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INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT OF  
WOMEN

IN THE

MIDDLE AND LOWER RANKS.

BY

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## NOTE TO REVISED EDITION.



I HAVE not thought it necessary to make much change in the text of this treatise, as it appeared in the edition published by me anonymously now thirteen years ago. I have, however, added the returns of the census of 1861 to the statistics given in Chapters VIII. and IX.; and I could not omit to notice the remarkable advance that has taken place, during these years, in public opinion and in legislation, on the relative position of the sexes—an advance that has surpassed my expectation.

ABERDEEN: *May*, 1870.



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

ENTITLED

“INDUSTRIAL & SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN.”

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THAT women of the middle ranks should, throughout their best years, have no definite occupation—that their life should be marked by a purposeless tone, or by misdirected aim—that they should be exposed to needless solitude—that their time should be too often valueless, their faculties unexercised, their talents lost, and their aspirations unfulfilled—are serious evils, entailing on woman herself much ill-health and unhappiness, and exercising on man and on society a reaction equally injurious. We would endeavour, in the present treatise, to measure the extent of these evils, and, partially at least, to trace their source.

The condition of women in the lower ranks will also occupy much of our attention ; it will be considered both in itself and in its relations with the position occupied by women in the middle ranks.

We have found our task a difficult one—the more so that little aid was derivable from previous treatises. So chronic indeed has the custom become, of serving up the subject in a mere rearrangement of platitudes, that the very title of the book will in all likelihood cause many to throw it down in disgust. We have done our best, however, to conduct the examination on independent grounds, and to rest our conclusions on facts within the knowledge of every one.

It would betoken a hardihood of conviction we do not care to claim, had we not oftener than once paused, lest some of our statements should be inaccurate, or some of our conclusions ill-founded ; public opinion, even were we satisfied it is but the prejudice of custom and time, is too strong not to stagger any one that would combat it. But from such misgivings we have time after time arisen, with a deeper conviction that

the evils depicted are real, and that the remedies urged are salutary.

It is some years since these pages were all but ready for the press; yet, though in the interval public attention has been more drawn to the subject than before, there is still room for the present contribution. We trust that even those differing with us in the conclusions arrived at, will at least, in the course of the inquiry, find considerations thrown out on points of detail that may not be deemed unimportant.

*May, 1857.*



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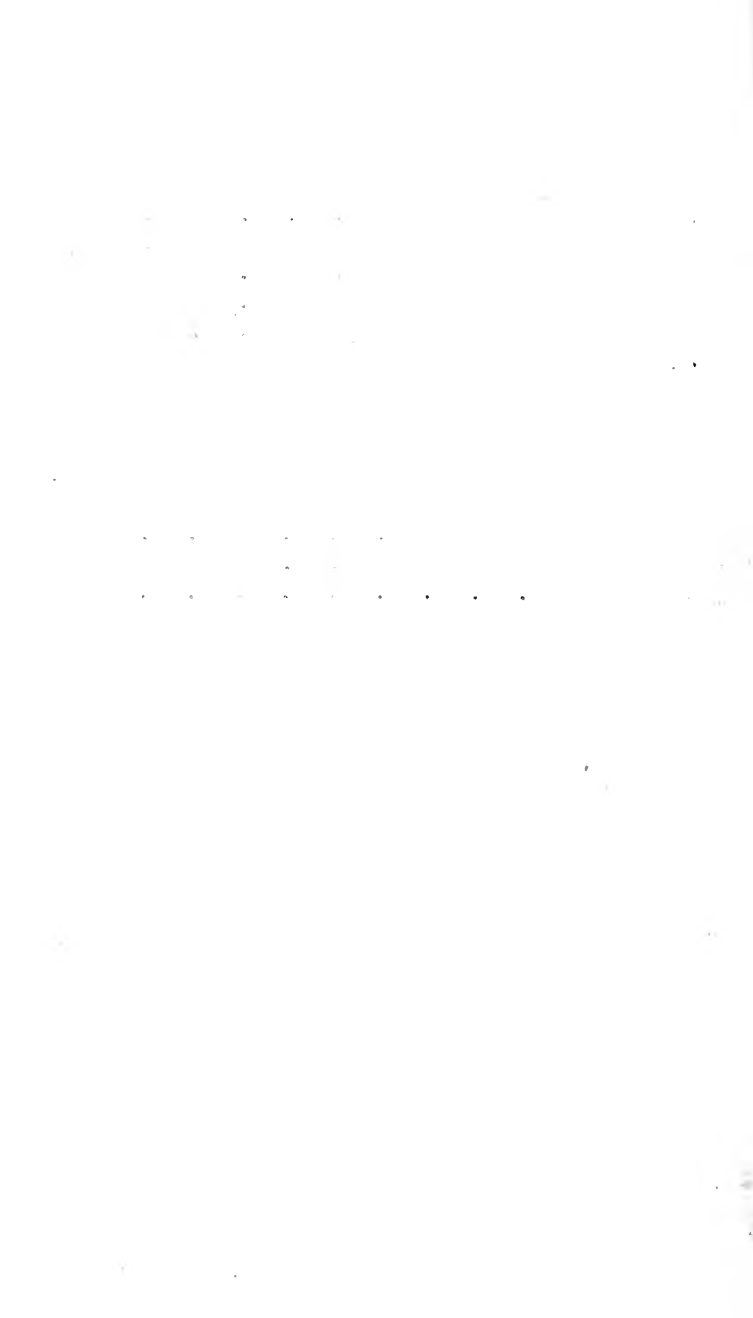
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# INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE AND LOWER RANKS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INFLUENCES OF INDUSTRY ON THE CHARACTER.

#### § 1.

TILL a comparatively recent period, the cultivated classes of society were subject, indirectly only, to the influences exercised by industry on the character of man. They reaped the fruits of industry in revenues and lordships, themselves however remaining an aristocracy—war-like, ecclesiastical, political, or fashionable, according to their age or country—but alike despising industrial occupation, and strangers to its reaction on the character.

It is very different now. The social importance of industry, once so little recognised, has become the marked feature of the time. In our most advanced

communities the middle classes have acquired the greatest political weight, and a large measure of personal culture; and even the better grades of the labouring classes receive the rudiments of sound education, and exercise no mean influence on society. Civilization is no longer in the keeping of a limited aristocracy; it has permeated the masses, and owes both its recent progress and its future prospects to the elevation of the industrial ranks. In many countries the privileged castes of ancient times have been entirely swept away; in the new communities that have sprung from our colonies, they never found a place; and in our own country, they have to maintain an unequal struggle with rival and more popular elements. Wherever we turn our view, social power and personal culture are found in other hands than once held them; classes formerly unknown have taken the larger place in the social framework; and it is these that infuse into modern life its characteristic spirit.

So great a change in the social position of the millions to whose keeping civilization is for the time committed, cannot but have been attended with a change equally great in the character of civilization itself. In the industrial classes of modern society, its development is the product of influences very different from those determining its form in the ancient and mediæval aristocracies.



Even when the characteristics of these aristocracies are compared among themselves, striking contrasts appear. The civilization of the theocratic Egyptian differs from that of the restless politic Greek; of the Roman captain and senator, from that of the gruff German baron; the civilization of the era of the Reformation, whether in Catholic or in Protestant countries, from that of the reactionary age that followed it. According to its seat for the time, to the occupation, circumstances, and race of those to whom it is committed, civilization assumes a characteristic phase. Its intellectual form, its moral aspect, the tastes and manners that spring from it—are determined by the pursuits, capacity, and historical position of the nations with whom, for the time, it dwells. In one age, religion alone moulds beliefs, prescribes duties, guides enjoyment. In another age, war is the leading occupation; and religion is but a belief in conquest, worship but invocation to the gods to favour the arms of the devotee, virtue but the one virtue—bravery, warlike glory the only fascination. In another age, politics rule; and people rest their faith on party and political creed, make it their chief end to serve their state friends, place their chief delight in finesse, intrigue, and the exercise of power. Anon, fashion bears the bell; and belief degenerates into vanity, virtue into etiquette, taste into levity. In a word,

civilization owes its tone, its creed, its principles, its tastes, to the character and circumstances of the people with whom it dwells ; or rather, there is a mutual action between them. Generation after generation, born to this heir-loom, imbibe from it the soul and spirit of their fathers ; learn to think their thoughts, act by their principles, be moved by their tastes ; but these, combined with new circumstances, wants, and vicissitudes, breed new thoughts, principles, and tastes, which in turn profoundly change those that are inherited ; so that, age after age, civilization assumes in each people a new and peculiar character.

If the aspect of civilization is so various when we compare its developments in the several forms of aristocracy, the contrast must be still greater when we compare these with its development within the industrial ranks of modern society. In the former, the cultivated classes led, comparatively speaking, a life of leisure and personal enjoyment, stimulated fitfully by warlike or political ambition ; while the toil of producing and distributing the necessaries and luxuries of life was imposed on slaves and other degraded classes, to whom was forbidden all approach to social power, liberty, or personal improvement ; but, in our day, most cultivated men spend the greater part of their time in industrial pursuits, while the labouring man is free to wield, and has fitted himself by educa-

tion to wield, a large political influence. Education and industry, mental culture and bodily toil, civilization and the sweat of the brow—are thus brought together in the same men; and what, for these men, is the result? What cast of mind, what spirit, what tastes, are produced in them? By and by, we will review in detail the influences thus exercised, by industrial occupation, on the mind and character of those engaged in it, and through these on the prevalent civilization; and then we shall find that industry, too, moulds the beliefs, the principles, the tastes, and the manners of men, in like manner as religion, war, politics, or fashion determined the civilization of ages when these were in the ascendant; and that, from the persistency and universality of industrial occupation, its influence on the mind is, and must be, deeper than any other. From the engrossing cares of industry few are free; its influence sinks into the depths of our being, penetrates every nook and corner of life, moulds our character with irresistible hand. Growing up in the mind of the man that works for his bread, civilization cannot be the same as when it filled the idle hours of the man of leisure.

In comparing one aspect of civilization with another, it is very important to inquire, in what form, and to what extent, we can recognise in them the influence of woman. In some embodiments of civilization that

influence is almost entirely wanting; others it pervades in a greater or less degree; in none does it attain the importance we might expect. With the Athenians the seclusion of women was so great, that they ceased among that people to be fit companions for men, who therefore sought scope for their affections in less legitimate relations; and, as a natural consequence, the literature of that people, while abounding in fascinating pictures of friendship betwixt man and man, contains no tribute worthy of the relation of the sexes now regarded by all as the deepest and most hallowed. Among the Mahomedans, women are subject even to greater seclusion and degradation; and, as a consequence, the Mahomedan religion regards them as unworthy of a place in heaven, or at least as unworthy of that heaven of bliss which it reserves exclusively for man. In ancient Rome, on the contrary, and in Sparta, woman was more honoured, was admitted more to the companionship of man, and even took an active interest in public affairs; as a consequence we find the elevating influence of her character in the virtues characteristic of these nations. The savage tribes of America treated their women as slaves or beasts of burden; while the primitive German tribes, in one sense little less barbarous than those Indians, yet looked on their women with respect, and bequeathed to us, in that

sentiment, the germ of our own domestic institutions. About the time of the Reformation, or the age immediately succeeding it, women of rank received a liberal culture and enjoyed a high degree of social freedom; and, as a consequence partly of this, we find no age more remarkable for great names of both sexes. Queens then truly reigned; feminine influence had just weight in politics, learning, and social life. Lastly, how different the religion of the ascetic monk, with its penances and vain formalities, from that living religious faith already realised in the love that binds a family together!

Since, then, many estimable qualities of civilization flow from the influence of woman, it is of importance, with reference to modern times, to inquire whether her position is now such as to admit of her influence having due weight; and, in particular, to inquire what position she holds with reference to that industry by which the character of modern life is chiefly determined. In the lower ranks, assuredly, much industrial labour falls to woman; but it is only the more mechanical descriptions of toil; she is excluded from situations of trust and of skill, is denied the prospect of bettering her condition, receives neither guidance nor encouragement from women of the better ranks, who regard her efforts to earn an independent livelihood as a transgression of the sphere of woman, as a sort of treason to the sex.

And as to the women of the middle ranks, they have in industry no place whatever; they have not been educated for industrial pursuits; there are no occupations open to them suited to their status; nor is the public mind yet prepared for their undertaking such occupations. It is of the utmost importance to inquire, whether these conventional arrangements are attended with the beneficial results commonly attributed to them; or whether, on the contrary, the exclusion of woman from the higher branches of non-domestic industry has not the effect of loosening her natural relations with society, of isolating her from the other sex, of alienating her from her race.

We will, in the first place, direct our attention, somewhat in detail, to the importance of the several influences of industrial occupation on the minds of those engaged in it; and thereafter apply our remarks to the position of women in the several ranks of modern society.

## § 2.

One of the most important influences of industry is that on the intelligence; the culture of which, whether we consider individual development or the progress of mankind as a race, is mainly owing to its agency. If we take the trouble of reviewing our own lives, we shall be

satisfied of the great part industry has played in stimulating us to the attainment of intellectual skill and the acquisition of intellectual furniture of all kinds. Our education is undertaken chiefly in order to fit us for a part in industry; and, in adult life, our intellectual energies are called forth chiefly by the necessity of earning a subsistence for ourselves and those dependent on us. Industry, perhaps, is to us the only definite object on which we have concentrated our reflective powers and activities; its arts have whetted our talents and stimulated our invention; it is in the conduct of business that our judgment and our prudence have been most put to trial; it has compelled us to enlarge our knowledge, and by placing us in contact with others has opened an unfailing source whence we might do so; it keeps us alert in the observation of passing events, and leads us to take an interest in the social condition of our fellow-men; it furnishes us with a habitual test of reality and usefulness; it throws us on our resources, and exercises us in the use of our powers and our means. In a word, the practical intelligence of a man is, for the most part, attributable to the training he has received in preparation for, or in the practice of his industrial profession, and to the social intercourse into which it has necessarily led him. So important an element, holding true almost of every man belonging to the middle and

the lower ranks, cannot but have weight in determining the civilization of modern life, and ought not to escape observation in an estimate of the social position now occupied by the female sex.

Another source of the influence exercised by industrial occupation on the mind, is the care and anxiety attending it; from their fangs a man engaged in business can scarcely ever cast himself free. There is the physical and intellectual exhaustion incident to an employment that tasks the energies for so many hours a-day; there is the anxiety to neglect none of its duties, and the vexation at the errors or misfortunes that must often attend it; there are the doubts of pecuniary success, the misgivings regarding our fitness for the profession undertaken, or for grappling with practical life in any shape; there are the harsh and disagreeable details of many of its duties. These anxieties, ever present with the man of industry, drawing on his energies and sinking deep into the mind, impart a tone that soon becomes habitual, and is nowhere so overpowering as during the hours passed at home after the labour of the day is over.

Corresponding to the tone of care so planted in the character, is a group of pleasurable and hopeful feelings also connecting themselves with industry. The healthfulness of activity, the satisfaction of being employed usefully, the enjoyment of good fortune, the excitement



of hazard and competition, a consciousness of fitness for duties undertaken, of spirit to grapple with difficulties, the elation of success, the prospect of independence, and such like emotions, present to us the cheerful side of industrial employment. Whichever the lot that falls to us in business—success or adversity—on it depends a great part of our inmost character; it moulds our most constant cares or our most constant hopes; and they mould us in turn. This is even more true of care than of hope;—for, while our hold of hope is light, the better to meet the chance of disappointment, it is seldom that care springs from a fictitious source; and the influence, therefore, of industry on the springs of character, through the persistence, depth, and secrecy of many of its anxieties, it is beyond our power to measure.

Industry likewise exercises an important influence on morality. One of the consequences of the rise of the industrial classes in status, and in personal culture, has been a conjunction of peculiar personal character on the one hand, and peculiar circumstances and duties on the other, —presenting in those ranks, as now constituted, a form of society, and a mode of life, to which former maxims of conduct are in a great measure inapplicable. Our working classes are no longer composed of slaves; in whom pretension to a conscience would be ridiculed. Our merchants are no longer of a proscribed and despised tribe.

Our lawyers, our scientific and literary men, no longer exclusively pursue their studies in the leisure hours of a clerical avocation. Our gentlemen are no longer found only in a leisured aristocracy. Our women of culture no longer move but in circles of fashion. Yet the old maxims of life remain, comparatively speaking, as they were ; our moral guides, overlooking the change that has passed over us, address themselves to a state of society gone by. They ignore the multitude of duties connected with industry ; the constant moral struggle encountered in it ; the disheartening difficulties it presents ; its tendency wholly to engross the mind ; the necessity of reconciling it with our other duties, with our pleasures, with our personal culture ; the duties of superior and inferior ; the duties of one class to another ; the relation in which industry stands to life and human destiny : these things were of little importance in former times, but are of paramount importance now. They constitute, in modern times, the fiercest battle-ground of vice and virtue ; a battle-ground where for good or evil we must day after day be in our place. And the conflict is most acute in the middle ranks where industrial relations are most complex. That we have outgrown the maxims once sufficient to guide the conduct of life, is felt by most people ; the strides of socialism among the working-classes, and the spread of its principles in a milder form among educated

men, show us the desperate remedy some have been driven to by a desire to master the evil.

Withdrawn from the direction of recognised spiritual guides, one of the most common influences of industrial occupation is to destroy such principles of morality as have been otherwise acquired. Either men are unable, without help, to apply these principles to industrial transactions, or they find it attended with pecuniary ruin to do so, or they feel that industrial matters ought to be regulated by rules of their own, or they simply yield to the force of example; but, from one motive or another, men in worldly affairs usually give the go-by to received moral precepts; and industry, left to get on as it best may, has fallen into a shifting code of morality of its own, too often so devoid of rule that it is difficult for those engaged in it to preserve even legal honesty. The havoc so made in the higher principles of conduct, is sufficiently notorious, and is probably illustrated to some extent in every one; there are few that cannot recal a time when they had hoped to adhere, amid all discouragements, to a purity of principle then untarnished, but since wrecked on the temptations, sophistries, and necessities of industrial life.

But there is also a beneficial influence of industry on morality, less recognised, but even of greater moment than the deleterious one just referred to. No man can

wholly escape the bad effects of an unaided struggle with inconsistencies and difficulties ; but wherever strength of character enables a man to bear up in some measure against them, and to resist the prevailing temptations in business to adopt an equivocal morality, he finds in industry a means unrivalled in its fitness for training the moral faculties. It rubs off cant, empty sentimentality, and too great indulgence in the luxury of gratifying the feelings. Honesty, honour, and justice it exacts in a degree called for in no other circumstances of life. It gives a practical form to our impulses ; embraces in it many domestic and social duties ; obliges us to sacrifice our ease, and undergo a large amount of active duty on behalf of others ; gives an insight into the workings of society. And that perpetual moral struggle, ruinous to the principles of weak men, and indeed too much for any one so long as unaided by recognised guidance, yet on the whole acts as a stimulus to the energies of a superior mind, and imparts an unusual amount of training and experience. The moral culture of an upright man of business, cannot but exceed far what is possible in a sedentary life or in affluent leisure. And it is worthy of remark that, while the deleterious influence of industry on the morality of life will disappear as the difficulties and inconsistencies it flows from are adjusted, this more beneficial influence

will, in the progress of time, be more and more consolidated.

That the moral influences of industry form a vital element in personal character and in modern civilisation, cannot be denied; and the consideration how far the female sex is excluded from them, must possess corresponding importance.

As industry moulds, in a great degree, the intelligence, the temperament, and the principles of man; so, for the most part, it furnishes him, directly or indirectly, with his stock of information, and with the objects that interest him. Matters of business and the ongoings of trade are the staple subjects of talk with men, whenever and wherever they meet; and nineteen people out of twenty have no taste or interest that does not connect itself with their industrial employments. In these most men are wholly engrossed; in making money they find all their aspirations gratified; to the task, therefore, they give their heart and soul. Industrial occupation is likewise the key to a knowledge of the social condition of our fellow-men. We not only acquire in it that personal experience alone enabling us to understand the life of others, but it also brings us into actual contact with them in those pursuits in which most of their time is passed, and by which their character is formed. The knowledge we have of our fellow-men, and our interest in

them gradually accumulate round this centre; and we need not wonder. In addition to its mental and moral importance, it is through industry that men of the middle and working classes obtain the means of living, the necessaries, enjoyments, and happiness of life; it is but natural, therefore, that whether as selfish or as sympathetic beings, our thoughts should group themselves round this prime element.

The springs of social action are equally bound up with industry. Caste and rank, influence and dependence, comfort and destitution, the relations of one class with another, government and legislation, political content or discontent, social progress and the well-being of the community—are all roots or stems of industry. From these, or some of these, most of our public movements spring; or in them they end.

Finally, industry has told in no small degree on our popular philosophy; that is, on the mode in which people view life, on their general method of reasoning and acting, on their belief regarding the destiny of man. The abstract sciences, which in all ages have modified the philosophy of the time, and whose influence in that direction must continue on the increase, owe to industry the chief stimulus to their cultivation. In a great measure, the progress of mathematics, astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry, organic science, and political economy—

is attributable to the prospects entertained of their useful application to navigation, to the mechanical and chemical arts, to agriculture, to the practice of medicine, and to the regulation of prices, wages, and rent. The fascination exerted by science on the mind of the student or of the discoverer is not enough; wealthy educational institutions must be provided for the culture of science, special education, the means of elaborate research. Discoveries already made must be adopted in practice, so as to prepare or lay open new ground for further progress. There must arise a popular interest in scientific pursuits; there must be a general concentration of resources and endeavour. Even the abstract thinker himself must have sympathetic encouragement and hopes from without. Apart from the stimulus and the aid derived from useful applications to industry, discovery would not have advanced beyond a few rude guesses. In the present day, as in former times, we owe progress in science chiefly to men professionally concerned in the industrial arts, or in conducting technical education for the practice of them; and not only so, but, generally speaking, it is this intimate connection of science with art that keeps up in the mass of the people a sort of everyday attention to subjects of science viewed in a popular aspect; it is through industry that most men arrive at any knowledge of science they possess; and through it

they acquire a general but clear enough notion of the practical bearing of science on human happiness, and on the arts ministering to it.

But the influence of industry on the practical philosophy of man goes much further. We have seen that to industrial occupation man chiefly owes the culture of his intelligence; that with it his spirits rise and fall; that it is the chief sphere of trial to his moral nature; that it moulds his character with the most plastic hand; that it is the chief means of his acquaintance with the world; that it determines his place in society, and the sphere of his public and private life; that he is driven to regard it as the dispenser of comfort, of power, nay indirectly even of virtue and vice; need we wonder that his philosophy becomes at last tinged with the colour of these reflections; that a materialistic or fatalist tone steals over his views of life and destiny? Industry teaches the poor day-labourer, and the richest capitalist, that there is a limit to human power—that the circumstances we are placed in are complex and conflicting—that in life it is difficult to attain a desired end.

But along with this doctrine habitually impressed on the mind, there is inspired another, which, in some degree, is correlative to the former. Industry teaches us not only the limits of our power, it teaches us also how to use that power, how to turn to the best account the means



really within our reach. It shows us the necessity of guiding our steps by definite knowledge, the necessity of recognising natural laws and conforming ourselves to them; it teaches us the uselessness, the mischief, of indefinite expectations, and the value of reality.

Such are the chief influences of industrial occupation on the mind,—moulding, as we have said, the intelligence, the temperament, and the moral character of man,—his tastes, his politics, and his philosophy.

### § 3.

But if industrial occupation has stamped its character so deeply on our life, and on the civilization of our times, can woman with impunity be excluded from participation in it? If the mind and character of the one sex are developed in a medium so different from that in which the mind and character of the other is developed, is it to be expected that there can be much accordance between the two? Have we not gone too far in a conventional alienation of the sexes—an alienation as little beneficial to society at large, as it is prejudicial to the happiness of woman herself?

Although the cause may not be generally recognised, people nevertheless admit that there is something far from satisfactory in the position of women in the middle

ranks. There is a certain social desertion and loneliness that are even regarded as characteristic of their lot. The time of the other sex is absorbed in business; the day is thrown idle on woman's hand. The thousand exciting events and undertakings that give eagerness to the attention, and keep on stretch the faculties of man, are reckoned beyond her sphere. She can take no part, and can feel little interest, in public affairs. The pursuits of men, the movements of industry, the progress of science—in short, the whole ongoings of the outer world, are to her but a phantasmagoria, destitute of reality; and, indeed, from her position, incomprehensible. In domestic changes and in personal incident alone, is she permitted to feel an interest; and, as these are also relished by man during his leisure hours, it is unfair that she should not with him also feel an interest beyond them. As it is—prevented from mingling her regard in much that is of vital importance to the well-being of mankind, and from undertaking many duties to which she feels naturally called—there is entailed upon her a constant sense of alienation from society, and the still more oppressive sense of a purposeless existence. There is also wanting to woman that natural culture of the intelligence, and that concentration of the energies, that are afforded to man by the necessities of his industrial avocations.

But the loneliness and the purposeless tone of life, characteristic of the lot that falls to women in the middle ranks, and the want of a healthful and natural exercise of the mental faculties, are neither the only nor the worst evils of the entire exclusion of the sex in these ranks from non-domestic industry. From the same source has arisen an estrangement of the mind and character of the sexes, so deep in its nature, and so serious in its consequences, as to call for the most anxious consideration. In spite of the happiness that must establish itself within the domestic circle in the midst of all obstacles, there is, in the relation of the sexes in the middle ranks, an incongruity of taste, a diversity of pursuit, a clashing of sentiment, a want of common ground in matters of reasoning,—that are only repressed, or kept out of view, in order to prevent the still greater evils that their free development would inflict. How much is the wife a stranger to the mind, to the tastes, to the pursuits of her husband! How impossible is it for the sexes to break ground on any but the most common-place topics of conversation! The more important the subjects, the more serious the opinions entertained by either, the less probability is there of mutual sympathy; and so instinctively is the tendency to jar on these more serious topics felt, that the discussion of them, the expression even of our heartfelt sentiments regarding them, is for the most part avoided as

an impropriety. And no wonder : from youth upwards the education of the sexes, whether at home, at school, or in general society, has been planned so as most effectually to estrange them ; and the elements of diversity thus planted, in mental training, in information, in tastes, and in principles, receive their full growth in after life under the influence of diversity of pursuit. The perverse effort of society to preclude in the sexes during the years of youth the growth of a community of mental power, taste, and sentiment,—is consummated in adult life by denying a community of experience ; and,—without community of education or of experience,—how is it possible for us to look for true mental accordance ? Most people, therefore, can but move through life bearing and forbearing ; practising a mutual compromise of principles and tastes, and maintaining silence or reserve on all but common-place topics. In the midst, it may be, of much domestic affection,—our best hopes, our most cherished ideals of happiness most frequently remain unfulfilled, buried in the depths of our own breast. And if this is true even of domestic life, where the strength of family attachment may overcome so much, how great must the evil be in other and no less important walks of life. It is to the same want of common attainments, common tastes, and common objects of interest, that we must attribute the formality and unsatisfying

nature of the whole social intercourse of our middle ranks, with all the evils consequent on such a social state.

If we compare the position held by woman in the middle ranks on the one hand, with the position held by her, on the other hand, in the higher and lower ranks, we cannot but be struck with the contrast. In the higher and in the lower ranks she emphatically shares the lot of man:—leading with him in the one a life of affluent leisure, and bearing with him in the other a share of the labour characteristic of their common station. But, in the middle classes, though man in his estate approaches more nearly the lot of the labourer, woman would be an aristocrat; must needs spend her time in visiting and receiving visits, or in equally vain makeshifts to kill the time. Like the lady of rank, she is above engaging in industrial pursuits; and she even pities the lot of her sex in the labouring ranks, that women must share in these the lot of man; but she forgets that for woman to find happiness in a life of ease, it is requisite that man in the same rank be equally exempt from toil. Unlike the lady of rank, the lady of the middle classes is left alone during the day. Her husband, her suitor, her brother, her friend—in place of accompanying her in her visits, or in her other efforts to occupy a day of leisure, is busy at his desk, engrossed in his industrial

avocations. Herein lies the drawback at present characteristic of woman's position in the middle ranks. In place of conforming to the medium in which her lot is cast, she strains after a false station. Her education, ideas, and manners, have reference to a condition different from that she really occupies. She is brought up, and still demeans herself, as if she belonged to a different sphere from that of man in her own rank; and, as a natural consequence, there can be little in common between them—the one trained for industry, the other for a life of fashion—the one for the world, the other for the drawing-room.

As it is impossible for man, in the industrial ranks, to attain the freedom from occupation, that would place him on a footing of equality with woman as she is at present situated in these ranks, and, as the sexes cannot by these means be fitted to enjoy a companionship of common leisure similar to that open to the sexes in the higher ranks; it remains, as the only alternative, that woman conform herself more than she at present does, to the medium in which, in the rank to which she belongs, man is necessarily placed;—in a word, it would seem necessary, allowance being made for difference in circumstances, that women of the middle ranks be admitted as far to non-domestic industry, as at present are the women of the labouring ranks. By this means only, does it

circumstances

appear possible to remove the barrier that at present separates the sexes in the middle ranks ; and to bring about that accordance of mind and of interest, without which, even when comparatively happy, life is but a perpetual compromise and abnegation. We are far from regarding the position of woman in the labouring ranks as satisfactory ;—but in the better grades of these ranks, there is in the position of woman much to call forth approbation and even envy. The families of the honest cottar, of the sturdy yeoman, of the trustworthy and enterprising artisan, present in the relation of woman to man almost all that could be desired :—similarity of education, of training, and of experience ; and, as a consequence, harmony of taste, unity of purpose, and all but equality in intelligence and judgment. We would desire to see these blessings realised also in the middle ranks—where undeniably they are at present most wanting—blessings enhanced, as in these ranks they would be, by superior education and an enlarged sphere of duties ; but it seems impossible to realise such a change in the middle ranks, unless woman abandon her present aspiration after a mode of life desirable only were it attainable by her in common with man, and at present, like other idle dreams, serving only to cheat her of the good really within her reach. The allurements of fashion that now fill her fancy, the elaborate training

she now receives in the accomplishments of fashion, should henceforth be reckoned at their proper worth; and her education and her pursuits be more adapted to the medium in which her lot is cast. Above all, in so far as circumstances permit, she must take part in the industrial occupations suited to her rank; in like manner as already do her sisters of the labouring ranks. We do not mean that *every* woman of the middle ranks should participate in industry, any more than every woman of the labouring classes; there are natural and proper limits to such employment—especially in the duties of maternity. But we mean that women in the middle ranks should cease to despise industrial occupation as such; and whenever possible should make it their duty to take part in it.

It may startle us to be told that, in the middle ranks, the sexes are so far estranged from each other. So much of their time is passed together, they seem throughout life to be on so intimate a footing, and to have so many enjoyments in common, that it appears incredible there should yet be a deep gulf between them, and that the chasm should be caused by the exclusion of women from non-domestic industry—from that industry which, in name at least, is as a household word even to women themselves. Nevertheless, if it is the lot of man in the middle ranks to spend in industrial occupation so much



of his time, and nearly the full measure of his energies, he must in mind and character be a stranger to every one that has not to some extent shared in the same lot. The influences of industry on the intelligence, on the hopes and anxieties, on the principles, on the tastes, on the politics, on the philosophy, of man, cannot be transferred to woman by a word, or by a wish, or by any other artificial means. Neither in intellect nor in morals can EXPERIENCE be replaced by any other teacher. The mind is in its nature active, and can be formed only in activity; the character is in its nature active, and can be formed only in activity. Though the student may do much in his closet, he can make little real progress there except in subjects far removed from every-day life; and with the great mass of people practical existence is all in all; every-day cares they find of sufficient importance to engross the faculties, and arduous enough to leave behind no inclination for other pursuits. The intelligence, the principles, the aims of most people, are part and parcel of their every-day life. It cannot be expected, then, that a large class (such as that of the female sex, comprehending one-half of the human race) should be able to acquire by artificial means a mental culture, or a tone of character, or to interest themselves in a sphere so far removed from the mode of life, for which alone their character fitted them, and with which alone they have

any practical acquaintance. Woman is brought up with the idea that it is unbecoming in her to concern herself with what belongs to the sphere of man; and in early life she may not see how fatal the precept is; it is not till after years that her eyes are opened, and she sees at once the distance between her and the other sex, and that it is too late to repair the past.

On the whole, therefore, notwithstanding the intimate personal relation between the sexes, it is not surprising that woman has been, and still is, a stranger to the influences that have shaped the mind and character of man. The mutual happiness enjoyed by them in domestic life, flows from personal feelings and interests inseparable from human nature and family relations; is far inferior to what it might be; and is inconsistent, neither in reason nor in fact, with the wide distance that divides their mental life. Dissimilarity of education and diversity of pursuit create a divergence that it is impossible afterwards to repair. Every day that woman remains a stranger to the influences moulding the character and culture of man, her distance from him is widened in an increasing ratio—for influences on the mind become themselves the source of new influences, and these in turn of others; and the culture and experience of a lifetime cannot, at a late period of life, be transferred from one person to

another, *per saltum*. It seems indispensable, therefore, that woman herself, when other duties do not pre-occupy her, should take part directly in non-domestic industry.

The three following chapters will be devoted to a review, in detail, of the social position in which our present industrial arrangements have placed women of the middle ranks; and of the evils thereby entailed on the female sex and on society. But the foregoing chapter appeared requisite to familiarise the reader with some considerations, not hitherto attended to in inquiries on the condition of the female sex; so that we might be able in the sequel to refer to them without further explanation. There is no need for a similar introduction to a consideration of the more recognised evils attending the exclusion of women from industry—such as the inability of woman to earn an independent livelihood; or the loss suffered by society in the want of feminine influence on the hard and materialistic character of our industrial relations and on social life in general. These, and other evils flowing from the source in question, are already familiar to the reader, and they need no preface.

## CHAPTER II.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE RANKS—IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH PUBLIC LIFE, INDUSTRIAL MORALITY, ETC.

## § 1.

PUBLIC spirit is the salt of history. It most evokes the interest of the reader; its ennobling example makes the deepest impression on the mind. Nations that have found no chronicler of this element of their character, remain comparatively unknown.

If we regard nations at periods when they were most remarkable for public spirit, we find that the sentiment was not confined to a few individuals, or to one age or sex; but spread itself through whole masses, and was intimately wrought into social life. The patriotism of Rome and Sparta was of domestic growth, learned in youth from the example of man and the precept of woman. The indomitable spirit of the Roman and Spartan matrons was imbibed by their children before these went forth into the world. Even the sudden out-

bursts of patriotism in ancient times were attributable to a like source. In the siege of a town, for example, the common and immediate danger reached *all*, and prompted a more energetic and devoted defence than if each singly met his enemy in the open field; and in ancient times, when towns and districts were liable to attack from foreign invasion and the jealous enmity of neighbours in a far greater degree than now, there must have been engendered a habitual readiness in the people to make a sacrifice for the common defence, involving as it did at once the preservation of their property, and the protection of themselves and their families from death or slavery.

The same principle is traceable to modern times. The English Revolution of 1640—bringing into action not only political, but in a still higher degree religious elements—was a movement in which both sexes and all ages could take part; and was supported chiefly by classes of a station in life in which the sexes were more nearly on a level, and enjoyed a greater community of sentiment and interest. Hence that revolution was remarkable for personal and domestic devotion to its cause. If that cause, however important, had possessed an interest only for man; if he could not have shared his enthusiasm with his family; rather than subject these to perils and misfortune for principles to them inappreciable, he would

not have hesitated to abandon cause and principle for their sake. But, fortified with family sympathy, each and all were ready to encounter the greatest dangers. The English Revolution is but one example. Wherever public spirit burns with warmth, it is in a cause for which all hearts beat. Religion triumphant, and, still more, religion when the object of persecution; liberty when espoused by an enlightened rank like the Girondins of France, among whom female talent and worth shed so brilliant a lustre; the despair of famine or household oppression, when felt over the length and breadth of the land; royalty itself, when regarded as a sacred cause—have frequently evoked the most devoted national adherence; and, in each of these examples, the strength of the predominating sentiment is traceable not solely to the inherent claims of the cause itself, but also to the feelings in its behalf being rooted in the best of the social emotions.

Patriotism, public spirit, are sympathetic sentiments, and will not thrive unless shared in by those we esteem and love. They must be felt at home; must be nourished by domestic warmth; must be shared in by woman; otherwise private interest will soon swallow them up. Unless so nourished, and so shared, our social sentiments cannot engraft themselves on our most cherished emotions. They cannot catch the purifying influence of personal

love, by which every noble impulse shared in common with us by the object of our love, is rendered still more sacred. Nay, affection, in place of ministering to a generous patriotic spirit, acts, when that spirit is not shared by both sexes, as a positive discouragement to it; for what is not shared in by both, it becomes a duty of affection, as far as possible, to sacrifice or suppress.

Nor, unless shared by woman, can public spirit, public principle, entwine itself with the feelings that guard the *aræ et foci*—the altars and the hearths of our country. Home is the centre not only of our social but also of our individual being; and unless patriotism is worshipped there, it can have no abiding hold of our nature. The sacrifice is small we are prepared to make for what is not to us as a household god; but give a man the sympathy of his wife; give woman the sympathy of her husband; give us children whom we honour and who give us honour in return, and then we will dare to do as duty bids us.

We want, in modern life, the influences on youth exercised by the Roman matron on the youth of the Roman people. Our young men, perhaps, learn at home to be diligent and of becoming manners; to avoid lying and other paltry vices; but beyond the inculcation of these simple virtues of childhood the mother cannot go. She must soon

become a stranger to her son ; his sentiments and his ambition must day by day jar more with home ; society must lose her assistance in sending him forth equipped with the civic virtues of manhood. These are not now of less importance than they were two thousand years ago, nor do they now stand less in need of woman's fostering influence. Public virtue, public spirit are still difficult of attainment ; still demand much self-discipline ; are still as honourable as they were in Rome ; and it is deeply to be regretted that the position of woman is such, that her warm solicitude for the honourable career of her children, her righteousness of spirit, and her great love—can do little to prepare them for the battle of adult life. The tie between mother and son, so sacred and so powerful in the many notable examples of it history has recorded, must, in the ordinary case, be broken at that very crisis when the character begins to take form, and when separation must be the most painful.

In modern times, when a nation is involved in war, there is perhaps, once the struggle begins, little lack of public spirit. From the simplicity and familiarity in story of the movements of war, intelligence from the scene of conflict is eagerly followed and readily understood, while anxiety is roused by the common danger to life and property. The interests of every one, without distinction of age or sex, are thus embarked in the hazard ; and all



submit readily to the pecuniary burdens, and cheerfully undergo the many personal risks that war involves. But the age of war as a permanent social state is past, and patriotism now finds other enterprises; public virtue, other duties. In place of bravery of the soldier, there is required bravery of the man; in place of the cannon's mouth, there are given us the terrors of public opinion and the sharp sneers of our acquaintance; in place of physical death there is given us the ruin of pecuniary means, and the ruin of honour, —neither, perhaps, less formidable than death itself. In place of conquering foreign countries, patriotism must now attempt to civilize our own. In place of a military spirit, we must cherish a jealous desire to perform our duties as good citizens. The times may be peaceful, but in them there is still much to do, and much to suffer, in the cause of truth, of justice, and of patriotism.

But, for the reason we have explained, women are unable to take part, or to feel much interest, in these things. Public life is, in modern days, a growth from industrial life, in like manner as in ancient times it was a growth from warlike relations. Politics, political rights, political influence, are now inseparably connected with business: it is on business, on our means of livelihood, on our future prospects, that our public honesty or dishonesty most directly tells; public movements either spring from,

or have for their object to act upon, the industrial condition of society ; our public conduct is continually modified by industrial experience and industrial interest : the character of the people, their intelligence, and their comfort depend in a great degree on their industrial occupations and industrial relations. It is impossible, therefore, for woman,—so long as excluded from industry,—to take a part or feel an interest in political and social movements, or to influence public opinion, national virtue, or national progress.

And if woman know little of the public duties of modern life, it cannot be expected that the virtues of public life should be valued within our families, or should have a habitual hold on national character. A desire for the public good has, therefore, no very prominent place among our national sentiments. Our patriotism regards more the material interest of ourselves and of our families;—if life and property be secure, we care for little else. Public principle is even less valued among us. The exercise of political rights, of political patronage, of political power, is so corrupt, that he who is politically honest is soon marked as unsteady, as a man that will betray his party, as one that cannot be trusted : intrigue and party spirit guard the approach to public office, and are necessary means towards the success of any measure however much for the public good ; political

cowardice and detraction are but examples of the cowardice and detraction that infest modern life in every part.

We believe that the moral cowardice and political dishonesty that disgrace the respectable ranks in this and other nations, is attributable, in a great degree, to the position of women, especially in the middle ranks. Few good men even feel prepared to risk the comfort of their families for a cause to these inappreciable. If we make a few exceptions, such as the occasional secession of a body of clergy from an endowed church for conscience' sake, the spectacle of a man foregoing his means of livelihood from public principle is rare indeed. Even in the exception noticed, the motive from which the sacrifice proceeds is one that, as has been already explained, is common to man and to woman—matters of religion being equally open to the judgment of both, and having an equal hold on their feelings. It were well if this were equally true of the rest of man's public conduct; if woman could take part in questions of public and national morality, in the fulfilment of public duty, in the struggle after public good. At present, she is, in a sense, unworthy to share in misfortune brought on by honesty of conduct, by sacrifice for public principle; and she is spared in pity, as if that treatment were the kindest: perhaps, in present circumstances, it is so.

By the exclusion of woman from participation in public opinion and in public sentiment, not only is the growth of patriotism checked in the mind of man, not only is society deprived of the full benefit of a masculine spirit (devoted to national honour and national good), but our patriotism, our public spirit, such as they are, show a manifest want of those feminine characteristics flowing from the softer influence of woman. It is remarkable that benevolent movements, having for their object to ameliorate the condition of the working classes, have emanated chiefly from the higher ranks, where the influence of woman is stronger. The middle ranks look on with comparative coldness, if not opposition; the men of these ranks deprecating the interference of Factory Acts, and such like measures, with the free action of the laws of political economy—and the women of these ranks feeling incompetent to move in the matter at all. Not but that the women of the middle ranks are as desirous as those of other ranks, to take an interest and active part in movements for the amelioration of the people: their position alone prevents them. That cause, however, is sufficient to hinder the leniency and, when called for, the just vehemence of the moral judgments of woman from having a fair influence on public opinion; and the warmth, constancy, and high tone of her character from deepening our public sentiment.

Nor, finally, can we overlook the injustice done to woman herself, in excluding her from an active, healthful interest in much that is of importance to human life and destiny, and much that is engaging to human feelings.

The want of a community of interest and sentiment in man and woman with respect to public affairs, is well illustrated by the manner in which the public press is severally regarded by them. Our London morning newspapers give, perhaps, the most complete expression of the public opinion and public spirit of the middle classes of this country; but while these newspapers are daily devoured by men with insatiable avidity, they, or at least their leading contents, are seldom looked at by women. Women confine their attention to notices of personal incident—to them never lacking interest—from a marriage in high life, to a criminal execution. Newspapers are written neither by women, nor for them. Nowhere could less trace be found of feminine social qualities; and we surely are to some extent in the right when we attribute to this cause the exclusion of all but prudential motives from the prevalent morality and philosophy of our public journals. Besides the open and fair public criticism, which is their boast, we do want some organ to foster a tone of feeling, and principles of action, in which all ages and both sexes can participate. In the higher, and in the working ranks, where

there is a greater similarity in the cares and in the occupations of the sexes, such an organ may even now be possible; for in them the influence of woman is already great, and there is greater sociality of manners and greater community of sentiment; but in the middle ranks it is otherwise, and in their case little improvement can be looked for until the cares and the occupations of woman are in some measure assimilated to those of man.

These considerations serve to show that the exclusion of the women of the middle ranks from non-domestic industry, is prejudicial to the growth and to the character of public opinion, public principle, and public spirit. Our national character, in place of taking root in the united sympathies of the people, is left to grow as it best may in each isolated individual; it is not purified by the influences of the female character; it is not elevated by the touch of personal affection; it cannot engraft itself on the family tree; it cannot become the heritage of children before they leave the parental roof. And injustice is done to woman herself. Were women admitted to some extent into non-domestic industry—reason and the experience of other classes and other times warrant us to conclude that these defects would disappear; that each family would, as in the days of Oliver Cromwell, be a centre of public opinion, and an altar of public principle; that

woman would join with man in the maintenance of public virtue, and in the endeavour after public good; and that, finally, she would implant the same spirit in the homegrown nature of her children.

## § 2.

In one respect, and in one respect only, can women of the middle ranks at present take an active interest in the condition of the people. Many are assiduous in visiting prisons, Magdalen asylums, charity schools, and the abodes of the poor; and this may at first sight appear inconsistent with our previous remarks. But it must not be forgotten, that that section of our population to which woman directs her charitable labours, really embraces but the outcasts of society, who have long ago thrown off the restraints of industry. The inmates of prisons, of Magdalen asylums, of ragged schools—the inhabitants of the wretched quarters of towns from which these institutions are peopled—form no part of the industrial world, or only belong to it at fitful intervals: and it is not on her acquaintance with the world that woman builds hope of success in her endeavours to improve the condition of such people. She strives, simply by kindness and persuasion, to alleviate distress and awaken the better feelings. A kind heart,

a liberal hand, unwearied exertion, may soften an hour of wretchedness and pain, kindle in the black hearth a passing spark of warmth, procure for the child a smattering of education, open the soul to a flickering tenderness,—soon to be again swamped by the surrounding ignorance, improvidence, and brutality. But after all,—though the endeavour to alleviate human wretchedness by human kindness can never be utterly thrown away—how thankless, hopeless, are these attempts to reclaim drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, and people whose ignorance and improvidence baffle all opposing forces. The man of the world sneers at these labours of charity, ★ and dislikes the interference of woman in them; pointing on the one hand to her want of acquaintance with practical life, on the other to the want of success attending her endeavours. Even the objects of her charity themselves regard her appearance among them in their rude haunts, with mingled feelings of pity, wonder, and dislike.

These remarks, as will be apparent, are meant to apply to the amateur and desultory labours of charity, usually resorted to, by ladies of the middle classes, to fill up their otherwise unoccupied time; and do not extend to charitable labours undertaken, as a profession, by women properly qualified for the task by a special education. With these, charity is, strictly speaking, a branch of in-



dustry, which with proper preparation is usually carried out with efficiency and success;—as in the case of those Sisters of Charity of foreign hospitals, who, abjuring worldly prospects, devote their lives to nursing the sick—not, however, without first qualifying themselves for the undertaking by a novitiate of many years training, including most frequently a course of medical study.

The active interest taken by woman in the outcast classes of society, as it is in her present position the only channel in which her social sympathies find vent, serves very well to show the power of these sympathies, maintaining as they do a struggle against circumstances so adverse; and it assures us how much society is a loser by the confinement of the energies of woman to a task comparatively so hopeless. For these outcast classes are in great part but the creatures of social evils, intimately connected with industry and industrial arrangements. To the root of these evils, however, woman may not at present follow; her function ceases the moment industry and the social structure come to be dealt with; with this part of the problem she is not permitted to interfere. She contents herself, therefore, with dressing and softening the exterior of the cancer;—till the time come when she may be permitted to use similar endeavours to keep the constitution itself whole.

## § 3.

We have said that industry is, in modern times, the sphere in which man is subjected to his chief and most constant moral struggles. The retail merchant, in whose branch of business it is customary to adulterate goods, or sell them in short measure—where, for instance, it is or was the usage of trade to mix chicory with coffee, whitening with flour and barley, sloe-leaves with tea, clay with sugar—finds it no easy question of conscience to resolve whether he should or should not do as others do. By leaving off the questionable usage, he must risk the loss of his means of subsistence; but he naturally doubts if, in the circumstances, he can be called on to sacrifice not only himself but his wife and children, for the sake of avoiding this trade fraud—if indeed he can bring himself to call it a fraud—and in the end he probably conforms to the obnoxious custom, consoling himself with the reflection, that at least the guilt is not all on his head. The clergyman or the schoolmaster may tell us that this is wrong; that it is wrong to sell chicory for coffee, two hundred yards of thread for three hundred, plaster of Paris for flour; but the clergyman and the schoolmaster have their own difficulties, and are, most likely, equally guilty: for they have subscribed volumi-

nous articles of faith, so precise and minute, that it is impossible for any two persons who have given them a diligent examination, to coincide in a candid belief of every particular of their contents. They, like the man who, following the usage of his trade, sold chicory for coffee, have suppressed their over-scrupulousness rather than risk their means of living, or the peace of their families; believing, or trying to believe, that they do nothing wrong. Moral inconsistencies and moral difficulties teem thus around us on every side. If we belong to a profession—the church, the law, medicine—a thousand little hypocrisies and false pretensions stain our minds, or our manners;—if we are merchants, white lies and black lies defile our lips: of whatever rank we may be, we have to practice simulations and dissimulations to keep us right in business and in the eyes of the world. And yet who is prepared to cast the first stone? Each started in the world with a determination to act uprightly, and who has not fallen? Not from mere weakness, but by coming to a deliberate conclusion that he *must* fall,—that, as he thinks, it would be wrong in him to let those dependent on him starve, merely to save himself from dipping in the mire of trade-conventionalities.

Side by side with these graver difficulties, we have others somewhat similar in nature, though of minor weight—the mean offices and disgusts of business. A

man finds that while contact with industry improves the character in some respects, it demands many sacrifices of feeling and taste. The lawyer that must give technical advice to a man whose character he dislikes, or whose object he knows to be unjust; the physician called to prescribe in cases he would rather pass by; the personal service we must undergo in most descriptions of employment; the stooping of the mind to trifling but necessary details; the reflection that our own gains are wrenched from the severer labours of others; the cruel and degrading offices that, in minor trades, fall to the labourer's lot;—in none of these examples is there usually understood to be anything contrary to strict justice or propriety, but in one and all there is much that is revolting to the feelings, and really injurious to our moral nature. Not an occupation but is attended with evils of this sort; from the butcher or the cabman, to the member of parliament. One employment blunts the feelings, another tarnishes our singleness of purpose; one makes our eye for truth less keen, another gives the tongue a slippery facility; one makes us servile, another tyrannical; and all entail on us more or less a money-getting selfishness, and over-engrossment in business—at the expense of solitude to those dependent on our society, and at the expense to ourselves of the healthful growth of the better elements of character.

Of all this the man of sensitive mind is painfully conscious ; he chafes most against it during the first few years of adult life ; and many a time does he pause—but what can he do ? How can he escape ? He feels the evils of his own occupation, but the attempt to change will most likely bring on him pecuniary ruin ; and he also knows that other occupations have drawbacks like his own ; so for the most part he remains in the occupation on which chance has hung his means of livelihood, though aware that by so doing he submits to much that is degrading and injurious to him.

Notwithstanding the importance of the every-day difficulties so presented to man in his industrial avocations, the position of woman in the middle ranks renders it impossible for her to aid him in dealing with them ; and, assuming that the moral atmosphere of industry must continue of the importance it now possesses, no one can regard without alarm the prospect of woman remaining a stranger to it. So long as the condition of the middle ranks is industrial, the moral struggles we speak of are unavoidable ; they daily beset our movements, they have become in modern life the test of human character. It is no favour therefore to woman to exclude her from sharing in them ; by doing so we pay her no compliment, we do her no favour, we do not add to her happiness. There are some kinds of care and

trouble one would far rather share in, than see cankering in the minds of others; and of such sort are those we speak of,—nay, the imparting of them to woman would be a means of relieving her of many of the more unhealthful cares that now sour an unoccupied imagination. We cannot doubt that to permit woman to take part in the moral struggles that harass modern life, besides relieving the pressure of these struggles, would add much to the healthfulness, happiness, and nobility of her being.

But it is not on woman's account alone, that we must regret her want of power to aid in the struggle with the moral difficulties of industry;—the hardness and selfishness of our industrial morality, show that society is the greater loser. A separation of the sexes in an important walk of life, in a moral struggle tasking the whole faculties and energies, can be attended with no good. Our principles and our sensibilities stand in need of all the aids within our reach, and of none more than encouragement from sympathy, the support of affection, the teaching of woman's kindness, the shelter of home.

For example, in the middle classes, we might fairly expect that, were prosperity and adversity in business as much a matter of domestic solicitude, as well-known at home as it is in families of the working ranks,—bank-

ruptey would be less frequent and less serious than now. The sense of moral shame is greater in woman than in man ; and, in fair circumstances, her perception of justice and her desire to fulfil its requirements, are stronger. On the other hand, she is perhaps more ready than man to submit to the adverse decree of fortune ; to suit her mode of life to altered circumstances ; to quit, under the pressure of necessity, a higher station for a lower. All this, we say, may be fairly expected of woman ; but on one important condition :—that confidence be placed in her, that she be satisfied she knows all, knows the worst. With the present relation of the sexes—from feelings partly of mercy, partly of fear—woman is usually the last to whom the calamity of insolvency is broken. Ignorant of the world, and without the power (as is supposed) of rendering assistance—out of pity she is spared that stroke ; and her husband struggles on with the secret in his own breast. But fear also deters him ; a disclosure would precipitate the crisis, a woman of spirit could not bear to live or see her family live on false affluence. And yet it would be merciful to disclose it to her ; she would try to avert ruin by timely retrenchment ; she would save herself from the shame of rolling in her carriage at the expense of the poor, as too often she is allowed unconsciously to do ; she would not give her children a fashionable education at the expense of

destitution to the children of others; and if the worst should come, if retrenchment should be found of no avail, she would at least, by timeously encountering her fate, prevent the adverse stroke of fortune that has fallen upon her own family, from spreading like a pestilence—inveigling, and in one crash ruining it may be hundreds of families besides.

It is no ordinary courage that will bring a man to an early declaration of insolvency; he procrastinates till, from misfortune, his affairs become entangled in dishonesty. There is little to take the careless eye in the family who, to preserve honour, quietly give up a better style of living, take their sons and daughters from expensive schools, cease to entertain their great friends, retire into obscurity. But the father of that family is kind to his children, leaves them an inheritance of more value than gold. It has cost him perhaps a broken spirit and a disappointed life, it has brought to his children narrowed education and diminished resources; but an example has been set that will stamp itself on their character, honour has been done to the earth on which they live, a seed has been sown of good and truth.

We give these examples of the moral aspects of industry, and could touch on many more. Justice, prudence, care for the future happiness of our children, and such like sentiments, are all either learned by us



chiefly in industry, or are inseparably bound up with it in practice. But in these moral trials, so long as man stands alone, it is impossible for him to attain any great degree of success. There is wanting the influence of woman, not only in her warm desire that justice be done in the world ; but in that encouragement and support to the better principles of man, which her companionship in this important work is fitted to afford. The soldier when he fights alone, fights feebly, and gladly allows himself to be borne down ; but if he have a comrade with him, it is otherwise ; and the closer the tie with that comrade, the more manfully will the two stand out. It is so in all other contests or great efforts ; at least the majority of us are, in such circumstances, very dependent on aid from without. We struggle coldly and feebly if we stand alone, more especially in those moral conflicts where success brings physical evil not only on ourselves, but also on those whom we cannot ask to join us in the struggle.

At no period of life from youth upwards, ought the influence of the character of woman on that of man to be permitted to loose its hold. Her position should be such, that as a mother she may be able, in early years, to instil fitting principle and fitting spirit in the mind of her son ; and that she may be able, as a wife, to fan the

same flame at the homely fireside. Moral courage, honourable dealing, social duty, uprightness of character,—ought to be engrafted on the family affections; and the family affections ought in turn to cling round these virtues. Industry, we doubt not, will at last be recognised as the great battle-field of moral life; and in following the career there of the aged or of the young, the anxieties will tremble in the scale as they did of old, when the story of the fights of a British soldier reached his English home.

In speaking of the moral aspects of industry, we cannot but say a few words of the duties of one class of society to another. Landowners, tenants, villagers; manufacturers, artisans; professional men, merchants, apprentices; clerks; labourers; servants of all grades; the disabled, the unprotected, the poor, the profligate; and one age with another;—have all mutual duties, founded primarily, it may be, on their relation as human beings, but so interwoven with their industrial position as to be inseparable from it. Hitherto indeed the social relations have been only too much subordinated to industrial considerations. Be that as it may, the moral duties involved in the industrial relation of class to class, and in the intercourse of the individuals of the several classes, not only present many social problems yet unsolved, but are, and must always in practical life remain, a constant

source of care to every one endowed with a just, brotherly, and gentlemanly disposition.

But at present these relations are removed from the influence of woman's character; and are accordingly deficient in those elements usually considered as dependent on such influence. The intercourse of the several classes of society with each other is, for the most part, characterised by a hard selfish spirit—each class being regardless of the true well-being of the other, no matter how close the relation is in which they stand. Were the position of woman different, her influence, it may fairly be expected, would soften these relations; would introduce into them more justice and benevolence; would foster a better social feeling.

#### § 4.

Once more, the admission of women into the higher branches of non-domestic industry would tend to harmonise the general tone of society. In the individual there is required a certain unity of character, and a certain harmony of surrounding circumstances,—before the energies can be adequately developed, and the greatest happiness the individual is capable of, realised. It is the same with society. Each nation or race has a certain tone pervading its character and history, which

it cherishes with national pride, and which moulds generation after generation in the type of their ancestry. This heirloom people regard as the essence of their nationality, cherish as their distinctive characteristic, and rely on as a force that will bear them through all difficulties.

It is obvious that if the several elements of our character be incongruous, there can in the individual be little of this unity of tone; and in like manner, in the social state, what unity can be looked for if the two moieties of society are so far separated? If the attainments and the tastes of woman are so different from those of man, if her sentiments and opinions clash so with his,—the common elements of our national character, and of our national happiness, must be proportionally narrow.

The prevailing sentiment of society, in the middle classes of this country, may be said to be a certain desire for material comfort and for domestic quiet, with a respect for law and religion as guarantees of these desiderata. To that extent there is a national sentiment; it is our national taste, as sturdy enterprise characterises our national activity, and it is so far well; for material prosperity and domestic security are essential to a more perfect development. Nevertheless these are but the rudiments of social life; and ought not to blind us to our

deficiencies. Beyond the love of material comfort, there is at present no general desire after social happiness; beyond respect for law, there is at present no general tone of social sentiment; beyond charity to the poor, there is no tone of social kindness; beyond self-seeking, there is no social taste; beyond keeping right with our neighbours for the sake of self, there is little social principle.

It is desirable that our nationality be raised to a higher standard; that it should rest on higher social principles, that it should cherish more elevated sentiments, that it should aspire to more perfect social happiness, that it should express at once all that is best in the nature of man, and all that is best in the nature of woman. But this cannot be, so long as these are so far separated as they at present are, in education, interest, tastes and pursuits.

## CHAPTER III.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE RANKS—IN THEIR RELATION WITH DOMESTIC  
LIFE AND PRIVATE SOCIETY.

## § 1.

WHILE people generally admit that woman cannot, in present circumstances, participate in the movements of public life, or feel an interest in the struggles of industrial morality, or sympathise in the general progress of civilization, they fall back on the belief that there is much left in what is termed her peculiar sphere,—in the retirement of home, in household duties, in the companionship of her own sex, in the intercourse of private society. These, it is said, afford ample occupation for her time, and suffice to fulfil her desires. And, were the assertion just, there would be good reason to hesitate, whether we ought not to submit to the evils attending the want of woman's influence on public and industrial ongoings, rather than disturb what in other and even more important walks of life is already well. We shall not, however, have gone

far in our enquiry before we find that, great as is the happiness woman derives from domestic sources, that happiness itself is narrowed and embittered by the nature of her relations with the outer world. Of the comfort of an English home, even in its present state, there are few ready to quit hold; and we are not unprepared to abandon the innovations we press, did we believe they would interfere with it; but meantime it appears to us that, by increasing the culture and influence of woman, and by removing the barriers that at present separate the sexes in interests and pursuits, we should obviate much weary misery, and add much to the happiness even of domestic and private life. We believe that the truth of this is felt by none more keenly than by woman herself. Shut out from an interest in the progress of her race and her country, from an interest in the ongoings of public and industrial life, she has it all the more at heart to keep hold of home and private life; yet she feels, universally feels, that the poison of dissimilar education, dissimilar experience, dissimilar interests and pursuits, has penetrated even these sacred places. Let us trace the story of woman's domestic life, and judge whether it be not so.

In the nursery, the boy and the girl prattle and play together; but even already an invidious distinction is fomented, encouraging the strength and rudeness of man

to tyrannise over, and profit by the weakness and submissiveness of woman. Parents do not protect their little daughters from the rude humours of their brothers; and the little girl soon finds herself at a discount, retiring into comparative neglect, or, as the only means of joining in play with her spoiled brother, taking her place as his servant. A germ ever afterwards on the increase is thus early planted, of domineering selfishness in man; of dejection and want of development in woman. Nevertheless, in the education suited to this early stage, some amount of similarity prevails; the sexes are trained by the same *gouvernante*, and are taught the same prattle, and even in play more community is found than in the amusements of any subsequent stage of life.

In boyhood and girlhood the same companionship continues. They attend together the same schools, or at least they are trained in the same branches of instruction; they romp together, play their games together, enjoy the same outward life, and inwardly the same feelings.

As youth advances, however, separation begins. The girl now attends a school where instruction is imparted of a different kind from that reserved for the youth of the other sex;—they each begin to receive an education suited expressly to the careers for which they are respectively destined. They begin to have neither the same outward life, nor the same hopes, nor the same



pleasures. Their instruction diverse, they cannot understand each other well ; they can give little or no assistance one to the other ; they have fewer objects to interest them in common—their bonds of companionship are rapidly loosening.

The university comes, and the fate of woman is sealed. Debarred from an institution that has done so much for the youth of the other sex, woman sees her brother going forward step by step in his haughty career of knowledge and ambition ; she, left on her father's threshold, can but gaze after him, or turn back to weep. In general, the young people of families and social circles separate as they quit the nursery and common playground, and only meet to feel the need of each other, when old age or sickness leaves them no choice.

The home companionships of youth, the friendships of school and college days, how unlike other living ties ! They combined the pleasures of duty, of diligence, of amusement. The first blush of life was shared together ; and in after days, is there anything on earth like our meetings with those that have been our early friends ? Were the education of the youth of one sex more like that of the other than it is at present, pleasures such as these would be open to every member of a household. Years of tough diligence cheered on by a favourite sister, or by a favourite brother ; a joint sense of duty in accom-

plishing their daily tasks ; play, or other linked amusement, the more sweet and tender that the two have together sat long under the same tutorial restraint ; a loving rivalry ; the mutual enjoyment of victory over difficulties ; the delights of freedom when the anxiety of study is year after year thrown off at vacation, for the inspiring enjoyments of country life ;—all these might be the welcome inmates of every home, prized most indeed in memory when the years of study are long gone by, when the dryness of the world has parched the spirit, and we have learned in its long journey to find pleasure in meditating on the past, and to long for those oases in time when we meet with our early friends.

These fruits indeed might be universally realised, and there would be not a few instances where the consequences would be even more blessed ; when a devotion to spiritual life and the pursuit of truth, would be retained long after the ordinary years of education are over. For a brother and a sister to go mind in mind, hand in hand, over the elevated fields of knowledge, and through the deep tracks of experience, till the joys of close companionship change into the hallowed memory of the one that has passed into the grave, and the longing in the other to lie down in death too : who can express the feelings of such a relation ?

Is it necessary, in contemplating the riches of perfect companionship in youth, to go beyond the relationships of family ; to point to its influences where brotherhoods and sisterhoods of friendship, ties of the disposition and of the soul, are formed (as is most usual) beyond one's own family ? Or, where a relationship is begun in youth, that remains ever after as the closest tie of life ? Perfect companionship in youth, in circumstances where it can be the basis of an after relation, would need a novelist's pen to tell of it. And whether these youthful companionships lead to closer relationships in after life or not,—it cannot be doubted that they would add much to the general happiness of society, and to the experience each of us acquires, both of ourselves and of human nature ;—preparing us for the world, and at the same time yielding experience fitted to enrich that world many-fold.

While noticing the advantages of perfect companionship between the sexes in early life, the intrinsic excellencies of it, and the foundation it lays for future happiness, let us not forget one other effect it must produce—in its tendency to do away with the artificial and convulsive separation that now obtains between the sexes in the general intercourse of after life. If innocent, peaceful, and happy companionship were known to us from our youth up, there would in later years be less

risk of our being blinded by passion and imagination, or of having every ordinary draught of social communion immixed with misunderstanding and bitterness.\*

Education then begins that separation in the life of the sexes, which is consummated afterwards by divergence of interests and of pursuits. Beyond the mere rudiments of instruction, the systems under which the sexes are at present educated show little in common. While the one, as is well known, has for its chief object to give a knowledge of classical literature, and of the sciences, the other is marked by an elaborate training in etiquette and in personal accomplishments. The two systems correspond neither in the mental training aimed at, nor in the substance of the knowledge imparted. From the feeling that it is becoming a certain distance between the sexes should be maintained, approach to similarity of education is positively avoided; and the idea encouraged that the sphere before each is entirely distinct. Education, in place of preparing for the sexes a groundwork of

\* "It is a serious objection to present modes of education in both sexes, that nothing is done with the important aim of enabling them to understand each other, and work together harmoniously and trustfully in after life. There seems, however, to exist among us an awakening and extending conviction that something of this is necessary, and that the complete separation of boys and girls in their early education, while yet children, is a great mistake, and a source of infinite unhappiness."—*Communion of Labour*, Mrs. Jameson, p. 116.

common interest and of mutual understanding, is, as at present conducted, calculated directly to alienate them.

There is much more in the diversity of the education of the sexes in youth than may at first sight appear. The mind at that age attaches itself to peculiar modes of thinking and to peculiar objects of interest, and develops its characteristic impulses; and, as enthusiasm is then stronger and impressions more vivid than at any other period, our nature becomes firmly and habitually fixed, and it is difficult or impossible afterwards to change the current. The leading features of our character, the most absorbing expectations of our life are formed at that age; and, although after-experience may destroy or modify, it seldom replaces these. To a very considerable extent our nature is formed for life by our education, or during the years of which it is characteristic.

## § 2.

Passing from youth to womanhood, we find the evils of woman's position to culminate. Difference of education is not now the chief source of mischief; although, did no other exist, it would be very prejudicial. The evil is for the most part to be traced, in the vast mass of the middle classes, to *diversity of occupation*, giving rise to mental divergence so wide and deep, that in seven-

eighths of life the sexes are strangers to each other; much more so than if they belonged to different countries or races, or to ages of the world separated by a thousand years. It is not difference of disposition and nature we speak of, but difference in the objects of their interest, in the substance of their knowledge, in their experience, in their modes of thought, in their sentiments, in their tastes.

Take first the private intercourse of social life. Can it be denied that in it the happiness, both of man and of woman, is grievously hindered by this cause? Not only, as we have said, does difference of education divide them. Business occupation, and public movements, engulph the cares, the excitement, almost the whole mind of the stronger sex; and woman is left in the solitude of home. There is little or no time for social intercourse; and, when it does take place, it is stiff, shallow, and unsatisfying.

It would not be correct to apply these remarks to all ranks indiscriminately. Great is sometimes the distance between men and women of the higher ranks; yet these have many opportunities for close social intercourse, and for establishing friendships,—opportunities that are not found in the ranks immediately below them. There are many things done in the higher ranks in concert. Men have more leisure time to talk of their matters, and these

are commonly of a nature to be readily understood by their lady-relatives. The pursuits of the sexes are in a great degree similar. The elegant literature of our own and of foreign countries is known to both; both have pleasure in the fine arts, in music, dancing, painting, gardening. They are much in company together during walks, in pleasure excursions, at parties within doors, at the theatre. Both may take an interest in the people on their estates, in schools, &c. And, on the whole, despite the dissimilarity of their education, there is led, by the sexes in the higher ranks, so far as the elements we speak of are concerned, a life of mutual concert and happiness.

Compare with this the jagged social intercourse of the middle ranks. Among these we find few things pursued by the sexes in concert. Woman not being admitted to an acquaintance with business, even as an assistant, she is a stranger to the character, thoughts, and pursuits of those nearest and dearest to her; much more is she a stranger to the character and the thoughts of others.

Business occupation in the middle ranks tends very naturally to absorb the mind and care; since on it depend the status, the means of livelihood, the happiness, temporal and spiritual, of him that labours, and of those looking to him for support. Very properly, therefore, it

occupies the greatest place in his active life. But is it not plain that men so occupied cannot be *understood* by those who are unacquainted with the cares of business? When men mix in social life, they bring with them thoughts and feelings cast in the mould of industrial duties, an imagination tinged with the colouring of their active hours, a recollection filled with the daily incidents that have happened to them; their minds whetted with the bustle, freshness, importance of passing events; their spirits elevated or depressed with the result of their labours; and, on entering into their social circles, they meet in woman a being ignorant of all these things. Women, on the other hand, have been occupied as their position permits; they, too, have important things hanging on their minds, but of a nature totally different from what occupy men; and they, too, on entering into their social circles, meet in our sex a class of beings, who know little about them or their ways.

In the middle ranks, business occupies so much time, that little is left for other purposes. For this reason, it is seldom found that the sexes pursue their amusements in common, or cultivate their tastes in common, or, indeed, have any undertaking whatever in common. There are no idle days at the command of both, by which, as in the higher ranks, they would be forced into companionship.



It is absolutely necessary, however, in order that people enjoy each other's society, that they possess a certain depth of acquaintance with each other. It is absolutely necessary, as a general rule, that they be familiar with the cast of character, each of the other; that the objects that severally interest them be common to both; that the mode in which things of importance are severally regarded by them be common to both. And how in the middle classes can this desideratum be attained? As we have seen, man cannot in these classes lead the leisured life of woman; there is not *time* to idle away the day together; and the short hours during which the sexes can meet, are too limited to gain the end in view. How then can the desired mutual acquaintance be obtained? By woman *also* knowing that industry, by which all belonging to the middle classes live. Were woman familiarised with active life, both sexes would be already prepared for the communion of social hours; conversant with the same medium, they would meet already in a great measure known to each other.

We repeat it,—in order that in the middle classes men and women may meet with satisfaction and happiness in the general intercourse of social life, it is necessary that *both* have some direct acquaintance with practical life, that both in some degree undergo the influences of industrial occupation. It is only thus that, in the ranks

in question, one sex can understand the other; that the cast of their minds can sufficiently approximate. The barrier that now divides the sexes thus once broken down, there would be much to interest them in common, much that at social meetings would afford material for the interchange of views and sentiments, much that would afford objects toward the attainment of which both might give their exertion. We do not mean the topics, or aims of business merely; but rather those general interests of society or of individuals, to the understanding or the furtherance of which an acquaintance with the business world is a requisite; for, as we explained at so much length in our introductory chapter, the whole civilization of the middle ranks is based on industry—not less in its material aspects, than in its intellectual, moral, and social aspects. Sociality, therefore, in the middle classes, must be *the flower of industrial activity*. It is industrial activity that supplies the material conditions of existence; it whets the mind and stamps the disposition; it constitutes the medium of life; the medium in which every individual born to these ranks must live, and through which he must struggle. Never can the life, even the inner life of man be understood unless that medium be first known. The man or woman that knows not industry and the sweat of the brow, knows not life. To attempt in these

ranks to build up social joys except on an industrial basis, is to build a fabric on a false foundation. There must be joint or similar *activity*, before there can be mutual sympathy or joint happiness.

It is not meant that industry should be all in all to man or to woman; that it should swallow up their time and care; by no means. On the contrary, what we advocate must tend to abate that money-making spirit, and that absorption in business during all hours of the day, which mark the greater number of men in these times. For at present the want of real harmony in the sexes, the want of objects possessing for them a common interest, and at the same time a real worth, the want of common information, reflections, and tastes, drives man from private society, and even leads him to make the hours he spends at home as short as possible. He finds that it is only in the bustle of his business, to which after all he may have no great liking, he finds it is there only that he can get occupation for his mind. But were the sexes more on a par in experience and acquirements, this desertion of woman by her companion would in a great measure cease. Home and the society of women would cease to be insipid and tiresome; it would on the contrary have much to attract; would lead man back to a normal mode of living. The conditions of harmony, and mutual understanding, once

secured,—social intercourse would no longer be a squeezing out of drops of critical remark about the weather, or about passing events equally trivial; artificialities such as these would be replaced by easy sociality, and by the hearty interchange of sentiment on much commanding mutual understanding, and mutual sympathy—on much possessing a common interest and a real worth.

As matters at present stand, social intercourse must remain on an unsatisfactory footing. Indeed, for want of a better garb, it is almost universally driven to assume that of form and ceremony. These at present afford in society the chief means of spending time. People meet with little or nothing to say to each other; they are, as we have said, almost total strangers; seven-eighths of the life of the one half of society is inconceivable by the other; it is as if they belonged to different planets. Nevertheless, each wishes to save the other the awkwardness of saying and doing nothing; and, from the best motives, social meetings are filled from end to end with formality, with ceremony, with unprofitable and commonplace gossip.

To a mind of refined culture or of deep feeling, this crude state of social communion in the middle ranks, resulting from the wide separation of the sexes in education, interests, and pursuits,—is a source of galling

regret, even of despair. Both sexes desire social enjoyment, but are chilled by reserve or baffled by formality ; both would value peaceful and sincere friendships, but meet only the manœuvring of etiquette and the vapidities of common-place. No other communion seems at present possible—our best aspirations are denied. And what can be more disappointing, more life-disappointing, than for man and woman thus to meet day after day in the midst of our world of realities, and, though youth and life are fast fleeting, feel it impossible to pass one earnest word ? They meet like puppets, go through a few evolutions, according as the strings of fashion pull ; appear gay, and retire to their homes under the heaviness of despair.

You say, Why do not those that feel the evil break down these barriers of formality, and in place of chattering vain common-places, and lispings meaningless phrases of ceremony, speak out their proper thoughts, and give utterance to their proper feelings ? Just so, but what were gained by the attempt ? For at bottom it is a real accordance in experience, in interest, and in judgment, that is a-wanting : *that* must be supplied before the attempt can prosper ; and, in the meantime, we fear, the more probable issue of the too ardent adventure, has been to give rise to some fatal misconception turning all into wormwood. We do not mean

that the improvement of social intercourse is impossible, but only that, in the present state of opinion, and under the present arrangements of social life, the beau ideal of it is rarely attainable. And so, after a little instinctive bashfulness at the outset, or after some painful blunder, one and all ultimately submit to social reunions of every kind in a mood of distant reserve, clothed now in silence, now in ceremonious phrase. These reunions would indeed be entirely deserted, were there any substitute of a more agreeable kind; but, that not being forthcoming, social feeling still wanders, like a ghost, among these simulacra, among these skeletons of social life. Perpetual solitude, or moping at home, is neither healthy nor, indeed, tolerable.

We have not yet done. The prospect becomes more and more anxious when we reflect, that it is in such a state of social intercourse that acquaintanceships are formed that afterwards become permanent ties of life. It is in this state of social intercourse we say, where people are really strangers to each other, as if they belonged to different planets, that ties of love and engagements of marriage spring up. And can it be otherwise than that in the circumstances the grossest errors are committed, and the foundation laid of much unhappiness?

From what does friendship spring? From accordance of nature. From what does marriage spring? From

a fascinating manner or a taking look! The present state of social intercourse renders it utterly impossible in the general case to realise any deeper bond, any truer affinity; and, on the other hand, the same cause prevents the timely dispelling of those first illusions of accordance, — bred of fond fancy, and a kindly glance. Each sex unknown to the other, each incapable of conceiving the nature of seven-eighths of the life of the other, how can the character or the mind be judged of, more especially when the forms of society so blindly circumscribe and impede their intercommunion?

We repeat it: the unhappy state of society we speak of *cannot* be replaced, till the education of the sexes be assimilated; till they have the means of attaining a real knowledge of each other; till they occupy themselves with the same or similar pursuits; till they live in a medium of common interest and of combined activity; till they have a similar acquaintance with the business world, a like interest in public life, and both a knowledge of, and a share of influence on, the general movements of mankind. Till this be, there will remain an unnatural separation of the two prime elements of society; depriving society of its finer vitality, and leaving the power of growth only to a money-getting spirit, and other rude springs of character.

Another feature of society in its present condition is,

that men have come to look down on woman,—regarding her as something inferior to them, as unworthy to put a word into their counsels, and even nursing a resentful aversion to any woman who shows she feels the unfairness of her position. The conviction may not be openly acknowledged, but it is silently acted on. Woman feels she stands at a distance from man; and even at home that distance is painfully felt. She watches with all the sensibilities of her nature if her presence is considered out of place; and on the slightest indication that it is so, she does not fail to withdraw. But the reality of her banishment is none the less, that, from gentle manners, she forbears to intrude where she feels that her presence is not wanted.

It is true, woman *does* receive a certain sort of deference in social life; she is even termed its “idol.” But what kind of idol? What is the worship paid her? She has “room” made for her in public places; men hold themselves bound to pay her “attention” at private parties, to talk to her, to assist her in trifles. She is petted at home, and placed in the midst of ceremony abroad. All this, however, is but mockery; an attempt to cheat woman of her due, by presenting her with shining beads; tithe is paid her of “mint, and anise, and cummin”—the weightier matters of the law being forgotten. It is but an equivocal compliment to woman



that man should treat her like a doll he is in constant fear of breaking ; that he should be ashamed to appear to her anything but a trifle ; that he should so seldom speak to her naturally and truthfully.

And woman's influence on society, to what does it amount? She has power over *appearances*; she has power over little else; she can make men obedient, and she can make them hypocrites; but she has little influence over the mind and the character:—and the reasons we have given. Look at the small power woman has to make society virtuous; meaning by that word, chaste. While the poor girl that falls, is hunted down till she is driven into the dirt of the public pavement, the more guilty offender is among the honoured, nay, is almost flattered the more. There is something wrong here; but we do not so much blame woman, as her position. Woman *dare not* at present resent this horror; she is too dependent on man; has too little influence on his nature. And yet how thorough is her hold of appearances! how strictly in accordance with propriety is every word uttered in her drawing-rooms! Woman can make man, when in her presence, obedient and a hypocrite; he submits to avoid trouble, as it were—does he do more?

One other remark. The stiffness and reserve between the sexes, in the middle ranks, brought about by the separation of their education, of their daily interests

and pursuits, cause young men to undervalue women of their own rank ; and, finding little pleasure in their society, little room for the natural flow of impressions and feelings, they seek such vent elsewhere ; in the more unrestrained and artless intercourse of a lower rank, or in the ruder companionships of their own sex. If young men and young women of the middle ranks had more the means of forming friendships one with another, it would be better for society in many ways. If a man esteem female character in his own rank, is it not more likely that he will respect it in an inferior rank ? At present a man fails to find a true companion among women of his own status ; and, believing them less capable of such companionship than with all their disadvantages they really are, he treats one class with injustice, and is tempted to wrong another still more deeply. .

## CHAPTER .IV.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE RANKS—IN THEIR RELATION WITH DOMESTIC  
LIFE AND PRIVATE SOCIETY—(*continued*).

## § 3.

IN married life, the separation of the sexes in interests and in character is even more felt than before; for, now, romance and imagination have been put to the closest test of reality, and it is the substantial accordance of nature that can alone give permanent happiness.

We have seen that prior to marriage there is, under present social arrangements, little or no possibility of the sexes attaining a harmonious culture: are the chances of attaining such a culture increased by marriage? Undoubtedly they are; but the improvement comes somewhat behind time, and after all is not in itself very perfect. It is undeniable that in many respects the interests of husband and wife are the same; but it is equally undeniable that, while up to the time of marriage their interests were totally unlike, they still,

in a great measure, continue so. Not only has the nature of each been already fully formed and stiffened into habit for the rest of life, but there is still the long absence of man from home during the day; there is still the impossibility of woman interesting herself in her husband's occupation, in public affairs, or in social movements; and there is still the incompatibility of her mental culture and attainments with his mental culture and attainments. She is left unoccupied and lonely during the day; she is shut out from the sphere in which man spends the chief portion of his reflective and active life; she is unable to follow, even in fancy, the movements and enjoyments in which he takes part. An impenetrable veil conceals from her the pursuits, the ambitions that fill his mind; and when, bringing his cares home with him, he plods over his difficulties by the fire-side, can she, even then, assist him?

Marriage then neither heals the discordance in the mental life of the sexes, nor does it in any considerable degree remove the cause of that discordance. The remedy, such as it is, comes too late to undo the evil of a system of education that purposely cast the mind of each sex in a mould so different from the other. The grounds on which they reason and judge are still incompatible. Their intelligence still remains unequal, and no care can *now* mend the inequality. Their ideas of right and

wrong are still unlike; for they have not lived, nor do they yet live in the same moral world. Their tastes are still different, for they have no common occupation or pursuit; each lives in opinions, in fancies, in desires, of his or her own.

It may be true that diversities in character and opinion, when more in form than in substance, rather add pleasure and piquancy to our relations in life, than do them real injury. But there is a limit to this; and when they are carried beyond moderate bounds—when they are in substance more than in form—when, as it were, the diversities of the day cannot be made up in the evening, both starting fair again after each accounting,—there must remain a permanent and fundamental want of concord.

In <sup>THE</sup> last chapter we saw in what medium marriage engagements are usually formed; that social intercourse for the most part consists of common-place talk and ceremonious etiquette; that there is no common ground on which the sexes can obtain a mutual acquaintance with each other, no common education, no common pursuit, no common interest; that neither has the means or the opportunity to judge of the mind and character of the other; that form and ceremony keep them apart, and for want of better stuff fill the time with conventionalities and trivialities. But here as elsewhere Cupid must play

his part. With a sweet lip, a glancing eye, a bounding step, or a hearty word, a lady soon finds an admirer; and, after a year or two of flirtation and small talk, the attachment duly ends in marriage. But flirtation, chit-chat, and compliment are kept up between them to the last hour. Such is the staple of love-making alone possible in the present state of society; what else can such strangers to each other talk of, even on the marriage eve? And when marriage has come, and ball-room chit-chat is of no more use, why, then, there is dining out and giving of dinners, visiting and receiving of visits, a few walks together, at least at first, new dresses, new acquaintances, gossip, billing-and-cooing: and this is the sum of marriage bliss, as it may be put in the appraisal nine cases out of ten.

Obviously, therefore, in the usual case, there is in marriage little room for growth of character, for development of intellect, for the pursuit of individual tastes. It is all very well for those possessing neither tastes, nor opinions, nor ambitions of their own; and whose ideas of the happiness of marriage do not go beyond its comforts and its convenience; but to such as possess some talent, or some taste, or some marked point of character—that it is a gratification to put to use and a disappointment to deny—it does seem essential that their most constant companion should be able to appreciate it. The

more marked the character, the greater the talent, the higher the ambition, this craving for sympathy must be the stronger; and the failure to find it the more disappointing. To attain the desired unity, a fitting choice is not enough, for that is necessarily limited: the way must be prepared by unity of the sexes in their education, and by unity in their aim of life. It is a bold assertion, but it may be hazarded, that if there is an intellectual quality, or an accomplishment, or a trait of character that more than another distinguishes a man among his acquaintances, the person least likely to appreciate it is too often his wife—his closest companion; and on the other hand, those peculiarities most marking the individuality of women in their maidenhood are truly so little valued by man, that after marriage they are allowed gradually to die out.

In a word, the lifelong separation of the sexes in their judgments, tastes, and pursuits, renders true sympathy, a true union of mind and spirit, next to impossible. They cannot study together the same books, nor think together the same thoughts, nor labour together with the same aim, nor worship together the same ideal; and not only is this higher union impossible, but the individual development of each is likewise exposed to serious check—the character, the talent, the ambition that each cherished before they met, now finds

itself in an unsuitable atmosphere, and dies off. Want of sympathy at home paralyses us. The aspiration of the poet, the eagerness of the politician, the ambition of the student, the virtue of the patriot,—are in domestic life too often damped, quenched, extinguished; and, on the other side, the girl's dream of companionship, her desire to think and feel with her husband in all that might occupy his mind, or move his heart, or fill his soul,—how is that dream dissipated—how impossible does she find its fulfilment to be!

And so husband and wife, to have any comfort at all, soon see the necessity of moderating the expectations they had cherished in former years, before experience taught them how incompatible the culture is in which, in accordance with the mistaken notions of society, they were severally trained. Their dreams of perfect unity must be abandoned—enough if they live together in ordinary domestic comfort. Their individual tastes and ambitions must either be given up entirely (and woman's usually are thus laid on the shelf); or, when not so given up, must be gratified without the other's participation, as the ambitions of man are gratified—away from home—in the regions of business and politics.

It cannot be maintained, indeed, that there are absolutely no elements of mutual understanding and mutual sympathy in the domestic life of the middle classes. Far



from it. There are certain bonds that must arise wherever people live together. Family attachment, friendship; family duties, offices of kindness; passing incidents, present, each in their degree, common objects of interest, and are the source of common sentiment. But, on the other hand, it may safely be asserted, that the common ground on which, in these ranks, the sexes meet, is confined to such homely matters; and, satisfactory and solid as these are, so far as they go, there is still much wanting. The simple fact of living in amity under the same roof is in no way inconsistent with the greatest want of mental fitness. There may be neither strife, nor aversion; there may even be much affection; yet there may be wanting that more perfect relation characterised by unity of thought, of taste, of moral feeling. Under present social arrangements, the concord, the mutual sympathies of a family cannot extend beyond the common-places of domestic life. Nevertheless, good sense and good feeling suffice to preserve a certain tone of happiness; for instinctively it is reckoned foolish to risk domestic quiet by vainly straining after a higher standard. People thus make the best of their circumstances, to preserve peace and comfort; practising a mutual compromise of principles and hopes, and maintaining a calm reserve on all but common-place subjects. Serious topics are above all avoided, for each fears the

other will not have the same views on them. Is it not the fact that even on religious matters there is, in general, a fatal want of accordance between man and woman? Man, though maintaining a respectable form of church-going, is, for the most part, practically irreligious; and woman, finding little to satisfy her in this world, and fleeing for rest to a world to come, breaks her heart that her husband will not follow her. How awful—yet how humane—is the silence that is maintained in some families on the subject of religion; unfeeling is he that would wantonly break it.

Nor, in the present relation of the sexes, can either have a real influence on the mind of the other. It is true that, wherever there is affection, there is abundant readiness to meet the wishes, and minister to the happiness of the object of that affection; and in married life there is no want of anxiety to please in this way. But anxiety to please is quite another thing from mental influence. Each may form wishes on grounds that with the other carry little weight, the ideas and feelings of each may run in their peculiar currents, and the other may find pleasure in gratifying these simply from affection. But it is not such little exactions and services of love, pretty as they sometimes are, that we value most; without a deeper harmony of mind, they are a poor support to companionship. What is wanting is the real

influence of mind on mind, founded on intellectual aptitude and congenial taste—the influence that the mind of the master has on the mental development of the pupil, the influence that a companion has on the emotional character of his friend. In the relation of man to woman, there is not an influence of reason on reason; there is no spontaneous reaction of views and sentiments; no true companionship of mind and spirit. It is desirable to replace these wants by a more satisfactory intercommunion. It is desirable that the interests, the cares, material and moral, the difficulties, the sentiments and views, the pains and pleasures, of the one, be such as can be thoroughly known by the other; that true advice can be given by the one to the other (which cannot be, unless the perplexities of each are mutually understood); that the views and sentiments of the one have a spontaneous and rational influence on the other, not an influence merely of *will* or *wish*; that the one find in the other true companionship in mind and heart.

We have said that the greater part of man's time is spent from home; that woman cannot follow him in the exciting pursuits of the day; that she has no interest in his cherished aims; that she is a stranger to his thoughts and to his life. There is only left, then, to woman those hours when man seeks the quiet of home, fatigued with care, excitement, and even amusement.

There at last woman meets him ; when the strain and worry of business have spent the force of the mind, when there is not energy left even for a newspaper. Then home, and home society is sought.

Fortunately, in the few hours so given to woman of the home-companionship of man, she has an opportunity of doing that service which before all others her feelings prompt her to,—to cheer the jaded spirits of one she loves. Were it otherwise her life would be most miserable ; but the welcome she gives to the short hours spent by man within her home, the happiness she feels in tending him and in soothing his annoyances, are not of *his* giving. They are the outpourings of her own affection. Man joins her company, only when his spirits fit him for nothing else.

Without seeking to disparage the enviable *rest* of home hours, surely the companionship of woman deserves to be held in higher regard than this treatment would imply. If woman were made more the companion of man in the pursuits of life than now she is, even the joys of that *rest* would be much enhanced. For the twilight happiness of home, the restful mood by one's own fireside, is not a stolid sleep of body and mind ; but a gentle and meditative flow of the imagination, brooding over matters of the heart affecting us nearly ;—garnering each night the treasures of the day's existence. The

richer the mind and life, therefore, the richer is this harvest; the more pleasant is this brooding over its wealth; and, far from an elevation of our regard for woman and an improvement in her position disturbing the satisfaction of home rest, either to her or to man, they will much enhance it to both.

After what has been said, it is not surprising that in the middle ranks, more than in any other, children to a married woman are a most welcome gift. In her children, if in nothing else, does she find an object for her care during the long day; in these, if in nothing else, is there a common object in which the interest of both parents may be centred. Their arch looks and amusing prattle, their pleasant call for a smile, their silent engrossment with a toy, their serious present to you of a grain of sand, their interminable questions, the hilarity of their mirth; anon, their education, their training; the conflict with wiles and mischiefs besetting their little hearts; their own little struggles of conscience and affection; the mother's pride in the manliness of her boy, in the grace of her daughter; in all these, and in all the talking about these, not to speak of innumerable cares and anxieties about the health and the many little wants of children—can woman look with confidence for the interest and the sympathy of her husband.

It were barbarity itself to mock these sacred ties. Our children have our love, and our constant care. Their culture is our most cherished aim, and their graces are our most cherished pride. But we do say that not even the gift of children can remedy the sad blank of want of true mental companionship betwixt husband and wife—a want that itself prevents a combination of their best abilities for the training of these children. If the views of parents are so different, if their tastes and principles have so little in common, it is impossible in the education of their offspring to realise any uniform standard—a standard in which both would find the best aspirations of their nature expressed. Both, we said, are interested in the welfare of their children,—but to realise that welfare each must draw schemes from a mode of life that is unknown to the other. The mother goes to her school-days, the father to his; but these school-days have little or nothing in common; the mother goes back to the sources whence she imbibed her ideas of the world; but these are not the same with the teachings that experience has given to man. So father and mother at last content themselves with bringing their children through the ordinary routine education in the A B C and good manners.

Nevertheless a mother's life is one of the greatest importance, and abundantly fills both her hands and her

heart. One thing is clear—open non-domestic industry to woman when you please; but the duties of the mother of a family are quite enough for her; the mother finds at home labour sufficient to occupy her time to the full.

As, in the social intercourse of unmarried life, the isolation of the sexes deprives the character of man of the tempering influence of the character of woman; as his early affectionateness of nature is thus neither encouraged nor gratified, and his disposition, in consequence, tends to become hardened and oftentimes dissolute; so, in married life, the distance that woman has in the mean time been left behind, reacts on man almost with equal severity. For on marriage, if he would not entirely set at nought the claims of his wife to some share of his society, he must for her sake forego many cherished pursuits into which she cannot enter with him: for her comfort he must give up much of his ambition, and many of his tastes; for her comfort he must sometimes sacrifice his opinions and even his consistency of character.

“Those who are so careful that women should not become men, do not see that men are becoming what they have decided women should be; are falling into the feebleness which they have so long cultivated in their companions. Those who are associated in their

lives, tend to become assimilated in character. In the present closeness of association between the sexes . . . (for the improvement in the moral sentiments of mankind and increased sense of the consideration due by every man to those who have no one but himself to look to, has tended to make home more and more the centre of interest), . . . men cannot retain manliness unless women acquire it. From a man of twenty-five or thirty after he is married, an experienced observer seldom expects any further progress in mind or feeling.”\*

For a like reason, woman has no means of keeping up the independent nurture of *her* mind. For two people to enjoy each other's companionship for life, *one* must not go to sleep; but what else is really done when a woman on marriage lets drop the accomplishments, gives the go-by to the companionships of her maidenhood, and buries herself in her new home? This soon tells; what with the jealous selfishness of man, and the ready submission of woman, woman's character loses its buoyancy and point; a new day is no longer a new day to her; her nature finds little to develop it; her husband and she do not now, day after day, meet to lay fresh life at each other's feet: so home becomes somewhat dull, the spirits and the energies sink; and, although man by en-

\* Westm. Rev., July, 1851, pp. 303-306.



grossment in business may shake off the lethargy, it presses heavily on the happiness of woman.

#### § 4.

Such is woman's adult life: does the comfort of her position improve in declining years?

The answer very much depends on the circumstance, whether her lot has been cast in the midst of a family, or in a home more or less solitary. It is of the former case only we have to speak in the present chapter, and *there* we in general find, that advancing age does bring a change for the better.

As age advances (and the same takes place in the premature age of sickness), man loses hold of the great world of industry and public action, and becomes more an inmate of home. His faculties have dulled, his activity is slackened, he falls from out the number of his boon-companions; repose and a restful home become more and more grateful to him. On the other hand, with advancing life, woman, despite the unfavourable circumstances of her position, has accumulated experience. Thus, in the vale of years, a close approximation takes place between the sexes; it is then only, indeed, as a general rule, that they begin to find support each in the other, that they become true but now feeble companions.

In addition to this, a marked change in pecuniary comfort usually takes place about this time in a family of the middle ranks ; for it is now that the industrial success, or want of success, of the head of the family begins to tell ; and henceforth they have to spend an existence, either decidedly more comfortable or decidedly less comfortable, than that they have hitherto led ; in either case, there is induced a much closer intercommunion than before ;—for joint success and joy bring people close together ; still more so do joint adversity and distress.

In advanced years, then, man's duties and ambition no longer drag him along a path woman cannot follow. Woman has, at the expense of a lifetime, insensibly accumulated at least sufficient experience to enable her to understand much of her husband's past life. The meekness of spirit attending a frail old age, the gentle affection of declining life, permit man to understand better the tender-heartedness of woman ; and his disappointments in life open his eyes to her self-devotion. For the first time since childhood, do they meet again as true companions ; their affections, their reflections, their tastes, their experience, and the little activity they yet claim, being once more really wedded together.

Since childhood ? And they are now entering on their last childhood. It is so : it is only on the verge of

dissolution that the approach takes place. And is this enough? The dawn of boyhood and girlhood, the evening of age—must it be only then that man and woman may meet as companions and friends? Can it not be, too, in the morning of youth—in the blue day of manhood—in the dusty and parched tracks of active life?

In old age, then, and on the decay of health, there is in general a short change for the better in the relation of the sexes in domestic life, despite the peevishness that is sometimes the attendant of those years. It is to be remarked, however, that the longer life's vigour is kept up, the shorter will be the twilight intercommunion ushering in the grave.

### § 5.

We have reserved to the close of this chapter the inquiry, whether the exclusion of woman from industry hurts her power of forming friendships with others of her own sex.

There is to be remarked a greater beauty in the companionship of girls, than in that of boys. Something inexpressibly sweet has made the friendships of girlhood its own. Like the gentle light of the Pleiades, they fascinate the soul. Yet, somehow, on the approach

of womanhood, the charm breaks; after the age of maturity, it is the friendships of men that, like the greater constellations, shine forth on the solitudes of the earth, silent and touching; while the friendships of women are lost among the scattered and markless stars.

Why is this? It cannot be that the impulses of woman have become less warm, nor can it be that the affections of sex have usurped the place of friendship; for warmth of heart in woman increases with her years, and womanly affection, far from destroying, reacts on and deepens all else within her that is tender and good. The change is really attributable to that change in circumstances and position, which woman finds she must undergo on passing from girlhood. If in man the friendships of youth seldom die, it is because those friendships continue to be alimeted by frequent incident, by common pursuits, by uninterrupted intercourse. But it is different with woman; the pursuits she enjoys in common with others of her own sex, the uninterrupted freedom of companionship, cease with school-days and girlhood; her friendships in after years find neither aliment, nor opportunity of enjoyment. And as friendship is the combustion of life with life,—the richer life is, the stronger the flame; the poorer life is, the poorer, in the general case, must friendship be.

Most men are so selfish, that they either directly forbid the freedom of woman's movements, or else they render it by persecution so disagreeable, as practically to gain the same end. So jealous are they of her time, so exacting of her services (which they consider to be all theirs), that the idea of a woman finding pleasure any where else than at home, is instinctively detestable. The obnoxious attempt is persecuted with a querulousness, none the less biting that it is indirect: and by constant annoyance and discouragement it is at last stifled. A succession of attacks on the delicacy of the mind will wear out the energy both of action and resistance: and, though the friendships of woman with woman are as necessary to her happiness as any other relation, they gradually fall off, and are replaced by the wearying fashion of "morning-calls," a fashion that can be compared only to those other social abortions—great dinner-parties and stiff balls.

Exacting as home jealousy is, it is surpassed by that of public remark, when turned on the movements of a woman who in any way attempts to enjoy a rational degree of freedom and of social activity. There are many important duties that even now fall to women as a class—duties as responsible and difficult as they are of consequence to society—for example, the early education of children, domestic economy, and the care of age

and sickness. Yet the jealousy with which women are regarded, both at home and by society at large, is such that they can take no proper means for fitting themselves to perform these duties well. They are prevented from acting as a *class*—they are kept at home, as if they could there learn everything requisite to make home comfortable. By this means each individual is in a great measure left to herself and chance, to acquire the information necessary to enable her to fulfil, with advantage to others, or satisfaction to herself, that part in life even now so grudgingly allowed her; but of this more hereafter.

It is needless to add, that these evils would disappear with the industrial and educational disabilities under which woman at present labours.

## CHAPTER V.

POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE RANKS, WITH RESPECT TO  
EDUCATION AND INDIVIDUAL CULTURE.

## § 1.

IN this and the following chapter we purpose to consider the effects operated in the middle ranks on the individual life of woman, by her exclusion from the higher branches of non-domestic industry; and, as introductory to the subject, it is not improper to allude for a moment to the education she in these ranks at present receives.

The general scope of the education of women according to the recognised system, has been already alluded to; it aims at an elaborate training in personal accomplishment; and is as far removed as it could well be from the scope of the education reserved for the other sex. The instruction open to the sexes in common does not extend beyond the first rudiments of knowledge; and from the higher branches of a thorough education woman is excluded. In a former chapter we dwelt on the social evils

flowing from the diversity thus introduced in the education of the sexes; we now turn our attention to the injuries woman is individually subjected to, by being shut out from the most important branches of knowledge and the most efficient means of mental training. We cannot conceive any part of what for a man is good and thorough education, but is calculated to improve a woman. By denying it to her, we diminish her resources for personal culture, render her a stranger to the past and present history of the mind, deprive her of much intellectual delight, and lower her position in the general intercourse of life.

There is no good reason (for example) why women should not be taught natural science—the laws of external and organic nature. Without a knowledge of these the universe is but a pretty patchwork of stars, houses, and green fields; and, as science has been reared up by the accumulated labour of the great, we are, without a knowledge of it, cut off from a most important department of the history of the human mind, and to us, great names can but tingle in the ear. Without a knowledge of it, the very genius of modern life cannot be understood; for, as may be said, modern life is based on the discoveries of natural science. Without it we are excluded from acquaintance with simple and universal laws, and from practice in the simplest, clearest, and



most certain of all reasoning ; and, seeing the multitude of agencies around us, that without a knowledge of it are left unexplained,—the mind is tempted to undervalue accurate knowledge of every sort, and to regard a search after exact truth as foolish and even impious. Without it we cannot know our relation with the external world, the conditions of our existence, the limit of our powers. From no great department of human knowledge can we be excluded with impunity ; the want of any part renders other knowledge imperfect or impossible ; and in particular it is impossible to master the higher principles of truth, till its simpler and more easy forms have become familiar. The want of elementary training in reasoning, within the simplest and most general branches of human knowledge, is a very manifest defect of female education ; and to it is attributable much of the desultory character of the accomplishments of women, and the difficulty they afterwards find in any long-sustained effort of mind.

If there is no good reason why women should be excluded from instruction in the sciences of external and organic nature, still less ought they to remain strangers to classical literature and the mental and social sciences. By the former we are introduced to the works of men of an early age, to whom we owe the large half of our civilization ; a comparison with whom indeed is fitted at

once to humble and instruct us, as well as bind us to them in reverence and affection. The claim to admit women to education in the moral and social sciences is more urgent still. From the mental constitution of woman much may be expected for the future progress of moral and social science, provided only education gave her an early acquaintance with it, and by an adequate preliminary training, fitted her for the search after exact truth. Her disposition and taste prompt her to take an interest in all inquiries where human nature is the subject of study, or where we are not led too far away from the immediate concerns of human life. Looking to those departments of literature in which alone it has hitherto been possible for woman to succeed, we trace this ardent desire for knowledge of the human mind, this eagerness to pierce the mysteries of social destiny. How much would the interest of woman in that subject be enhanced, and her ability to solve those problems increased, if she could bring with her that patience and exactness of reasoning, that knowledge of method, that sense of the importance of exact scientific truth, and of the difficulty of attaining it,—in a word, that preparation afforded only by a course of careful training, by a thorough education. With her present preparation, when tempted to philosophise on abstruse subjects, she is soon confused by their complexity, or is misled by superficial fancies,

the truth or worth of which her education affords her no means of testing. It would of itself be a sufficient reason for the introduction of women to a study of the sciences of external and organic nature, that they would thereby be prepared to enter on a study of the higher sciences. At present there is not one woman in a thousand whose education enables her to read a scientific book on any subject whatever.

It will be said that the generality of men suffer as much from deficient education as women do, comparatively few even of the former receiving a high course of instruction. This is to some extent true; nevertheless, the rank in which man receives a superior education to that of woman is large and important; and it has also to be considered, that education is even of more moment to a woman than to a man—she has so much more time on her hands, and her external relations give her so little facility for making up deficiencies by social intercourse. Besides, there is now a general desire to introduce instruction in science in a suitable form into all education, particularly in those schools which, when left, the pupils leave for good, to mix in active life. In this movement, so fraught with importance and in time so certain to succeed, there is great need to keep in mind that woman as well as man ought to participate in the benefit.

The present system of educating one sex alone in the

higher branches of instruction is sufficiently suicidal, for it leaves small motive to maintain proficiency in that instruction in after life. With the monkish ecclesiastics of olden times it did not matter much whether women could talk Latin or not; but in our day a college-bred man mixes in general society, and lives with other companions than brother monks. Knowledge, however, loses half its value if we cannot turn it to account, if we cannot share it with those with whom we live; and to this, doubtless, is attributable the very common neglect in adult life of the accomplishments acquired by either sex during education. My own Greek, my wife's French, my son's chemistry, my daughter's geography and history, all go for nothing; because not one accomplishment is common to two of us: so I have forgotten my Greek, and my wife her French—we never spoke either after leaving school; my son's prize exhibitions I fear wound up his chemical brilliancy, and his sister is just taking to crochet. It never occurs to us but that all this is as it ought to be, we do not miss a family communion we never had; but I somehow think that we should have been happier, and should have had a more cheerful home, had the accomplishments of our school-days found some response and encouragement after we left school and were married; had we been able to keep up our early acquirements; had an assimilation of the education of man and

woman secured that our cherished intellectual tastes would throughout life be prized by our families as by ourselves.

Is it necessary for us to say more on the benefits of education? In stinting the measure of it we give to woman, could we more effectually cripple her resources? To her, with her present education, a great part of the literature of the country, a still greater part of the literature of the world,—and of each the most valuable part—is utter darkness. In the society of the learned, she is as a child; she can take no interest in the development and progress of thought. She can never know the life of the student. Be her faculties as competent as they may, what are they without training, without preparation? Nay, even on ordinary topics her words have but a secondary weight. And the solitude she enjoys—those moments when, in the stillness of thought, light comes to direct our path; when the best instincts of our nature, freed from external disturbance, point like the magnet to the course we ought to follow; when the soul gathers round it all it loves and cherishes, and rises from the altar strong to do its duty; solitude that has a happiness of its own, and has the charm of doubling all other happiness—what is it without a well-stored mind? Solitude without education is but drowsiness and sleep.

On the whole, woman ought to be, more than she at present is, a common denizen of the moral and mental world; have full and free access to all resources open to our race where the soul can find food and satisfaction.

## § 2.

Since education is closely allied to active life, for which it is a most important preparation, the preceding remarks cannot be foreign to our subject; we now, however, revert to considerations more directly connected with industry; and in the first place would notice, that the exclusion of women of the middle ranks from non-domestic employment, entails upon them those evils attending want of regular occupation.

There are some five or ten important years in the life of every one, when the want of a definite object or purpose in life is most prejudicial. No matter what turn a woman's fortune may afterwards take—if, for any considerable time between the age of fifteen and twenty-five, there happen to be no very decided duty to occupy the time—the growth of character will receive a check from which it is impossible afterwards to recover. It is during this period that the character forms. If a

woman do not then learn that there is something serious in life, that it is not to be fritted away in indolence or vanity, no amount of responsibility will afterwards teach her the lesson. If she do not then undergo the discipline of realities, and learn to govern her mind, she will never afterwards be mistress of herself, or know her place in the world. If, during these years she find no encouragement to the growth of independence, energy, and consistency (which can only be afforded from the mind having a fixed object of endeavour, some development to work out, some duty to perform), the time is missed when alone these elements of character can be planted; and the remainder of life is marked by aimlessness, by a sense of misdirected and disappointed effort, by weakness of body and mind.\*

At the period of transition from youth to womanhood, the want of some definite occupation is more or less felt by most women of the middle ranks; with many it continues through life; and its injurious effects are the

\* "Why are women devoured by *ennui*? Because they know nothing. Why are others coquettish, capricious, vain? Because they know nothing. Why will one spend on a jewel the price of her husband's labour for a month? Why does she ruin him by debts that she tries to conceal? Why does she drag him about to fêtes that weary him? Because she knows nothing. Because her mind has been nourished by no serious idea. Because the world of intelligence is closed to her. Therefore it is that she flies to the world of vanity and dissipation."—*Passage from Legouvé's Histoire Morale des Femmes. Translated in West. Rev., July, 1850.*

source of much unhappiness. No lot in life could have less of object than that of many women. They have no family to care for, no occupation to turn to—even social intercourse is not to them available to fill the blank they feel. The deficiencies of their education prevent them from taking an interest in literature; politics are equally closed against them. Self-imposed missions of charity are their only resource.

Destructive as is the want of definite occupation to the health and the faculties of young women while, during the best years of youth, they sit waiting for a settlement in life; it is still more calamitous to the woman of mature years, who—on failing to find such a settlement—must now mope for the better half of life in absolute solitude, with no object on earth to interest her, with no duty to call forth a purpose, without an incident to break the hideous monotony that weighs upon her to suffocation. Her faculties are rendered useless, her impulses are ungratified, her hands are unfilled, her mind is unoccupied—hers is a life without vitality. Such, we blush to say it, is the lot of the unmarried among women of the middle ranks. In vain we now speak to her of crochet work or worsted sewing; these she has outgrown, is sick of to nausea; of visiting prisons and Magdalen asylums, she has found the hopelessness of redeeming the out-



casts there,—or at least has found that she, untrained to such a task, can by desultory interference only do harm: a few religious meetings, the distribution of a shilling or two of alms to some deserving pensioner, afford positively all the interest left her in the world. And what a destiny is this for a woman of ripe years, of good education, of fair position in life! What a contrast with the hopes and ambitions that once moved her breast! Doomed to such death in life, for these long and dreary adult years, and panting for the revival of a healthy relation to the world, what would she not give for occupation—for a road to usefulness—for some tie to bind her to her fellow-men?

One of the most obvious consequences of want of steady occupation, is injury to health; and the miserable health of the women of the middle ranks is not surprising. It is borne without murmur or complaint, and may therefore be little known; but it is nevertheless severe and constant. Though not immediately fatal to life, yet the pain suffered, the diminished energy, the sleepless nights and useless days, are a serious drag on woman's usefulness and happiness; and were it for no other reason than to relieve her of this infliction, let her have some occupation, some daily change, something to take her out of doors, something to give a healthy tone to body and mind.

Hand in hand with loss of health is dejection of spirits—another of the scourges of woman's happiness. She finds nothing to take her "out of herself," to place her in healthy relation with external life and passing affairs. Her mind is thrown upon its own workings, and either passes into disappointed vacancy, or into a melancholy brooding over its own thoughts.

### § 3.

By exclusion from non-domestic industry, women of the middle classes are deprived of the discipline exercised by industrial occupation on the development of the mind.

The importance of the reflex influences of industry on the intellect has been insisted on in our introductory chapter, where we traced to them the greater part of the intelligence and information possessed by the mass of mankind; and we need not wonder that, as women are excluded from the industrial world, there is found in them a corresponding intellectual deficiency. It is quite true that in women of the middle classes, there is no want of sense and prudence; but the attribute of sense is a general one, and admits of every degree of culture, and much diversity of application. A secretary of state may be a man of sense, and so may a bricklayer,

but there is nevertheless a great difference between the two; for the powers of the former have been fostered and drawn out by care and experience, and have been applied to the highest objects. Such also has been the case with the faculties of man as compared with those of woman. The intelligence of the one has had far more schooling than that of the other; and has been applied to wider and more important objects. The intelligence of woman may be equal to the orderly management of a household, and to a sound appreciation of character and conduct within the limits of the domestic circle, but it does not pretend to approach the elaborate culture that characterises the intellect of the other sex. Many a fool even is enabled from that training alone to pass for a wise man.

The occupation of women in the middle classes consists chiefly of domestic economy and needlework. The former is of most importance; and its influence in disciplining the character is by no means trifling, especially in the case of the young. But on the whole it seems an occupation that ought rather to fall to a servant in whom confidence can be placed; and when assumed by the mistress, it most frequently comes to be an interference on her part with the natural duties and responsibilities of others. "Hanging on the hand" of a servant injures both—disturbing in particular the

natural exercise on the servant's part of that intuitive sense which some degree of responsibility is the best means of bringing out; and it ought to be avoided except in families whose circumscribed means preclude other resources. From the great extent to which the practice is at present carried in the middle classes, it has in a manner spoiled the whole body of domestic servants, interfering with the normal growth of trustworthy character and usefulness,—so much so, that it has become difficult to procure female servants to whom much can be confided. A striking contrast is presented in the other sex, trustworthy workmen being by no means rare. While therefore the women of the middle classes must still retain a general acquaintance with household duties; (for every master or mistress ought to be acquainted in a general way with the work done by people in his or her employment;) it would be for the advantage both of servant and mistress that the latter found a sphere of occupation more fitted to her education and status—placing her more in relation with the general ongoings of society. Domestic occupation, however, is far better than no occupation at all. The women of the middle ranks most remarkable for gentleness, sense, and superiority of character, are those who, with equal advantages in other respects, have had a large share of industrial occupation within their own homes. Till

an improved sphere of employment be found, let them continue in the old way; making an attempt however to improve the relation betwixt them and their domestic servants, by raising as much as possible the status of the latter; and to attain a greater interest in the ongoings of that industrial world, out of which the humblest article consumed in their households has been purchased.

Useful needlework is one of the household duties just alluded to; and there remains only to speak of the ornamental needlework resorted to to fill the gaps of unoccupied time. It may be dismissed with a word. It is a tolerable makeshift, and serves its purpose wonderfully well. To women who have not even household duties to interest them, it is invaluable.

With the unassuming housewife-sense of the women of the middle classes, accompanied with not a little homely virtue and patient gentleness, we shall have in a subsequent chapter to contrast the superior general intelligence, not only of the women of the aristocracy, but even, in a certain degree, of those in the better grades of the working classes—allowance being always made for difference of education and of manners.

## § 4.

It is usually considered that moral principle is stronger in woman than in man; and, on the whole, we agree in the opinion. We must, however, make one qualification—the superiority is realised only within the limited circle of people and things that woman is at present familiarly acquainted with. Whether we can hope that the moral superiority of woman may be extended beyond that limited circle, were her sphere itself extended, will be considered presently.

The restriction of the position of woman is itself to some extent a source of her moral superiority—obliging her from infancy to subject her wishes to restraint. “The life of woman is a life of self-sacrifice;” so every one has said, or heard said by people who know it well. She has been schooled into self-sacrifice and self-control; and so deeply has the habit been engrafted, that it is carried to an extreme calling for some reaction, both for woman’s own sake, and for the sake of the other sex, who are thereby encouraged to forget what is really due to her, and to indulge their own comfort at her expense.

But although the moral superiority of woman is to this extent attributable to the restrictions under which she labours, it does not wholly spring from that source,—nay,

the self-sacrifice and submissiveness of which we speak are to be found in nearly equal degree in women both of the upper and of the lower ranks, in neither of which do the restrictions that prevail in the middle classes operate in the same degree. The fundamental source of moral superiority in woman lies in the constitutional tendencies of her nature; in her kindness of disposition, in her aversion to injustice, and in her tendency to judge actions by the direct test of the feelings.

Within the sphere to which woman in the middle ranks is at present restricted, the moral elements of her character shed a fair lustre. They are seen in her care for the comfort and welfare of others; in her watchfulness to catch the bent of the feelings of those with whom she lives, (and this watchfulness, as the opposite of indifference, is the root of active virtue); in her readiness to sacrifice her own comfort for theirs; and not less in the courage with which she attacks their faults, and risks the loss of regard in her attempt to reform them. The moral elements of woman's character, are also seen in her self government; in the discipline to which she has subjected her personal character in her resignation, and in the many internal struggles to which she is exposed. She must often sacrifice her feelings to duty; or her love to principle; and

there are times again when love is the loftiest call of all ; but the contest in her bosom is often a severe one, and is not over in a day. Man, with his abrupt decision, and less acute sensibilities, is a comparative stranger to these subjective trials.

Morality consists in the regulation of our feelings and conduct ; its limits therefore in each individual are defined by the limits of his or her sphere. The moral responsibility of man embraces all departments of life ; his moral feelings are disciplined not less in politics than in the nursery ; not less at his fireside than in his counting-house. They may be inferior in sensitiveness to those of woman ; but they are better disciplined, wider in their application : and have more of *principle* in them —(that is, are based on a wider experience) ; so much so, that even in morality the dictum of man is usually the tribunal of ultimate appeal. The moral promptings of woman's nature are the homely products of an affection, that in itself stands little in need of ethical regulation ; but which, from being confined in its exercise, has as yet too narrow a basis, and is too much warped in its judgments, to be a safe or steady guide to the whole conduct.

We repeat, then, that the constitutional morale of woman is higher than that of man ; but we also repeat that the superiority is as yet seen only within the sphere of woman's present position. And naturally so ; it were



unreasonable to expect it to be otherwise. The inhabitants of a country observe laws of justice very well among themselves, but forget them when dealing with foreigners. The moral superiority of woman disappears in like manner so soon as she steps beyond her own home circle; nay, it even begins to vanish in her relations with her domestic servants. Comparatively a stranger to all beyond that circle, she is apt to be misled by family partialities, and by the misapprehension of motives; and, on attempting to influence a wider sphere, her actions are too apt to degenerate into partizanship and intrigue.

The moral superiority of woman then is for the present confined within the limits of the sphere now open to her. But as any quality of mind bears fruit only in so far as it receives exercise, we are warranted in concluding that in proportion as the sphere of woman is enlarged, the grasp of her moral feelings will likewise enlarge; and that woman will in a wider sphere have the same superiority she now has within her present sphere. In place of the almost total want of moral influence on society at large, which, in spite of her superior moral nature, we have seen to mark her present position, she will over an extended sphere suffuse something of that moral influence from which at present the family relations alone benefit.

There are two characteristic attributes of feminine culture, which serve very well to illustrate the present moral position of woman ; both unavoidable as things at present stand, both possessing a charm to students of character, yet both rather questionable in their nature. As woman is allowed no direct influence on the on-goings about her, she ceases to claim any ; but of course there are many things she wishes brought about, and what is equally natural, she does contrive to bring them about. Hence feminine tact and management, in the exercise of which so much of the effort of woman is spent. It is a charming accomplishment when delicately managed ! and no doubt is but the machinery for attaining a purpose all would approve, were it regarded with patience and an unprejudiced eye. Still there is something objectionable about this hatching of indirect means to secure an end ; it is mortifying to have to use it, mortifying to know it is used towards you ; and it is itself a duplicity. There is, however, under present social arrangements, a sort of necessity for it.

Opinionativeness is another charming trait of woman's character ; but she may have consolation in knowing that it is almost equally strong in man, and is brought about in both by the same cause. For, as we have said, the imperfect accordance of mind between the sexes renders true mental influence by the one on the other

impossible ; hence a habit of substantial exclusion of each from the other's counsels ; and even when the mooted point is amenable to the experience of both, there is still the strength of the habit to overcome. It is hard for a man to listen to reason from a woman ; he feels humiliated, and tolerates on her part no demur to his dicta ; and, on the other hand, a woman is apt in appearance to abandon her opinion and purposes on the first blush of opposition ; yet we should like her to tell truly, if after all she was convinced,—if after all she did not take her own way !

### § 5.

If the morale of woman is generally regarded as superior to that of man, still more is her emotional character. True, that in this respect, man seldom receives full justice ; for, from the habitual restraint our manners require him to exercise over his softer nature, he usually hides his finer feeling, and is accordingly put down as possessed of little of it. A man is at bottom more of a woman than he is inclined to admit ; and the emotional nature of many men has, through culture, acquired much strength and delicacy. Still the emotional nature of woman is as a whole the superior. The impulse of thorough devotedness, the unwearied

strength of attachment, the richness of sensibility, the ever fresh emotions of the heart; these, to the end of time, will belong to woman.

It may be thought paradoxical to say that these qualities of woman would be improved by her mixing more in the external world. Yet experience shows that it would be so. The more woman has been tried, the more is the affectionateness of her character spread through her being.

It is well known that in a monotonous existence everything about us is apt to go to sleep; and this is true of the emotions as of everything else. A woman brought up without much education or occupation, without duties to call out her energies, or to give a serious aspect to her life, must by and by become a very dull personage, even to herself; her faculties and her feelings die as it were a natural death. And taking the majority of women in the middle ranks, we suspect there will be found in them much poverty of character—not excepting even in the emotions; they become passive and indifferent to what passes around them—indifferent to all but their own interests, or the interests of their families, instincts that cannot well disappear in any circumstances. To save us from this atrophy of feeling, it is necessary that the faculties be kept alive, and that the character be sustained either by good education, or by constant household duty,

or by continual mixing in society. The reader will recall many examples of the fact, that, provided woman's faculties be not altogether overtaken, experience, trials, and a practical acquaintance with active life, add much to the breadth, warmth, and healthfulness of her mind and heart.

The guileless affection of a home-loving woman is a familiar thing amongst us, and we know its value. She may have few points of character but that of tenderness, little skill but in a few simple arts ; she may be sensible, but have few or no opinions ; and she may have no wishes but have already been fulfilled. Such a woman is a favorite with our people ; and we do not dispute the choice. But it is possible nevertheless to retain these amiable traits, and still strive after the attainment of a higher standard. There is surely no charm in insipidity, or there ought not to be. Though woman's time were otherwise occupied than now, she might still be simple in heart, in mind, and in manners. The more sense and experience, the more natural will the character be ; the more constant and deep the affections.

Restriction of the sphere of woman not only impoverishes her own emotional character, but has the effect of frightening the manifestation of emotion from all departments of life, except its utmost privacies. For so long as woman remains a stranger to so much of life,

affectionateness of nature will be proscribed amongst men, and missing the warmth and healthfulness of the presence of woman, will shrink from daylight altogether. There is perhaps in the circumstances a propriety in this; we have even come to regard the utter repression of our feelings as a manly virtue. But it is truly an evil; it tends to dry up the social fountains of tenderness, to harden the heart, to impoverish the character; especially in man, in whom these elements are weakest. And it cannot but re-act injuriously also on woman.

## CHAPTER VI.

WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE RANKS, IN THEIR RELATION TO MEANS OF  
SUBSISTENCE.

## § 1.

WHEN it is said that women ought to content themselves with the duties and the happiness of domestic life, no account is taken of the many who are altogether strangers to these. Many are doomed to single life, and have neither the comforts of home nor of domestic society, to fall back upon; it is peculiarly hard that these should be precluded from taking an independent part in active life. Unfortunately, too, the prejudices of married women have hitherto sided so much with the prejudices of men, that it has been rendered more and more difficult for the unmarried to improve their position. This should not be; if a married woman choose to console herself with the engrossment of household duties and the affections of home, imperfect though her satisfaction in present circumstances must be; her in so far fortunate

lot ought to make her the more anxious, that those of her sex destitute of her advantages, should not be left without any resource whatever on which to fall back. Woman, like man, should surely have more than one fate in store; the common lot failing, it is hard she should not have a chance of success in another walk of life—an alternative open to every man, but for the most part shut to woman.\*

The dependence of woman on marriage, as the only means of obtaining a comfortable settlement in life, must necessarily exercise a very prejudicial influence on her early years, and on the formation of her character.

And in the first place there is a striking inanity given to her existence by its unsettledness of aim. It is like gambling. Her fortunate lot may be fixed in a day, and no woman but is conscious of this in spite of herself. So long, therefore, as the chance of marriage is open, the anxieties and fever of the expectation will occupy the mind more or less, and interfere with application to any other pursuit. If the lot fall right, the whole purpose of life is regarded as fulfilled, and a vacancy is left in the

\* "Rich women do not engage in these (industrial) callings. For rich women, there is no profession left except marriage. After school time, woman has nothing to do till she is married; I mean, almost nothing; nothing that is adequate. Accordingly, she must choose between a husband and nothing,—and sometimes, that is choosing between two nothings. There are spare energies which seek employment before marriage, and after marriage."— *Theodore Parker*.



mind ever after: if the lot fail, there is left no time or spirit to turn the mind and pursuits into another channel.

If a young man is brought up in the daily expectation of succeeding to a fortune on the death of a rich old uncle, who has given vague hints that his nephew will heir his estate—and if the young man's parents are so foolish as encourage the expectations so raised, what good can be looked for from the youth? Instead of applying himself to business, and preparing himself for active life, he spends his time in desultory pleasures, expecting every day to heir his independence, and be at last a gentleman; and should, unfortunately, his old relative take a dislike to him from his idle ways, and leave his fortune to found an hospital, the disappointment to the young man, and the idle habits he has formed, spoil him for life. So it is with young women, whom the foolish ideas of society, like the boy's foolish parents, encourage to look forward to marriage as the great fortune awaiting them. It may come upon them any day, like the boy's fortune on his uncle's demise; and like the boy's fortune, too, it may never come; but meanwhile, the uncertain prospect of it, encouraged as it is by social maxims, prevents the expectants from turning the present to good account, and, in a word, spoils them for life.

The want of power on the part of woman to earn her own livelihood places her also in a false social relation, from the baneful influences of which it is next to impossible for her entirely to escape. It is to be hoped that the pictures popularly drawn, of the extent to which marriage-hunting is carried in common life, are overcharged; but it is utterly impossible that the tendency can be altogether resisted. The education and conduct of a young woman come unconsciously to be guided with a view to it: she is led to rear a false standard by which to judge herself; she is led to overlook faults in others which ought to repel her. Everything around her is placed in a false light. Her single-mindedness is put in jeopardy; and the bait to untruthfulness consummates her ruin, when she is brought to barter soul and body for money and rank,—an event which, revolting as it is, is common enough.

We must not dwell on this painful part of our subject. The taint suffused through the female character by the consciousness of dependence on marriage for the means of subsistence; the tendency to direct every accomplishment, effort, thought, toward the attainment of that prime end; the unnatural alliances forced on many women, and the wretchedness brought in their train; the still more numerous instances where, though no positive misery is produced, union can be expected to afford no happiness—

loveless, cheerless marriages—with the affections, it may be, irrecoverably fixed elsewhere ; intrigue, bickerings, separations, divorces ;—these fruits of the evil are all already sufficiently known to require no fresh delineation here.

To woman's honour, however, there are many of her sex that feel keenly the indignity of their situation. There is an honourable reserve instilled into the social intercourse of the sexes by the consciousness of the dependence of woman on marriage for a settlement in life, and of the false lights to which it gives rise ; and, in spite of the corruption inspired by the system, and the myriads tainted by it, there are many whose sense and honesty have borne them through in comparative soundness.

But again, under present social arrangements, there is an unnecessary and unfair addition to the disappointment of failing to secure a settlement by marriage. Assuming that marriage is desirable for its own sake, it is sufficiently unfortunate if circumstances have not occurred permitting a suitable engagement, and the disappointment is as often felt by one sex as by the other. But in the case of woman there is added the bitterness that, in marriage, lay her only hope of a comfortable and, so to speak, independent livelihood ; the disappointment is therefore increased from a source that is foreign to the proper motives of marriage, and to that extent woman

is exposed to an unfair burden. It comes even to be regarded, in some circumstances, as a reproach. There is a sort of social expectation of every young woman, that she shall find a husband; it is a duty that, as it were, lies to her, both for her own sake and the sake of the relatives on whom she is dependent. It is felt even by herself; she is driven by a sense of it into alliances she would not otherwise choose; and if she is unsuccessful, her sensitiveness causes much discomfort. She regards the failure almost as a crime on her part; as a failure in her duty; she accuses herself of continuing a burden on others. We call attention to this, not because there is any good ground for the self-accusation, but to show the unnecessary pain and discomfort a sensitive mind is exposed to, from the false lights of dependence on marriage, which, in spite of all endeavour, continually obtrude themselves.

## § 2.

Dependence during life on relations, is one of the few alternatives on which woman must fall back, if her lot otherwise fail; and it fortunately is a universal and instinctive feeling that she is entitled to support from the earnings of those related to her. The right is indeed recognised with a definiteness approaching to positive

enactment ; and the income of man has been so adjusted, that he receives from society a portion of its products sufficient to maintain not only himself but those dependent on him. We would say that, on the part of man, the obligation has been ungrudgingly and honourably discharged ; there is commonly much kind and gentle love to be found in these relations ; and many are the families that have had aid, comfort, salvation, brought them by lady relatives resident with them, fulfilling the duties that would have fallen to a dead or an invalid mother.

But many women have no relatives to cling to, or none that will own them, or none that they can live with or be indebted to with comfort. They may be subjected to jealousy and ill-usage, or may see that they are sheltered but as part of what a respectable man is expected to do, or they cannot brook that they should remain a burden on those that can ill-afford it, while their own hands lie idle.

Those having only distant relatives are frequently worse off than if they had none at all. The claim to help is so slight, that aid can bear no other name but charity ; and it is often shame more than charity that wrings a pittance for them, a pittance given grudgingly, but counted by the givers at the highest price. These dependents, too, of distant relatives are at their wit's

end whether to take or to refuse, to rely on these for the future or to depend on themselves alone, to attempt to maintain an appearance that will not affront their friends, or to resign themselves to the abjectness of their real situation.

### § 3.

In the higher ranks, though marriage fail and friends die, woman is rarely left without a permanent source of income. The essence of an aristocracy is the inheritance of accumulated wealth, and it is seldom that women of that rank are not, out of this wealth, provided with a competency. It is not so with the middle classes; in common with the labouring classes, their inheritance is industry; and with them it is most frequently impossible to secure the independence of woman by a money provision. But if the inheritance of their rank be industry, not wealth, ought women to be excluded from it—especially in the absence of other resources? Surely not. Industrial pursuits should be open to them, suited to their status, and in which, by ordinary endeavour, they might earn the means of living. At present it is not so, and under the arrangements of society now holding, women of the middle classes, left destitute and cast on their own resources, have to encounter a hard lot.

A man that has to work his way in the industrial world is seldom commiserated, however feminine in character and disposition he may be. He is, so to speak, at home when labouring for his bread ; he is a recognised member of the great human society labouring by the sweat of the brow "within or without." But a woman attempting to earn her bread under present social arrangements, is inexperienced and alone. She had not expected this to be her lot ; she was suddenly left on the shores of the cold business world, and is looked down on there by man as an intruder. She has few of her own sex to bear her company ; and such as are similarly placed with herself have not yet attained the position of a social class, prepared to give mutual encouragement and mutual help.

A woman in the middle ranks, when cast on her own exertions, has two courses before her. Either she may endeavour to gain the means of subsistence in a way in some measure fitting her previous station in life ; or, unable to do this, she may leave that status to join the ranks below. In either case she has many formidable hardships to encounter.

The former resource affords, under present arrangements, but a limited number of openings. Literature, fortunately, is now open to women ; but of course it is only a few that are qualified to take part in it. Com-

panionship to an infirm lady is also, sometimes, a situation gladly taken ; but, besides its rarity, the situation is anomalous and unsatisfactory. The situation of governess is the only other ordinarily available to any one wishing to retain her position in the middle ranks ; and to it every young woman of spirit, intelligence, and education, turns herself, when from unforeseen calamities she is driven to earn her own subsistence. Indeed, it forms the chief support of all that have a shadow of education. Without doing more than noticing the monstrosity of thus pushing all sorts of people into a very important situation, however far they really are from being fitted for it, we shall proceed to glance at the position woman attains in it.\*

The hardships of the life of a governess are as widely known as the hardships of the life of a needlewoman ; in biographies, in novels, in the newspapers, and from the personal observation of every one, they may be learned. And yet it is an honourable situation, none more so ; the

\* "The immediate cause of the inadequate payment of governesses is, of course, the excessive competition, from the great number of women in a measure forced into the employment. It is, perhaps, necessary to add, that the evil consequences are not confined to the governesses themselves, but that the duties unwillingly undertaken, and most scantily remunerated, will be inadequately performed ; and, from the absurdly large demands made on governesses, they will also, it is to be feared, be led to extend their pretensions beyond their real capability."—*Westminster Review*, July, 1850.



life of a faithful governess, whose kindness refuses to be soured by neglect, who patiently pursues her duty in the midst of the self-will, partialities, and interferences playing around her; who can hear the good influences of her work attributed to every other origin than her care and solicitude, and learns to be satisfied with doing her duty for its own sake; who performs to the children under her care the duties of a mother; who offers herself a helpful and affectionate companion to those who prize her company; who scruples not to lose favour with her superiors when the truth has to be spoken; who, in the demure and respectful silence required of her, watches with disinterestedness and geniality the varied play of human character about her; who, in addition to all, entered upon this position from the most praiseworthy motives, and has the satisfaction (when it is possible) of saving a little to aid some other of her sisters—such a life is as heroic as any that could be named. But, though often valued by the family who reaps the benefit of her services, the hardships of a governess-life are severe and trying; and to many are more than they can bear; either health fails, or, which is of as great importance, the geniality of the mind gives way. It is usual to talk contemptuously of the stiffness and ungenial strictness of a governess: whence have these come? Forced, it may be, into an employment for which she was not fitted, torn with

exactions, always on the rack of work, bitterness in the past and care in the future, with little remuneration or thanks, without hope or a home—is it wonderful that her geniality often breaks down, that her mind is often worn to dregs?

Although such is too often the lot of the governess the picture is subject to qualification. Some in that profession, by early devotion to it, and by superior ability and aptitude, are enabled to arrive at a moderate independence. And, in the higher walks of female education, we often find women in the enjoyment of much success. Many conduct, on their own account, large and thriving educational seminaries;—indeed, the position of the owner of a successful establishment of that description may be regarded as a type of what ought to be woman's position in other branches of industry for which she is equally well fitted. For many women of intelligence and active habits are entirely unsuited for the business of education, and to them other occupations should be available.

Midway between the status of the middle ranks and of the labouring classes, there are certain occupations resorted to by women, of which it is proper we should not omit notice. Many, for instance, become matrons of hospitals—and such a situation is highly suited for them; though, were the industrial position of women more re-

cognised than it is, this avocation, instead of now occupying a place almost within the lower ranks, would be considered as belonging to a far higher status. A great number of women, too, chiefly in widowhood, support themselves by letting furnished apartments; but this requires the possession of some little capital, and the small income derived from it requires usually to be supplemented from other sources—as needlework, or some inconsiderable pension or annuity.

Beyond these employments there is nothing for woman but to join the countless crowd of needlewomen. Incredible as it may appear, this is the only lot open to women of the middle ranks, who, from want of sufficient education, or from other causes, are unfitted for the other occupations we have named; and there are many that are driven to this last resource.

Thus, the woman of the middle ranks, who for a livelihood must look to her own exertions, has little before her but penury, or an occupation so severe as to ruin her health or wear out her mind.

It cannot but occur to the reader that, however unsatisfactory the position of women may be in the occupations now enumerated, necessity has nevertheless already driven, and must continue to drive, many to them. Hitherto, at least, it is seldom choice that has led them there. But if it is of necessity that many women of the

middle classes undertake non-domestic industry, why not make up our minds to it? In place of ignoring the fact, and leaving them to struggle without preparation and without help in a cold and selfish world, why not adjust ourselves to the necessity in good time—look it in the face before-hand—familiarise them early with that world—teach them to regard it as within their sphere—prepare a place for them in it—and prepare them for filling that place? But of this we shall have to say more in a subsequent chapter.

#### § 4.

We saw in a former chapter the change old age brings to woman when living out her time in the midst of her family; but the lot of the woman who, in declining years, has no one to look to for support, is very different. With the miserable earnings she could win it was impossible for her to provide for the future: and now old age or ill health overtakes her in the midst of her exertions, and she finds herself in destitution.

The prospect of an aged woman falling into poverty, especially if she have seen better days, calls forth much pity. It is borne meekly, yet inwardly the cup is bitter. She has to restrict the comforts of life; but this is not all, she feels the contrast with her earlier years; and who can tell the anxieties, the desolation that accompanied

this change of fortune? Even when the energies are unimpaired, self-respect can scarcely stand firm amid the injuries and indignities of poverty; and now that old age has before it no cheerful future, the spirit of resistance is broken.

It is much to the honour of the other sex that the claims of aged, indigent women have never been lost sight of. There are few men but for a great part of life have extended to some of them a helping hand: and there are many public foundations expressly instituted as a means of relief. But these efforts of public and private charity are insufficient both in degree and in kind.

Charity degrades those that receive it, or unnecessarily wounds their feelings; and it is impossible for it to meet all the physical distress prevalent, much less is it possible for it to minister to the distress of mind to which the indigent who have seen better days are subjected. Much suffering is borne before people of such a class bring themselves to receive relief from charity.

It would be more in accordance with justice and with humanity to enable woman, by her independent exertions, to earn a livelihood sufficient not only for the wants of adult life, but sufficient also to enable her to lay by enough to carry her in peace through the gray days of old age, and, on her death, to lay her head decently under the grass.

## § 5.

We cannot close this chapter without saying a few words on the religious orders of Roman Catholic countries, in their bearing on the position of women. Undoubtedly the monastic system is, in all its departments, an extreme and morbid exaggeration of a tendency in human nature; but, in the branch of it devised for the female sex, we cannot overlook how aptly it addresses itself to the real wants of their condition. We have seen that the life of woman is aimless and purposeless—that she finds nothing with which to occupy her time or her faculties. It is to such as feel this blank most acutely that the convent presents the strongest call. We have also seen that, on failing to obtain a comfortable settlement in life, there has hitherto been open to women of the better ranks no means of obtaining a livelihood. To these also the convent presents a sheltering roof, beneath which they may spend their days free from the pangs and indignities of want. Under the conventual system also there is ample sense shown of the value of woman's services—in education, in ministering to the sick, in prosecuting charitable labour; and an equally just sense of the necessity of a fitting preparation before she can efficiently undertake duties so difficult and

important. Convents were for long the great educational seminaries for the female sex; and women of talent who chose to enter them might find in that calling worthy employment for their faculties. On the continent, too, as is well known, the nursing of the sick in hospitals is committed to the members of religious orders—commonly known as Sisters of Charity—who are specially trained for the duties. On the whole, apart altogether from the religious attractions of the cloister, the promise held forth by it of a purpose to the life of woman, of filling her heart with zeal for the improvement of her fellow creatures, and her hands with useful occupation, and finally of sheltering her head all her days in comfort and peace, has been perhaps the greater attraction.\*

\* “ In England the law is frequently abused by daughters marrying according to their own fancy, without consulting their parents. This custom is, I am apt to imagine, more tolerated there than any where else, from a consideration that, *as the laws have not established a monastic celibacy*, the daughters have no other state to choose but that of marriage, and this they cannot refuse. In France, on the contrary, young women have always the resource of celibacy; and therefore the law which ordains that they shall wait for the consent of their fathers, may be more agreeable. In this light, the custom of Italy and Spain must be less rational: convents are there established, and yet they may marry without the consent of their fathers.” (!)—*Spirit of Laws*, b. 23, ch. viii.

## CHAPTER VII.

COMPARISON OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES WITH THE HIGHER AND LOWER CLASSES, IN RESPECT TO THE POSITION OF WOMEN.

## § 1.

WE have now brought to a conclusion our review of the present position of woman in the middle classes. Amid the quiet and respectable formality prevalent in these ranks, woman is excluded from an interest in the general on-goings of life; is a stranger to the mind and character of the men of her own rank; her culture and experience are narrowed; her life rendered aimless; and she is left no means of livelihood but marriage. Man, on the other hand, is deprived of the influences of woman's nature, and of the support of her companionship. If there is any feature more prominent than another in the social intercourse of the middle ranks, it is the absence of the influence of woman. Want of public spirit, laxity of industrial and political morality, material engrossment, a suppression of the emotional character,



formality of social intercourse, discordance of sentiment, seem all justly attributable to this source. The influence of woman has much freer play both in the aristocratic and in the working ranks, in both of which the education and occupation of the sexes are more alike.

The present anomalous position of woman in the middle ranks is in accordance with the fact that these are the latest formed in the social framework. The aristocracy and the labouring classes are both very old, and have had time to perfect themselves in their several relations; but the middle ranks are comparatively of late growth, and are even yet struggling for a status: except in this country and in the United States of America, they are numerically small; and it was but twenty years ago that they obtained a direct voice in the election of our own legislature.

It is not to be expected, therefore, that the middle ranks should be yet perfectly formed; that the mutual relation of their component parts should be fully adjusted. So long as the position of an individual or of a class is in abeyance, and it is necessary to fight for a footing, it is the most rude and unscrupulous elements of character that stand most in stead, and we look in vain for the natural and normal adjustment of the more delicate and less obtrusive relations in life. Accordingly, throughout history we find that the claims of

woman have been the last to receive the consideration due to them; she was of old made man's slave; then she was cooped up in stone walls as his mistress; then she was dandled and petted by chivalry; and it was not till chivalry too had exhausted itself, that she began to take her natural and proper place. In the older sections of society, the aristocracy and labouring classes, these changes have had time to operate; but the middle ranks have not yet attained that permanence of position permitting their finer elements to arrange themselves. In former times, woman was unable from deficiency of physical strength to take part in wars of the sword; and in like manner her position has hitherto unfitted her for taking part in the social struggles of the middle ranks. Whether in political conflicts, or in industrial competition, the middle ranks had to fight their battle without her; it was only when these were over, when the middle classes had secured their footing and settled down, that they could bethink themselves of her; just as the upper ranks paid her little regard till their own social position was secured,—for even these did not recognise her claims till the days of feudalism.\*

\* "Of all relations, that between men and women being the nearest and most intimate, and connected with the greatest number of strong emotions, is sure to be the last to throw off the old rule and receive the new; for in proportion to the strength of a feeling is the tenacity

## § 2.

In the higher ranks or aristocracy, industrial life falls neither to man nor to woman; as we have seen, the determining element of these ranks is that wealth, as their means of living, springs from inheritance alone. The distinction gives to aristocracy advantages that other classes do not as yet enjoy; a leisured and educated youth, early training in personal accomplishment, similarity in the tastes and sentiments of the sexes; but it is no less true that the absence of industrial influences, and of experience of the common destiny of man, leaves the character defective in many important particulars. A man, to be of worth, must be tried, must know the difficulties of life as well as its ease, must not be a stranger to the realities around him. It was very well when war was the business of the aristocracy, the class had then an occupation; now it is different, war is no more, and the aristocracy are thrown back on themselves. The difficulties they have to surmount are now chiefly those of ennui, their realities of life are to them the ceremonious call, the afternoon drive, the

with which it clings to the forms and circumstances with which it has even accidentally become associated."—*Westminster Review*, July 1851, p. 295.

evening party ; they have neither a habitual occupation, nor anything to regard as their habitual duty.

This life of indolence is ill suited to satisfy men of spirit, and accordingly many of the aristocracy devote themselves to public affairs, or mix in industrial pursuits. By so doing they combine the advantages of a generous culture with the experience and energy of active life ; and while our aristocracy, in the absence of war, their former occupation, are thus taking on the duties of industry ; it is, on the other hand, a most hopeful thing that the middle ranks are rapidly acquiring the advantages of a leisured class. The advances of industry have put within the reach of men of limited means a supply of the necessities and comforts of life, a command of productions of art and of literature, that formerly the rich only could boast ; nor need the man of the middle class now want the most solid or the most elegant education.

Although the man of the middle ranks need not seek to exchange his lot with his elder brother of the aristocracy, the position occupied by women of the upper ranks is comparatively more favourable. Even in times when war was the great occupation of an aristocracy, woman was not entirely excluded from an interest in it. The movements of war are simple, and its spirit may be kindled in the breast of the woman and the child,

as well as in the warrior himself. In Rome, although women took no part in war, they shared in the warlike spirit, and fostered the bravery and ambition that fed on military renown and fidelity to the Commonwealth. But in modern times, since the days of feudalism, peace has gradually done away with the old occupation of the aristocracy, and man in that rank has been brought down more and more to the level of his fair helpmate. The movements of fashion in its season; and, in the country, visiting, excursions, gardening, and such like, fill the time alike of the one sex as of the other; or, in a family of superior culture, there is a field of common interest in literature and art, in the condition of families on the patrimonial estates; in the progress of social improvement. In short, if a woman of the higher ranks have sufficient good sense and simplicity of character to preserve her from the artificialities of fashion and the intrigues of aggrandisement, her life has every chance of being a happy one.

In evidence of the favourable influences of the social equality of the sexes in the higher ranks, we may point to the independence of spirit, and the liberal culture that in these characterise the female sex, and which are seen alike in the Queen on our throne, and in the humblest lady that can boast a title, an estate, or even an aristocratic connection. Clever, polished, and dignified, with

strength of body, mind, and heart, independent in means and in impulse, the women of the aristocracy claim a social freedom, a social respect, and a social influence, little less than that of the other sex. They have no abject dependence on marriage;—the sneering epithet of “old maid” is never heard in their ranks; the married lady attempts no overweening patronage; the unmarried have the same independence, receive the same respect, have even as great influence as the married; the life of the unmarried is, as it ought to be, like the unmarried life of man. The patriotism and enterprise of the women of the higher ranks are unbounded, and history is full of their intrepid acts. It is from these ranks that women have ascended thrones,—and have wielded the influence of nations, of political parties, of great families. In these ranks chivalry was nursed and flourished, vindicating for woman a social respect she had not before received, and stimulating the courage and enterprise of man; and chivalry is but one example of the intimate influence exercised by woman in the aristocratic ranks on the spirit and energy of man.

Families of those in the clerical and the literary professions possess, in respect of the position of women, many characteristics of the aristocracy; or, viewed in the proper light, they possess the features that, were women admitted into industry, would be alike shown in all families of

the middle ranks. The duties of a clergyman, especially in a country cure, can, not only be appreciated, but may actually be joined in by woman. The sick are visited by both, advice and encouragement are given by both to such as stand in need of them, a like interest is felt by both in the ongoings of the locality; and woman, if she can do no more, may at least know the inward life of her husband as day by day, or week by week, it is portrayed in his religious exercises. A woman of superior understanding, is thus placed on a footing of the most cherished companionship with man. And it is the same in literary life; with the business of which woman may become more familiar than with the pursuits of men in other avocations: in such families the sexes enjoy an enlightened companionship; and woman is enabled to take an elevated place in society. Nevertheless the time of women even in these cases is mostly unoccupied; and although in general women of the families of clergymen and literary men may, in respect of character and attainment, occupy the first rank, it cannot be expected that a few can in any circumstances rise far above the general level.

## § 3.

So much for the aristocracy ; the labouring classes will detain us longer. In them exclusion of women from the higher branches of industry, does not operate in the same way as in the middle ranks. In the latter it is equivalent to the exclusion of the sex from all non-domestic industry whatsoever ; whereas the women of the labouring classes do find a place in industry, although it is still true that they are excluded from those branches of it that are most remunerative or involve any considerable degree of responsibility.

And now it will naturally occur to the reader that, as the women of the labouring classes are not entirely excluded from industry, their case affords a test of the truth of much that has been advanced in preceding chapters with respect to the benefits that would be produced by admitting women of the middle ranks to a grade of industry corresponding to their status. And we readily admit the soundness of the test, provided two qualifications be kept in view. First : it must not be forgotten that the admission of women of the labouring classes to industry does not at present extend beyond the lowest kinds of industry, beyond its menial occupations. Second : in comparing the two ranks, much allow-



ance must be made for the difference of their education and of their outward circumstances. The disadvantages under which the one rank labours, may make it on the whole infinitely inferior to the other ; while it may claim comparative superiority in many particulars. In personal intelligence for instance, the lower classes may be superior to the upper ; yet deficiency of education and of leisure may leave them far behind in general attainments. These considerations kept in view, we do not fear an examination of the position of women in the labouring classes ; and to that end we will devote the remainder of the present chapter—enquiring whether, on a fair comparison of the two ranks, the evils we complained of, in the middle classes, as arising from the exclusion of women from industry, disappear with the admission of women to industry in the labouring classes. The exclusion of the women of the latter rank from the superior branches of industry (as distinguished from industry in general) has evils of its own ; and to a consideration of these we will give attention in subsequent chapters.

In a former chapter we found that from want of a knowledge of industry, as the basis of society, and of a practical interest in it, women of the middle ranks can take no part in public movements, can have no influence on public opinion, can, by their charitable exertions, benefit but the outcasts of society. Now, in so far as

circumstances admit of a comparison, how does it stand in these respects with the women of the labouring classes? Do they take more, or do they take less interest in public movements than women of the middle ranks? Have they a worse or a better understanding of passing events? Is their benevolence more, or is it less, efficacious in rendering assistance to the well-doing in time of need?

It appears to us that the women of the labouring classes, comparatively speaking, do interest themselves more in passing events and public movements than the women of the middle ranks. A movement in industry (and for the most part public movements spring from or return to industry) is of great importance to them and to their families. A tax on this or that article used in their trade, a factory bill, a school bill, the corn laws, the sanitary movement itself, have all a direct bearing on them—as the latest Parisian fashions have a direct bearing on the women of the higher ranks. A chartist meeting is to women of the labouring classes a matter of much more engrossing excitement, than a middle class political meeting is to women of that rank; and a strike for wages is a thing of far more importance to the wife of the artisan, than the masters' strike against wages is to the wife of the master. All this you say is not to be wondered at—since the women of the labouring classes are really dependent on industry for their sup-

port: it is right, therefore, you say, that they should take an interest in movements affecting it, and in the mutual relations of the industrial classes. Just so: and are not the women of the middle ranks also dependent on industry; which of the two is more dependent on it—the wife of the labourer, or the wife of the master? The only difference is, that the one feels the fact, while the other does not feel it. In the labouring classes both sexes know their dependence on industry, and are alike interested in all movements affecting it; in the middle ranks the dependence is as real and direct, but it is only felt by man, and he alone takes an interest in what affects it. The woman of the labouring classes has therefore an advantage in this particular over the woman of the middle ranks. She is better acquainted with her own place in the framework of society; understands better the bearing of public movements; and can join more fully in the feelings and views entertained by men of her rank on these important subjects.

The neighbourly feeling prevalent among the labouring classes is proverbial. Novelists, parliamentary reports, and much beside, bear testimony to it. Throughout the labouring classes distress meets with much sympathy and help; the scanty loaf is shared with a fellow-workman; and the fear of contagion is no bar to the good offices of a neighbour in times of disease. With

the people of these ranks, difficulties and reverses are soon known ; a whole street will feel, and feel heartily, for a misfortune that visits one room in it ; and aid will come to the call. In times of general distress the mutual sympathy is increased many fold, and perhaps it rises to its extreme height on occasion of the strike of some section of workmen ; the vast contributions of money that then flow in, the privation and suffering voluntarily undergone on behalf of the general cause, far exceed the sacrifice any other class has shown itself ready to undergo on occasions so frequently recurring, or even on any occasion whatever.

The fellow-feeling of the labouring classes is, perhaps, in some degree attributable to the greater need for it. In private life there cannot with them be procured the paid assistance of servants ; and to protect their interests as a class, combination must supply the want of direct political power. But we think there may be seen in it also the operation of another element, by which the social mass is imbued and softened—the closer relation of man and woman. A kindly impulse does not, in the labouring classes, stagnate in the female breast, as too often it does in the better ranks ; from the footing of equality on which the sexes stand in the labouring classes, emotions pass quickly from the one to the other ; the kindness of woman carries with it the

sympathy and help of man, and the benevolence of man soon enlists the encouragement and co-operation of woman. This is rarely seen in the middle ranks; there the benevolent feelings of woman do not pass readily to man, but expend themselves in promiscuous charity to which he is no approving party; while *his* impulses of charity are overborne by scruples of political economy and the difficulties attending its exercise in a sound and judicious way; to overcome these difficulties he rarely even asks assistance or encouragement from woman. Hence, in the labouring classes there is a more pervading tone of kindness than in the middle ranks; and a more intimate and energetic class sympathy. Nor are the labouring classes deficient even in promiscuous charity; it is they that give the blind and maimed that beg in our streets the greater part of their halfpence.

On the whole then, so far as concerns public life, industrial interests, and the wider social relations, the position occupied by women in the labouring classes is more favourable than that occupied by them in the middle ranks. There are no doubt drawbacks sufficient to counterbalance and more than counterbalance these advantages; but to these we will revert at a subsequent stage of our inquiry.

## § 4.

We would now compare the middle and the working classes in respect of the influences of industry on what is called the proper sphere of woman—domestic life, and private society. And first, as to the private social intercourse of the working classes.

It is not altogether pedantic to use the phrase social intercourse of these ranks. They may not have dining-rooms and drawing-rooms, dinner and evening parties; but they have firesides and lounges; they have their evening and their Sunday strolls. And not only so, but the intercourse they enjoy is natural, rational, and unreserved. At the meetings of neighbours round a country fireside, or in the "living-room" of the artizan—and from these meetings neither sex is excluded—there is found more heartiness of feeling, a more natural flow of conversation, than is found in any rank above them. It cannot be otherwise. The circumstances of each are known to all, the previous history of each, the work each is employed at, the masters served under, the transactions of the day or week, the good or bad fortune come by, and so on. Hence there are ample materials of social intercommunion, understood alike by man and woman; these ranks are not divided into races unknown to each other in seven-eighths of their lives.

In the better grades of the labouring classes, the relation of married life is necessarily closer and deeper than in any other rank. The husband works through the day in a medium with which his wife was once familiar, and her former experience is not lost to her now. She can still regard things from the same point of view as he; she can, from experience, enter into the feelings that stir the men of these classes about their masters, about their treatment of workers, about the comparative comforts of rich and poor; she can understand the comfortable or disagreeable circumstances attending her husband's daily work; she can enter keenly into the hopes of success that he builds on his skill or perseverance, on his usefulness or trustworthiness; can enter into his fears that he may not be able to cope with ill-health or ill-fortune. All these things she has herself known, and in the same medium; she must then understand them well in another's case. She knows too what low wages and want of work are; can understand the many thoughts on that subject that pass through her husband's mind; can see the rise and fall of his spirits, and know the cause; can put in a cheering word in time. Each, too, knows what the lot of their children will be, knows the world where it will be cast: and their thoughts and cares on that subject are in keeping. In general, their tone of thought, and of

feeling springs from a common source, and shows a corresponding harmony. The tie of married life in the working ranks fills every crevice and corner of existence.

We must also observe that the family duties are for the most part well understood amongst them, and well discharged. [There is a strong tie binding the family together in every part of life. The relation between husband and wife is closer than in other ranks; parents are anxious that the upbringing of their children be honest and respectable, and that they get a fair start in the world. The mother in particular is strongly impressed with the responsibility resting on her. The whole economy and government of the family fall to her, even to the banking of the savings—commonly in her own name; and she labours hard to make ends meet, so that her children may obtain a little “schooling,” be brought up in sound principles, and get into respectable employment.] In the families of this class there is often much religious feeling and noble principle—the picture of the “Cotter’s Saturday Night” was drawn from nature. In the peasant propriety of France, it is remarked that there prevails much filial, much brotherly and sisterly affection, young women giving their savings to aid the advancement of their brothers, and such like. But, indeed, nowhere is there a finer picture than the family of a peasant or artizan of



our own country, brought up in honesty and sound principle.

These remarks apply to the better grades of the working ranks ; for, in the comparison drawn, it would be unfair to take into account those lower grades where other evils destroy the good effects of such advantages as they really possess. There are many branches of the lower classes where women have been reared from infancy amid vice, intemperance, and squalor ; in other branches they at best receive no education, and are subject to so long hours of work, that there is no time to pick up a smattering of experience in household economy. The wretchedness that in married life follows these causes is too well known. It is not, however, attributable to the admission of women to industry ; but to the want of education, the want of social care, the want of a standard of comfort in the class or grade to which these women belong. Withdraw woman from industry ; and this squalor and thriftlessness and wretchedness would be increased, not diminished. The woman that is squalid and thriftless when working ten hours a-day, and earning five shillings a week, would be much more so if she could earn nothing ; the five shillings a week and the work are all in her favour. Probably it is too much to expect that society will ever be without a large thriftless and squalid class ; but its number will be

decreased, not by withdrawing the female sex from industry, but by bettering their position there—by increased education, by regulating the hours of labour, as by Factory Acts, by encouraging a suitable standard of comfort, by instructing the people in domestic economy, and in general by elevating the social status of woman.

§ 5.

We now come to the individual life of woman in the labouring classes; and the first point of favourable comparison with that of woman in the middle ranks, is physical health. From the train of ailments that beset woman in the better ranks—become so habitual that she rather likes to be ailing—the women of the labouring classes are free. Occupation, where it is not driven to excess, is as healthy for the body as it is for the mind.

The intelligence of women belonging to the better grades of the labouring classes is best judged of by comparing it with the intelligence of men of their own rank; and we have nowhere so happy an illustration of the beneficial influences of industry on the relation of the sexes. As will be more fully dwelt on in a subsequent chapter, a comparison of the intelligence of the sexes in the rank now spoken of is most favourable to women. Placed as she there is on an equality with

man in education and in the management of industrial affairs, she has enjoyed an experience and practical training which have brought, or nearly brought, her intelligence to an equality with his.

In conjugal fidelity, the most important department of personal morality, the better grades of the working classes do not yield to any other; in the women of these ranks, it is as inviolate as in the middle and upper ranks; in the other sex it is perhaps superior. Nor, indeed, in any but women of the lowest grades is there a disregard of this homely virtue.

In judging of personal morality in the *unmarried* life of the labouring classes, some regard must be had to circumstances. In many grades of the labouring classes, the standard of propriety in the behaviour of the young is as strict as in any other rank. Still there is an occasional fall; and in the middle grades of the working classes, especially in rural districts, illegitimacy of birth is not unfrequent.

The man or the woman is inexcusable that brings a child into the world without having a home prepared for it; it must grow up without father or mother, exposed to taunts of desertion and reproach; and if it is the fruit, not of a permanent attachment, but of a passing passion, human nature is the more abused, and there is less hope to the child of ever receiving parental

care. Very frequently indeed the evil is remedied by marriage; but, in too many instances the child is born an outcast. This only will we say, that when such does occur, the mother for the most part continues to love her child, and does what in her lies to make a home for it; while the father too often hates and deserts both her and it.

A fall from chastity in the better grades of the working classes is so rare, as scarcely to require notice; certainly, when it does occur it is attributable, not to the influence of industrial occupation, but to entirely other causes, most commonly to the fascination of acquaintance with some one of a higher rank—inducing an attachment not less powerful on the side of woman than the love of an equal; and yet marriage cannot be claimed. In the middle grades of the labouring classes, the causes of illegitimacy are different. In rural districts it is often impossible for a man to procure a home for a wife, so much discouragement is thrown in the way of an increase in the married population; and even in towns it is a serious matter for an artizan to undertake the burden of a family. The difficulty is known on both sides, hence in these grades illegitimacy springs for the most part from real and permanent attachments, many of which, notwithstanding all discouragements, lead ultimately to marriage.

As we approach the lower grades of the labouring classes, we find education and early training more deficient, and the character more reckless; still we are at a loss to trace any deleterious influence of industry at work as the cause of degradation. On the contrary, it is attributable chiefly to *the want of habits of industry*, combined with want of education, want of early training, want of a standard of character. Were there no industrial occupation for women in these ranks, their condition would be far worse; and the upbringing of their children would be the upbringing that the children of the dangerous classes now receive. The more abundant work is for woman or man, the more steady and respectable the work-people are.

There are, and always will be, certain employments that serve a most humane end in drawing off the better disposed even of the dangerous classes from their haunts; and in a peculiar manner give occupation to those who, without such occupation, would be outcasts. A proportion of the class of factory labourers and slop-workers is so recruited; and from this circumstance industry is sometimes attacked as the *cause* of the low standard of life in such a class. Nothing can be more unjust. The factory population, as a whole, is composed of steady, well-doing families.

On the whole, then, the charges of immorality made

against the labouring classes have assumed undue proportions; and where there is a laxity of morality, industry, far from being directly or indirectly the cause, is for the most part instrumental in preventing greater criminality. By affording an honest means of support, it keeps many from evil; and its direct influence is to discipline the mind and improve the character.

The culture of the sentiments and emotions has an intimate dependence on education. Yet, though the feelings of the labouring classes cannot be expected to present the refined embodiments shown in other ranks, they are not on that account less truthful and discriminating. In the better grades of the labouring classes, many are remarkable for intellectual culture, for a desire to refine and improve the mind; and in general, the class is characterized by many of the most valued social sentiments—as love of liberty, love of justice, love of propriety and a good name. In the emotions too, as exhibited in the personal relations of these classes, we can trace shades of feeling so truthful, yet so various, that in contrast with the simplicity of their life, they strike with wonder. In the woman of the labouring classes, the natural feelings are not lost in the artificiality and distance maintained in other ranks; variations in her situation tell on her mind with their natural force, her relations with

all around her are understood and felt. In her mind the hues of nature have free play, and are not the less interesting that her tongue can give but artless expression to them. In the emotional relations of these classes, there are rich materials for study. The poetry of the emotions, the touching tales that are popular among them, the spirit and narratives of the Bible,—are understood and valued by people of the working classes as thoroughly as by any above them; and their life is often not unworthy of being chronicled side by side with the biographies of the best of our race.

## § 6.

Once more, in the labouring classes woman has open to her an independent means of livelihood. In this rank probably it has always been so; if not in name, yet substantially. In our day, the idea of remaining at home dependent on parents, when useless to these, is spurned by the women of the working classes; and unless they leave their father's roof too soon, no one will deny that they are improved by having to earn their own bread. Indeed without this resource, what would become of the millions of women of the labouring classes in Great Britain dependent on industrial employment? No doubt the earnings

of the female labourer are scanty; but the state of society permitting her to earn a livelihood at all, is preferable to her exclusion from such a resource.

### § 7.

On the whole then, and making proper allowance for the different circumstances in which the two ranks are placed, the principles applied in previous chapters in estimating the position of women in the middle ranks, are borne out by the facts observable in those grades of the labouring classes, where woman has already been admitted to a share of non-domestic industry, without being subjected to poverty and social neglect. In those grades of the labouring classes, where woman has received some education and a good early training, admission to non-domestic industry has had a highly beneficial effect on her character, her intelligence, her influence, and her happiness.

In conclusion, we cannot refrain from remarking that the world is indebted to the labouring classes, and especially to the female influence that pervades them, for more than one invaluable contribution to the civilization of the human race. As chivalry took its rise in the aristocratic ranks, so it was in the frugality and simplicity of life of the labouring classes



that was first planted the germ of monogamy, an element of civilization of far more importance than chivalry. The poverty of the free labourer prevented his keeping many wives; and jealousy (if no better motive), even more strongly than in a larger harem, must have guarded the few, or the one, his circumstances allowed. Moreover, the equality of intelligence and experience characteristic of the rank in question, must early have raised in the men of that rank a respect for the women of their households unknown in other ranks. In practice, and long before the enactment of any positive law to sanction it, we find monogamy and a corresponding respect for women to be characteristic of poor and frugal nations. In the time of Tacitus, the respect entertained for women by the Germans struck the civilized Romans with wonder.

In the labouring ranks, too, Christianity seems first to have taken root. It is represented as having been first preached to the poor, and fishermen were its apostles. In that rank Christ found his most constant companions; and, illustrative of the position there held by the sexes, his friendship was equally extended to both. In later times, it was with the rise in the social scale of the lower classes that the general spread of Christianity took place, and it was accompanied with an increased respect for woman. At the Reformation, it was

in the ferment of religion permeating the humbler classes that the moral and physical, if not also the intellectual, strength of the movement lay. Even in our own day, the same classes form the great stronghold of religion.

In like manner from the labouring classes have, for the most part, sprung impulses to liberty and political reform; and few movements for the attainment of these ends have been effectual without their support.

From the children of the same ranks from time to time arise intellectual and moral leaders of their age; and our clergy and literary class, as well as other influential ranks, are largely and continually recruited from the same source.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ANALYSIS OF THE INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENTS OF WOMEN OF THE  
WORKING CLASSES.

## § 1.

WE have drawn a contrast in several particulars between the position of women in the better grades of the working classes, and the position of women in the middle classes; a contrast in so far favourable to the former, but throughout qualified by our reserving till now consideration of the disadvantages to which the working classes are peculiarly exposed. Making allowance for circumstances, the relation of the sexes may be superior in the one rank, to the relation of the sexes in the other rank; while, nevertheless, the former rank may have drawbacks of its own, and to the drawbacks attending the industrial position of women in the working classes we now turn our attention.

The present and the following chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the branches of industry to which women in these ranks have been admitted—pointing

out shortly the leading circumstances affecting each occupation; and thereafter we will notice specially the more formidable agencies that in the working ranks depress the condition of the female sex—competition with the valueless time of women of the middle ranks—and restriction, within the working ranks themselves, to the menial and worst paid occupations.

It is difficult to estimate the relative proportions of the population belonging severally to the aristocracy, the middle ranks, and the working ranks—as the census affords little or no information on the subject; but on the whole, judging approximately from tax-office returns, and the old registers of parliamentary voters,\* we may reckon that the middle ranks are about three times as numerous as the aristocratic and monied ranks, and that the working classes are about three times as numerous as the middle ranks. Thus, taking the census

* County Electors, England . . . .	471,287	
City and Borough, „ . . . .	399,178	
	<hr/>	870,465
County Electors, Wales . . . .	36,467	
City and Borough, „ . . . .	11,751	
	<hr/>	48,218
County Electors, Scotland . . . .	50,833	
City and Borough, „ . . . .	47,960	
	<hr/>	98,793
Total Electors, Great Britain . . . .		<hr/> 1,017,476

of 1861, out of a population in Great Britain of twenty-three and a third millions—the aristocracy or wealthy classes may have numbered a million and two-thirds, the middle classes five and a half millions, and the working and lower classes sixteen and a half millions. Of these estimates, one-fourth may be taken as representing the number of men above twenty years of age; and a slightly larger proportion as representing the number of women above that age.

The reader will probably be surprised at the large proportion of the working and lower ranks; for, looking to the general movements of society, it would certainly seem to be composed chiefly of the middle classes—such is the house room they occupy, their frequent appearance in our thoroughfares, and their large share in the ongoings of life. But as, in ancient times, the prominent place was filled by the far from numerous class of aristocracy and freedmen, while the crowd of slaves and common people scarcely attracted historical notice; so modern statistics inform us that, though the influential ranks are more comprehensive now than formerly, and the condition of the lower classes much improved, yet still the mass of mankind is chained to manual labour and to long hours of work. From the large proportion of the working ranks, the importance of the inquiry we now enter on—the social

condition of the women of these ranks—is sufficiently obvious.

In 1851, there were in Great Britain 5,998,384 women of an age above twenty; in 1861 there were 6,666,715 women above that age. Of these there were returned as—

	1851.	1861.
Engaged in independent industry, or possessed of independent means . . . . .	2,153,924	2,496,166
Wives and Daughters (above 20) of Farmers, Innkeepers, Shopkeepers, Shoemakers, &c., specially returned as such . . . . .	459,115	458,021
Wives, Widows, and Daughters, returned as of no occupation . . . . .	3,227,153	3,632,372
Paupers, &c. . . . .	158,192	80,156
Total . . . . .	<u>5,998,384</u>	<u>6,666,715</u>

Thus two millions and a half out of six millions and a half, or more than one-third of the whole number of women above twenty years of age, are engaged in non-domestic industry; besides half a million that are specially returned as farmers' wives, innkeepers' wives, &c.—these last taking so active an interest in the occupations of their husbands as to be regarded as a distinct section of the industrial community; and had it been possible, the census commissioners might with propriety have extended this section further. They have limited it to the wives of farmers, graziers, innkeepers, victuallers, butchers, shoemakers, and one very limited class of shopkeepers; but they might with equal justice

have included the wives of *all* shopkeepers conducting business on a small scale, an extension of the section that would have brought in well nigh half a million more. So modified, the census returns would be thus summed up: viz. that three millions, or nearly one-half the whole number of women above twenty years of age, have no place in non-domestic industry, and remain at home as "wives" and "daughters;" that one million occupy a secondary place in industry as "farmers' wives," "shopkeepers' wives," &c.; and that the remaining two millions and a half are engaged in non-domestic occupations on their own account or are of independent means.

## § 2.

We will now draw attention to the civil condition of women, above the age of twenty, especially of those engaged in industry on their own account.

According to the census of 1851 and 1861 the civil condition of women above twenty was as follows:—

	1851.	1861.
Spinsters, returned merely as such . . . . .	323,704	308,878
"Farmers' daughters" . . . . .	88,301	78,094
Unmarried women, engaged in independent industry, or of independent means . . . . .	1,355,189	1,470,784
Total unmarried . . . . .	1,767,194	1,857,756

	1851.	1861.
Brought forward . . . . .	1,767,194	1,857,756
Widows, returned as such . . . . .	289,558	324,663
Ditto, engaged in independent industry, or of independent means . . . . .	505,715	567,426
Total widowed . . . . .	795,273	892,089
Married women above 20, returned merely as such . . . . .	2,613,891	2,998,851
Ditto, returned as "Farmers' wives," "Shopkeepers' wives," &c. . . . .	370,814	379,927
Ditto, returned as engaged in independent industry, or as of independent means . . . . .	451,212	538,092
Total married . . . . .	3,435,917	3,916,870
Total—Women aged 20 and upwards, as before . . . . .	5,998,384	6,666,715

Thus in 1851, three-fourths, and in 1861 nearly four-fifths, of the adult unmarried women of this country (above the age of twenty) were engaged in independent industry, or were possessed of independent means; and in both these years two-thirds of the widowed of adult age, and one-seventh of the married of adult age, were engaged in independent industry or possessed of independent means.

Moreover of women above the age of twenty engaged in independent industry, four-fifths are *unmarried or widowed*; that is, are in circumstances requiring them to earn their livelihood; and, with respect to the remaining fifth, composed of *married* women, engaged



in industry, it must not be forgotten that many follow a business that may be carried on without injury to family comfort—as keepers of lodgings, laundresses, dressmakers, shopkeepers, dairywomen, charwomen, lace-makers, weavers, &c. Making allowance for these, and making allowance also for wives whose husbands are by sickness disabled from work, and for those having no children or none at home of a tender age, the number of married women who, while engaged in industry, leave their families insufficiently attended to, must be very limited. It is undoubtedly an evil that the mother of a young family should sometimes be under the necessity of neglecting them during work hours; but if she is a widow, industrial employment is probably the only resource for her own and their support, and in the case of a wife whose husband still lives, it is an expedient almost never resorted to. His sickness or desertion may indeed drive her to it as a last resource—but then, what is she more than a widow? In either case it is far better that she should work for her bread, than that she should go for it to the parish.

## § 3.

We now proceed to our analysis of the occupations of women above the age of twenty, engaged in non-domestic industry; and only premise, that the inquiry has a much wider bearing than on the individuals

directly composing the class; for it may be assumed, that almost every woman in the working ranks was at one time or other of her life engaged in industrial pursuits; and as the influences thereby impressed on her are never wholly lost, but enable her afterwards to take a lively interest in the every-day work of her husband, and in the future prospects of her family, and even enable her in some form or other to lend them a helping hand in their occupations, our inquiry affects directly or indirectly the whole female sex of the ranks under review.

The industrial occupations to which the women of Great Britain of twenty years of age and upwards have been admitted, may be arranged according to the following table:—

*Occupations of Women in Great Britain of the age of 20 years and upwards.*

	1851.	1861.
Group I.—Proprietors of Lands and Houses, Gentlewomen, Annuitants, Teachers, Artists, &c. . . . .	241,261	229,445
Group II.—Engaged in Commercial and Agricultural undertakings :		
(1) Commercial . . . . .	134,211	136,312
(2) Agricultural . . . . .	30,254	29,152
	—————	—————
	164,465	165,464
Besides—	1851.	1861.
(1) Wives of Tradespeople, returned as such . . . . .	75,783	86,438
(2) Farmers' Wives and Daughters, returned as such . . . . .	289,793	281,278
	—————	—————
	365,576	367,716
	—————	—————
	405,726	394,909

	1851.	1861.
Brought forward . . .	405,726	394,909
Group III.—Engaged in providing Dress:		
(1) Millinery, &c. . . .	388,302	478,590
(2) Laundry-work . . . .	136,582	167,937
	————— 524,884	————— 646,527
Besides—	1851.	1861.
Shoemakers' Wives, returned		
as such . . . . .	93,539	90,305
Group IV.—Domestic Servants, &c. . .	664,467	779,051
Group V.—Engaged in Manufactures, Out-door Labour, &c.:		
(1) In Textile Manufactures	384,041	398,590
(2) In Mechanical Arts, &c.	39,210	79,584
(3) In Mines . . . . .	6,737	
(4) In Agricultural and Mis- cellaneous Labour . . . . .	128,418	110,216
	————— 558,406	————— 588,390
Summation . . . . .	2,153,483	2,408,877
Discrepancies in Census Summations	441	
Occupations unassigned . . . . .		87,289
Total engaged in Independent Indus- try (as before) . . . . .	2,153,924	*2,496,166

In round numbers, of women above twenty years of age engaged in independent industry, one-fourth pursue commercial and agricultural undertakings, or are possessed of means of their own; one-fourth are engaged in the occupation of providing dress; one-fourth in domestic service; and one-fourth in manufacturing and agricultural labour.

\* It is impossible to make a close comparison of the two census in points of detail, as they follow different rules of classification.

## § 4.

The first group (or half-group), numbering about quarter of million, is composed as follows:—

## GROUP I.

*Women above 20 years of age returned as Annuitants, Teachers, &c.*

	1851.	1861.
Proprietors of Land . . . . .	14,522	16,638
Proprietors of Houses . . . . .	21,930	29,167
Gentlewomen (Independent) . . . . .	15,316	} 97,447
Annuitants . . . . .	121,220	
	<hr/> 172,988	<hr/> 143,252
Teachers, Authors, Artists . . . . .	64,336	} 86,193
Miscellaneous . . . . .	3,937	
Total of Group I. . . . .	<hr/> 241,261	<hr/> 229,445*

Many in this group belong, no doubt, to the upper and middle classes; but the census does not distinguish them. Many, on the other hand, returned as “annuitants” or “teachers,” may occupy a very humble position. A good deal has been said in a previous chapter † of the situation of teacher, as occupied by woman, and of the other professions embraced in the group; and we may at once pass to Group II. We must add however that the encouragement of late years given to female teachers by their admission to the Privy Council grants on the same terms as the other sex, has

\* See note last page.

† *Ante*, Ch. vi., § 3.

had, and must continue to have, the most important influence in helping them to their normal place in social life. As pupil teachers and as pupils in Normal Schools opportunity and aid are offered them to thoroughly qualify themselves; and their substantial allowances as certificated teachers, with the fair and encouraging appreciation their labours receive from the Government inspectors, leave nothing to be desired.

Group II. comprehends undertakings in trade, especially shopkeeping in its various branches; and agricultural undertakings, especially farming and grazing. The particulars of the group are as follows:—

## GROUP II.

*Women above 20 years of age engaged in Commercial and Agricultural Undertakings.*

	1851.	1861.
(1) Commercial Undertakings:—		
Lodging-house Keepers . . . . .	20,070	43,238
Innkeepers, &c. . . . .	8,910	
Victuallers, Beer-shopkeepers, &c. . . . .	10,147	
Shopkeepers (branch not defined) . . . . .	28,104	21,916
Shopwomen (assistant, ditto) . . . . .	1,742	
Butchers, Milk-dealers, &c. . . . .	13,345	62,634
Bakers, Confectioners, Greengrocers . . . . .	17,987	
Grocers . . . . .	16,830	
Tobacconists . . . . .	809	
In Furniture Trade . . . . .	5,763	
Conveyance . . . . .	7,479	7,263
Miscellaneous . . . . .	3,025	1,261
	<u>134,211</u>	<u>136,312</u>

	1851.	1861.
Brought forward . . . . .	134,211	136,312
(2) Agricultural Undertakings:—		
Farmers, Graziers, &c. . . . .	27,986	29,152
Gardeners . . . . .	2,268	
Summation . . . . .	<u>164,465</u>	<u>165,464</u>

Besides which there are the following returned :

	1851.	1861.
(3) Innkeepers' Wives . . . . .	17,422	49,821
Victuallers' Wives . . . . .	26,524	
Butchers' Wives . . . . .	25,861	26,845
Shopkeepers' Wives . . . . .	5,976	9,772
	<u>75,783</u>	<u>86,438</u>
(4) Farmers' Wives . . . . .	201,492	203,184
Farmers' Daughters . . . . .	88,301	78,094
	<u>289,793</u>	<u>281,278</u>
Summation . . . . .	365,576	367,716

The people comprised in this table stand midway between the middle ranks and the working ranks; and the list will be largely swelled when the time comes for a larger admission to industry of women of the middle ranks. It will then, to a much greater extent than now, represent the higher departments of business. As the census returns are arranged, it is seldom possible, from the name of the occupation, to distinguish the rank: a shopkeeper or a farmer may designate a person carrying on business worth a thousand a-year, or a business not worth so many pence; the figures, therefore, must be interpreted according to circumstances,

as these are known from other sources; at present few in the table before us belong to the middle ranks,—they are for the most but a superior grade of the working ranks.

Many doubtless are *widows*, who on the death of their husbands continue business for the support of themselves and their families. These women-bakers, grocers, general-dealers, innkeepers, are, for the most part, widows of small tradesmen, in poor parts of a town or in country villages; and the like may be said, in a less degree, of women having farms or grazing establishments in the country. The conclusion is confirmed indirectly by the returns at the foot of the table, giving, under specific heads, the “wives” of the tradesmen that are embraced in the group; showing that, according to the views of the compilers of the census, the “wife” takes, in the classes in question, an active part in the business of her husband—a supposition inconsistent, on the one hand, with the present arrangements of the middle classes, where a wife takes no part whatever in the business-affairs of her husband; and, on the other hand, showing that women of the class comprised in the table have, to a certain extent, some preparation enabling them on the loss of their husbands to carry on business on their own account. Of the arrangement whereby in the better grades of the

working classes, the wives and daughters of retail dealers assist in conducting the business of the shop, we cordially approve. As previously remarked, the compilers of the census have unnecessarily restricted those special returns of tradesmen's "wives" to a few branches in the group; it would have been well to extend them to many others.

The drawbacks under which female shopkeepers labour are chiefly these, viz., first—that, as just indicated, they do not always enter upon the undertaking in early life, but only on being thrown on their own resources at an advanced age by the death of their husbands, and perhaps with the burden of a large family to support; and, second, that they want the encouragement and example of a class of their own sex in a higher rank similarly engaged in industrial pursuits, without which their relations with the commercial world, cannot be advantageous. It is all very well for the daughter of a tradesman to assist him at his counter at intervals, when it happens to be convenient for him or for her that she should do so; but that is quite another thing from a young woman looking forward to shop-business as an occupation by which to gain a livelihood, and early qualifying herself for it. There is no intrinsic reason why shop-business should not be as open to the female sex as to the other; and in-



deed, it is usually looked on as effeminate for a man to stand behind a counter;\* nevertheless, except in a few

\* "If the tall fellows who wait behind the chairs, or stand behind the carriages, of the great, and the men-milliners who smirk behind the counters of our shops, were absorbed into our regiments, and handed over to the drill-sergeant and the rough rider, so as to leave more room for women in places where men intrude, to the manifest discredit of themselves and our social and commercial system, a state of war would at all events have one beneficial result. It is sickening to see the 'smooth-faced rogues' behind our counters, dandling tapes and ribbons in hands which God made for ruder tasks, and lipping about 'sweet things' with which they desire to tempt their lady customers."—*North British Review*, February, 1857.

"There is another department of shop-business in which women may be advantageously employed—we mean as account-keepers and cashiers. On the Continent, women are much more employed as book-keepers and financiers than they are in England."—*Ibid.*

"In the name of justice and of humanity we protest against the competition of men with women in employments purely feminine. There are certain professions that, by nature as by law, are interdicted to women. Why does not law also, like nature, establish similar restrictions on men? They that can neither be soldiers, nor blacksmiths, nor joiners, nor labourers, nor builders—should not see the few trades they are admitted to invaded by others. In show-rooms of silks and fashionable novelties, what need of these tall young fellows expending the strength of their brawny arms in measuring cloth and selling ribbons! Back, gentlemen, back! You not only are out of your own place, but you usurp the place of others! That place the women of France have assuredly gained and made their own. Neither in Italy, nor in Germany, nor in England, have women reached in commerce a rank so honourable and useful; the women of France alone, artistes, and full of active energy, have contested the ground foot by foot; and to make sure of a career there, have originated one for themselves. Yes—it is their inventive genius that has conferred on our national commerce the most elegant of its glories. If French taste reigns even with our enemies, if our manufacturers of dress and ornament meet imitators everywhere, but rivals nowhere—to whom do we owe it? To the women of France."—*Legouvé*.

branches, it is still unusual for young women to undertake shop-business as a trade. They seldom think of that branch of business ; they all fly to millinery, or to departments of haberdashery embracing millinery work. No wonder that, when at an advanced age, the death of her husband leaves a woman without provision, and when she, as her only resource, resolves to carry on his business, she finds the little help she gave him during her marriage goes but a small way in enabling her now to keep the business together. That help was at best desultory, and took no cognizance of one essential element in all business, its external relations—the relations with wholesale commerce, on the one hand, and with customers on the other. These departments were in her husband's hands ; and, from her ignorance of them, she now soon falls behind in the selection of her goods, and is outstripped by others in the competition for custom. In the midst of all this, too, in place of starting well, as a young man or a young woman would do on commencing business in the prime of life, while active in faculty and free of incumbrances, age has now clogged her activity, and the burden of a family weighs her down. The loss of her husband most likely withdrew the money credit on which he traded ; and, with diminished resources and increased outgo, it too often happens that, ere she has had time

to adapt herself to changed circumstances, she finds herself entangled in pecuniary embarrassment.

These remarks do not apply in an equal degree to the rural section of the group of occupations under consideration. For not only is an agricultural possession—as a dairy-farm—frequently undertaken in youth by unmarried women, but in farming economy in general a specific branch of the business, as the dairy, poultry-yard, &c., falls, as a general rule, under the management of woman; not casually, or by way of help, but by direct arrangement, implying corresponding controul and responsibility on her part. Nor, in that situation, are her duties confined to in-door work; they most frequently embrace the relations with commerce, buying and selling, so far as bearing on her department: in short, the department is entirely committed to her charge—an arrangement very different from that usually obtained in the family of a shopkeeper in a town.

It is indeed with much satisfaction we speak of women engaged in rural undertakings. In the country a woman much more nearly than elsewhere is on a level with man; the humbler the rank, the closer do the character, intelligence, and interests of the two approach; their education is similar, and their experience and sphere of activity in adult life are scarcely divided. Rural affairs in general are open to the observation of

both ; the work is fairly apportioned, and women have a recognised controul and responsibility. Hence women living in the country show much prudence and intelligence, without the smallest injury to their womanly nature ; for, in sterling homely virtue, in the training of their children, in moral and even social principle, they occupy more than an average place. We are indeed now speaking of a class to which, in its humbler form we have often made reference—that embracing the yeomanry of England, the peasantry of Scotland, and the peasant proprietors of France and Germany.

## § 5.

We now pass to Group III. of the occupations contained in our general table—that engaged in providing dress. The particulars of it are as follows:—

## GROUP III.

*Women above 20 years of age engaged in providing dress.*

	1851.	1861.
(1) Milliners and Dressmakers . . . . .	202,448	249,936
Seamstresses and Shirtmakers . . . . .	60,588	77,902
Hat and Bonnet Makers . . . . .	27,175	23,813
Staymakers . . . . .	10,383	10,110
Hosiers and Glovers . . . . .	40,766	34,737
Shoemakers . . . . .	22,657	30,690
Miscellaneous . . . . .	24,285	51,402
Total engaged in making Dress . . . . .	388,302	478,590

	1851.	1861.
Brought forward . . . . .	388,302	478,590
(2) Washerwomen, Manglers, Laundry-keepers	136,582	167,937
Total . . . . .	<u>524,884</u>	<u>646,527</u>
(3) There are also returned, under the designation of "Shoemakers' Wives" . . . . .	<u>93,539</u>	<u>90,305</u>

In 1841 the return of women, above 20 years of age, engaged in dressmaking and its allied occupations, amounted only to 159,101; in 1851, it was as high as 388,302; and in 1861, it was 478,590. In like manner, in the first of these census the return of adult women engaged in laundry work was only 49,001; in 1851 it was 136,582; and in 1861 it was 167,937; the total increase of the population for the first period being only in the proportion of  $5\frac{1}{4}$  to  $6\frac{1}{2}$ , and for the second period as 10 to 11. In a word, the number of dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses, and laundresses has tripled in 20 years, while the population has only increased some 25 per cent.

So large an increase is remarkable. The inordinate "dressiness" of women of all ranks as compared with quarter of a century ago, has stimulated the demand—especially within the humbler ranks whose large numbers require a proportionally extensive class to supply it; moreover, dressmaking and millinery cannot now be done so much at home as formerly—ever-changing fashion

being too exacting for unprofessional hands.\* There is probably also a change in the plan on which the compilers of the different census proceeded. In 1841, probably no woman was entered or entered herself in the returns of independent industry if she might with propriety be included in the miscellaneous classes dependent on domestic relations; whereas, in the census of 1851 and 1861, the leaning seems to have been the other way. On the one system, a wife or daughter living under the husband's or the father's roof, though earning there a small income by millinery work, would be returned, not as a milliner, but as of the mass of the female population dependent on relatives; while on the other system, every one would be returned as engaged in industry who earned a pittance by that means, though her livelihood came chiefly from other sources.

In the returns of 1841 the number of women professionally occupied in making women's dress was less

\* Of late years the waste vigour of unemployed young women has consumed itself in the pursuit of novelty in dress and toilet—which has reached a height reprehensible in women of undoubted means, and wholly out of place in women of the middle and humbler ranks, with whom simplicity and usefulness of dress should be a test as rigid as it is now with the other sex. It is only one of the signs of the small value of a girl's time to be able to give so much of it daily to personal adornment, and to engross herself in watching and adapting herself to the constant changes of fashion. In the lower, as in the middle ranks, girls are fast becoming "useless," their ideas being early raised above the *work* that is natural to their lot.

than the number of men professionally occupied in making men's dress; there being from an eighth to a tenth more tailors than there were dressmakers and milliners. The occupation therefore of millinery was not then *over-crowded* in the sense in which it was commonly understood to be; nor was there ever any want of work, as the notorious system of late hours prevalent in the business of dressmaking testified. The competition to which the milliner was and still is exposed is of quite another sort, and proceeds from quite another source than the rivalry of others of her sex engaged in the same profession. Millinery work *is not confined to the professional milliner*, as tailoring is to the professional tailor; a crowd of women, for want of anything else to do, are a sort of half-milliners, do not strictly belong to the profession, but add a little to their other means by taking in millinery work. We are driven to suppose that women of this class were not included in the return of occupations in 1841, though they have been so to a larger extent in 1851 and 1861.

Not only does the professional milliner compete with the non-professional—with those that merely take occasional work to eke out other sources of livelihood—but she competes with every woman having idle and otherwise valueless time on hand; *i. e.* with every one of her own sex that is not at the present time engaged in non-domestic industry. *All women are milliners,*

the young and unmarried, and the married. The few hundred thousand pursuing the business as a profession compete with a million or two women at home, having their time otherwise unoccupied. It is this competition with work at home that brings down wages: work that *can* at a push be done there, will not be given out but at the lowest price; rather than pay high for it, it is done within the domestic circle. A man does not make his own clothes; he finds a more valuable way of occupying his time; not so woman—it is the cheapest way for her at present to be her own dressmaker; she has no more valuable way of spending her time. She only employs a milliner to save trouble or to secure a neater shape.

The milliner thus competes directly with the rank best able to remunerate her work; with those who ought themselves to be earning, like her, an independent livelihood.

There is still another source of unfair competition to which the professional milliner is exposed, arising, as a natural consequence, out of that just described. For, if every woman not otherwise engaged in industry is more or less a needlewoman, it is necessary for her in early years to learn a little of the business; and thousands of young women engage themselves for short periods in a millinery house, as apprentices or improvers



at small wages, or even at a premium. Although their object is laudable, it is nevertheless hard that the seamstress, dependent on her work for a livelihood, should find herself exposed to a competition so ruinous in a branch of industry, which in many towns is alone open to female employment.\*

We are unable, from the census, to distinguish the *status* in life to which any of the returns are applicable. The mistress of an establishment, and the youngest apprentice, the highest and the lowest grades, are all returned in one enumeration. It is impossible, therefore, to say to what grades the several sections of the group now under consideration belong; a large proportion doubtless is composed of the mere seamstress, or slopworker, who is the "labourer" of the group.

Whatever influences depress a class, they tell with most deadly weight on its lowest grade. And so it is with the seamstress and slopworker, who are exposed to hardships that have made a deep impression on the public mind. Who did not shudder at Hood's

\* Reverting to our comparison of the different census, it is right to qualify these remarks by admitting an apparent abatement in recent years in the domestic competition to which the seamstress is exposed—more millinery work being now done out of doors than formerly; and if we mistake not, a corresponding amelioration being noticeable in the condition of the seamstress. This is well so far; but it may be observed that the change has rendered the time of women, and especially of girls in the middle ranks, more valueless than ever—the old domestic employments for women gradually disappearing without a substitute being found.

“Song of the Shirt,” the pictures of which were so fearful that they were so true! And yet needlework is one of the few trades that have not been invaded by man’s labour; it is entirely in the hands of women; is of great extent and importance; and in most of its departments requires skill, experience, and taste, and in all requires neat-handedness, cleanliness, and care. Unless therefore we keep in view the real cause of the depression, we can neither estimate the magnitude of the evil, nor devise a fitting remedy. For instance, one must pause ere he believe that the emigration of a few hands, merciful as it may be to the individuals themselves, can very materially improve the position of those left behind. The true origin of the evil is the small value of *woman’s* time in general, especially in the middle ranks, which is thus placed directly and indirectly in competition with the labour of the milliner and seamstress. We would not argue that women in general should entirely abandon the needle, it is indeed essential at spare hours to the mother of a family; but we would wish to open for young and unmarried women other occupations than that of desultory stitching at useful or ornamental needlework; and thus, while the mother might as heretofore continue to keep her children in tidy dress, without calling in a tailor for every mending, the milliner would at least be relieved of the

competition of those who, unlike the mother, have no domestic duties to attend to.

There is one other gloomy evil in the position of the lower ranks of female industry, which seems to press with peculiar severity on seamstresses of non-manufacturing towns,—the temptation to eke out the earnings of industry by those of prostitution. Of this evil we will say a few words in a subsequent chapter.

On the occupation of laundry-work we might repeat some of our remarks regarding needlework. Every woman is more or less a laundress, and those professionally engaged in it, find themselves in competition with half their sex, not merely in the department of hand-labour, but also and chiefly in that of superintendence and management, that is, in the department entitled to the highest remuneration. In this description of work, were a high price to be put on superintendence, women of the middle ranks would withdraw their custom, and have their laundry work done at home under their own management,—an arrangement indeed for the most part obtaining at present ; and, however proper in itself, yet showing clearly the nature of the competition to which the professional laundress is exposed, that, namely, with the unoccupied time of women of the middle classes. The competition is not so severe, however, in the case of the laundress, as in that of the seamstress.

## CHAPTER IX.

ANALYSIS OF THE INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENTS OF WOMEN OF THE  
WORKING CLASSES (*continued*).

## § 6.

THE next of the Groups into which we have divided the occupations of adult women has reference to domestic service, and consists more particularly as follows :

## GROUP IV.

*Women above 20 years of age engaged in Domestic Service, &c.*

Domestic Servants :	1851.	1861.
General . . . . .	401,984	413,763
Housekeepers . . . . .	49,652	69,018
Cooks . . . . .	46,819	78,796
Housemaids . . . . .	41,948	72,088
Laundry Maids. . . . .	—	4,441
Nurses . . . . .	21,017	34,782
Inn-servants . . . . .	20,841	10,629
Nurses (not being domestic servants) . . . . .	25,466	29,221
Gate-keepers . . . . .	334	
Midwives . . . . .	2,882	
Charwomen . . . . .	53,892	64,498
Undertakers . . . . .	69	
Miscellaneous . . . . .	—	1,815
	664,904	
Deduct a discrepancy in the Summations of the Census . . . . .	437	
Total . . . . .	664,467	779,051

Domestic servants come in disproportionate numbers from rural districts,—migrating into towns to an extent that seriously disturbs the balance of population. We shall have more convenient data to illustrate this by reference to the census of 1841, in place of the census of 1851, or 1861, the returns of the first being arranged very differently from the other two, and in the present instance serving our purpose better. According to the census of 1841, the number of men in Great Britain above the age of 20, engaged in “commerce, trade, and manufacture,” that is, as we will assume, in *town* occupations, was 2,039,409; while that of the female sex of the same age similarly engaged was 483,017, or nearly *one-fourth* of the number of men so engaged. On the other hand, while the number of men above 20 years of age then engaged in agriculture was 1,215,264, the number of women of the same age similarly engaged was only 66,329, or *one-nineteenth* of the number of men so engaged. It is impossible to suppose that this small proportion represented the whole number of women born in rural districts, and engaged in assignable occupations; and in ordinary circumstances it is not to occupations of “commerce, trade, and manufacture,” that women born in rural parts usually turn; nor, on looking at the column headed “Labourer,” do we there find an explanation of

the disproportion; for the relative number of women to men as returned under that category exhibits no undue ratio; indeed the column appears to have no special reference to rural occupations. The only return that can indicate where the missing countrywomen are, is that of domestic servants, containing a summation amply sufficient, and more than sufficient, to supply the gap. Going through the necessary calculation,\* we are led to the following conclusions, viz., that, of the whole number of domestic servants, nearly two-thirds are born in rural parts; that the agricultural class, although little more than half as numerous as the

\* The estimate, or calculation, is as follows (Census of 1841):—

Men above 20 engaged in Commerce, Trade, and Manufacture . . . . .	2,039,409
Women above 20 engaged in Com- merce, Trade, and Manufacture	483,017
Add from the class of Domestic Servants (562,734) . . . . .	200,000
	<hr/>
Together . . . . .	683,017

Making up the proportion of 1 to 3, or thereby.

Men above 20 engaged in Agriculture . . . . .	1,215,264
Women above 20 engaged in Agri- culture . . . . .	66,329
Add from class of Domestic Ser- vants . . . . .	360,000
	<hr/>
Together . . . . .	426,329

Making up a like proportion of 1 to 3, or thereby, which corresponds with the average relative proportion of the sexes returned in 1841 as engaged in assignable occupations.

classes engaged in trade, commerce, and manufacture, sends out nearly twice as many domestic servants; that of the women of town families engaging in independent industry, about one-third become domestic servants; and that, of the women of country families engaging in independent industry, six-sevenths become domestic servants. To a great extent, therefore, the women of the rural classes monopolise that situation both in town and in the country.

We have said that by the influx of domestic servants into our towns, the proportion of the sexes in town and country is very much disturbed,—in fact this seems to be the greatest of all disturbing agencies of the kind. On the one hand, it is evident that in rural districts the female population must be very much thinned; on the other hand, that in towns it must be very much overcrowded. Taking the population of Great Britain as a whole, and counting in natives temporarily absent as soldiers, sailors, fishermen, &c., the numbers of the two sexes are about equal; the female sex preponderating by a very small per centage,—from three to four per cent. A similar equality is found in particular districts of the kingdom not subject to disturbing influences, and even in towns themselves in the returns of an age below 20, up to which time these disturbing agencies are only partially in operation. Above that age three

causes of disturbance may be traced: (1) the absence of sailors, fishermen, and adventurers, from seaport towns, or from districts abounding in seaports, whereby the proportion of the male sex at home is lessened. (2) The influx of female domestic servants, especially to towns where there are many people belonging to the middle and higher ranks. (3) An interchange of population between districts of textile manufacture, on the one hand, and districts of mining and metal manufacture on the other; the former drawing a slightly larger proportion of the female sex, the latter of the male sex. But, as already said, the greatest displacement of population is referable to the influx into towns of female domestic servants.

Take for illustration the town of Edinburgh. In 1851 there were in that town (including Leith):

Men above the age of 20	.	.	.	.	47,049
Women	„	.	.	.	64,638

the proportion being as 3 to 4. In the same town the number of the sexes below the age of 20 was about equal. Turn then to the number of domestic servants: of these there were no less than 12,449 above the age of 20, besides nearly half that number below the age of 20. In other words, in 1851, 1 out of every 5 women in Edinburgh above the age of 20 was a domestic servant, while in Great Britain, on the average,



1 in 10 only was so.\* Even this large number of domestic servants does not suffice to account for the large disproportion of the female sex in the town in question;—it is partly attributable to the seaport of Leith; and the even distributon of wealth in a town such as Edinburgh, besides drawing from rural districts an unusually large proportion of domestic servants, draws also many women from the same districts to the trade of millinery, and to other assignable and unassignable occupations. But, that the main cause of the disproportion of the sexes in Edinburgh is referable to domestic service, may be seen by comparing the statistics of that town with those of its rival Glasgow. Glasgow is, in many respects, a wealthier town than Edinburgh, but not in the same sense. In Edinburgh a large section of the population stand above the working ranks, and wealth is distributed. In Glasgow riches are accumulated in the hands of a smaller number of individuals; wealth is not distributed; a larger section of the population fall within the working ranks, and

\* In 1861 the numbers for Edinburgh and Leith were

Men above 20	.	.	.	.	49,045
Women „	.	.	.	.	67,629

or as 5 to 7—the number of domestic servants above 20 being 11,640 or 1 in 6 women of same age. It is observable that during the interval of ten years the number of domestic servants in Edinburgh had fallen off, both relatively and absolutely, and with them a corresponding excess of the female population.

fewer can afford to have domestic servants. Hence, although Glasgow is one of the most extensive shipping ports, with many of its population absent at sea (an agency, however, that is probably counterbalanced by the influx of adventurers), the sexes in that town counted in 1851 as follows:—

Men above the age of 20	. . . . .	83,455
Women	„ . . . . .	100,574

the proportion being as 6 to 7, or thereby, in place of 3 to 4, as in Edinburgh. In Glasgow, the number of female domestic servants above the age of 20 was 9635—less than 1 in 10 of the female population of the same age, less than the average of Great Britain, and about one-half the proportion obtaining in Edinburgh. The proportion of women engaged in millinery in Edinburgh and Glasgow was in 1851 very nearly alike, being in Edinburgh 1 in 15, and in Glasgow 1 in 18.\*

A similar contrast is exhibited in other towns. In London, the disproportion of the sexes above the age of 20 was in 1851 as 5 men to 6 women, and in 1861 as

\* In 1861 the statistics for Glasgow were

Men above 20	. . . . .	97,833
Women above 20	. . . . .	121,810
Female domestic servants above 20	. . . . .	8,995

or 1 in 15 women of same age.

In Glasgow, as in Edinburgh, the number of female domestic servants had fallen off both relatively and absolutely during the interval of ten years.

4 to 5; while in both census the proportion of female domestic servants was 1 in every 6 women, or thereby; contrasting with Birmingham, where, both in 1851 and in 1861, the proportion of female domestic servants was only 1 in 11; and the disproportion of the sexes only as 20 to 21. In Bath, in both census, the disproportion of the sexes was nearly as 1 to 2; in Cheltenham and Exeter as 2 to 3; in Bristol as 3 to 4: the proportion of female domestic servants being in Bath 1 in 4, in Cheltenham and Exeter 1 in 5, and in Bristol 1 in 7; all contrasting with Leeds, where the proportion of female domestic servants was 1 in 14, and the disproportion of the sexes as 10 to 11; with the other towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire, which exhibited the same proportions as Leeds; or with Manchester, in which the proportion of domestic servants was 1 in 9 in 1851 and 1 in 11 in 1861, and the disproportion of the sexes as 7 to 8, and 6 to 7 respectively.

Thus, in professional, fashionable, and county towns, while the chief opening for the industry of town-born women is millinery and shopkeeping, there is a large influx of country-born women, who find employment as domestic servants. It naturally follows in these towns that the proportion of women engaged in industry, as compared with the residue of the female population, is greater than in most other towns, and the number of

women necessarily remaining unprovided for by marriage is also proportionally great. In the Registration District of Bath there were:—

	1851.	1861.
Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	10,767	10,457
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	4,057	3,493
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	<u>6,710</u>	<u>6,964</u>

In Edinburghshire there were:—

Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	33,015	34,171
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	23,292	23,966
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	<u>9,723</u>	<u>10,205</u>

In London there were:—

Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	246,124	270,368
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	196,857	205,471
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	<u>49,267</u>	<u>64,897</u>

To be compared with the following Manufacturing Districts:—

Lanarkshire (including Glasgow):—

	1851.	1861.
Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	47,278	54,450
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	46,813	49,711
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	<u>465</u>	<u>*4,739</u>

Manchester (District):—

Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	19,658	19,785
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	18,450	16,308
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	<u>1,208</u>	<u>*3,477</u>

\* In the cotton districts considerable distress prevailed in 1861.

Leeds:—

	1851.	1861.
Women above 20 unmarried . . . . .	7,783	8,663
Men above 20 unmarried . . . . .	7,405	8,279
Excess of unmarried women . . . . .	378	384

The prospect of marriage, therefore, that a country-born woman has on coming to town as a domestic servant, is the smallest possible; fortunately, however, the demand for female industry is, as we have said, great in those towns to which she resorts; and in domestic service she usually finds herself independent and comfortable for the greater part of life.

The situation of a domestic servant (which, however, it must never be forgotten, *is, in so far as concerns the servant herself, a non-domestic employment*) is attended with considerable comfort. With abundant work it combines a wonderful degree of liberty, discipline, health, physical comfort, good example, regularity, room for advancement, encouragement to acquire saving habits. The most numerous class of depositors in the Savings Bank is that of domestic servants. The situation frequently involves much responsibility, and calls forth the best features of character. Kind attachment in return for honest service is not uncommon with the master or mistress; and an honest pride in the relation frequently springs up on both sides, and lasts throughout life. The position of the domestic servant in the

country, while more homely, is relatively superior to that enjoyed by the domestic servant in town, though the latter may have in the servant's eye attractions of its own. It is, as we have said, in the country that even town servants are for the most part reared and trained. Their duties are there more general, they are on a closer footing with their mistresses, more confidence is placed in them, more responsibility thrown upon them; and both during their term of service in the country, and while children in their father's cottage before that service commenced, they felt the advantage of their sex being in rural life more on a footing of equality with man. Hence one reason for the preference of country-born servants over those that are town-born; there are other reasons for the preference that need not here be adverted to.

From the explanations, however, made in a previous part of this treatise, it must be kept in mind, that even the class of domestic servants, though for the most part favourably situated, is, nevertheless, not free from competition with the unoccupied time of women of the middle classes. Rather than engage a superior servant many ladies will themselves act in the capacity, or will supplement by their own care the labours of an inferior. With people of narrow pecuniary means this arrangement is unavoidable in any state of society, and is what

ought to be; but at present it is carried needlessly far. The time of many women of the middle classes might be turned to much better account; and it is a benefit to the servant that a mistress throw on her as much management and responsibility as possible. Her character and status are thereby improved as long as she continues a servant; and they prepare her, should she leave that position, for the better management of her own home, and for the better discharge of any other duties she may undertake.

Lastly, the class of domestic servants suffers a good deal from want of an organisation for their efficient training. It would lead us too far into technical details to discuss the best means of remedying the defect; but the following quotation pictures the evil very truthfully:—

“ In respect of our female servants there is a lamentable want of training. Every girl thinks she is qualified for domestic service, without any sort of special education. The consequence of this assumption is that she commonly fails. She goes from place to place; makes for herself no standing anywhere; never improves, but remains as ignorant and awkward in her last place as in her first. . . . To the householder these frequent changes are inconvenient, but to the servant they are fatal.

“So long as there are thousands of incompetent young women seeking service, such service will be obtained at a low rate of wages. But if girls were trained for domestic servants, as boys are trained to become carpenters or shoemakers, they would carry, not the raw material of work, but skilled labour into the market, and be able to demand a higher price for their service.”\*

## § 7.

It remains for us to consider the last group into which we divided female occupations—that of textile and other manufactures, on the one hand; and agricultural and mining labour, on the other. The particulars of the group are as follows:—

## GROUP V.

*Women above 20 years of age engaged in Manufactures, Agricultural Labour, &c.*

	1851.	1861.	
(1) Textile Manufactures:—			
Cotton . . . . .	143,264	186,034	
Woollen . . . . .	67,757	72,921	
Silk . . . . .	53,629	51,051	
Flax and Linen . . . . .	31,589	26,818	
Lace . . . . .	33,210	31,954	
Straw . . . . .	15,874	49,585	
Hair, Fur, Hemp, Paper, Fustian, Muslin, Calico, &c. . . . .	39,198		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	384,521		418,363

\* *North British Review*, February, 1857.



	1851.	1861.
Brought forward . . . . .	384,521	418,363
(2) Mechanical Arts . . . . .	11,617	27,046
Working in Earthenware . . . . .	8,080	} 32,765
Working in Iron and Steel . . . . .	4,986	
Working in Brass . . . . .	12,165	
Working in Gold, Silver, &c. . . . .	2,362	
	39,210	
(3) Mines . . . . .	6,737	59,811
(4) Agricultural Labour :—		
Dairy Women, &c. . . . .	63,538	} 110,216
Out-door Labourers . . . . .	56,338	
Engaged about animals . . . . .	1,055	
Labourers (branch not de- fined) . . . . .	7,442	
	128,373	
Total . . . . .	558,841	588,390

Of the group presented in this table, therefore, nearly four-fifths consist of women employed in the textile manufactures.

[Factory labour has for many years formed the subject of legislative attention; and various enactments are in force regulating the sanitary condition of factories, restricting the hours of work for women and young persons, and enforcing, in the latter, a certain amount of education.] Whether these enactments be regarded in themselves, or as the earnest of further legislative protection against competition in industry, carried so far as to ruin the workman that would desire to maintain a respectable status for himself and his family, they are invaluable. [They keep the status of the workman from sinking below what can be tolerated in a

healthy community; they preserve children from enervation by early labour, an evil in the factory system the exposure of which, about 1840, so shocked public feeling; and they give woman a chance of knowing the comfort of home, and of learning to make home comfortable to others. This best security for self-respect, for the domestic comfort of her relatives, for the wholesome upbringing of her children, is surely worth some little sacrifice;—were it even to heighten to a certain extent the price of labour and the cost of production, society would get more than value for the difference in the elevation of the working classes. Till lately, indeed, the Factory Acts were restricted in their application, omitting many important branches of industry, where women and young people were exposed to the evils these Acts had in view to remedy. The propriety of widening their application, however, has already received and still receives the attention of the Legislature.

It is noticeable that, with exception of the woollen cloth manufacture, there is a somewhat larger number of women above the age of 20 employed in textile manufactures, than there are men of the same age so employed; hence, towns and large villages in which these manufactures are located, give employment, not only to women of families belonging to the manufacturing population, but to women of the artisan and labouring classes generally; so much so,

that in the localities in question there is ample work for the whole female industrial population. About 42 per cent. of women above the age of 20, are either unmarried or widowed; and in manufacturing towns, the number of women returned as engaged in industry on their own account, bears about the same proportion to the whole female population of the same age. In Manchester, for example, according to the Census of 1841 (which gives the return in a more accessible form), while the whole female population, above the age of 20, numbered 72,900, of which 3200 were of independent means, there were 26,400 returned as engaged in industrial occupations. The same thing is shown in other manufacturing towns; and we may conclude that occupation is there readily found by all women of the working classes, not having a settlement in life otherwise.

In manufacturing towns, therefore, there is full employment for women; nor does it appear that they are there exposed to any large influx of their own sex from rural districts, or even from other towns, to compete with them for employment,—as in certain towns country-born women compete with the town-born for domestic service. It is in manufacturing towns alone that the balance of the sexes maintains a normal ratio, as shown by the statistics of married and single for various towns given some pages back. True, there

appears to be an interchange of population between localities of textile manufacture on the one hand, and localities of mining and metal manufacture on the other; these branches of industry being frequently seated in towns, of the same district, only a small way removed from each other. This interchange produces a preponderance of the female sex in towns of textile manufacture, and a preponderance of the male sex in mining and metal districts; but the preponderance is not very great on either side, although observably greater in 1861 than in 1851. The fluctuation in the factory population is entirely of another sort, depending on the rise or fall of prosperity in the several branches of trade, causing occasional migration from town to town in search of employment; but in general, the manufacturing population remains within itself a distinct body, enlisting in its ranks the female population not otherwise provided for within towns in which the trade is located, but free from a competing supply of labour from rural districts and non-manufacturing towns. Factory work, indeed, requires a training found only in those that have spent their early years in its *foci*.

Looking at these results, the question occurs,—Does then the factory woman labour under any depressing influences at all?

The answer need not be long looked for. From jealousy and other causes, to be more fully enquired

into afterwards, she is restricted to the meaner sort of work and may not rise above it. She competes not with labourers around her of a different occupation; not, or at least not disadvantageously, with women of her own age in the same occupation; but *the adult woman competes with the young, the young with the adult*; and there can be no form of competition more depressing and injurious. The wages and the qualifications of the adult are kept at the level of the wages and the qualifications of the mere apprentice; under it the factory woman must ever remain at the bottom of the scale of employment.

Moreover, the factory woman suffers from want of social protection. No one around has an interest to befriend her. It is her employer's interest to keep down her wages. The men of her own rank are jealous of her competition with them; the overseers and higher workmen are especially jealous, lest in any department she rise to their place. To whom in these circumstances ought she to look for help and encouragement? To a higher industrial rank, to women of the middle classes, if she could but enlist their regard, if she could but feel that they had a place in the same industrial world with herself; but at present her struggles to better her position are looked on by women of these ranks with indifference, and even dislike.

Nor, limited to the lowest mechanical occupations

and surrounded by unfriendly agencies, can the factory woman befriend herself; she cannot shake off the unfair competition with the young, the uneducated, and the unprincipled, to which she is exposed; she cannot rise from the dead level of the crowd; and the absence of all hope of bettering her condition, and of all encouragement and aid from women of a higher rank, leaves her little motive to maintain even self-respect, and places her at the mercy of pressure and temptation.

These considerations call for more lengthened attention than can be given in this chapter, and will be reverted to in our next.

While, according to the Census of 1851, about one-seventh of the married, and three-fourths of the unmarried and widowed, were returned as engaged in industry or as possessed of independent means, the proportions were slightly larger in towns of textile manufacture. In Manchester, Stockport, and other towns of the cotton district, the proportion of adult married women returned as engaged in industry, or otherwise occupying an independent position, was one-fourth (in 1861 a third); while of adult unmarried women, from seven-eighths to nine-tenths were so returned. In flax and woollen districts the employments open to women are more limited, from one-fifth to one-sixth of adult married women,

and from one-half to two-thirds of adult unmarried women being returned in 1851 as engaged in industry. In the lace districts, again, the proportion is very high, two-fifths of the adult married women, and nine-tenths of the adult unmarried, being returned as engaged in industry; doubtless, owing to the circumstance that so much lace-work may be carried on at home, without disturbing domestic arrangements. In the silk and ribbon districts, the proportion is highest of all; in Coventry no less than *two-thirds of the adult married women*, and nine-tenths of the adult unmarried, being so engaged. Similar proportions are shown in the census of 1861.

Evidently the lace and silk manufactures are, from their peculiar nature, exceptional; and although, in the great cotton, woollen, and flax manufactures, the number of *married* women engaged in industry is slightly above the average for Great Britain, it must not be forgotten that, in that *average* are included agricultural, mining, and metal districts, and seaports, in all which there is little employment for women; and that, when towns of textile manufacture are compared with other towns presenting a fair opening for female industry, as fashionable, professional, and county towns, there is no contrast presented unfavourable to the former. In Bath, for instance, in 1851, one-fifth of the adult married women, and nine-

tenths of the adult unmarried, were engaged in industry; and the same proportions obtained in Bristol, Clifton, Cheltenham, and London itself.

It is a fashion with women of the better ranks, to despise women of the working classes engaged in industry, and especially women engaged in factory work—an occupation they are pleased to suppose to be degrading in the extreme.

We have already asked what the women now engaged in factory work would be, into what moral condition they would be thrown, were that employment withdrawn; but, besides, a comparison of the female factory population even with the favoured class of domestic servants, provided we take, not selected specimens of the latter, but the whole body, will be to the advantage of the former. It is manifestly unjust to put the worst of the factory population in contrast with the domestic servant as familiarly known to most of us, that is, the domestic servant found in families having a position above the average in comfort or culture; to hold the balance even, we must weigh class against class, the best of one against the best of the other, the worst of one against the worst of the other; the whole of the one against the whole of the other. We venture then to say, that in the class of factory workers, especially in towns where the trade has been long established, will be found a grade equal, if not superior, to the best grade of domestic servants; and turning to the lower



end of the scale, and comparing the worst with the worst, we find the following statistics:—First, that by the census of 1851 (and the same holds good of the census of 1861), while on the average for Great Britain, 1 out of 165 women was an inmate of the workhouse, the proportion of inmates from women engaged in textile manufactures was far less than the average, while the proportion of inmates from the class of domestic servants was considerably above the average; Second, that, arranging the counties of England according to the proportion born by the number of paupers relieved to the population of the county, the manufacturing districts occupy a middle place in the scale; Third, that by the census of 1851 and 1861, the proportion of women in prison belonging to occupations of textile manufacture, was less than the proportion of women in prison who had been in domestic service; and, Fourth, though we cannot refer to statistics on the point, we believe it to be a fact, that the proportion of domestic servants becoming inmates of Magdalen asylums, is larger than the proportion of factory women becoming inmates there. These statistics may be at variance with prevalent notions; but, as we have said, a fallacy is usually committed, in comparing the worst of the factory population with the best of the class of domestic servants. A large number of domestic servants are referable to a scale sufficiently low; while the

mass of factory workers form a steady and well-doing community.

Another common remark about factory women is, that they have no opportunity of learning household economy; that they have no idea of domestic comfort, or of the management of children; that thus, as wives, they drive their husbands to the gin-shop, and, as mothers, rear their children in squalor and in the road to vice. The remark by no means applies to the factory population as a whole, but undoubtedly designates a section of it. It is, however, an easy way of dealing with an evil affecting a section of a class, to denounce that class wholesale. Neither can the employment of women in factories be abolished, nor is it desirable that it should be abolished; nor is the evil in question found exclusively in a section of the factory population; for it affects the working and lower classes generally, and most of all those districts where there is little or no opening for female industry.\* In colliery districts, mining districts, seaport towns without fisheries, and hamlets for agricultural labourers where women have little

\* "It is a great honour and pleasure to be usefully employed, and a great disgrace to be idle and useless. Some young people may be seen, day after day, idly strolling about the streets, doing no good to any body, but learning every kind of mischief and wickedness. How much better is it to be at work in the factory . . . . Suppose all the idle people were sent out of the country; who would miss them for any good they do? But if all the industrious young people who work in the factories, potteries, &c., were sent out of the country, it would be a real loss."—*Religious Tract Society.—The Young Women of the Factory.*

employment, one finds more squalor, ignorance, and dissipation than in manufacturing towns where employment for women is abundant. [Let society, then, address itself to the real difficulty, and endeavour to devise a remedy for the real evil it has to deal with. It is above all a woman's question; and we venture to say the solution lies to the women of the middle classes. When women of the middle ranks have established for every few streets a room where women of the working classes may be taught a few simple lessons in cookery, in mending, cleanliness, and nursing; when women of the middle ranks, in place of the present *dilettante* mode of dealing with the working classes, either train themselves at a normal school to be able to instruct their sisters of a humbler rank in the duties of domestic economy, or get others to train themselves for the duty; then, and only then, having done their part, can women of the middle ranks cast a stone at the shortcomings of the ranks beneath them.] We are glad to add that of late years, and since the time when this treatise first appeared, a marked improvement is observable in the quality of the ministrations of women of the middle ranks in aid of the poorer classes, in many and by no means isolated instances realising to the full all we have here advocated.

The number of women engaged in other manufactures than the textile is comparatively small.

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As already indicated, towns that are *foci* of the metallic arts, do not afford full employment for their female population, and, when there are textile districts in near proximity, give off to these a part of that population; metallic work also draws from the latter towns a certain number of the male sex. In Wolverhampton, for example, there were in 1851, 29,648 men above the age of twenty, to 26,341 women above that age (in 1861, 41,831 men to 32,451 women); and the disproportion was even larger when the number of the unmarried are contrasted: there were, in the same district in 1851, 9429 unmarried men above the age of twenty, to 5201 unmarried women above that age, and in 1861, 9019 unmarried men above twenty, to 6211 unmarried women. Wolverhampton is an extreme case; but all towns devoted to metal work show to some extent the same features.

In these towns, few women, and *a fortiori* few married women, are engaged in independent industry; in Wolverhampton, in 1851, one-eighteenth of the adult married women, and three-fourths of the adult unmarried, were so engaged; in 1861, one seventh of the married women and nearly three-fourths of the unmarried. In Walsall and Dudley (1851 and 1861), one-seventh of the adult married, and three-fourths of the adult unmarried; in Rotherham, in 1851, one-twentieth of the married, and two-thirds of the unmarried, and in 1861 one-tenth and two-thirds respectively.

Although in towns of metal manufacture, few married women are returned as engaged in industry—there is nevertheless prevalent there, a system of domestic manufacture, by means of which women participate in industry to a greater extent than is shown in the returns. The staple manufactures of these towns not being aggregated in factories, but admitting of being carried on on a small scale at home, both sexes and all ages take part in them, as is well illustrated in button making, and other extensive branches of trade in Birmingham.

There are drawbacks attending this domestic system, that are apt to run into abuse and to bring it into discredit. They are summed up in this, that the system is removed from the protection afforded by laws similar to those by which the factory system is now regulated. The work is too often carried on in ill-ventilated rooms, and there is no restriction to the age of the young employed, or to the number of work-hours per day; in short, the domestic system of manufacture is exposed to the same abuses as the factory system was exposed to, before enactments were passed to regulate the latter. Rather, however, than discourage the domestic system of manufacture, we would endeavour to improve it by providing against its abuses; it were a boon, not only to this mode of industry, but to industry in general, were the Factory Acts made universally applicable. We should thus

preserve, and we hope extend, the domestic system of labour. For, under it, woman enjoys an equality and freedom of condition, found only elsewhere in the relation of the sexes in the better grades of the rural population; she can take part in the common industry on which the livelihood of the family depends; she can join man in daily labour on a footing of companionship; industry is regarded as a branch of domestic life in which all the family feel an interest, and which woman in an especial manner may take pride in forwarding; just as the wife of the farmer or cottar takes pride in adding from the produce of her dairy, or from her fleeces, or from her plot of flax, her quota to the support or comfort of the family. The smallness of the scale, too, on which domestic manufacture is usually conducted, is in the present position of woman more adapted to her limited experience, and homely notions. We should rejoice, therefore, to see domestic industry holding its ground; although certainly, in rivalry with the factory or large establishment system, its prospects are at present not very encouraging.

It is a striking circumstance that in the towns now under consideration, where there seems to be, as we have said, less opening for female industry than elsewhere, we nevertheless find women occasionally occupying more important situations of trust and management than elsewhere; in Birmingham, for instance, in particular

branches of the button manufacture, and in other manufactures of that town, women are frequently seen in charge of departments of the work as overseers, and in receipt of high weekly wages. Why, in Birmingham more than elsewhere, should women be admitted to situations of trust and management? Is it from the circumstance that there they have been trained under the domestic system of work so favourable to the development of their capabilities; and that, from themselves and society becoming thus habituated to their enjoyment of a free and equal position, they are enabled on entering a larger establishment to assume a place, for which women otherwise brought up would not be found qualified?

In *mining*, the number of women employed are few, thanks to the legislative restrictions that became necessary to check the abuses attending their employment in this branch of labour.

Of the women above the age of twenty engaged in *agricultural labour*, about one-half are dairy-women; of whom we need say nothing here, as their case was anticipated by our remarks on rural life in general, and on domestic service. The remainder of the group is chiefly composed of out-door labourers.

Having already seen how large a number of women born in rural districts, are preferred as domestic servants, both in town and in the country, we cannot be surprised

that so few are left to form the lowest rank in rural labour specially so called. Women employed at out-door agricultural work are, indeed, for the most part widows in destitute circumstances, and young women whom their parents did not put out for domestic service. They were probably required at home, and remained there till beyond an age to acquire steady industrial habits. Notwithstanding the sparseness of the female population in rural districts, the condition of the female out-door labourer is rude in the extreme; and the scale of her remuneration, except in the harvest months, wretched. Indeed, whether old or young, she too frequently resorts to industry but to eke out an allowance from the parish.

In the course of our remarks, we have had small occasion to speak of seaport towns; we may add, therefore, that in them the opening for the industrial occupation of women is at a minimum. In Newcastle, Sunderland, and Tynemouth, from a third to a fifth only of the adult unmarried, and scarcely any married women, were engaged in 1851 in independent occupations. In 1861, however, the proportions had considerably increased, viz. to two-thirds of the unmarried, and one-ninth to one-sixteenth of the married. In the limited employment for women, and especially in the almost total absence of married women from the lists of industry, sea-port towns rank with mining villages, agricultural hamlets, and towns of metal manufacture.



Those who would attribute the slatternly habits they are pleased to attach to factory women, to the enlarged place these occupy in non-domestic industry, would do well to weigh these facts. Are the wives of miners, sailors, and metal-founders so superior in housewifery to the wives of cotton and flax spinners? are their homes more comfortable, or their families better brought up? It is rather, we suspect, the other way; and we cannot therefore avoid our conclusion, that the defective notions of domestic comfort in the minds of the lower classes are attributable, not to the employment of women in industry, but to the failure on the part of society, and especially on the part of women of the better classes, to provide for their sisters of a humbler rank, the means of acquiring the rudiments of knowledge and the art of making their homes comfortable.

### § 8.

By the census of 1841, the number of women, twenty years of age and upwards, then engaged (in Great Britain) in independent occupations, is returned as 1,604,101; while by the census of 1851, the number of women of the same age similarly engaged was 2,153,924; and in 1861, 2,496,166: these figures including, in both cases, women returned as possessed of independent means. The total female population of adult years for the same periods, was—

For 1841	.	.	.	.	.	5,280,039
For 1851	.	.	.	.	.	5,998,384
For 1861	.	.	.	.	.	6,666,715

In other words, while the female population has increased in the ratio of 7 to 8 for the former period and 10 to 11 for the latter, the number of women returned as engaged in independent industry, has increased in the greater ratios of 3 to 4 and 7 to 8 respectively.

The difference in these proportions ought to represent a large increase, absolutely and relatively, in the industrial employment of women; but the reader has been already warned not to regard the increase as so large as the figures would imply. The two earlier census especially having been compiled on different principles, a comparison of a given item of the one with what appears the corresponding item of the other, is almost certain to mislead. In 1841, for instance, under "Lodging and Boarding House Keepers," 8882 women above twenty were returned; in 1851, under "Lodging House Keepers," there are returned 20,070; the millinery classes are represented to have increased from 159,101 to 388,302; the laundresses from 49,001 to 136,582; the number of female shopkeepers has been quadrupled; in short, we feel satisfied that a certain share of the apparent increase in female employments must be ascribed to variation in the principles on which the returns are compiled. Nevertheless, that there has

been a substantial increase in the industrial employment of women cannot admit of doubt. In the comparison exhibited in the following occupations, there is much less room for error than in the returns of the occupations already referred to. Women above the age of twenty engaged in :—

	1841.	1851.	1861.
Domestic service . . . . .	562,392	664,467	779,051
Textile manufacture, about . . . . .	230,000	380,000	418,000

On the whole, therefore, we may safely conclude that woman's position in the industrial world *is rapidly widening.*

In taking leave of the census, we cannot but complain of the ill-advised arrangement on which some of the occupations are classified. One important object of the Population Tables is to afford the means of comparing the condition of the people in one decade with their condition in another ; but to effect this, some uniformity of plan is indispensable ; not that an old or an imperfect system should be adhered to for ever ; but in making improvements, the old landmarks should be preserved so as to enable the traveller to mark his distances. The compilers of the census of 1851 and 1861 evidently entertained schemes of perfection for their great work ; but, in spite of their good intention, we must often dispute their judgment. We miss much of the useful and ready information afforded by the abstracts of 1841 ; and are

baulked in our desire to trace the movements of the population by comparing the one with the other. Of the whimsical points of classification in the census of 1851, take the following illustrations:—The reader's curiosity is excited on observing that a certain percentage of women are returned as "Persons in the learned professions (with their immediate subordinates), either filling public offices or in private practice;" but is wofully disappointed when he finds that these learned females are pew-openers! He desires to know the number of shopkeepers, but must range the whole tables for them from head to foot, picking out here and picking out there. And, when wishing to trace the well defined and important class of operatives engaged in textile manufacture, he finds, to his astonishment, one branch classed with butchers and cow-keepers, because they alike "work and deal in *animal* matters!" another branch classed with bakers, corn-merchants, beer-sellers, and grocers, because they alike "work and deal in *vegetable* matters!" In short, instead of the occupations of the people being arranged for or by a political economist desiring to study the various *social organisms*, they appear to be adjusted by some naturalist desirous to study the animal and vegetable kingdoms, whose classifications are, for purposes of political economy, about as useful as would have been an arrangement of the population according to the colour of their hair

or the shape of their feet. The harm of all this is the greater that it affects, not only the present returns, but indirectly both past and future returns; since, for the purpose of comparison with the past or with the future, many abstracts of the census of 1851 are next to useless. In the census of 1861, proprietors of houses (of whom are some 24,000 women above twenty) are classed, not with proprietors of land and annuitants, but as "persons engaged in art and mechanical productions," presumably because a house is a mechanical production!

In the census of 1851 there are also many discrepancies in the figures and summations. In one table are columns that profess to give summations of details in other tables; but, if you take the trouble to sum the latter for yourself, they almost never correspond with the former, and the discrepancy (as in the number of domestic servants) sometimes amounts to many hundreds.

As may be supposed, therefore, in digesting the tables given for 1851 in this and the preceding Chapter, elementary though these are, much needless trouble stood in the way. Very seldom indeed was the grouping presented by the census of any use whatever; fresh classifications had to be made, fresh proportions struck; and on proceeding to check or verify these, discrepancies in the figures constantly threw the calculation out. In the census of 1861 no trouble was experienced from this cause.

## CHAPTER X.

AGENCIES DEPRESSING THE CONDITION OF WOMEN OF THE WORKING  
CLASSES ENGAGED IN INDUSTRY.

## § 1.

IN the two preceding Chapters we attempted an analysis of the occupations of women belonging to the labouring classes, and indicated, as we proceeded, the mode in which the exclusion of the sex from the better-paid and more responsible departments of industry operates in lowering their status and their comforts. The depression, as will have been observed, though assuming various forms, is referable to two main sources—the exclusion from industry of the women of the middle ranks, and the restriction of women of the labouring classes to the more servile and worst-paid occupations. We will in the present Chapter reconsider more particularly the mode in which these depressing agencies operate.

In the first place, the exclusion of women of the middle classes from industry, places the unoccupied and otherwise valueless time of these in direct competition with

that labour on which the subsistence of women of the working classes depends ; a competition, as we have seen, most strikingly exemplified in needle-work, and also sufficiently observable in the extent to which women of the middle ranks do the work of upper servants. The women of the middle ranks thus hinder women of lower ranks from entering on the full responsibilities of these occupations, and from enjoying the increased remuneration attached to trust and skill ; they throw on women of the labouring ranks merely the drudgery of the work ; and as needle-work and domestic service are at present the species of work recognised as most suitable or proper for women even sprung from the labouring classes, the competition referred to is the more to be regretted. It would be too much, perhaps, to expect that women of the middle ranks should throw themselves entirely into idleness, in order to relieve the pressure caused by their interference with the occupations of the labouring classes ; till their time can be employed to greater advantage, things must remain as they are ; but it is desirable that a more suitable occupation were found for them, that division of labour should find place in female society more than it at present does, and that the regular employments now open to milliners, domestic servants, and others, should be relieved from an unfair and destructive rivalry.

By reason, too, of the exclusion of women of the middle ranks from industry, women of the labouring classes want the countenance of a higher class of their own sex, who would possess in some degree the same interests with their sisters of a lower rank. This remark may not apply to the case of domestic servants, whose relations with their mistresses are sufficiently intimate; but, with that exception, women of the working classes engaged in industry, find themselves cut off from the kindness of the better ranks; and as from their condition they really stand in need of help and encouragement, this want is the more serious. A young man in a humble rank, if he show himself possessed of good parts, has a fair chance of being noticed and receiving encouragement; nay, a deserving and clever lad may gain the personal confidence of his master, be admitted to his friendship, and sometimes into his society. It is not so with women; the factory worker has no chance of being noticed but with an evil eye; no chance of receiving encouragement or sympathy but at the staff-end of an Act of Parliament. There is none of her own sex above her possessing a knowledge of the industry she is engaged in, to whom she can look for example or guidance, who might encourage and bring her forward, with whom, as with a superior, she might occasionally associate. With the female sex ranks do



not insensibly run into each other ; each does not afford encouragement and companionship to that below.

Another mode in which we found that the exclusion of women of the better ranks from industry, depresses the industrial condition of women belonging to the lower ranks is, that when by any chance a woman of the working ranks does undertake business of the better sort—if, for instance, on being left a widow with a family to support, she finds the earnings of ordinary female industry insufficient, and attempts something better (as to open a shop),—she is placed at great disadvantage ; for, woman having at present no recognised position in the better grades of the industrial world, these being entirely in the hands of men, it is difficult for her to maintain the relations with commerce necessary for the proper conduct of business. Had women of the middle ranks already a footing in industry, this commercial isolation of women of the lower ranks would be far less felt.

## § 2.

Not only is the workwoman deprived of the encouragement and social sympathy which she would derive from the presence of women of the middle ranks in industry, but she is herself precluded from the hope

of rising by means of her own exertions from the subordinate position she at present occupies into a higher industrial rank. This forms the first depressing agency attending the exclusion of workwomen themselves from the better grades of industry.

It is a dangerous thing, no doubt, to excite the ambition of a class to rise into the comforts and power of a class above it; for it is to excite an ambition that can never be universally gratified, only a few members of the class having the ability or the opportunity necessary for success. It is, however, equally bad to restrict a whole class to its conventional place; and prevent the rise into a higher rank, of any members of it, whose energy and intelligence enable them to effect the change. Such a restriction must, on the whole, deprive that class of much of its spirit, lowering the tone, not only of the members of it who might have risen to a better status, but indirectly of all others. For the superior members of a class who struggle to rise in the end above it, are not alone benefited by their enterprise; they give a stimulus to others of a kindred spirit, are looked up to as superior companions, and maintain a standard in their class which elevates and encourages all.

It is well known that without scope and opportunity the energies lie dormant; and such we believe to be pre-eminently the case with respect to woman. She is

not allowed to rise from the meaner ranks of industry ; and, as is to be expected, she moderates her desires accordingly ; like other machines, she just performs her work mechanically, as a matter of routine, without intelligence and without spirit. } It is not so with the other sex ; if a man is possessed of intelligence and energy, they show themselves, and he has an ambition to take that place in the industrial ranks for which he is most fitted. It is not always that his ambition meets with the success he imagines his due, but the disappointment he feels itself shows the pride and energy of his nature. With woman there is not place even for disappointment.

But we must not confine our view to the present want of opportunity for woman to rise above the industrial sphere of the labouring classes ; she cannot even attain her proper level within that sphere. A familiar example, as well as the most common form of this injustice, is her exclusion even from subordinate offices of skill, trust, or management. As already said, this is not true of domestic service—though even there far less trust is placed in woman than might be ;—but, in other employments open to the female sex, as factory and artisan labour even in their humblest branches, situations of skill, trust, or management, are seldom or never given to women.

Nothing is more effectual in producing abjectness of

spirit than confinement to a mean and servile condition. The character is formed without the intelligence and energy that accompany a sense of responsibility. There is no inward stimulus to the faithful and willing performance of the work engaged in ; it is done, as in slave labour, with slovenliness and eye-service ; and this slovenliness extends by sympathy over the whole character. It is in doing our work well, and in the motive to gain a comfortable livelihood thereby, that we commonly learn self-respect ; and this is especially the case at entry on adult life, when men of every rank begin to feel the responsibility of their situation, and the necessity of diligence and application to business. If the future is at all hopeful, this feeling of responsibility, and a corresponding trust placed in it by society, are great encouragements to do well, and carry us through many difficulties. But the tedium and servile drudgery of the occupations open to women, chime in so ill with a generous impulse, the success they can look forward to is so inconsiderable, and the value placed by their employers on their character so small, that it is difficult for them to acquire self-respect, and neither in the present nor in the future can they find a strong motive to well-doing.

In the industry at present open to woman, she in the first few years of her employment has acquired all the

skill and experience she will ever have need for ; and she is left without a motive to further improvement. Of what use is further improvement, if no value is put on it by others,—if it go for nothing in the labour market? Experience, maturity of judgment, tried steadiness of character, would not at present serve to better her condition ; with them, as without them, she would still be debarred from occupations of trust or skill ; would still be confined to the same servile drudgery. These prized attainments of adult life are in woman a drug in the market, and worse than useless. Accordingly, in the less favourably situated of the labouring classes they are seldom found.

That women in many departments of industry should have so little scope for the development of trustworthiness of character and the other tried qualities of mature life, must leave them both socially and individually in the lowest scale. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to estimate the beneficial effects that would follow the removal of this source of depression. A few appointments of women of the industrial ranks to situations of trust and management, would give encouragement to the whole class. They would no longer feel that society ignored the better principles of action within them, or refused them fair play ; those having fitting qualities would acquire habits of responsibility ; encouragement

would be given to perseverance and well-doing ; feelings of self-respect would be implanted ; and the whole class would be elevated with the more deserving members of it. The worth of their class once appreciated socially, they would appreciate it themselves.

One very direct consequence of the little value in which the experience and trustworthiness of adult life are held in the labour market, is that adult life is thereby placed on a level in point of wages with raw and inexperienced youth. In so far as the work hitherto open to woman is merely mechanical and routine, and even where its chief requirement is light manual dexterity (which is the great requirement in most occupations open to woman in factory and artisan industry), the work can be as well done by a girl of fifteen as by a woman of forty—nay, better, as the body is more agile in youth than in age. Experience, intelligence, trustworthiness, earn no wages, are worse than profitless. This, in so far as true, is sufficiently disappointing ; and in many branches of labour it is strictly true. Often, too, the girl, that the adult woman is thrown into competition with, may reside with her parents ; and may thus be in a position to compete with the adult for less wages than is actually required for her support—her earnings being merely thrown into the common stock of the family, while those of the adult cannot be so eked out. We do

not mean to say that practically the competition has this extreme and ruinous result ; it must, however, have a considerable influence in depressing wages—more especially as the want of organization and of a standard of living in the female labouring population, disables them from resisting even a feeble competition. The adult man who has a family to support, earns sufficient wages to enable him to do so, in spite of the competition of the young and unmarried of his own sex. He maintains his standard of living ; and the wages of the young rise to that of the old, in place of the latter falling to the former. But in the case of adult woman we fear it is the reverse ; and that the wages of the old tend to sink to the level of those of the young. This is partly owing, no doubt, to the majority of women engaged in work being young, but partly, also, to the fact that the tried character and experience of age are of no value to woman in the labour market ; and that thus the standard of living of the adult woman of the working classes engaged in independent industry has not yet risen above the lowest.

### § 3.

The strikes of workmen are feared ; those of work-  
women are laughed at. Yet a strike is almost the only

means of asserting a social right that is at present open to work-people. It is a desperate resort, mostly suicidal, as the conflict is unequal; but the motives of it are frequently just; and though often, like other battles, fatal to one or other of the combatants, it is sometimes no less necessary to the independence and self-respect even of the vanquished. But why should this last protest, open to women of the labouring classes, be held of so small consideration?

The answer is, that women have not organized themselves into a class; that society has not recognized them as a part of itself, with duties and rights of their own.

A general class feeling is desirable on many accounts. In a body having common interests, it serves the same office as public opinion to the whole community. It represents for the most part a juster feeling than would pervade individuals singly, and raises a general standard to which all are expected to conform. It secures a joint resistance for protection of the body, and leaders to guide and represent it. It strengthens by union the influence of the class on other parts of society, and watches that its claims be not overlooked. Comparing the slave with the free labourer, one characteristic difference is, that society scarcely recognized the former as a part of itself, any more than the ox that browsed on the fields or tilled their corn land; or else political care



was directed not to his amelioration, but to his repression: his class was allowed no organization. Had it been otherwise, slavery would have soon come to an end. The workman of modern times is otherwise placed. He has fought his way into the social fabric, by accumulating his earnings, by organization, by education, by self-respect. Woman has yet to achieve this freedom.

No doubt the attempt by women of the labouring classes to gain a social position, will, like their helpless "strikes," be jeered by the sans-culottes, and looked coldly on by the respectable; but the desired change may be quietly brought about. Every instance where a woman of the working classes is placed in a situation of skill or trust, tends to raise her whole class; and a similar effect would follow the admission into industry of women of the middle ranks; the social recognition these would necessarily receive, and the respect due to their status, would naturally be extended to women of the lower ranks engaged in the same industry.\*

\* In further illustration of the evils suffered from want of organization, take the following quotation:—

"What is wanted in all large towns is a well-understood and readily accessible channel of communication between those who have work to be done, and those who desire to do it. . . . The seamstress is compelled to betake herself to the middleman; for she knows where he is to be found. She knows where the great slop-shop stands at the corner of the street. She does not know that there is a kind lady still

## § 4.

We have seen that from the restriction of female labour to the more servile departments of industry, from injurious competition with the young, and from other causes, the wages earned even by the adult woman are reduced to the lowest scale; and with these small earnings she has too often little command even over the necessaries of life. Her food is scanty and innutritious; her wages are forestalled; her clothing for the week-day is pawned to relieve that for Sunday; she can only procure the shelter of a roof by clubbing with a few of her companions to rent an attic room or a cellar.

In such poverty and with the social neglect attending it, it is vain to look for any thing like comfort. What home can have comfort or self-respect in it when the necessaries of life are wanting? Or can a woman in

nearer, who is ready to pay her double price for the same description of work. All this is the result of want of organization. . . . There is no possible reason why such a simple machinery as that now suggested should not act with efficiency, after a little time had been allowed to make it known. To the rich it would be a great convenience, to the poor a blessing past counting. . . . Moreover, by means of agencies of this description scattered over our large towns, a more equable diffusion of different descriptions of working power might be secured. . . . Workwomen would know the localities in which they would be most likely to obtain profitable employment."—*North British Review*, February, 1857.

such circumstances learn to make a home comfortable to others? She cannot have saving habits, for scanty earnings do not admit of saving; and if a woman have children depending on her, she wants the satisfaction of being able to support them. The small luxuries that mollify life are unknown; and in old age she must look forward to the harsh relief of the workhouse—doled out unwillingly, and clutched with the fierceness of want.

It is seldom that so cheerless a lot can be borne without a reaction of nature, and single labouring women are exposed to that reaction in all its power. The limbs get cramped in the long hours of their monotonous employment; the head dizzies, the blood fevers, in their crowded and ill-ventilated workrooms. In the general abnegation of their life, temptations have a power they can scarcely resist. With neither home nor hope, with no world of her own sex to guard her, no voice of education within, no comfort or happiness to gain or to lose—is it wonderful that these temptations frequently overcome her?

At present, too, it is impossible for a woman to save money. It is with difficulty she can provide even for the physical wants of the day; she cannot lay by enough to meet the wants of old age; still less can she accumulate sufficient savings to enable

*although  
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her to improve her position. Occupations requiring capital, therefore, are, on this account alone, shut against her. A man can by care save money from the first, and by putting it to good account, or undertaking profitable employment, can rise to the rank that is the object of his ambition. He can from a small beginning reach at last a home filled with the comforts and the elegance at the command of a moderate fortune; can step by step acquire an increase of social respect, can do his turn for his fellow men, can educate his family, can himself enjoy every material or spiritual luxury. Man can call wealth his own—woman as yet cannot; she cannot compass the first step in the ladder; she must remain at the foot, a desolate and ill-paid governess, an overworked and consumptive milliner, an asthmatic factory worker, or a miserable pauper.

There will always be a class, both of the one sex and of the other, the wages of which will be at a minimum; but if our view of the industrial position of women in the labouring classes is correct (and it is in accordance with the general opinion on the subject), there is a disproportionate pressure on the earnings of women—they are too much huddled into the meanest employments.

## § 5.

We have now to speak of another evil to which women of the labouring classes engaged in industry are sometimes exposed—particularly sempstresses or slop workers in large towns—the temptation to eke out their earnings by the wages of prostitution,—and the competition to which the well-behaved are so exposed, with those who resort to this mode of eking out their livelihood. The evidence collected by Mr. Mayhew some years ago, and first given to the world in the *Morning Chronicle*, left a lasting impression on the public mind. The statements made by the unfortunates he examined, allowing only the amount of credence that is appropriate in the circumstances, show that a large proportion of the women of London living by needle and slop-work, are driven to the streets to eke out their means of livelihood. The wages of these branches of industry are too small of themselves to afford the means of living; and with women brought up as many in large towns have been, we cannot be unprepared for the result. “Many young girls at the shop advised me to do wrong; they told me how comfortable they were off; they said they could get plenty to eat and drink and good clothes. There is not one young girl as can get

her living by slop-work." Another says—"At times I was so badly off, me and my boy, that I was forced to resort to prostitution to keep us from starving—hundreds of married and single do the same thing as I do for the same reason." Another says—"I do the best I can with what little money I earn, and the rest I am obliged to go to the streets for. I can't get a rag to wear without going to prostitution for it. My wages will barely find me in food. The young and middle-aged all do the same as far as I know. There's good and bad in all; but with most of them I'm sure they're drove to it." Another says—"I was forced to go out of a night to make out my living. I had a child and it used to cry for food; so, as I could not get a living for him myself with my needle, I went into the streets and made out my living that way. In my heart I hated it; my whole nature rebelled at it; and nobody but God knows how I struggled to give it up. I was only able to do so by getting work at something that was better paid. Had I remained at shirt-making I must have been a prostitute to this day. I have taken my gown off my back and pledged it, and gone in my petticoat, as I had but one, rather than take to the streets again; but it was all in vain." Mr. Mayhew gives other evidence of like import, and concludes by saying—"They (the women examined by him) were unanimous in

declaring that a large number in the trade—probably one-fourth of the whole, or one half of those who have no husband or parent to support them—resorted to the streets to eke out a living. Accordingly, assuming the government returns to be correct, and that there are upwards of eleven thousand females under twenty living by needle and slopwork, the numerical amount of prostitution becomes awful to contemplate.” He does not speak of the number above that age.

Unchastity must not be confounded with prostitution for money. However common the former may be among the lower classes in town or country, for the most part it springs on neither side from mercenary motives; whether the result of lasting personal affection, or of a lighter liaison, it seldom adds to the pecuniary resources of women, and cannot therefore be regarded as an agency depressing wages.

Nor can the prostitutes Mr. Mayhew speaks of be the abandoned creatures that turn night into day, and waste their strength in riotous pleasure. A distinction must be drawn between creatures, who from an early age embraced that avocation as a channel of indulgence to their passions—as the only way in which they *could* steadily live, and the hard-working woman driven to it to eke out her earnings. The former cannot, will not work; and in the labour market can be no rival to any

one. It is when the work-woman herself resorts to this trade as a means of adding to the earnings of her daily industry, that we find a cause of depression to wages. If a section of the women of large towns engaged in certain descriptions of industry eke out their earnings by such means, they can afford to work at lower wages than are adequate to support them; and by the fall in wages so caused, the rest of their class are driven to the same resort.

If we were compelled to believe that this state of things is permanent—that, although the condition of the women of the industrial ranks were comparatively comfortable, many would still make gain of their unchastity, and so drive others of their class to the same resort—the prospect would be unsatisfactory enough; and honest women could only avoid a ruinous competition with such rivals in the labour market, by confining them through the force of public opinion to some particular trade or occupation—as of tap-waiting—leaving other occupations uncontaminated with their presence. But we do not believe such competition can be permanent. With the exception perhaps of a few trades, the competition of honest women with the wages of prostitution must be regarded as transitory. They have been driven to it solely by the lowness of wages, brought about by the depressing causes in the indus-



trial position of their sex. ✓ Reason tells us this, — it is incredible that the hard worker, were she able to gain a sufficiency by her industry, could subject herself to the disgusts and diseases of miscellaneous prostitution for money; and the conclusion is verified by experience. In provincial towns or rural districts, where there is not the same pressure on female industry as is characteristic of large towns—the competition in question does not occur. Unchastity for gain, when resorted to at all, is in ordinary circumstances the sole occupation of its devotee.

Besides, in proportion as the industrial status of women as a class is raised, they are enabled to maintain themselves to better advantage against the competition of an “unfair trader.” They raise the degraded to their own level, in place of being themselves dragged down to the level of the degraded.

### § 6.

But apart from the direct temptation to prostitution as a means of eking out a livelihood, we would make some general remarks on the influence exercised on personal morality by the restriction of women to the meanest descriptions of industry.

The almost universal prevalence of conjugal fidelity

among the labouring classes proves, that, wherever there is attained a standard of comfort and respectability, personal morality receives its due value; but in the present condition of women engaged in industry, it is difficult to acquire such a standard except under the marriage roof. If the position of women were such that, on entering the industrial world, they could feel that steadiness and trustworthiness would secure a measure of comfort and respectability, they would guard themselves far more against what would mar their prospects. But in most occupations at present open to women, little or no advance can be made beyond a drudgery and a pittance of wages that cannot save them from the poor's house. There is no allurements on the side of industry; the girl loses little when she leaves or is turned from her work, and has small inducement to return to it again. She inherits from her parents no high standard of living, and has no opportunity of acquiring such a standard of living for herself.

Intemperance in a young man destroys his prospects in much the same way as dissolute habits in a woman; and what for the most part keeps a man from that vice, or when it is gaining on him, saves him in time? Religion and good advice may be wanting neither to man nor to woman; but in addition to these, man feels he has a status to gain or lose; it is this that rouses

him to his last effort—he has to choose between the prospect of a happy fireside and a life of want and wretchedness — between the hope of success in life — enjoying the respect of his fellows, and a career ending with delirium tremens or the hulks. But what status can the labouring woman gain? Can *she* see a comfortable home before her if she only persevere? Give the working girl something to win by steadiness and perseverance, something to lose if she forget these, and she will look at life in a more serious light than she can do now. Then religion and principle will tell, thoughtless imprudence will be guarded against as in other ranks, and the more weighty temptations will be combatted bravely.

As another consequence of the restriction of women to the more servile parts of industry, young women engaged in it do not find themselves under the protection of their own sex. They are thrust into the world with no safeguard but their own prudence, with no one there of their sex to whom they can look up. But, were better descriptions of industry open to women, this would not be the case; for very soon women of the working classes would rise into situations of trust and responsibility, and a girl entering on industry under care of these, would find herself more protected, more at home; she would also have an example before her of what she might rise to if she also should persevere.

Moreover, if women of the middle ranks were admitted into industry, the young woman of the labouring classes would in their presence feel still greater security and independence ; and would be encouraged by their example and companionship to improve her standard of comfort and propriety. The mixing of women of the middle ranks in industry would also be of value, by placing in work-rooms, in the presence of the other sex, women of their own rank. The female sex is sufficiently dependent in its own place ; but under present arrangements, women employed in an industrial establishment are necessarily of a rank below that of men engaged in that establishment. They would feel more under protection were women of the middle classes also present among them ; and there would be thus afforded a natural check to impropriety. Young men thrown in the company of a girl of humbler rank would be led to protect her in place of misleading her. If they respect female character in the one rank, they will respect it also in the other.

The truth of these observations is illustrated in the case of female domestic servants. Their occupation affords them a prospect of future comfort if they persevere in well-doing ; they find themselves under the protection of women of their own rank who have risen to a responsible position, or they find themselves under the direct protection of their mistresses. Though as

much exposed to temptation as any other class, and even more so, yet the comforts they would lose by a lapse from propriety, the prospect of greater comfort before them, and the protection of their own sex in a better condition than they, are sufficient safeguards. The class of domestic servants is for the most part composed of women of respectable character. Exceptions do occur, but they do so for the most part when those safeguards are wanting—they are exceptions that prove the rule.

There is another annoyance work-women are exposed to, that is also pretty much attributable to the exclusion from industry of women of a better rank. When a shop-girl is sufficiently well-dressed, and sufficiently good-looking, she is stared at and run after by all married and unmarried rakes about town; and there being in industry no class of women of a better rank either to encourage her in well-doing or shame gentlemen of their own rank out of these indecencies, the inexperienced girl is flattered by the attraction, and like a moth, it may be, tumbles into the flame—sometimes to recover herself again, sometimes beyond recall. It is impossible, perhaps, that these things can ever be entirely prevented; but there is wanting that atmosphere of encouragement and protection that would be afforded by the admission into industry of educated and

respectable women, a change that would be so well calculated to diminish the evil.

Indeed, however, the whole of the discussion in the present section is invidious, and should not have been entertained but for the notions current on these subjects;—for where is the great purity of our sex that we should be entitled to sit in judgment on the chastity of women? It is time that women were emancipated from the bondage of forms that presuppose that they require in this respect to be fenced round with artificial barriers. Women are more chaste than men; let them then take care of themselves.

We hasten, therefore, to say in conclusion, that the remarks we have made on the influences affecting the morality of women, have reference only to a few years of youth—to the age extending from fifteen to twenty or twenty-one—that period weathered, the danger is past.

From the length at which we have spoken of the dangers besetting these few years, there is a risk that, important as they are, their importance may be over-rated. For what are they in a life of fifty to eighty years? In one sense, perhaps, everything, but in another sense, a very small part. From thirty to sixty adult years usually follow the short space during which it is necessary to exercise unusual care; and this long and most valuable part of woman's life ought to be more thought

of than it at present is. During these long years of adult life, it is arrant trifling to treat woman as if she were still a girl, and to make such an excuse for refusing her the social and individual justice to which she is entitled. She is by this time as well fitted as men for employments of trust and responsibility, is as much mistress of her own actions, and regards life in as serious a light. It is in these long years that the hardship of her position is most keenly felt and that it is, at the same time, least excusable.

## CHAPTER XI.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO THE  
HIGHER BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY.

## § 1.

WE now close our review of the position at present occupied by women in the middle and labouring ranks. We have found it attended with many evils, arising in the one case from the entire exclusion of women from industry, and in the other from their confinement to servile employments without opportunity of rising to situations of skill and trust. The remedy for these evils—or rather the natural means of preventing them—has been pointed out as we proceeded; but it still remains for us to direct attention to certain considerations regarding the practical form in which the remedy must be applied.

Our remarks will have reference in the first instance to the middle classes; and in their case we on the threshold meet with the question—to what extent are married women in a situation to undertake indus-



trial occupation? Is it proposed that that they should leave their children and their households to the management of servants, and join in the daily labour of the other sex?

Desirable as it may be that married women should share with the unmarried in non-domestic industry, and that they should remain throughout life under the same influences as the other sex in their own rank; yet the many impediments to such a step seem entirely to preclude it. Even supposing that the inconveniences of childbirth did not of themselves negative the proposal (and in certain ranks they are not considered to do so);\* it is nevertheless desirable that, where there is a young family, the mother should hold it her first duty to superintend personally their health and upbringing. Indeed to speak of being separated from her children would be regarded by her as sacrilege. We must therefore spare them her care.

The experience of the labouring classes points to the same conclusion. In these, women as a class have been admitted to independent industry; and their case is fitted to show whether practically it is found possible for the married to undertake a part in that sphere. Now,

\* Queen Isabella of Spain accompanied her army during her pregnancy; and in the humbler classes, where health and strength are abundant, parturition does not confine to a sick room but for a few days.

in the labouring classes, the mother of a young family, unless she is widowed and *must* work for her children and even for herself, does not as a general rule undertake non-domestic industry, but devotes herself entirely to the care of her children and to household duties. We are willing to accept this as a type of the normal condition of society under the full admission into industry of the female sex. In the middle, as in the labouring classes, notwithstanding the aid of domestic servants, superior domestic accommodation, and comparative shortness of business hours—a woman that is mother of a young family ought to undertake no occupation interfering with her duties to her children.

But in coming to this conclusion must we also give up all hope of attaining the objects so earnestly urged in preceding chapters—the assimilation of mental culture in the sexes, and all our other desiderata? If the majority of the female sex be precluded by the duties of maternity from entering on industrial pursuits, is it worth while disturbing present arrangements for the sake only of a few who are not mothers? Or can it be expected that much effect will follow from so limited a change?

The remedy, however, even were its operation restricted to admission into industry of the unmarried, and of those having no young children

requiring attention at home, is sufficiently broad to meet most of the evils of the present position of the female sex. For, in the first place, such a remedy would enable woman to earn a livelihood for herself in the event of marriage and relatives failing her; and would relieve her from the prejudicial influences of dependence on marriage as her only means of settlement in life. Such of the women of the middle ranks as might choose to earn a livelihood for themselves, or had no alternative but to do so, would find industrial occupations open to them suited to their status. In their case, therefore, would be realized the benefits that accompany assimilation of the culture of the sexes, and elevation in the position of women.

But an improvement in the position of unmarried women in the middle ranks that have no relatives to depend on, would have influence beyond that narrow limit; it would effect a change in the tone of female society generally. At present the status of the unmarried in these ranks is merged in that of the married; but if the unmarried enjoyed an independent status, this would be reversed. The unmarried woman would in such circumstances have a social position akin to that of man; taking a part in industry, and in social affairs, and having a corresponding influence on the ongoings of life. It cannot be doubted that the tone of female

society would be much altered by this new element ; that the culture so acquired by the unmarried would spread to the married, and would aid in assimilating the general culture of the sex to that of men in their own rank. Indeed, from her greater experience and independence, and the superior culture she would receive, the unmarried woman must enjoy the higher status, and influence the rest of female society accordingly. Indirectly, therefore, much of the benefits of the admission of women to industry, though directly confined to a few, would extend to all. The truth of this is shown in the case of the labouring classes. In these, as in the middle ranks, married women do not in general engage in industry ; the unmarried and widowed alone do so. Nevertheless, the admission of the latter is sufficient to give a tone essentially industrial to the whole class ; and though the majority of women in that, as in other classes, are married, yet it is the unmarried work-woman that gives her class its name, and its characteristic tone.

But again, the admission of women to industry in the restricted form contemplated, would not only supply a permanent provision for the unmarried, and through them indirectly assimilate the culture of the whole female sex ; but it would afford occupation in youth to the female sex generally. It has been already pointed out how this period of life, so important in every

respect, is at present worse than lost to woman. Brought up in the tacit trust that marriage will provide for her, she has in the meantime no fixed purpose, no steady occupation. Till the hope of marriage is utterly given up she does not think of preparing herself to meet another lot; and then it is too late to learn any branch of industry, even were it open to her. In place of these years being thrown away without the possibility of making up for them in after life, it would surely be an improvement to spend them in acquiring a knowledge of that world in which the other sex moves; on the industry of which the middle ranks depend; and in which, should marriage fail her, it is proper that she herself have a permanent place. The girl of the labouring classes begins life in right earnest by working for her bread; if she remain dependent on industry during life, she had surely an advantage by beginning early; and if she marry, she cannot repent the years in which she learned habits of diligence and perseverance, and an experience she now finds of the utmost value, in as much as it has familiarized her with the objects that occupy the mind of her husband, and with the medium in which the lot of her family will be cast. In like manner, without forgetting some training in household economy, it is desirable that young women of the middle classes should be early familiarized with the medium in which

their rank exists, with those objects that in their rank must engross the energies of man, with duties which leave man few leisure hours for domestic intercourse, and these tinged with the cares of the day. Besides, were young women of the middle classes to be employed in youth, their faculties would no longer be blunted for want of exercise at that critical period. They would acquire a knowledge of, and interest in, the ongoings of life beyond the domestic circle. And if it is not necessary for them to remain in industrial occupation through life, they would at least have acquired a culture in harmony with that of their class, and an interest in its characteristic pursuits. Whether in their intercourse with those of their own sex who still remain in industry, or in their intercourse with the other sex, their experience and their attainments would be in keeping with their rank, and would aid in realizing that unity so happily shown in the better grades of the working classes. The wife would be a companion to her husband in all his cares and in all his thoughts, her experience would have familiarized her with the source from which these spring; and while he would be a better companion to her, both would know from experience that world for which they must prepare their children.

But it may be said that if young women engaged in non-domestic industry were to quit it on assuming the

duties of a mere-de-famille, they would not in the meantime apply themselves with that steadiness and earnestness which would only be given could they look on industry as their permanent lot. On this point, too, the experience of the working-classes removes all doubt. In these ranks marriage is looked forward to by young women as a desirable condition, in like manner as in other ranks; and the probability of their prospect being fulfilled is much the same in both; but it does not injure the habits of application of the young or of the old. Industry is regarded with them as the mainstay. And a similar illustration is found in the middle ranks themselves. The daughters of a family that, on the death or insolvency of their father, find it necessary to earn their own bread, may still have, like others of their sex, a chance of obtaining a settlement by marriage; but they usually show more spirit than to lean on such a hope, and equip themselves in right earnest for a struggle in the industrial world. There is no good reason to doubt that industrial occupation would be pursued by women generally with the spirit and perseverance shown in these instances.

Finally, it may be said that, from the uncertainty of the chance of marriage, parents would not incur the cost of an expensive education, to fit their daughters to undertake industrial employment; since all might

be thrown away for the sake of a foolish match. In the first place, however, there would be few instances, indeed, where the cost of the special preparation required could exceed that at present lavished on the ordinary education "fashionable" in the middle ranks. In the next place, there is scarcely any branch of special education that is not useful as a part of general training. And besides, we must not forget that most employments require no special education whatever, or none of an expensive description. It would only be in a few instances that an expensive special education would be given, and in these we might expect its fruits would not be lightly cast away. For example, a special and expensive education is at present sometimes given for the profession of dramatic singing, of painting, and such like; but we do not hear complaints of women so educated capriciously casting aside such professions. Possessing, perhaps, a strong taste for them, or feeling it improper to abandon duties they have deliberately fitted themselves for, or finding a satisfaction in their independence, they are not easily induced to change. Even on marriage, ladies of talent who have been educated for a profession, do not entirely abandon it; it frequently affords themselves and their families a lucrative income.



## § 2.

On the admission of women into the higher branches of industry, and their withdrawal, to a certain extent, from the management of domestic concerns, there would arise for the middle classes a greater number of domestic servants of superior character and trustworthiness—such as are even now found in many families in that rank, especially (and this is very much in point) as part of the domestic establishment of bachelors, where more trust is reposed in servants, and where they prove themselves equal to the domestic management that ordinarily falls to the mistress of a household. The remuneration of these servants would likewise rise in the scale, and it is fitting that it should do so. On the whole, with a class of domestic servants made trustworthy by increased responsibility, and by bettered circumstances, and with the general superintendence of the head of the family, no serious damage will be done to household economy by the withdrawal from it of the young and the unmarried—of all that have no duties of maternity to attend to. Where there is no young family, the presence of a woman of the middle ranks to superintend the minutiae of household matters is no more necessary than in the house of any gentleman bachelor; it is enough if an eye is kept on the general household economy.

On the other hand, on women of the middle classes engaging themselves in youth in non-domestic industry, it may be necessary for them, on leaving that industry, and entering on the duties of married life, to devote a little time to supply any deficiency in their knowledge of domestic matters. Not that engagement in industry would preclude their acquiring experience, during the years of youth, of the general management of a household ; but in certain of the special duties, the direction of which will now fall to them, as of the kitchen and the nursery, it would be proper that they procure a little special instruction. Indeed, with regard to the culinary art, this practice already very much prevails ; and it would be well if means could be devised by which women might in like manner be guided in the discharge of the still more important duties of the nursery.

### § 3.

The idea of entering into non-domestic industry is regarded by most women of the middle ranks with aversion. However much alive they may be to the evils of their present exclusion from the companionship of the other sex, to the solitude of their life, and to the little part they have in the ongoings of the world ; they nevertheless hesitate when told that, as the only means

of remedying these evils, they must leave their accustomed indoor habits, and their desultory way of passing time, to mix for a while in the world of business.

But what remedy was ever pleasant till it was tried and past? Had we been so constituted that experience and mental culture could be acquired without exertion on our part, or contact with the realities of life, the lot of man would have been easier, and perhaps happier, than it is; but, in like manner as our very existence is dependent on the hard labour by which the necessities of life are prepared from the earth's produce,—so, as a matter of fact, a healthy culture of the mind, and a healthy tone of character, are dependent on participation in that labour. It is an equivocal position to assume that any one should not lend a share of his or her time to that general mass of labour by which the human race is supported. Unless participation in that labour is regarded as a first duty, there is great danger of other duties being equally powerless to engage our attention, and of our being drifted about without compass or rudder; our accomplishments will in retribution be found useless, our time objectless and uninteresting. They that would find a place in the world, and know what life is, must work; not deluding themselves with the expectation that work in itself will be pleasant, but really putting on the resolution to undergo a disagreeable necessity.

Nor must women suppose that they alone have an aversion to steady occupation, and to the disagreeables of industry. What man has not feelings of the same kind? Early life in the middle and lower classes is generally a hard struggle between diligence and idleness, in which the great achievement is more or less to overcome the natural aversion to labour. With many men the aversion to industry is ineradicable; they submit to its tasks with a grudge that keeps its ground to the last. With men, too, the source of the distaste is the same as it is with women—an aversion to clock-work regularity, to tedious details, to occupations they consider demeaning, to practices they believe to be equivocal, to the disagreeable contact with miscellaneous people, and to the competition of rival interests. No doubt, some men have a real pleasure in business; but for the most part, if men are not afraid to be thought effeminate, they would confess their dislike to it—probably adding, that in prudence they never allow themselves to think of these things. The great ambition of man is to be able to retire with a competency.

But, indeed, apart from the desultory habits in which many women of the middle ranks have been brought up, it by no means appears that woman is more averse to activity than man; on the contrary, she is for the most part more diligent in whatever falls to her hand to do.

Man must have his hours of ease and pleasure ; the hand of woman is never idle ; and it is proverbial that many women are only happy when in the midst of bustle and activity. Brought up, however, as women of the middle classes have been, it is, perhaps, with them somewhat different. Their education is copied from the female education of the aristocracy ; and while, as life advances, they find it to be to them of little or no use ; yet unfortunately it has drawn away their minds from their real status, and led them to regard fashionable leisure as the true type of their life, as it is of the aristocracy ; and in like manner, they imbibe the feelings of aristocratic aversion to labour in all its forms. A woman is sometimes even ashamed of the vulgarity of her husband's position in the world ; ashamed that he should have to work for his daily bread. In effecting the introduction of women of the middle ranks into industrial occupation, this feeling will be the obstacle most difficult to overcome. Women of these ranks would regard such a step as calculated to bring them down to the level of the vulgar ; their fine education led them to expect something so very different ; trade, commerce, and similar employments, are, as they have been led to think, beneath them. How mischievous these false notions are, experience has proved. In the attempt in the middle ranks to avoid what women conceive to be

the vulgarities of their own rank, they throw themselves out of their true place, and are unable to reach a higher. Were they to conform to the circumstances around them, were their education suited to their needs, and did they take part in the industry which is the proper condition of their class,—they would find their lot far happier and more dignified than it can be in their anomalous attempt to retain the forms and fancies of aristocratic life, while the men of their rank are of necessity confined to the condition proper to their class.

## CHAPTER XII.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO THE  
HIGHER BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY—*Continued.*

## § 4.

BUT further, it is improper that the feeling of aversion to industry should attach itself indiscriminately to all employments. In the alarm raised in the mind of woman by the proposal that her sphere should be changed, she is apt to regard all non-domestic industry as responsible for what is only chargeable against some branches of it; the dislike she feels to some trades or occupations, that can be congenial to none but the hardest of men, or the hardest of women, is directed against industry indiscriminately. Instead of familiarizing herself gradually with the change by confining her attention, in the first instance, to employments least obnoxious to her taste, she pictures an abrupt transference to those that are most obnoxious;—to those in which competition is roughest and the surrounding circumstances most disagreeable.

Again, much of woman's aversion to non-domestic industry, and her dislike to discussion about her social position, is attributable to feelings of timidity; and, on this account also, it is necessary that the change take place gradually; she must feel herself at home in situations little removed from her present sphere, before she can without forwardness endeavour to reach farther. In judging of the practical form that the admission of women into industry in the middle ranks ought to assume, it is proper to pay regard to these considerations; and, in the sequel of this chapter, we will endeavour to arrange the different kinds of industry according to the distance they are removed from the sphere woman at present moves in.

The first step we should wish to see taken, is an arrangement whereby a daughter, a sister, or (where circumstances permit it) even a wife, would lend a helping hand in the industrial occupation carried on by her father, brother, or husband;—not an occasional visit to his place of business, but a steady and stated attendance. The arrangement already obtains in many branches of trade, where the books are kept, or the counter attended to, by the wife or the daughter; but it is as yet confined for the most part to small retail business. However disagreeable the truth may at first appear,—wherever a family is dependent on industry,



wherever a father spends most of his time in its cares, the daughters of that family forsake their father's place in society, and in vain try to reach another, when they think themselves above participation in his employment.

Nor would this first step toward the introduction of woman into non-domestic industry remove her far from her present sphere. She would still be under the protection of her near relatives; and her intercourse would be for the most part with them. And, even on the supposition that the admission of woman to industry were limited to participation in the employments of her relatives, the benefit would be great indeed. Her experience would be enlarged, her time occupied, her development more healthy; the barrier at present dividing the sexes in culture and in interest would be removed; and community of interests would speedily be followed by community in taste, and by harmony of character.

The very name of family industry—of an employment in which all members of the household may join—calls up the warmest feelings. It is a social organism still lingering to some extent among our small farmers and yeomen, and among some sections of our artizans; but for the most part it has taken its departure from us. Our rural classes are not composed of peasant proprietors as on the Continent, where the system is yet in its vigour; while the huge strides of capitalist manufacture, and the

concentration of population, have almost driven family industry from our towns. It is a pity; for surely it is a healthy society, each household of which is an independent hive of activity, in which man and woman, the aged, the adult, the youth, the child, all do their part for the general thrift. There is true family companionship, uniting them in the day's hard work and in the evening meal. Each does not singly war with fortune, they make it a family lot, and stand by each other; and doing so they live out life more bravely, more piously. In such a family a man learns independence and self-respect; and the character grows up in unwonted unity. It was in such families, as we have already said, that the strength of the puritan religion, of the covenanters' religion, lay; and to this day they are an unmatched nursery of domestic affection and of individual and national worth.

Under this form of domestic industry there would also arise in their greatest strength centres of social opinion, each forming an intermediate link between individual sentiment and the great public opinion. A good deal was said on this subject in our second chapter, and need not be repeated here. We want an influence to strengthen and purify the moral tone of our country; an influence proceeding from woman as well as from man, from the old as from the young; and where can these

influences join in one stream, and soften and mellow each other, if not in the family? The progress of society has well nigh extinguished this source of our old spiritual warmth, and has left little but the scattered stones of its altar. We would rebuild that altar, in the hope that man may again know the household piety it once kindled.

### § 5.

The admission of women into industry under the care and protection of their relatives would be a step of the greatest importance; but would not meet the necessities of the class that really stands most in need of it. It is women having no relatives to support or care for them, that society is most urgently called upon to admit into the industrial ranks.

It is necessary, therefore, as a second step that women, to secure a means of livelihood, be admitted to *subordinate salaried offices* generally—more especially ought they to be admitted to offices of trust, management, and responsibility—as managers of shops, warehouses, and similar industrial establishments; managers of departments in factories and in artificer work; overseers, clerks, bookkeepers, tellers, and such like. This would no doubt involve at first a considerable change

in the habits of women of the middle classes; but the pioneers of the social experiment will be precisely those hailing it with most welcome—women left friendless in the world, and who must somehow endeavour to earn a living for themselves. Besides, from the offices into which they receive admission being, on our supposition, those of trust or superintendence, they would not necessarily be placed in the midst of the competition and rude jostling of the world—many offices of the description being sedentary and congenial to the most retiring disposition.

It is not every woman in the middle ranks that is at present fitted to undertake a responsible, even though subordinate position in industry; and for the most part it will continue so till women of those ranks be trained in prospect of industry as their lot in life. Still there are many that would eagerly make the trial, and are possessed of sufficient intelligence and readiness of faculty to acquire many of the qualifications. The advantage to woman would be very great. She would feel herself to be no longer a burden on others, an object of genteel charity; she would have before her the means of obtaining a humble independence, free from the severe drudgery that crowded competition entails on the few occupations at present open to her. She would acquire a social place, and an interest in the on-goings of life.

There is a manifest connection between the family industry spoken of in last section, and the more independent industry we now speak of. Brought up as the present generation has been, it will perhaps be too much to ask it to change at once. But it were a course of much prudence for merchants, professional men, and others of the middle ranks, who labour with the sweat of their brow, or of the brain within it, to lay aside a family pride inconsistent with their real means; and encourage their daughters to fit themselves to take charge of some department of their business. In the course of years many women so employed would have but too much occasion to turn their experience to necessary and grateful account; and having gone through the first or family stage of industrial training, they would have little difficulty in conforming themselves to the second. It is to be recollected, too, that in course of time a woman, entering on a situation in industry beyond the precincts of her family, would in most cases find herself in the company of women of her own rank, belonging, it may be, to the family of the head of the establishment she goes to; and women feeling more than usual reluctance to go where none other of their sex are, could choose such establishments as these.

Hitherto we have contemplated the admission of women of the middle classes into subordinate situations

of industry ; and it is probable that, for a time at least, they must content themselves with this. It is in these only they can acquire the experience and training enabling them to undertake more advanced duties, can secure a recognised position, and establish that relation with the general industrial world, without which the attempts of individuals to carry on any branch of independent industry of a precarious description, would in all likelihood fail. Even as a matter of feeling with woman herself—if she is asked at once, as it were, and without a necessary and gradual preparation, to take a full-grown part in business—she must be, and at the very mention of it is, as averse to it as a timid apprentice lad would be were the proposal made to him, and for the same reason. It is proper that both become, in the first instance, familiar with their field of labour by training in a subordinate capacity. Under the prejudice, too, that prevails on this subject, it would be prudent to be content, in the first instance, with the quiet occupancy of a subordinate place. However desirous a woman may be to obtain industrial employment more suited to her rank, it would, in this country, require no small courage on her part to disregard the prejudices of opinion on the subject, and at once step forward to claim it; to such a proceeding the courage of few men would be equal, and we cannot therefore wonder at the

hesitation of woman. It will be more prudent for her as we have said, to secure the quiet occupancy of a subordinate place till public prejudice cool down.

Nevertheless, such was not the course followed by the movement in the United States of America. In that country, the status of women of the middle ranks is higher than in this; the difference being attributable partly to the influence of literary society, which, in the absence of a landed aristocracy, gives a tone at least to the north-eastern States of the Union; and partly to the fact that society is composed for the most part of families who are proprietors of the ground they occupy—citizen proprietors—peasant proprietors on a large scale—in whose industrial economy every member bears a part—a condition of society which in a previous section of this treatise we found favourable to the development of woman's character and influence. Accordingly, in America, women early put in a claim to share in the highest industrial professions; ladies attended universities with the object of qualifying themselves by the ordinary course of special education for the practice of medicine and for the church; colleges were founded for them; and the *alumni* of these colleges are now in the practice of their professions. In this country, when this book was written, such a thing was not yet possible; public opinion was not prepared for it; an under-

graduate with a parasol would have been sent to the police-office. But nothing is more astonishing than the change a few years has inaugurated. A short time since, a lady begged of our universities, one after the other, to be admitted to study for a medical degree, and was refused; now, almost with unanimity, the University of Edinburgh has reversed its former decision, and with a strong effort a special course of medical classes for women has since been maintained. A change equally important is the recent recognition of the claims of women to preparatory scientific instruction, without which technical education can only rest on a "forced" foundation—a change seen in the English universities opening to women their middle-class examinations, and in courses of scientific instruction being opened for ladies in various principal towns, as by several of the professors of the University of Edinburgh.

#### § 6.

The higher employments to which women of the middle classes may ultimately claim admission, may be arranged as follows:—

(1) Professions and offices, the duties of which are stated, and the income a fixed salary.



(2) Partnership.

(3) Business and trade in general, exposed to competition and fluctuation.

In the opinion of many, woman is peculiarly fitted for the office of education; but hitherto her labours in this department have been for the most part confined to primary instruction, to governess tuition, and to the management of boarding schools. If, with all the disadvantages woman now labours under, the majority of those best able to judge testify to her power of imparting instruction to others with ease and geniality, an improvement in female education would no doubt speedily be followed by a recognition of a power in her to impart the higher branches of knowledge also, and by her consequent admission into the higher offices of education.\*

\* The institution, in Great Britain, of normal schools for female teachers, and the eligibility of female teachers for grants from the Committee of Privy Council for Education, on passing the prescribed examinations, must tend ultimately to raise their position very much; not only by affording a stimulus to the class, but by inducing many in early years to adopt teaching as a profession, and to devote their whole energies to suitable preparation for it. By this means, the standard of the female teacher's qualifications will be gradually raised; and, as the subjects of instructions and examination, prescribed by the Council, are the same for candidates of either sex, woman may, in course of time, be qualified to bid for higher educational employments than are now open to her.

The following shows the feeling entertained in France on the same subject:—"Already the Sorbonne is conquered—the grave and masculine Sorbonne,—which still excludes women from its courses, and does

Another profession, to which women may with much propriety aspire, is the clerical. In many religious sects women are already permitted to speak in public; nor does public opinion regard the practice in such instances as unseemly. These peaceful communities meet hourly among us, yet no offence comes to society; nor has it been heard that female character is in these communities less amiable or even more masculine than elsewhere. We suspect it is all the more amiable, all the more feminine. In truth, the horror usually entertained of a woman speaking in public arises from the conception that in doing so she abruptly leaves her fireside muteness, and, unprepared and uncalled for, addresses with unblushing forwardness an assembled crowd. We should like to see the *man* that could do as much! It is unnatural for any one that has lived in seclusion to appear in the presence of a large audience, as most

not think of opening to them its colleges,—has at least formed a course and examinations for women, and distributed to them diplomas and honours. Every year, in the month of August, there assemble three inspectors of the university, two Catholic priests, a Protestant clergyman, the Grand Rabbi, three lady inspectresses,—and before these judges appear a hundred and forty or a hundred and fifty young girls or widows, offering to submit to the most complicated and difficult trials, in order to acquire the right of instructing the lower classes of their own sex. The necessity of establishing a body of teachers among women, and the need they feel of raising themselves by instruction given and received, is manifested under a thousand interesting forms.”  
—*Passage from* LEGOUVÉ'S *Histoire Morale des Femmes*, translated in *Westminster Review*, July 1850.

men know that have tried it; and it is but natural that women should, in their present position, feel repugnance to it. But that there is no impropriety in a woman addressing a number of her fellow-beings, is established by the large circulation of literature contributed by female writers. The difference, and only difference, is that in the one case the thoughts are uttered orally, in the other that they are uttered through the press; and the difference is not essential. In the religious sects already referred to, even that distinction never had place; and we may hope that in other sects also woman will gradually attain the power of giving oral as well as written expression to her thoughts. If, for example, our female writers were to read a few of their essays to a public audience before sending them to press, the public would be gradually prepared for the change. Soon it would regard a woman preaching publicly with as little comment as it now calls forth in the unobtrusive sects where it has long been so common.

When we regard the intellectual and moral qualities of woman, we cannot without emotion contemplate the time when these may take their place in influencing the mental growth of mankind; when something of the spell that now softens us in the affections of home shall

breathe through the spiritual atmosphere around us; when the culture we receive from the pulpit and from public lectures, which from earliest years has moulded our principles, and stamped on us the aspirations of our lives, shall not only be inspired by masculine vigour, stern principle, and intellectual consistency; but shall also be influenced by the warm and forgiving nature of woman, her quick intelligence, her instinctive perception of right and wrong, her love of purity, her desire for the happiness of all.

The profession of physician is also an attractive one for woman, and the claim to share in it has been well earned on her part. For many an age women were the only authorities in medicine, and all nursedom is still in their hands. Night and day their services are exacted, paid or unpaid, by the sleepless call of disease. Nor can we forget that there are many branches of the medical profession that, from considerations of delicacy alone, ought to be committed to women. On the whole, the practice of medicine presents a most suitable field for the industrial employment of the female sex; and, accordingly, in the United States, many woman have fitted themselves for it by the requisite course of special instruction.

There are other occupations, with duties comparatively

sedentary, and where pushing and competition do not much obtain, which also would afford desirable openings for the employment of women.

A good deal of attention has been recently drawn to the propriety of women of the better ranks undertaking the active superintendence of our hospitals, workhouses, reformatories, and prisons. The nurses in our hospitals, and the staff of servants generally found in the institutions named, are at present of an unsatisfactory description; and it is thought with justice that, if the management were intrusted to women of education, not only would benefit be derived from their gentle manners, discreet treatment, and superior skill; but their presence would raise the standard of the subordinate officials, especially of their own sex, abuses would be checked, hope of advancement held out, and encouragement given to the proper discharge of duty. At present, indeed, the state of these public institutions illustrates very well the evils that attend the exclusion from industry of women of the better ranks—in the want of kindness of tone towards the inmates, and in the degradation of women of inferior rank employed in them as subordinates, who are deprived of the protection and encouragement of women of a higher rank engaged with them in the same employment.

The benefits of female influence in the superinten-

dence of hospitals, workhouses, &c., are well set forth in a little work recently published, which deserves attentive perusal.\* The authoress differs from us in thinking that the services of women of the better ranks should be given gratuitously—as a labour of love ; but she agrees with us in another point, (which to our mind must in the general case carry with it the remuneration of such services)—a point already much insisted on by us, and essential to woman's success in undertaking any higher employment : to wit—that *she must undergo special training for her work*, as any one of the other sex must undergo special training for his work. Dilettante visiting, desultory fits of charity, must give way to serious application, laborious preparation, and long study. If a lady would superintend the nursing and administration of medicine in a large hospital, what more reasonable, more requisite, than that she should qualify herself for these duties—should in early life serve a noviciate or apprenticeship, should acquire a knowledge of physiology and medicine, chemistry and dispensing, and on trial should be able to show herself possessed of a competent acquaintance with these. This is the rock on which woman's enthusiasm chafes ; and for our part we in the general case have little faith in her perseverance, except she devote herself to the duty from the first as

\* Mrs. Jameson's "Communion of Labour."

a profession. Exceptional instances will occur where ladies of high rank and independent means may go through the laborious programme from motives of humanity alone; but why be restricted to these rare cases? The mass of women in the middle ranks are not of independent means, and could not undertake these duties unless they could thereby at the same time earn a livelihood. And why not? It does not detract from the worth of a clergyman that his position secures him a living; in Roman Catholic countries, women of the middle ranks, choosing a life of labour as Sisters of Charity, secure from the Order a comfortable subsistence; but in Protestant countries the same end is only attainable by the more common-place plan of pecuniary recompense.

If we were to point to any one element more likely than another to retard the progress of woman's admission to industry, it is an insufficient sense on her part of the necessity, not only of a suitable training in the technical knowledge required in business, but also, and even more emphatically, of a training in *habits* of business. At every turn a contrast is at present drawn between the value of man's services and woman's services, in branches of business where in most respects the sexes appear to be on a footing of equality; and in nine cases out of ten, where there is inferiority on

the part of woman, whether in the higher or in the lower grades of employment, it is attributable to the source now pointed out. Industrial employment is from the first, in the case of woman, reckoned of subordinate importance, or is taken to at a late age with feelings of disappointment and dislike. Women are not *grounded* in the cardinal virtues of business, as men are grounded in these in apprenticeship, or as children at school are grounded in the cardinal virtues of social life. So, many women never learn the value of exactness in business, or of the many other habits essential to industrial success; and, on their first admission to any new employment are apt to fall into mistakes of the serious nature of which, from their previous imperfect training and imperfect knowledge of the business world, they have no adequate sense. Prejudicial as these defects at present are in the inferior grades of employment, in the higher they would bring speedy ruin; and no defect in present ideas about female employment ought sooner to attract the general attention of the sex; for, assuredly, any attempt to advance far, without remedying this fundamental shortcoming—the want of business habits—will only bring mishap.

We have no desire to drag into a discussion like the present the name of that illustrious lady, whose priceless services in the East have done more to elevate woman



in social estimation, and mark out for her a path of usefulness, than all the wisdom and all the eloquence the subject could for years call forth. We would only note that by her career that lady has shown her high estimation of the system on which, in foreign countries, Sisters of Charity prepare themselves for their duties by years of study and training; and that she herself "went through a regular course of training at Kaiserswerth,"\* a Protestant institution near Dusseldorf, similar in constitution to the sisterhoods of charity of Roman Catholic countries.†

\* Mrs. Jameson's "Sisters of Charity," p. 57.

† We cannot resist appending some extracts from Mrs. Jameson's "Communion of Labour;" at the same time strongly recommending to our readers a perusal of the work itself:—

"The practical advantages, the absolute necessity of a better order of nurses to take the charge and supervision of the sick in our hospitals, is now so far admitted that it is superfluous to add anything to what I said in my former lecture. It is not now maintained that a class of women, whom I have heard designated by those who employ them as drunken, vulgar, unfeeling, and inefficient, without any religious sense of responsibility, and hardened by the perpetual sight of suffering, are alone eligible to nurse and comfort the sick poor."

"The Paris hospitals are so admirably organised by the religious women, who in almost every instance share in the administration so far as regards the care of the sick, that I have often been surprised that hitherto the numbers of our medical men who have studied at Paris have not made any attempts to introduce a better system of female nursing into the hospitals at home. But they appear to have regarded everything of the kind with despair or indifference."

"When I was at Vienna, I saw a small hospital belonging to the Sisters of Charity there. . . . There were fifty sisters, of whom one-half were employed in the house, and the other half were going their rounds among the poor, or nursing the sick in private

Partnership is a form under which women may enter on active business, and at the same time avoid a great

houses. There was a nursery for infants, whose mothers were at work; a day-school for one hundred and fifty girls, in which only knitting and sewing were taught; all clean, orderly, and, above all, cheerful. There was a dispensary, where two of the sisters were employed in making up prescriptions, homœopathic and allopathic. There was a large airy kitchen, where three of the sisters with two assistants were cooking. There were two priests and two physicians. So that, in fact, under this roof we had the elements on a small scale of an English workhouse; but very different was the spirit which animated it."

"A certain reformatory prison, of a very unusual kind . . . left a strong impression on my mind of the good that may be effected by very simple means. A prison governed chiefly by women—and *the women as well as the men who directed it* RESPONSIBLE ONLY TO THE GOVERNMENT, and not merely subordinate like the female officers in our prisons."

"I have seen many workhouses and of all grades. The regulation of details varies in different parishes. Some are admirably clean, and, as far as mere machinery can go, admirably managed; some are dirty and ill-ventilated; and one or two, as we learn from recent disclosures, quite in a disgraceful state; but whatever the arrangement and condition, in one thing I found all alike;—the want of a proper moral supervision. I do not say this in the grossest sense; though even in *that* sense, I have known of things I could hardly speak of. But surely I may say, there is want of proper *moral* supervision where the most vulgar of human beings are set to rule over the most vulgar; where the pauper is set to manage the pauper; where the ignorant govern the ignorant; where the aged and infirm minister to the aged and infirm; where every softening and elevating influence is absent or of rare occurrence, and every hardening and depraving influence continuous and ever at hand. Never did I visit any dungeon, any abode of crime or misery, in any country, which left the same crushing sense of sorrow, indignation, and compassion—almost despair—as some of our English workhouses. Never did I see more clearly what must be the inevitable consequences, where the feminine and religious influences are ignored; where, what we call charity is worked by a stern, hard machinery; where what we mean for good is not bestowed but

part of its turmoil. By adopting it, objections such as are expressed in the following quotation, might be

inflicted on others, in a spirit not pitiful nor merciful, but reluctant and adverse, if not cruel."

"I may not further dwell upon details at present; but I would ask whether such a state of things could exist if some share in the administration and supervision of workhouses were in the hands of intelligent and refined women whose aid should be voluntary? Why should not our parish workhouses be so many training schools, where women might learn how to treat the sick and poor, and learn by experience something of the best means of administration and management?"

A recent article in the *North British Review* comments very judiciously on this little work of Mrs. Jameson's. Among others we find the following remarks:—

"There is no lack of institutions, the doors of which will be thrown wide open to our English ladies as soon as they knock at them. . . . If any lady, either in town or country, with charitable instincts, with a vague desire after good, will look round in search of some practical starting point, let her turn her eyes towards the union workhouse . . . and begin her ministrations there. . . . The lady-visitor, who sees that the workhouse boys are taught to become artificers and mechanics, and is told that a very small per-centage of them ever become chargeable to the parish in later life, will appreciate the value of proper industrial training. Girls fail more frequently from absolute ignorance and inability to do better, than from any inherent vice, or even any culpable carelessness or indolence. . . . Every union workhouse ought to be an industrial school on a large scale. . . . Every girl ought to learn, before she is cast adrift on the world, how to wash, how to iron, how to make a bed, how to clean a grate, how to boil vegetables, how to cook a joint, how to make a pudding, how to wait at table, and how to do all kinds of plain needlework. Doubtless some of these things are learned and practised for the benefit of the master and mistress of the union; but there is no systematic instruction in which it is to be *gravely and earnestly regarded as the business of life*. . . . The many failures and the many falls . . . are to be attributed not merely to the fact that the poor girls are not taught to work, but they are not taught to look seriously and solemnly at work."—*North British Review*, February 1857.

obviated:—"Are women generally so self-dependent as to have the desire or be able to conduct business alone? In some cases it may be well, even necessary, that they should do so; but I should wish to regard these cases as exceptional. There are many situations we shrink from the idea of woman being placed in. I would have women trained to business knowledge; but it is against my idea of what woman best can be, that in most kinds of business she should be other than a participator." Even at present many women of the better ranks have an interest as proprietors in industrial establishments.

¶ Lastly, we must say a few words on occupations characterised by fluctuation, competition, and pushing. Although these are the least eligible for women, it is a strange fact that, for the most part, the occupations at present open to them fall under the category. Millinery and other branches of trade conducted by women, are subject to the same, if not to keener, competition than branches of trade conducted by the other sex; the letting of lodgings is precarious and fluctuating; and what position involves more anxiety and turmoil than that of mistress of a boarding school? What less security than that of an artist, or a contributor to the press? There is nothing new or inconsistent then in women encountering some of the turmoil and anxiety even of the more active descriptions of business.

After all, the disagreeable features of business, especially when they are contrasted with the disadvantages of woman's present position, are somewhat exaggerated—and are perhaps confounded with vulgarity—*itself*, as we have seen, a bugbear to a class that has been educated as if it belonged to the aristocracy. The competition and pushing of a certain class of tradesmen, mercantile travelling, and the incessant puffing of quack shops, have so filled the public eye, that it is forgotten that the mass of business is conducted quietly and unobtrusively; is such as might be undertaken by woman with ease to herself, and without offence to others.

### § 7.

Hitherto, in this and the preceding chapter, our attention has been confined to practical considerations on the admission of women of the middle ranks to branches of industry suited to their status; we have now to speak of the removal of the restriction at present confining women of the labouring classes to the more servile occupations. This part of our subject presents a marked contrast to that we have just left; in the labouring classes the admission of women into industry is, for bad or for good, irrevocably settled. There is no desire

on their part that it should be recalled, no aversion towards industry to be overcome, as with women of the middle ranks; they would be glad to have the remotest chance of rising to the lowest of the situations to which women of the middle ranks can with difficulty be reconciled.

We have little, therefore, to offer here by way of practical remark. As women of the labouring classes are already familiar with many of the routine occupations of non-domestic industry, there will not be much intrinsic difficulty in permitting a few of them to rise to offices of trust and management. Undoubtedly their education and training must be improved, so as to fit them for these; but deficiencies in this respect would be soon supplied. It is also necessary that, with increased responsibilities, woman be entrusted with greater power in the management of subordinates. There is at present, on the part of manufacturers and others, a hesitation to give women the power of overseeing a working-room, even of girls; and this very hesitation is itself destructive of all authority, even when, on particular occasions, they do entrust women with the management of their fellow-workers. It is not every woman or every man that can use authority well; but it cannot exist at all unless the order of the individual in authority is felt to be law. That women,

after suitable training, can exercise authority temperately and firmly, is shown in the numerous institutions where they hold situations as matrons, and in their management of domestic economy. There seems no intrinsic hindrance therefore to women obtaining situations of trust and management in industrial establishments.

An interesting question occurs, whether the admission of women to the higher branches of industry will be brought about directly by women of the middle classes entering into industry, or indirectly by women from the labouring classes gradually rising into higher employments. Whichever of these takes place first, the other will follow in the wake. We are inclined to think that the middle ranks will be the first to move, and that the amelioration of the labouring classes will follow; an expectation, however, that need not prevent an endeavour, even now, to improve the condition of the women of the labouring classes.

## CHAPTER XIII.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS (*continued*)—LEGAL DISABILITIES OF WOMEN.

## § 1.

IN consequence of their intimate bearing on the industrial position of women, we would now notice briefly the laws that in this country affect their civil status.

Both in England and in Scotland, the personal or movable estate of a woman passes, by marriage, to her husband; and, as the means of the middle classes consist almost entirely of this species of property, the law in the general case operates as a confiscation of woman's whole wealth. It is true that, on the dissolution of the marriage by death, a share of the personal estate of the husband is given to the wife; but, during the subsistence of marriage, the husband has the absolute power of administration,—the power of disposal according to his pleasure.

Again, a married woman cannot legally enter on a



contract or undertake an obligation; has no power of administration, except as her husband's representative in household affairs; and can neither sue, nor be sued at law.\*

No inconsiderable share of the abjectness of spirit that characterises women of the middle ranks is attributable to the source now indicated. There are few in these ranks but possessed some means in their own right, which on marriage passed from them; and, although they are thus relieved of all "care" about money, and, as the phrase is, harbour no interest separate from their husband's, yet the change is much against the wife. It makes her more of a servant, less of a free agent. Trifling as the circumstance may appear, the possession of a little property that she can call her own, can do with as she chooses,—gives an elasticity and a freedom, that tell on the spirits and on the mind; the sentiment of independence, of free agency, thus

\* According to the law of England there are two descriptions of personal or movable property:—*chattels personal* and *choses in action*. The former pass at once to the husband; the latter may at any time be taken possession of by him, and in that event, vest in his person. In the law of Scotland there is no such distinction; all personal property passing at once to the husband. Both in England and in Scotland, heritage remains the property of the wife; but during marriage the husband administers and enjoys the fruits. In neither country can a married woman sue at law or be sued in her own name; nor, without the consent of her husband, can she, except in very special cases, enter into any agreement, or contract, or undertake any obligation.

sheltered in one nook of existence, the liberty to cherish agreeable purposes of one's own, give to woman a generous ladylike spirit, add not a little to her moral health, enable her to submit more cheerfully in other things.

The truth of these remarks is shown by a glance at the status of woman in the upper or aristocratic ranks—where the mass of wealth consists, not of personal, but of real or heritable estate. By law a woman's right to property of this description remains in her during the subsistence of marriage, subject to a right on the part of her husband to draw the fruits; and although it may be argued that such a power in the husband is not very different from his absolute right to personal property, it is nevertheless found practically to be different. The fact that the heritable estate remains *specifically* vested in name of the wife, that nothing of importance can be done regarding it without her direct consent, and that she is recognised in society as the real owner, is found to be quite another thing from a woman's claim on her husband's death to a share of personal property, in which at present she has no specific interest. Accordingly, the mental influences of these two conditions of property are very different. Whether the faculty of holding heritable estate was accorded to married women of the aristocracy, the better to preserve it in the direct

line of family descent, or from a regard to the superior attainments of women in that rank, its influence has been very happy in maintaining in them, in aristocratic life, much spirit and individuality.

That the middle classes are at heart favourable to woman retaining during marriage some controul over her own means, appears from the following consideration:—By a marriage settlement the general provisions of law respecting the property of the wife may be set aside to any extent; other arrangements more agreeable to the parties interested may be substituted in their place; and, as a matter of fact, few, if any, marriage settlements are gone into in the middle ranks, that do not preserve to the wife a part at least of her means. This suffices to indicate the feeling generally entertained; the guardians of the wife consider such a provision most calculated to secure her at once a position of comfort, independence, and respectability.

But what are our marriage laws but a uniform marriage settlement, provided for the poor and the careless; who simply adopt the provisions ready made for them? And surely the law should secure for the poor and the careless the same objects as are essentially in view in all cases where individuals have sufficient prudence and judgment to make a law for themselves. In truth, when the present laws with respect to movable estate originated,

the amount of personal wealth was comparatively trifling, and it was but natural that the laws respecting it should take a form less perfect than those regulating the ownership of heritable estate. The relative amount of these descriptions of property, however, is now very different; and it is time that the anomaly should be done away.

If the inability on the part of a married woman legally to hold personal estate, and her want of standing in courts of law, are seriously inconvenient even within the domestic sphere, how much more injurious must they be on her undertaking industrial employment. Although, in the general case, a married woman must restrict her cares to home duties, it cannot always be so. In numerous instances, both in the labouring and even in the middle classes, married women have no resource but their own exertions; and it is not very easy to see how these can be turned to much account without the legal power of owning or disposing of property, without the title to grant or receive an obligation, without a standing in courts of law either as suitor or as defendant. It is impossible for a married woman engaged in industry to obtain pecuniary credit, since no one will lend on an obligation that cannot be enforced—that is legally worthless; and her debtors may defy her—for she cannot sue them at law. Till 1857 in England, and 1861 in

Scotland, the same disabilities followed her even when deserted by her husband, and forced to work for her own and her children's bread; and often it happened to an industrious wife after she had gathered some small earnings that a dissolute husband would return and wrench every farthing from her, again to leave and watch when he might return to plunder her.\* Now a deserted wife in either country may have protection against this cruelty; though it is significant that the remedy came so late. Moreover, it meets only one

\* "How often does it occur, that, after the husband has absconded for years, during which the deserted wife, by painful toil and rigid self-denial, has kept her family in decency, and got together some little store, he has returned only to destroy her comforts, sell up her little furniture, and strip her even of those very implements by which alone she can earn her own and her children's bread!

"The profligate, returning from an adulterous life—the brutal soldier, discharged for misconduct—the very convict released from transportation, comes back in full authority to despoil and oppress the wife whom he ought to have cherished, and the children whom he should have reared.

"During the time of my inspection in Scotland, many, I believe the majority, of the murders that were committed were those of wives and husbands; most of which would probably have been prevented could the suffering party have obtained a separation.

"The state of New York, which lately set so good an example to this country in the junction, as respects procedure, of what, it may be hoped, will one day be always found united in another sense besides that implied by the 'fusion' of law and equity, has now made an advance worthy of general imitation towards rendering legal justice to women, by decreeing that the property of a married woman in New York shall, without special covenant, be at her own disposal, instead of being handed over to her husband."—*Hill on Crime and Punishment*, 1853.

case: the wife that is *deserted* may seek protection to her earnings—but what help have those whose husbands, though equally abandoned, have sufficient cunning to avoid this forfeiture of their marital rights, and add to the misery of their families by lounging about at home? Moreover, there seems no impediment to a husband who has deserted his wife returning to her when he pleases, and resuming his marital powers irrespective of her consent.

But, apart altogether from cases of special hardship, and in ordinary circumstances, where husband and wife reside in family together, it seems desirable that the property of the wife should by legal enactment remain to some extent her own. We would not have this protection extended to the whole of the wife's property, nor would we give her the power to protect it to this extent even by means of a private marriage settlement; for it is not just to the public, with whom the family deals, that any property adding to its visible means should be entirely freed from liability. But it is reasonable that it be protected to some extent. Practical difficulties there may be in the working of such a law, but they would not be greater than those attending the working of the law as it is at present.

## § 2.

Our law not only gives to the husband a right to his wife's estate, but recognizes in him a sort of property in her person, extending (as law books express it) to the power of locking her up or administering moderate chastisement. This part of our subject is sufficiently uninviting.

Till 1857 a husband might sue the seducer of his wife for damages—she was his property—and the suit was for her money value. Even now he may bring the same suit in another form.

In England, if a married woman, as the only means of avoiding disgusting company or protecting herself against cruelty, leave her husband's house, he may by main force compel her to return. At this moment there is many an English lady that has fled her native country, or lives under a feigned name in some secluded corner of it, in order to escape being hunted down like a runaway slave; and, with every knock at her lodging, pictures (what the law permits) a band of ruffians come to drag her back to a hated house and a hated bed.

If outrages like these occur in the better ranks, what may not be looked for in the lower, in whose

manners there is no check to the violence of passion and tyranny. Death often comes to the wife at the hands of a drunken and violent husband; and a recent enquirer has attributed the prevalence of poisoning by the wife to a desperate resolve to be rid of the cruelties she is subject to. "Application for legal redress avails little or nothing. To obtain divorce, or even separation, involves an expense beyond the total earnings of years — perhaps of a whole life—and complaint to a magistrate, the only means open, obtains at best but a temporary relief, followed in all probability, by more malicious if less open ill-treatment.\*

These are no doubt extreme examples of the operation of the law, that the wife is the property of her husband; but we must not suppose that they are isolated facts. Horrible as they are in themselves, they are more hateful in view of the sanction they receive from law, and still more so when they are regarded as indications of a hereditary habit of mind clinging more or less to every man and woman. They are but the rude form of evils that lurk in common ideas of married life. A Turkish empire still reigns there over body and mind.

\* Hill, on Crime and Punishment.



## § 3.

Among legal reforms in the position of women, an improvement in the law of divorce is not the least important. If a marriage produce nothing but wretchedness, should it not be dissoluble on that very account? True, considering that the interests of children are at stake, as well as the happiness of the individuals themselves, it is proper that every precaution be taken against a rash and hasty separation, and against encouraging that restlessness and discontent which the present inexorable law is undoubtedly well fitted to repress; but, allowing for all this, the candid feeling of both sexes is in favour of some change—some compromise between the two extremes.

For instance, voluntary separation for a few years may with great safety be admitted as a ground of divorce; it affords as good a test as any of the incompatibility of the individuals interested, and of their settled wish that the tie between them be dissolved; while no reasonable man can regard the recognition of such a principle as encouraging the wish for separation. Even at present, desertion for a certain period affords a ground on which to sue in England for legal separation,

and in Scotland for divorce itself; and in neither country in those ranks to which the privilege is accessible, has it in the smallest degree given rise to abuse. In both countries, however, the forms of procedure are cumbrous and beyond the reach of the mass of the population.

The evils of the present state of the law fall more on woman than on man. A man has many resources that may be set off against an uncomfortable home; he may apply himself more assiduously to business, or spend the evenings at his club, or with his boon companions. But to a woman an uncomfortable home has a dreariness that cannot be removed. The gentle lady tyrannized over by a violent and unprincipled ruffian; the pure-hearted wife left to sit day and night alone, while her husband is rioting in debauchery; the tie where dislike has for ever taken the place of affection—where there was at first some fatal misapprehension or some vile deceit—in all these home to the wife is wretched in the extreme. And we cannot but think that had woman had the influence on public opinion to which she is entitled (or which it is even now boasted she possesses), a remedy would have long ere now been found; and that even those of her sex in the enjoyment of domestic happiness would have aided in

bringing it about. It is true that most of those so unfortunate as to contract a bad marriage, are willing to submit to much discomfort in expiation of their error; and, even were divorce readily obtainable, few we believe would avail themselves of it. But occasionally it is a necessary and desirable step; and if taken in time would prevent much unhappiness. In a word it is a reasonable and humane resource, which every one, more especially every woman, feels ought at the worst to be within reach.

It is not unfrequent for separation to take place without the formality of divorce; and in the lower classes and even in a section of the middle classes, where divorce from the expense of the procedure is at present out of the question, voluntary separation is the only resource. It must be recollected, however, as was explained in a preceding section, that voluntary separation does not abrogate the husband's power over the person and property of his wife, and that in any case the latter has no recognised position even in a court of law. Besides, unless the marriage be formally dissolved, it is impossible for either to enter into a second, however long the period since they separated may be; and in many instances this hardship is very great. It is by no means uncommon, especially in the humbler classes, for separation to take place but a few

months after marriage ; and when both are still very young. Some quarrel or incompatibility may have utterly estranged them, and they part never to meet again. Most of our readers may know of cases of the kind, and will agree with us that in these divorce is desirable. At present, however, it cannot be obtained ; and these young people must live the rest of their lives legally bound to each other. It is needless to add that such a law is but a trap to irregularity of life.

There is one circumstance in the position of woman which might to some extent justify the legal discouragement of divorce, but which the admission of women to industry will remove. As women of the middle ranks have hitherto had no means of gaining a livelihood for themselves, divorce, whether sued by them or by the husband, left them penniless : here might have been a ground for admitting none but the most urgent reasons in an action of divorce, at least when sued by the husband. The prospect of destitution which the wife had before her, in the event of herself suing a separation from her husband, was fitted also to induce her to submit to much at his hands.

But, on the admission of woman to industry, the relative position of parties would be changed. A wife, being now in circumstances permitting her to earn an independent living, would cease, in the general case,

to have any claim in equity on her husband for support after divorce; nor, if the wife herself bring the suit, could she with propriety claim a livelihood even during the prescribed period of voluntary separation, on which it is desirable divorce may be grounded. If, on the other hand, the divorce is sued by the husband, it would be proper that he support his wife during these years. In all cases, it seems further desirable that the judge have a discretionary power to award alimony in special circumstances to either party. Exceptional occasions must frequently arise where such award would be called for; one or other of the parties may be possessed of independent means, or one or other may be in ill-health, and disabled from earning his or her livelihood; it might violate the dictates of humanity to leave such a one without provision, however undeserving his or her conduct may have been.

If there be children of the marriage, divorce, when justified on other grounds, is frequently on that account more imperatively called for. What more necessary than to remove those children from the contaminating influence of bad parents, to save them from the curses and wranglings of an unhappy home, to remove the causes of an embitterment that poisons the mother's milk, drives the father to the gin-shop, and prepares their children for ruin. Of all nurseries of infantile vice and crime, of

all social cancers breeding corruption, such a marriage bond is the worst; it is humanity to apply the surgeon's knife, and at once to cut out the sore.

Nevertheless, the interests of children must throughout be protected. As already said, a fitting test must be chosen indicating that divorce is called for; and the experience of centuries has shown, especially in Scotland, and partially in England, that the test of voluntary separation for a number of years may, with safety, be adopted. It also seems proper, as a further check to abuse, and as fitting in itself, that the husband or wife suing for divorce, should be responsible in the first instance for the maintenance of the children. The claims of these ought to subsist, if need be, against both parents; but the parent suing the divorce ought to be primarily charged with their maintenance.

The expense of the procedure, in cases of divorce or even of legal separation, is regarded by some people as a happy accident, tending still more to discourage resort to such suits; but, if it is right to oppose such an obstacle to the operation of any law, that law itself should be entirely abrogated. If it is right that the rich should have a law of divorce, the poor also should have it; if it is right that the poor should not have it, so also ought it to be with the rich. The great expense of a suit of divorce, therefore, is an unqualified evil. What-

ever discouragement is shown, let it be intrinsic, not in the expense of the procedure. Establish a test by which to judge in what cases divorce may safely be granted, and let the test be suitable and sufficient; but after it has been fairly applied, the form of divorce ought to be simple and inexpensive, before a court of law accessible to the poor as well as to the rich.

#### § 4.

So long as the political franchise was confined to the middle classes, a manifest objection might be urged against extending it to women. In addition to the assumed disability of sex, they had no active participation in industry; and, as the leading function of government is to guard and regulate the material prosperity of the country, the objection was not without foundation. When, however, the franchise is extended to all classes, the objection is inapplicable; the labouring classes now enjoy the right of vote, and women of the labouring classes participate in industry as well as the men.

It appears to us, that, where women thus participate in industry, and belong to a rank in which the political franchise is enjoyed, there is really no good reason for excluding them from the rights exercised by the other sex. An unmarried woman, pursuing an inde-

pendent occupation, and acquainted with the general on-goings of the industrial ranks, may with safety be entrusted with the exercise of political influence, and has as fair a claim to it as any one of the other sex belonging to her rank. It is indeed so reasonable that a woman thus situated should not be subject to political disability, that we presume little difficulty would be felt, were it not that the question is involved with a more difficult one:—whether the privilege should also be extended to married women. It would no doubt be invidious to give it to the one, and withhold it from the other; nevertheless, let us not forget that where unmarried women occupy an independent industrial position, it is substantially fair that they should have the same political rights as are enjoyed by men of their rank.\*

\* Under the Reform Act of 1868, persevering efforts were made by women in various towns to have their names entered on the Register of Voters. The claim was conceded by many of the registrars, but was disallowed on revision. It was, however, a great gain to have the merits of the claim weighed by the judicial mind of the country—the more so that most of the judges admitted their weight, and gave judgment on technical grounds alone. It was even a greater gain to find public opinion so far advanced as to listen to the discussion and wait the issue with complacency. Had the judgment been favourable; had the statute been found broad enough legally to enfranchise women, whatever the intention of its makers, the public seemed prepared to acquiesce, and to regard the change as in no way more revolutionary than household suffrage itself, to which indeed it seemed but the complement. If we mistake not, once sanctioned by the courts of law, even from accidental considerations, it would have been found impossible afterwards to reverse the decision by a special act of disfranchisement.

Next year (1869) a substantial triumph followed in the English



There are two objections that may be urged to the admission of married women to political rights: that their votes will, through partiality, coincide for the most part with those of their husbands; and that, as they do not participate in industry, they would represent no social interest entitled to public attention.

With reference to the first of these objections, we would remark that, were every vote disqualified that is even now given from partiality or similar motives, our poll-books would be easily counted up. There is undoubtedly a tendency in the wife to adopt the views of her husband, on political as well as other subjects; but, although the one or the other may adopt his or her views from partiality, if both are sincere, they still give free votes. There is a tendency in the son to adopt the views of his father; in the members of a rank or class to adopt the views current in it; we are all more or less influenced by the circumstances in which we are placed; and the relation of the wife to her husband is, therefore, by no means singular, and her views, no matter how acquired, ought to have their due weight.

In offering these remarks, we feel that we tread on

Municipal Act, into which were introduced, on the motion of Mr. Jacob Bright, clauses conferring the municipal franchise on women possessed of the same qualifications as admitted the other sex; and thousands of women have since voted for the magistracy in English boroughs with satisfaction to themselves and without offence to others.

delicate ground; a discussion regarding the political rights of women carries with it associations more unfeminine than any other part of our subject, and it may seem especially unnecessary and mischievous to speak of conferring political rights on married women. In addition, therefore, to the reasons already urged for giving women a political voice, we must endeavour still further to justify such a measure; and in doing so, we meet the second objection to the admission of married women to political rights—that they would not represent any social interest entitled to public attention.

It is true that married women do not participate in industry, and have not, therefore, the same claim to political status as the unmarried woman who earns an independent livelihood; it is also true that married women have little or no property of their own, and have therefore no claim to political status on that account; but that women, and especially married women, are a class whose opinions ought to have direct influence on politics, cannot surely be gainsaid! The mother of a family is the centre and true representative of the household; man represents the external economy of the family, woman its internal; and, apart from the consideration of material support, her loss would be even more serious than would be the loss of the

other parent. To her falls the care of interests as important as the industrial interests entrusted to man—the health and early training of her children, the nursing of the sick, the superintendence of the various arts of housewifery, the management of household economy; she is placed in a position fitting her alone to acquire experience, and to see the real wants of society, in these departments of life; and it seems of the utmost consequence for social well-being that her experience and her views on these subjects, and on the many questions connected with them, should have due weight.

It may be thought that, in their present position, married women have all the influence that needs be desired; but, far from this being the case, we believe that, beyond the household matters of their own families, no class has less influence than they. The educational movements of the day, and all those important reforms having for their object the moral and physical welfare of the community, derive no appreciable support from them, would have been just where they are, though the whole female sex, and especially the married portion of it, had been entirely ignorant of them. It is true that many women assist in the management of charitable institutions; but that forms only one of our social needs, and if we except such instances as that of Caroline Fry,

who belonged to a sect where the female sex enjoy a more independent condition, we find that public opinion and public endeavour on such matters receive little support or guidance from the influence of woman.

The defect is most observable in the small public attention bestowed on those departments of life falling peculiarly within woman's sphere. Notwithstanding the importance of the duties that are entrusted to woman, the indifference to them hitherto shown by the public is remarkable; and can only be explained by the fact that in public opinion women, especially when they are mothers of a family, are not represented. In the middle classes, information about the care and education of children, about nursing the sick, &c., is picked up at haphazard; and in the humbler classes there is often no opportunity of picking it up at all. It is the special duty of government to regulate the material relations of man and man, and to provide institutions fitted to supply the education necessary for the proper conduct of life; but the influence of woman has been so small, that, except in the recent statutes limiting the hours of work in factories, and prohibiting female employment in mines, public attention has seldom or never been directed to the amelioration of the condition of the female sex; and, notwithstanding the importance of their duties, women have not acquired the semblance

of an organization to secure the better performance of these duties.

The labouring classes stand most in need of such assistance; and it would be a mission worthy of woman to devise a means by which it may reach them. To carry out such a measure, women must come forward as a class; the duty lies on them, and they are best qualified for the task—for by whom can instruction in home duties be better given than by women themselves? Nothing could contribute more to the happiness and well-being of society than some arrangement, organization, or institution; by the help of which, and from the lips of her own sex, the richest mother and the poorest mother might learn how to care for the health and early training of her infant child; might be warned of the many precautions needful for the preservation of health and strength during the trials of pregnancy; might acquire a few maxims useful in tending the sick; and might be initiated in the arts of household economy.

Seeing how much of the physical comfort and moral well-being of the family depends on the mother's wisdom and habits of life, such a mission must call forth the deepest devotion; and, indeed, in localities where the time of the female sex is occupied during the week, Sunday would present the only opportunity for carrying out so sacred a labour.

It is not, therefore, in obedience to the revolutionary demand of perfect equality of rights that we think women ought to have the same political influence as men. There are social interests entrusted to them, which otherwise will not receive their due share of public attention, and which cannot be properly cared for unless by women themselves; not by each isolated in her own family as at present, but by all acting together as a class. It is only in this way that they can interchange opinions, and call public attention to their wants; it is only so that they can create a public opinion, and influence the nation as a whole.

Many may look on a mere political vote as quite another thing from the social and political influence we claim for married women; but, somehow, the one for the most part goes with the other. An influential class sooner or later gains a fair share of political representation; and a class admitted to the franchise soon becomes influential. A political vote is the means by which an increase in the social influence of women could be most readily effected. Nor ought we to lose sight of the benefits they would personally derive from such a privilege. There would be a freer interchange among them of feelings and opinions regarding matters of common interest, they would have the gratification

of participating in important social movements, and everything both within and beyond the domestic sphere would wear a more clear and encouraging aspect. To many whose tastes and capacities fit them for the task, an opportunity would be afforded of treading in the steps of Caroline Fry—of devoting themselves to some social labour requiring the steadiest wisdom and the most unwearied zeal.\*

\* The claims of married women have not yet been urged in definite shape, and doubtless a few years' experience of female franchise in its simpler form would aid in suggesting the arrangements most suitable for its full extension. But the claims of married women must not be ignored. The fear of difference of political creed between man and wife is with some perhaps the readiest difficulty; though that married people should fall out about politics more than the thousand other interests concerning them is by no means apparent. Even under the present system of giving but one vote to a household, it seems uncalled for to restrict the power of voting to men only. In many instances a husband may not care to interfere in politics, and may be too glad to cede the privilege to his wife; or from illhealth or absence it may be possible for her only to vote; or in some ranks it may as a rule be more convenient for the wife instead of the husband to vote as head of the family, just as now it is convenient for her to do its business with the Savings Bank. It is by no means unreasonable that in such cases the votes of married women should be admissible; and it would in some degree remove the stigma that must remain on their autonomy, were the franchise directly extended in the first instance only to women qualified as householders. There are other methods besides by which the claims of married women might be recognised without risking direct collision with the votes of their husbands, though to these we should not think it necessary to resort.

## CHAPTER XIV.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS (*continued*).—LAWS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY  
IN THEIR BEARING ON THE INCREASED EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

## § 1.

IT may be objected that the introduction of women into the higher branches of industry will, by increasing competition, injuriously tend to lower profits and emoluments. In answer to this objection, let it be considered, in the first place, that the number added to the ranks of industrial labour will be but small. In the lower orders women have already a place in industrial employment, and such of these as will be enabled to rise to its higher branches, will just relieve by as much the pressure of competition in the rank they have hitherto occupied. On the other hand, as statistics show, the number of the women of the middle ranks in a position to enter on industry—though of sufficient magnitude to exercise a beneficial influence on society—is and will always be small when compared with the number of



the other sex already engaged there ; and though, as we have said, a change in the social position of a few will be instrumental in elevating the status and culture of the whole, the increase of competition in the superior ranks of industry will be but little felt ; and, from the circumstances women are at present placed in, will be operated very gradually.

But, secondly, the dreaded increase of competition will be of a kind essentially different from increase of competition in the labour-market arising from ordinary causes. In the common case, such increase arises from an addition to the number of labourers—to the population of a country, either through births or through immigration ; or it arises from a decrease in the capital available for the support of the labouring population. But in the case contemplated, there will be no actual increase to the number of the population, in the way operated through births or immigration ; since women already form part of the population ; nor will the capital of the country available for the maintenance of labourers, be drawn on for the support of a greater number of individuals than it now supports.

At present the wages capital of the country, directly or indirectly, supports *both sexes*, though one of these is only partially engaged in industry ; and therefore, although the unattached female population were to enter

at once on productive employments, the wages capital of the country could as well afford to support them as now. The real and only consequences would be:—1. An increase of the productive power of the country; and, 2. A slight readjustment of wages.

In proportion as the time of women, at present comparatively valueless, is applied to useful employment, there will be an increase in the productive power of the country; and one is at first apt to fancy that the enlarged power of supply would, perhaps, exceed the corresponding demand, that the increased number of labourers would reduce wages, that the increased competition for the higher employments of industry would lower the rate of remuneration. We have already in so far addressed ourselves to this supposition, by pointing out that although, by the admission of women to industry, the actual number of persons employed is slightly increased, nevertheless, the total number of persons to be supported by the aggregate wages earned is not increased; that there will be no glut of labour arising from the number of the labouring class exceeding the resources for their support, no competition of an over-crowded labour-market, as that term is commonly understood. But, as the employer now has for the same aggregate wages an increased productive power, would there not be an excess of production?

Will not the market be overstocked with commodities, and a reaction be produced depressing the labour-market?

We take leave on this point to quote from Mr. J. S. Mill:—

“Because this phenomenon of over-supply, and consequent inconvenience or loss to the producer or dealer, may exist in the case of any one commodity whatever, many persons, including some distinguished political economists, have thought that it may exist with regard to all commodities; that there may be a general over-production of wealth: a supply of commodities, in the aggregate, surpassing the demand; and a consequent depressed condition of all classes of producers. \* \*

“When these writers speak of the supply of commodities as outrunning the demand, it is not clear which of the two elements of demand they have in view—the desire to possess, or the means of purchase. \* \*

“First, let us suppose that the quantity of commodities produced is not greater than the community would be glad to consume; is it, in that case, possible that there should be an insufficient demand for all commodities, for want of the means of payment? Those who think so cannot have considered what it is which constitutes the means of payment for commodities. It is simply commodities. Each person's means of paying for the

productions of other people, consists of those which he himself possesses. All sellers are inevitably and *ex vi termini* buyers. Could we suddenly double the productive powers of the country, we should double the supply of commodities in every market; but we should by the same stroke double the purchasing power. \* \*

“But it may perhaps be supposed that it is not the ability to purchase, but the desire to possess, that falls short, and that the general produce of industry may be greater than the community desires to consume. \* \*

“Assume the most favourable hypothesis for the purpose, that of a limited community, every member of which possesses as much of necessaries, and of all known luxuries, as he desires: and, since it is not conceivable that persons whose wants are completely satisfied, would labour and economize to obtain what they did not desire; suppose that a foreigner arrives, and produces an additional quantity of something of which there was already enough. Here, it would be said, is over-production: true, I reply; over-production of that particular article: the community wanted no more of that, but it wanted something. The old inhabitants indeed wanted nothing; but *did not the foreigner himself*” (now a part of the community) “*want something?* When he produced the superfluous article, was he labouring without a motive? \* \* The new-comer

brought with him into the country a demand for commodities equal to all that he could produce by his industry; and it was his business to see that the supply he brought should be suitable to that demand. \* \* We saw before, that whoever brings additional commodities to the market brings an additional power of purchase. We now see that he brings also an additional desire to consume; *since if he had not that desire, he would not have troubled himself to produce.* Neither of the elements of demand, therefore, can be wanting.\*”

The illustration given in the latter part of this quotation, supposes the additional power of production to arise from the accession to the community of an additional member immigrating from a foreign country. But the principle illustrated is equally applicable to the case of an increase in the productive power of the native members of the community; and may be shortly expressed in this general proposition: That whoever brings commodities to market does so, not for the sake of getting rid of these, but for the sake of obtaining in return for them the means of purchasing other commodities for himself; in other words, he brings with him a desire to purchase exactly commensurate with his desire to sell.

\* Mill's Political Economy, book 111.chap. xiv.

Hence, though the accession of women to the higher branches of industry were instrumental in increasing production to an extent far greater than can really be expected of it, no injury could flow from such a source ; but, on the contrary, all the benefit arising from increased resources, evoked by means of the same wages capital ; in other words, a cheapening of commodities. The present cheapness of many of the articles of commerce is attributable in great measure to the admission into industry of the women of the working ranks, a change which by so much increased the productive power of that large section of society. An increase in productive power presents us also with the means of shortening the hours of labour, and so increasing the comfort and culture of the community. If the wages capital of to-day, by supporting the whole population, enables three-fourths of that population to produce a certain quantity of commodities, each individual working twelve hours a day ; the same capital will enable four-fifths of the same population to produce the same amount of commodities, each individual working a smaller number of hours per day. It is to be noticed, however, that on this supposition the commodities would not be cheapened ; because, although there is an increase in productive power, the increased power would be exercised not in producing a greater aggregate of commodities, but in producing the

same aggregate in less time. But, whether applied to the effect of cheapening commodities, or applied to the effect of shortening the hours of labour, there is in either case an advantage to the community; and it is very much in the power of each individual to select from the two advantages according to his taste. In these remarks we have used terms more commonly applied to the working ranks alone, but the principles involved are applicable to all ranks productively employed.

## § 2.

But, secondly, although by the admission of the female sex to industry, wages as a whole would not be reduced; a slight readjustment must take place. The industrial income at present received by man has adjusted itself to a standard according to which he is socially, if not legally, bound to maintain women of his family that have no nearer dependence. Should women be enabled to earn an independent livelihood, the percentage of remuneration hitherto destined for their support would be withdrawn from man, or would tend to be so. But the per-centage so withdrawn would be small; and at all events the loss would be proportionally less than the burden of which men are relieved: for,

theoretically speaking, as the per-centage destined for the support of such dependents was necessarily distributed to all men indiscriminately, whether they had dependent relatives or not, it was inadequate to meet the real burden borne by such as had the burden of those dependents.

Nor is there any ground to fear that, in the slight readjustment referred to, the scale of remuneration earned by heads of families will be prejudiced. It is they more especially that will be relieved of some of the burdens that now press on them so heavily; their relations in life are more extensive than those of the young or the unmarried; they are more liable, therefore, to have their kindness and humanity taxed, not causelessly, but from the necessitous condition of many connected with them; and hence to them the relief will be the greatest; above all, their families will at the proper time of life be able to do something for themselves. These men, therefore, can well afford to abate a small per-centage from their earnings in consideration of the advantage gained by themselves, and by those hitherto dependent on them. That the abatement will be very small, is proved by facts observable with respect to the working classes; where, although woman is admitted to independent industry, wages still adjust themselves to a scale enabling the working man



to maintain his wife and family. It is so even in classes where a standard of living is scarcely to be found ; much more then will it be realized where social opinion and habitual self-respect unite in securing such a desideratum.

## CHAPTER XV.

DOES INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT REMOVE WOMAN FROM HER  
"PROPER PLACE?"

## § 1.

THERE is a very undefined objection to all change in the position of woman,—that it will take her from her "proper place;" and, although our remarks have already in part addressed themselves to this point, it will be useful to give it some further illustration.

The most obvious answer, in so far as concerns us at present, is that the supposed evil is already done; for women of the humbler ranks, when they are not detained at home by family duties, already participate in non-domestic industry. Is it meant that these have left their proper place, and that society would be benefited, or even the female sex itself, were they to abandon non-domestic occupation and return to their homes? We think not. What would become of us without that crowd of female domestic servants—for, as already

said, their occupation is to them really non-domestic? And what would become of these domestic servants themselves? And would it not in like manner be an evil to close to the female sex millinery, and shop work, and factory work? Society would lose a useful branch of its operatives; and they would be deprived of their only means of gaining a livelihood. In that rank of life grown-up daughters cannot remain idle at home, and little good could come of their doing so. Misery and dissoluteness are found where there is not work for both sexes; comfort and well-doing where it is abundant. It is neither desirable to withdraw the women of the humbler ranks from non-domestic industry; nor, though it were desirable, is it possible.

Since the women of the labouring classes must retain their position in non-domestic industry, it cannot take them out of their sphere to endeavour to improve that position; and as these classes compose three-fourths of the whole community, the problem before us is very much narrowed. Applied even to women of the middle ranks it melts into an inquiry still narrower; for many women of the middle ranks have already taken part in industry, no one gainsaying; and we have now only to ascertain whether it would take the rest out of *their* "proper place" if, in the absence of family duties requiring their presence at home, they follow the

example already set by many of the sisterhood in their own rank who have become governesses, or matrons of institutions, or pursue similar avocations? As has been already said, it is not expected that the mother of a young family will leave to others her household duties; it is proper that in any circumstances she should remain at home; but the rest of the sex are often, sooner or later, obliged even now to turn to some sort of industry for a livelihood, and there seems no possible impropriety in these taking such a necessity a little more at vantage, instead of waiting till other resources fail them.\*

## § 2.

When it is asked that we do not remove woman from her proper domestic duties, it should, as a counterpart, be made certain that the duties usually recognized as domestic, should never be removed from the domestic sphere. If, however, on the contrary, from a change in the distribution of labour, many branches of industry,

\* "There seems to be no objection to taking the lower classes of women out of their homes to be domestic servants, milliners, shop-women, factory girls, and the better educated to be governesses. Then why should the objection be urged, merely with respect to other employments, only because they are as yet rather unusual, or at least not yet recognized among us, but which are of a far more elevated kind."—*Communion of Labour*, Mrs. Jameson, p. 119.

once justly recognized as constituting the *chief* domestic occupation of women, are actually and entirely transferred from the domestic sphere, and have a place assigned them among the great capitalist labours of modern society; it is necessary to woman's retaining a position even equally important with that she previously possessed—that she should in some way or other follow these duties to their new sphere.

“When all manufactures were domestic—when every garment was made at home, every web wove at home, every thread spun at home, every fleece dyed at home—when the husband provided the wool or the sheepskin, and the wife made it into a coat—when the husband brought home a sack of corn on the mule's back, and the wife pounded it in a mortar, or ground it between two stones, as in the Old Testament—then the domestic function might well consume all the time of a very able-bodied woman. But now-a-days, when so much work is done abroad—when the flour-mills of Rochester and Boston take the place of the pestle and mortar, and the hand-mill of the Old Testament; when Lowell and Lawrence are two enormous Old Testament women, spinning and weaving year out and year in, day and night both—when so much of woman's work is done by the butcher and the baker, by the tailor and the cook, and the gas-maker, and she is no longer

obliged to dip and mould with her own hands every candle that 'goeth not out by night,' as in the Old Testament woman's housekeeping—you see how very much of woman's time is left for other functions. This will become yet more the case. Ere long, a great deal of lofty science will be applied to housekeeping, and work be done by other than human hands, in the house, as out of it. And, accordingly, you see that the class of women not wholly taken up by the domestic function will get larger and larger." \*

In the course of our treatise, we have had frequent occasion to lament the decay of that system of household industry—once so familiar to this and other countries—in which every member of the family took part; and we have also had frequent occasion to point out the happy influence on the position of woman still realized in those situations where remnants of that system yet linger. But, in general, the state of society in question has passed away; and "woman's occupation" has, we fear, passed away with it. It is useless, therefore, now to speak of confining her exclusively to domestic duties, and to the domestic sphere; since those duties and that sphere have themselves in a measure broken up. As is so forcibly put in our

\* Theodore Parker.

quotation,—spinning, weaving, brewing, baking, and other equally important arts, form no longer the prime household business of women; have all become great branches of non-domestic manufacture. Women of the working classes seem to have understood the change; and, seeing the need of adapting themselves to it, have taken their place in that non-domestic sphere, where alone they can now execute the labours they formerly gave to the corresponding descriptions of manufacture, under the household system. But the women of our middle ranks have not shown the same wisdom. They find, indeed, their former occupation of superintending those household manufactures gone; but they have not courage to follow that occupation to a new sphere. They have preferred, listlessly, to let it pass from their hands; and they have even permitted the want of work that as a consequence they feel, to deceive them into a belief that, in their rank, woman was born to a life of aristocratic ease. We would bring woman back to her sphere—we would restore to her the superintendence of those important arts that once formed her chief domestic employment; and, wherever these, her proper duties, have passed from the domestic sphere, we would have her even to follow them.

## § 3.

It is objected to woman leaving the domestic circle, that her natural relation to the other sex would thereby be broken, and the feminine attributes of her character lost.

The meaning of this objection depends very much on the ideas entertained by the individual putting it. We have contended that the change will very much improve woman, will increase her intelligence and spirit, will render her more the companion of man, and less his servant than heretofore she has been; but it would perhaps assume too much to suppose that to every one of the stronger sex such a change would be an agreeable one. There is a deep-rooted prejudice, strengthened by the convenience of it, that woman should be subservient to man; and, as it is considered an impropriety in a servant to have a better table, or to be better informed, or to be happier than his master, so it is reckoned insulting for a woman to be superior to her master. Most men are ashamed to acknowledge, nevertheless do acknowledge, that at heart they wish her to continue as dependent on them as now—to continue their inferior in every way, in education, in ability, and in every kind of happiness that does not depend on the smile of man himself. In the hearts of how many is there this jealous spot!



Coming from such men, the objection that the removal of the social disabilities of the female sex will destroy woman's natural relation to man is easily understood ; but with others the grounds on which it rests are somewhat different. These fear that an "improvement" in the position of woman would really be prejudicial to the female character ; that its gentleness, its warmth of feeling, its constancy, and its devoted love of home would be lost ; that there would be no longer that contrast between the characteristics of the sexes, rendering them mutually attractive and each helpful to the other.

It would indeed afford a strong reason against the change, if woman could no longer be looked on as the natural source of the kindness that binds society together ; if home should no longer be her cherished resting-place ; if the duality of the sexes lost any of its charm. The liberation of woman from her present unhappy position, if it involved the casting away of such blessings, would be a doubtful boon. But there is no cause for fear. Warmth of feeling, and the other feminine traits of character so much valued, are no artificial growth of a peculiar civilization, but are traceable to female organization itself. In whatever circumstances woman is placed, if we except the most abandoned, she is still woman.

And we have direct experience proving that participation in non-domestic industry, far from injuring female character, strengthens and improves its best elements. In the lower classes women have always had part in industry; and though, as was explained in a former chapter, we cannot expect to find much excellence in the neglected sections of these classes—yet in the more advantageously situated, as in the families of peasant proprietors, villagers, small shopkeepers, and artizans, the female character is marked by superior intelligence and by healthy development of the best feelings. The history of the labouring classes both in town and country speaks well for them in this respect. The example of those women of the middle classes that have already undertaken some branch of industry affords a farther proof of our assertion. It cannot be said that they have lost any part of their womanly nature. In the domestic sphere itself we have an indirect proof of the same principle; *cæteris paribus*, the woman of the middle ranks, to whom the greatest share of the duties of domestic life has fallen, possesses the best intelligence and the warmest affections.

In place of industry injuring the character of woman, the effect will be all the other way; the influence of woman will help to rescue industry from the materialism and inhumanity into which it has fallen, will humanize

man in public life as it now does in private life. And far from woman losing her attachment to home, that home will be more cherished than ever; the husband, finding there a true companion, will not desert it as he is now tempted to do; it will be to the family not merely the nominal but the real centre of its life. Nor will the relation of the sexes suffer—the spiritual bond between them will be more real. The feeling of companionship in the lot of life—at present known to families of the middle classes only in the days of adversity—will be familiar to them at all times in like manner as it is now familiar among the labouring classes, where the sexes stand more nearly on a footing of equality.

Not even is there cause for alarm lest the relation of the sexes lose any of its romance. Their present separation in education and in pursuits, as it reduces private life to the utmost dullness, is itself an effectual check to all romance; which, apart from personal incident, can now-a-days only be realized in the play of mental development—especially in connection with the personal relations.

To give room for such play it is necessary that the sexes meet on some common ground. There must be a common culture to which the peculiarities of individual development are referable, and through which they may

be understood. That there is nothing in industrial training in itself precluding the amount of romance requisite in a love attachment, is shown pretty plainly by the fact that, though man is for the most part subject to industrial training, he is, nevertheless, not without the power of inspiring the sentiment of love. And, in the lower ranks, we have yet to learn that the factory or millinery girl has no attractions for the lads of her own rank, or even for a stray romance hunter of a higher rank.\*

\* "The education of women should embrace the whole circle of arts and sciences, with no other rule of exclusion than that of peculiar disposition. There is no fear that the true mental distinction of the sexes would be lost. As different plants draw from the same soil different juices—as two different beings do not assimilate the same substances from the same aliments, but only what belongs to their peculiar nature—thus man and woman would not profit in the same manner by the lesson, which might yet be profitable to both."—Passage from *Legouvé's Histoire Morale des Femmes*, translated in *Westminster Review*. July, 1850.

"People, when they draw an ideal picture of woman, especially poets, transport her from all contact with material life. A lover, a virgin, an angel, a young and beautiful woman—these terms, so diverse, all unite in representing a being who scarce touches the earth with the tip of her wings; whose feet do not walk; whose hands do not work . . . And what is it to ask an opening for woman in a professional career, but to pluck off those angel wings, and to put her to hazard in the foul streets of the city; to make the virgin descend from her pedestal, to expose her to the miscellaneous gaze, to burden her with the fatigues of life, to mix the wife in the rude strifes of reality; to take thus from the one her grace, from the other her purity, from both the ideal charm of modesty? . . . These objections, most serious and most substantial, fall before one single word: woman lives upon the earth. Wealth may occasionally allow her this poetic leisure, and

## § 4.

There is with many women, just as there is with many men, an aversion to the bustle, competition, and anxiety that mark many regions of the industrial world. "Can it be a subject of regret to any right-minded woman that they (women) are not only exempt from the most laborious occupations both of mind and body, but also from the necessity of engaging in those eager pecuniary speculations, and in that fierce conflict of worldly interests, by which men are so deeply occupied as to be in a manner compelled to stifle their best feelings until they become in reality the characters they at first only assumed? Can it be a subject of regret to any kind and feeling woman that her sphere of action is one adapted to the exercise of the affections, where she can love and trust, and hope, and serve to the utmost of her wishes? Can it be a subject of regret that she is not called upon so much as man to calculate, to compete, to struggle, but rather to occupy a sphere in which the elements of discord cannot with propriety be admitted?"\*

youth or beauty may confer on her a grace; but wealth, beauty, youth, belong only to a select few, or last but a few short years; and for three-fourths of the life of woman the sovereign law of Labour is demanded by her as a boon, or is submitted to by her as a necessity."—*Legouvé*.

\* Mrs. Ellis, *Daughters of England*, p. 11.

If industry causes the mental ruin here attributed to it, the lot of man is an unfortunate one ; but in truth, as we have seen, the beneficial influences of industry do more than counterbalance any opposite tendency. To it our race mainly owes its civilization, and each individual the greater part of the mental culture he can boast of. On the other hand, as we have endeavoured to show, the deleterious influences of industry are mainly attributable to the separation it operates between the life of the sexes—a defect which the industrial employment of women will itself rectify. Looking to those branches of society where woman has already a part in industry, the mental ruin complained of is nowhere seen. In like manner take the example of those of the other sex whose distaste for non-domestic industry is as great as that of woman can be. Would these men, who have the disposition or supposed disposition of women, be more comfortably placed in some such position as women now occupy? Though many of their feelings would have freer indulgence, their general development would be far inferior to what it is now.

But is woman's present position so perfectly happy as our quotation represents it to be? If so, we have written this book in vain. Can woman love to the full of her desires when between her and the object of her love there is an impassable distance ; when she cannot follow,

even in fancy, his pursuits, ambitions, and amusements ? Can she hope when she knows not what to hope for ? Can she trust, when in her inmost thoughts, in her most cherished sentiments, she finds no partner ? Can she serve, when she is not received as a counsellor, and does not know that world for which she is educating her children ? If there ought to be no elements of discord in the sphere of woman, there is but too universally a stolid want of spirit and life.

Finally, care must be taken not to contrast the wrong things. As it is not proposed that married women desert their young families in order to undertake industry, no contrast drawn with respect to these is applicable to women who may engage in industry. The former may boast that they can love, and trust, and hope ; but the other have it not in their power to do so. To admit into industry those that have no family duties at home, cannot be to them an undesirable change.

### § 5.

It is said that women do not desire a change in their lot ; and there is a certain amount of truth in this. They are averse to the turmoil of change, and, rather than assume the forwardness necessary to bring it about, are content to confine themselves to the comforts and the

peace they at present enjoy. Their decision is considerate. It is foolish to risk present comfort and peace for the sake of a distant benefit; it is better to wait the calm progress of opinion and the gradual reformation of manners and laws.

But if it is meant that women as a class in their real conviction believe that they occupy the position most fitted to their nature, most conducive to their happiness and usefulness, a position worthy of them—*that* we deny. Not one in a hundred has such conviction; and yet, as we have said, it is equally true that the ninety-nine are content to abide the quiet progress of opinion, and if need be to live out their days in the lot to which they were born.

But allowing all consideration for the submissiveness of most women to the lot of life they are placed in, for their unwillingness to risk turmoil and bickerings at home for the sake of a distant social good, we would have equal toleration for those that consider it their duty, or even feel impelled by disposition to stand forward and advocate a change. Till lately it was reckoned immodest for a woman to talk about the rights of her sex; it was thought an offensive boldness, an act of high treason to society; and so general was the terror inspired that a few only, possessed of a bold and defiant spirit, dared to incur the odium. This in turn



was made use of by the adversaries of change ;—they selected the name of some amazon disowned alike by both sexes, some flaunting *femme emancipée*, and pointed to her as an example of what the sex would be were it admitted to a larger measure of social freedom !

Even now there is traceable to the same source an outcry against what are called “strong-minded women.” Assuming that such a class is not a mere fiction of the public (for the leaders of social reform are always maligned), it may fairly be attributed to the circumstances of the times. Allowance must be made for the novelty of the movement, and for the strength of public prejudice it has to meet. It cannot be expected that perfection will rise up at once, that the leaders of a new movement should have the finish and polish of apostles of institutions that have flourished for centuries. There is perfection indeed on neither side—if there is somewhat of cant in the talk and writing about the rights of women, there is, though less observable, ten times as much in the talking and writing indulged in *against* the rights of women. Imperfections and errors—even errors of taste—will be plentiful till the movement adjust itself to the ordinary ongoings of life ; but these errors and imperfections must not mislead us when we endeavour to form an opinion on the justice or practicability of the aim substantially in view.

The necessity for revolutionary agitation about the rights of women will, it is hoped, soon be over. There is a quiet advance of the sex into industrial occupation, calculated speedily to transfer the movement from debate to practical realization. In literature woman has already established a footing,—in teaching, in the superintendence of public institutions, in many other branches of industry—and all without the necessity, or even the imputation of being “strong-minded.” \*

### § 6.

The following quotations †, although adverse to the views we urge, deserve attention:—

“In all sorts of strength, not merely of body, but also of mind and character, man, in accordance with the ordinary law of the animal kingdom, evidently surpasses woman; and, in as much as practical life demands

\* “Women, it is said, do not desire—do not seek what is called their emancipation . . . . Supposing the fact to be true . . . if it proves that European women ought to remain as they are, it proves exactly the same with respect to Asiatic women; for they, too, instead of murmuring at their seclusion and at the restraint imposed upon them, pride themselves on it, and are astonished at the effrontery of women who . . . are seen in the streets unveiled.” “Submission is inculcated on them from childhood, as the peculiar attraction and grace of their character.”—*Westminster Review*, July, 1851, p. 309.

† *Discours sur L'ensemble du Positivisme, par Auguste Comte*. Paris, 1848. The excerpts given in the text are successively from pp. 204, 240, 252, and 242.

incessant and severe activity, it is necessarily governed by strength, not affection. If it were only required to love, woman would reign. But we must act and think in order to overcome the hardships of our destiny ; hence man must govern despite his inferiority in morality. In all great tasks success rests more on energy and talent than on zeal ; although the last has a considerable reaction on the other two. \* \* \* Woman can only modify through affection the natural supremacy of strength ; \* \* \* empire belongs to the strongest, not to the most loving, who, nevertheless, may be the more worthy of it.\* \* \*

“Since women are the purest and most spontaneous fountain of moral power” \* \* it is proper that, like the priesthood or spiritual power, they renounce all participation in practical affairs. “Delicacy of sentiment, which is their essential merit, and the true source of their ascendancy, is liable to be impaired by a life of activity \* \* \* the exercise of practical authority would be hurtful to the purity of the affections, as it would develop the egotistical impulses ; and it would be less in the power of women to avoid this danger since, with their tenderness of disposition, they are ordinarily wanting in energy, and would not be able sufficiently to resist corrupting influences.\* \* \*

“We are led, therefore, by reason as well as feeling

to establish in real life, public and private, the worship by the active sex of the emotional sex, individually and collectively. Born to love and be loved—freed of all responsibility in practical affairs—voluntarily retiring within the domestic sanctuary,” women are to be regarded as a sacred priesthood, the chief source of human happiness and perfection, the object of social and individual worship. The devotion to the female sex inspired by the spirit of chivalry, must be revived in the form of a social religion.

As the natural complement of these views, it is added: “Man must provide material support for woman—it is the natural law of our species \* \* \* and it is in the better application of this principle that any amelioration of the material condition of woman must consist. The duty of providing support for the female sex attaches itself more especially to individuals—but the direct responsibility that lies on each man to support the companion he has chosen, does not relieve the active sex collectively of a similar though indirect obligation with respect to all the affective sex. In the absence of husband and parents, society ought to guarantee means of subsistence to every woman.”

These views of M. Comte are at least consistent. He would in all ranks of society withdraw the female sex from industry; but as a counterpart of such a system,

he considers that such as have not fathers, or husbands, must be supported *by the state*. The latter recommendation ought to be well considered by the patrons in this country of the system of excluding woman from industry. Notwithstanding its obvious justice as a corelative of that system, and notwithstanding the chivalrous pretensions of the so-called friends of the sex, in these pages of M. Comte it is now proposed for the first time. Whether it would be preferable to support single women by a public subsidy, or by a local rating, is a grave question for those that would prevent them working for their bread ! but justice and humanity require that the doctrine of the exclusion of the female sex from industrial employment be supplemented by some such measure in their behalf. If none such can be devised, it were becoming that the clamour against the admission of women to industry should cease.

We agree with M. Comte that society stands in need of a habitual moral influence, felt in every family, and by every individual ; we believe, too, that for this influence woman is chiefly to be looked to ; but while M. Comte considers that the restriction of woman to domestic life is essential to the exercise of that influence, we have endeavoured to show that such an isolation effectually destroys it. The truth of this is seen in extreme cases. In ancient Athens, for example, the

mother of the family was immured in the Gynceum, and thus strictly confined to domestic life: yet no one will contend that in such a position her influence could have the smallest weight. It has only been with her emancipation from seclusion that woman's influence has been developed. Her social position in the middle classes, as we have endeavoured to illustrate it in these pages, affords of itself conclusive evidence to the same effect. There woman is entirely freed from the responsibility of earning a livelihood; is entirely domesticated; is, in a word, placed precisely as it is by some desired that women of every rank should be placed; yet what does her influence there come to? It is absolutely nothing. Isolated from the world, a stranger to the other sex, her faculties dulled by seclusion, she is regarded as incapable of forming a judgment except on household affairs, and is content to lead the life of an upper servant.

The salon or drawing-room has been regarded as the proper field for the social influence of woman;\* and

\* "When the manners of the Middle Ages had procured for women a just measure of domestic freedom, there arose in the west of Europe a form of voluntary reunion, wherein public life mingled intimately with private life under the presiding influence of woman. [The famous salons of French social life are here referred to.] This is the natural form alone adapted to the public influence of woman."—*Discours, &c.*, p. 225.

in a certain sense, this may be partially true. It is in the drawing-room that the sexes meet in social communion ; and whatever general influence woman may possess, such social reunions afford her the *opportunity* of putting it forth. For the *origin*, however, of that influence, we must look to more natural sources. As we explained in a former chapter, the social intercourse of leisure hours can be but the flower or the fruit of more serious life, of the great tree of existence ; and, in order that a drawing-room may not be a dungeon of weariness, people there must have some degree of mutual acquaintance. The nearer the sexes approach in ordinary life, the more complete will the intercourse of the drawing-room be ; and the more they are separated in ordinary life, the more will formality and dulness reign in the drawing-room. Accordingly, if we inquire in what ranks the salon has afforded scope for the influence of women, we find it is only among the aristocracy, and in literary society ; where, in mental qualities and in culture, the sexes stand more on a footing of equality, and where they have the same or nearly the same pursuits. But as soon as we leave these ranks, the influence of woman vanishes ; assuredly it is nowhere seen in the drawing-rooms of our middle classes. The source, therefore, of the influence of woman in the salon or drawing-room is misunderstood ; it is attributable

to the common culture and common pursuits of the sexes in those ranks where the mode of reunion in question first drew attention; and disappears with that common culture. Before it can be realized in the middle ranks, the distance there at present separating the inward and outward life of the sexes must be removed.

If women are not only withdrawn from active life and restricted to domestic seclusion, but in addition are formally made the objects of social worship, the mark would be still further missed. Their isolation from the world would only be increased, their character more impoverished, their sense and judgment weakened, their impulses rendered more exacting and selfish. The chivalresque petting of woman by ceremonious form, and this proposed worship of her, are equally unnatural to the real feelings, and deleterious to her character and substantial influence.

We would not be misunderstood. The worship by one human being of another, whether man or woman, is among the most sacred elements of life—would that it pervaded the realities of our existence only more completely—but must the object of our worship be perched on an altar, and in the midst of ceremony and solitude? Must woman be ignorant of the frailties of our frame, of our trials and difficulties? And, if man too may be the object of love, of worship, should not he also be



withdrawn from active life, and placed on an altar? We cannot admit that woman should be formally regarded as an object of social worship any more than man. It would put the sexes on a false relation, would confound all notions of desert and demerit, especially in the minds of the worshipped; would make women empty, silly, and vain. The chivalresque politeness at present in use towards women already goes far to produce these effects; and is, on that very account, despised by women of sense and amiability. It is too often the incense offered by men who hold the sterling qualities of woman in the greatest contempt, and who will leave the drawing-room to go to the casino. The true gentleman will in his politeness show more of sense and good feeling than of ceremony.

But will not exposure to the rudeness of practical life impair the delicacy of sentiment which is characteristic of woman. Has she sufficient strength to resist that deleterious influence? There is indeed an artificial delicacy of sentiment, called sentimentality, which cannot bear exposure to the realities of life; and which, on the isolation of woman's life ceasing, may be jeopardized. If so, none will regret its loss; but there is no reason to fear that delicacy of natural feeling will receive injury from any such source. On the contrary, what is sensibility without experience, without trial? Poor,

sickly fancy ; or else mere quackery ; it can have no moral wisdom, can obtain neither respect nor influence. Which is the least selfish, the indolent or the active ? There is no surer precept about human nature than that its faculties can only be perfected by exercise, by trial ; and feelings even the most delicate are no exception. To whatever rank we look, the woman of sterling genial nature—distinguished as well by sense as by delicacy and depth of feeling—is not the creature of mere sentiment, or that is petted as an idol, but she whose life is active, whose duties have brought her in contact with, and given her an insight into the realities of life. In the woman so placed are most frequently found true delicacy and depth of feeling, with wisdom to guide, and energy to carry out. In her, too, it is seen that, so far at least as regards her emotional nature, the strength of woman's organization is not inferior to that of man ; and that, while trial is necessary for the perfection of her faculties, she is equal to that trial. Indeed, the remark of M. Comte, that woman is more homogeneous than man, implies that she retains more firmly the feminine characteristics under all circumstances.

## CHAPTER XVI.

INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY OF WOMEN; CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO  
INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT.

## § 1.

It remains for us to notice one other objection to a change in the industrial and social position of woman; namely, that she is intellectually inferior to man. This part of our subject divides itself into two branches: whether there are grounds for believing that the mental powers of woman are, and must always remain, inferior to those of man; and, if so, whether the inferiority is so considerable as to incapacitate her for undertaking such ordinary duties of industry as, by the present arrangements of society, fall to be performed by man alone. It will be convenient to consider in the first place, the latter of these two points.

There is a prevalent notion that the female sex is inferior to the male sex in intelligence and mental power, and with that conclusion most people rest satis-

fied, fancying that in it lies a justification of the present relation of the sexes; but they forget to inquire *how far* the inferiority extends, whether it is so considerable as to exclude woman from the occupations ordinarily open to the other sex, or to justify a marked distinction in their several pleasures and pursuits. Granting a certain measure of inferiority, there is much more to be ascertained before a practical conclusion can be drawn regarding the social position to be assigned to the female sex. Some may put the supposed inferiority as a good reason why woman's social position should always remain just as it happens at present to be. Others may argue that improvement is desirable, but that there are many departments of practical life and many intellectual pursuits from which woman must always be excluded; and this opinion itself admits of diverse shades—for where is the line to be drawn? how far will woman's talent permit her to go, and where will it fail her? Some may think that such pursuits as are in a peculiar degree intellectual, as writing books or teaching, must be beyond her powers; for, if her intelligence or mental power is defective, here surely, if in any walk of industry, would that deficiency mar success; yet we have the fact that thousands of women have devoted themselves to these occupations with much *éclat*. Some may regard her powers as equal to the prudent management

of domestic affairs, but unequal to the requirements of ordinary commercial industry; others may see in commercial industry no need for greater intellectual qualifications than are possessed by the generality of either sex, but may rest an objection to woman engaging in industrial employment, not on any want of ability, but on some other of the shifting sands that prejudice is never at a loss to settle on. In short, though it were ascertained beyond cavil that woman is intellectually inferior to man, it would still remain to be determined what the extent of inferiority is, and whether it is sufficient to exclude her from industry, or from any other important walk of public life.

Now, fortunately, without raising for the present the abstract question of equality or inequality in the mental powers of the sexes, we can in the first instance determine from experience the narrower question—whether, taking the mental powers of woman as they are, she has shown herself disqualified on account of their supposed imperfection for undertaking ordinary industrial employment. In certain ranks of life woman has already acquired a recognised place in industry, and in all ranks she is occasionally found engaged in it. We have it in our power, therefore, to apply the test of experience; from that source we can tell whether she has exhibited any remarkable deficiency in those intellectual

qualifications that may be regarded as indispensable to success in business.

Among the labouring classes the sexes are much more on an equality in education, in industrial training, in social position ; and this is peculiarly the case in what we have termed the higher grades of the labouring classes, in which the wife, mother, or daughter is for the most part in a situation to give no inconsiderable aid in the management of the industry by which the family is supported. It need scarcely be repeated that this condition of society occurs especially in the families of small shopkeepers and artisans, and among the owners or occupants of small holdings in rural districts. In these is shown of how small importance to the main object of our inquiry the supposed mental inferiority of woman practically is. Allowing that woman is mentally inferior—what then ? Among the extensive peasant proprietary of Continental Europe, among the yeomanry and peasantry of our own country, among our village artisans, and among the tradespeople in the crowded quarters of our large towns, it is usually found that the wife is as intelligent, as prudent, as helpful, and has prosperity in business as much at heart as her husband himself, and is a good wife and good mother to boot. Yet these ranks are more numerous by far than all other ranks put together. Besides, in the branches of industry open to

the independent exertion of woman, we are not aware that she has shown less skill and art than could have been expected of the other sex had the same employments been entrusted to them. In short, it is a matter of experience that, in all departments of industry where woman has acquired a recognized position, and in all situations where she receives, under fair circumstances, a general charge or management of industrial affairs, not only is her work well done, but that work exercises a favourable influence on her mind, improving her intelligence, and affording healthy development to her energies.

In some countries the occupations of the people are, from peculiar circumstances, more favourable to woman than in other countries; there being in their ordinary employments more scope for her taking part with the other sex on a liberal footing. This is especially observable in France, where not only is the population composed chiefly of peasant proprietors (a condition of society very favourable to woman), but where, from the extensive home-culture of silk, flax, wine, garden produce, and other commodities of domestic consumption, the female sex has acquired much industrial and social importance. We do not refer to the growth of these products on a large scale, but to that home-culture on a small scale in which woman takes a direct interest, and of which, likewise, in a considerable degree she takes an active charge.

There is scarcely a peasant's dwelling in France but has its garden or its plot of flax, its mulberry tree or its vineyard, which the housewife considers as peculiarly her own. Of these, perhaps the flax-plot is most constant; and its produce is reaped by woman, dressed by her, spun by her, bleached by her, and, when woven, is hoarded by her amongst the family napery, of which she is so proud; or, if the yarn she has spun must be sold, it is she that claims the privilege of going to market on the occasion; if it is to be knitted into lace, this art, too, with all its taste and delicacy, falls into her hands. And so with many other occupations prevalent throughout the peasant proprietary of the rural districts of France, or even in the towns of that nation. We go further, and venture to assert that the favourable position of the female sex in the peasant proprietary of that country has elevated the ranks above them. It is impossible, where peasant proprietors compose four-fifths of the population, that influences affecting these should not indirectly bear on the higher classes. It is natural, therefore, to expect that the female sex in that country should, in intelligence and social influence, be well-nigh equal to man; and such, we believe, has historically been the case, notwithstanding the recluse education it was the custom, at no recent date, to give to young women of rank. The times of the great French Revo-



lution are associated with the names of many women whose intelligence, wisdom, and heroism, are not among the least remarkable lineaments of that outburst; and these are not the only times of which France can make a similar boast. The elevation of the peasantry or working classes of a country enables the higher classes the better to elevate themselves.

The superior intelligence of the female sex in France affords an illustration of the favourable influences exercised on woman by industrial employment; and similar illustrations might be drawn from our own and from other countries. Wherever the staple employments of a people are favourable in their influence on the intelligence of the female sex, the social position and mental attributes of woman rise responsively in the scale; wherever these influences are unfavourable, woman is proportionally degraded.

## § 2.

But it may be said, that these illustrations are taken from the lower ranks of life, and cannot therefore justify the wide conclusion we seek to draw from them; that, though woman occupies in the humbler and more numerous section of the population a status nearly equal to that of man, and exhibits capabilities equal to that status, it

is too much to ground thereon an argument for the equality of their intellectual powers in general, seeing that, in the humbler classes, the industrial sphere in which the equality obtains is very narrow ; and woman may in that narrow sphere acquit herself well enough, while she may be quite unfit to take a place in a wider sphere. In truth, however, narrowness of sphere sometimes increases the test of intelligence in place of lowering it ; for it frequently throws the individual on his own resources for the supply of his wants and the solution of his difficulties. The backwoodsman, settling down on his uncleared lot of land, occupies, in one sense, a sufficiently narrow sphere ; but no one depends more on innate intelligence and energy ; he, like the housewife of France, supplies his wants and the wants of his family almost entirely from home-manufacture ; and, in the one case as in the other, the trial of intelligence is far sharper than many are exposed to in the organised branches of industry, where division of labour assigns, it may be, to each individual a single routine operation.

Moreover, in the higher departments of industry, in so far as the female sex has already been admitted to them, women have shown no inaptitude to justify our hindering their advancement in that walk. In literary labour they have reached to eminence, many of their

works being of high order both in matter and in execution; in conducting higher educational establishments, in the situation of governess, and in the minor branches of teaching, nothing is left to be desired; to their services in the management of hospitals and public institutions, *when undertaken after due training*, and when accompanied with an appropriate measure of trust and responsibility, the world's approbation has been accorded; and, even in trading establishments, where woman is at present placed at most disadvantage, we have never heard that want of intelligence kept her back. Her difficulties have sprung from other sources — from undertaking enterprises in trade, or the management of institutions, without due training in youth, without having from the first regarded herself as destined for these employments; and from her masters failing to repose sufficient trust in her, or to place her sufficiently on her own responsibility. What matron of an hospital in this country but has a committee of a dozen interfering people incessantly buzzing about and dictating to her, each member claiming the right at any time even to give orders individually, and all clashing in full disorganization? Compare such a system with that hospital in Italy noted by Mrs. Jameson as unique, as so different in its constitution from all others seen by her, where the matron and co-operators of her own sex are responsible for the manage-

ment of the institution to Government and to Government only!

### § 3.

Both in the middle and in the lower ranks the general direction of domestic economy falls almost entirely to woman. In this executive department of life does she show any great deficiency in intelligence?

Now, while industrial employment has for its object to gain money, the task of domestic economy is to spend it. Is it easier to gain or to spend? It is easy to spend foolishly; but to spend prudently is, we believe, nearly as difficult as to gain, and the duty falls, as we have said, almost exclusively to woman. It is she that has to make ends meet, to make most of the resources, to do the best for respectable appearance, to maintain the comfort of table and fireside, to clothe and to educate the children; for the just apportionment of the family means towards the attainment of these various ends, woman is for the most part responsible, and in the task there seems ample room for the exercise of faculties of the highest order.

In other words, the material and moral government of the household falls to woman. She has to arrange matters for each day, so that there may be a time for every

thing, and that every thing may be in its place. The management of servants falls to her ; and, not least, the care and education of her own children. In all these affairs the husband is called in but as a bugbear to frighten the refractory.

Moreover, domestic economy requires a very considerable measure of information, and considerable skill in various arts. Of needlework we have already had occasion to speak ; and, of cooking, we would only say, that to know it well implies nearly as much art as is requisite for successful manipulation in a chemist's laboratory.

On the whole, the character woman has acquired for "prudent management" in her present position, her skill in many useful arts, the judgment she displays in the discharge of the many responsible duties devolving on her, the near equality of her intelligence to that of man in the ranks where education and occupations are alike, and the aptitude she has shown for conducting even the higher departments of business when open to her—show the groundlessness of the objection of want of capacity on the part of woman, when by that objection is meant want of capacity to undertake without restriction the ordinary business of life.

## § 4.

In these remarks we have not contended for the absolute equality of the sexes in respect of general capacity; but for equality, or an approach to equality, in *industrial capacity*. That, for our present purpose, is the essential point of inquiry. If, from experience, we are satisfied that, allowing a certain measure of inferiority in woman, none has been shown so glaring as to preclude her from undertaking, after proper training, the ordinary duties of business—we seek no more. Suppose it were true that women could not teach the differential calculus, or invent spinning-jennies, or preach sermons—or suppose even they could not write books—they might still have sufficient talent for ordinary industrial employments. How few of the other sex, of our merchants, tradespeople, or artisans, even of our professional men, could, with any amount of training, teach the calculus, or invent machinery, or preach sermons, or write books? Allowing, therefore, a considerable inferiority on the part of woman, if nevertheless, as has been proved, she is able to take a respectable position in every-day industry, the arguments urged throughout this treatise on behalf of improvement in her condition are as justly applicable as if the equality of the sexes were

perfect. By admission to the higher industrial employments, woman, though inferior to man, would still be enabled to earn a livelihood by her own exertions, would find an occupation for her time and vent for her energies, would acquire an interest in public and social life, would become more and more the companion of man.

There is this obvious advantage in restricting the question, in the first instance, to capacity or incapacity for industrial employment—that we are sooner led to a practical issue—an issue that can scarcely be looked for so long as we beat for a solution of the wider dispute touching the comparative intellectual capacity of the sexes in the abstract. The solution of that vague problem is at present far distant. But it is otherwise with the narrower inquiry of industrial talent; and, since experience has shown that if there be intellectual inferiority in woman, at least it does not incapacitate her for taking a respectable part in the business world,—let this step be taken in the first instance, let her have free admission to industrial employment, and *then* woman will have a fair opportunity of showing her inherent powers to rise higher. Then, and then only, will it be possible to determine her proper intellectual rank. The educational, industrial, and legal disabilities under which she now labours being removed, she will feel at home in the world, be as well educated, have as wide experience,

be as well trained in life as the other sex; then, and then only, can her higher cerebral powers be known. Then—we had almost said—will it be known if she can even write books—which is surely the highest of intellectual tasks—but, lo, in this department she has already entered the intellectual lists, whether with discomfiture or with honour, let our readers themselves be judges!\*

\* “The speakers at the Convention in America, have done wisely and right in refusing to entertain the question of peculiar aptitudes either of women or of men \* \* they justly maintain that these questions can only be satisfactorily answered by perfect freedom \* \* There need be no fear that women will take out of the hands of men any occupation which men can perform better than they. But to interfere beforehand by an arbitrary limit \* \* \* is the most effectual mode of providing that, in the sex or class so fettered, the qualities which are not permitted to be exercised, shall not exist.”—*Westminster Review*, July, 1851, p. 295-6.



## CHAPTER XVII.

SOCIAL OBSTRUCTIONS TO THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF WOMAN.

## § 1.

ALTHOUGH, as was explained in last Chapter, the question regarding the intellectual powers of woman, properly falling within the scope of this treatise, is the narrow one of capacity or incapacity for industrial pursuits; nevertheless, the wider question of the comparative mental powers of the sexes is too tempting to be denied a place here; and, indefinite and unpractical as it undoubtedly is, it may be useful to note a few considerations that may aid in clearing the way for its ultimate determination.

An essential preparative to the solution of the problem is to understand clearly the causes that historically have retarded the mental development of woman. That such causes have operated from the earliest times, and even yet operate, no one, whatever his opinion on the main

question, will deny; but of the extent and depth of these unfavourable influences on the development of woman few have an adequate conception. It seems desirable, therefore, now to review them in an articulate form—at such length as the limits of this work will permit.

At no period of history has woman had any conspicuous rank in the rôle of social ongoings. Productive industry has for the most part been in the hands of man; the management of public affairs has likewise been monopolised by him. The social activities that strike the eye of the observer or of the historian are all with him. Important intellectual and social questions are discussed and settled by him—at no time has woman taken much part in them; and he even dictatorially orders the private matters of domestic life. Above all, in the progress of the human race, are attributable to him all great intellectual achievements, all great works of art, all great social movements.

And why has it been so? Why has woman had so inconsiderable a part in industry, in politics, in social and intellectual progress? Manifestly, had she been placed in every respect on an equality with man, so as to give her a like opportunity with him to influence or take part in these important developments, we might have reasoned justly that her failure to use the opportunity was attributable to weakness in her innate powers;—but it is

equally manifest that, if she has all along been placed in a social position that necessarily precluded her influencing or taking part in social ongoings, no matter what intellectual organization she possessed,—it were most unreasonable to attribute her shortcomings to any other source than the obstructions under which she so laboured. That, as a matter of fact, these obstructions were amply sufficient, and more than sufficient, to retard the development of woman; and that, whensoever the same obstructions are present in the case of the other sex, they have uniformly and in the same degree retarded the development of man, can indeed scarcely be gainsaid; but as prejudices must be cut out by the roots, let us trace these agencies a little more closely, with a view of dislodging the prejudices that would lightly regard the power of these.

## § 2.

The first of the great agencies that have precluded the rise of woman in the social scale is jealousy. We might have gone back a step further, to the savage state where woman is the slave of man—is used as his beast of burden; for the inferior strength of woman placed her at the mercy of the stronger sex, and from the first she was made at once the bearer of children and the common drudge. But it is doubtful if, in this state of barbarism, the intelligence

of woman was really the inferior ; for, while man lorded it over her in indolence, most of the duties of life fell to her, and could not fail to bring out her energies.

In the subsequent stage, marked by the jealous seclusion of woman, the influences bearing on her were very different. These are still found in an extreme form in Asiatic communities, in few of which women dare be seen in public ; where the invidious veil itself indicates the jealous eye with which they are regarded ; and where, if their masters have the means, they are even put in keeping of stone walls and eunuchs. These are the countries of polygamy ; where women are looked on, not even as useful slaves, but chiefly as instruments of pleasure. Indeed their banishment from the general intercourse of society, their confinement within stone walls, their degradation to creatures of passing luxury, seem to leave them little elevated above girls of pleasure in our own community, except that in the case of the latter there is a community of husbands as of wives ; at all events, in the jealous seclusion to which women of Eastern countries have been condemned, little mental development could be looked for. And although from many accounts it appears that polygamy and the "mural interment" of women have been habitual chiefly among the wealthy, who had the means of carrying out the system ; the degradation of the sex has been no less universal—since

the estimate of woman in the lower classes must, in a great measure, follow that adopted by the higher, and since the restrictions increased in proportion to the status of the individuals, and in proportion, therefore, to their means of influencing the general civilization.\*

And even in Athens, as we observed in a previous Chapter, where there reigned a medium state between the rigour of an Asiatic Harem and the conventional "proprieties" of modern life,—what room was there for female development? Polygamy did not obtain; but women still occupied secluded apartments, were denied interference in social affairs, and the free intercourse of common life. They were virtuous, but, so far as history shows, they were also destitute of mind, of influence, or even of emotion itself. True one class of women possessed

\* "In despotic (Asiatic) governments women are themselves the objects of luxury. They must be in the state of the most rigorous servitude. Every one follows the spirit of the government, and adopts in his own family the customs he sees elsewhere established \* \* We find the manners more pure in the several parts of the east in proportion as the confinement of women is more strictly observed. In great kingdoms, there are necessarily great lords. The greater their wealth the more enlarged is their ability of keeping their wives in an exact confinement, and of preventing them from entering again into society. From hence it proceeds that in the empires of Turkey, Persia, of the Mogul, China, and Japan, the manners of their wives are admirable. \* \* Wives are changed so often in the east that they cannot have the power of domestic government. This care is therefore committed to the eunuchs, who are entrusted with the keys, and the management of all household affairs."—*Mon'esquieu, Spirit of Laws.*

a certain brilliancy at Athens, though not its matrons. That class had freedom, and some of its number education and influence; and a few even gained a reputation for learning and ability. But it is an isolated phenomenon that the Hetærae of Athens should have acquired so much consideration; and their case can scarcely be reasoned from in our present argument, save as an exception proving a rule. The true state of the female sex in Athens is seen in its matrons, in the wives and daughters of its citizens—a condition backward in the extreme—precluding all mental culture, or the participation of woman in any branch of active life.\*

\* One is startled at the revelation such passages as the following afford, of the domestic and social relations prevalent among the Athenians:—

“I assert, therefore, that he who loves, if he is found committing any base act, \* \* would not be in so much pain when seen by his father or friends, or any one else, as by the object of his affections; \* \* a lover would less endure to be seen by his beloved, when deserting his post, or throwing away his arms, than by all others. \* \* There is not a man so much a coward as that love would not divinely inspire him to deeds of valour, and make him equal to the very best by birth.”—PLATO'S *Banquet*.

And yet this was *not* said of the love of *Woman*!

“Not every love is honourable and worthy to be highly praised; but that which impels to loving honourably. The one, then, belonging to the vulgar Venus, is a love truly vulgar \* \* and this it is which inspires the worthless love; and such persons, in the first place, love women (!) \* \* But that from the celestial Venus, is, in the first place,” the love of youths.

Children are represented as the natural offspring of the love of women; but, in the other relation, people “yearn according to the soul. Are there, then (said I) they who yearn according to the soul? Still more, (said she) than in their bodies. \* \* What then is *their*

Up to classic times, therefore, the seclusion of woman rendered it quite impossible for her to make any perceptible progress in mental development.—Veils and stone walls, ignorance and social banishment, formed effectual barriers. But mark,—at that era *man* had already made more than half, and certainly the most brilliant half, of his advance from barbarism, as is exhibited in the art and science of Athens itself; and, supposing the restriction on woman's freedom had been then removed, she had started, at least, half way behind; and even now might not have made up her lee way, might still have suffered from the effects of her first disadvantage. This, we say, might

natural offspring? *Intellect, and every other excellence.*" In other words the vulgar relation (the domestic relation of man to woman) is entirely sensual; while the relation defined by Socrates as the higher of the two, *is spiritual as well as sensual.*

And who is the *teacher* that in the above passage Plato represents Socrates as quoting with so much earnestness and admiration? "But as regards the discourse about love, which I heard formerly from Diotima, of Mantenea, who was a clever person on these and many other points—for when the Athenians were making sacrifices on account of the plague, she effected its being put off for ten years—she it was who instructed me (Socrates) even in love affairs." And what was Diotima, that her discourse should fill so large a portion of Socrates' dialogue? She was "a stranger"—she was another Aspasia!

Here, therefore, as in similar passages from Greek writers, is unequivocally shown, that at Athens free-born women, the mothers, the wives, the daughters of its citizens, were little if anything more than domestic slaves, raising up children to the state; that the relation between them and man inspired no elevated sentiment; and that the higher emotions of love, associated among us with woman in the domestic relation, sought among the Athenians far other objects.

have been, had the restriction exercised by jealousy on the domestic and social freedom of woman been long ago removed ; but every one knows that the restriction was not removed ; that for centuries longer it weighed on the liberties of women. Every one knows that the jealous seclusion of women has not yet left us ; that most women, even in this country, yet feel themselves to be the property of Turkish masters ; that the laws of England give a husband much the same rights over the person and property of his wife as the laws of ancient nations ; that the whole sex is yet socially and individually watched with the strictness of my lord's preserve. And if you believe that, in ancient times, the immuring of woman in harem walls, and the denial to her of ordinary social communion, must be reckoned causes of the degradation of the sex then obtaining—of the inferiority of its culture to that of man ; and if the advance of woman from that state of restriction, great in one sense though it be, is still far from perfect ;—you must still, in judging of woman's intellectual attainments in the present time, make allowance for the same influence, though now assuming a less aggravated form. At Athens it had thrown her out from the prevalent civilization, and removed her from its culture ; and intervening ages have but partially made up the distance. Woman is still denied the culture conferred by civilization on man ; and



for much the same reason as before—a jealous conventional propriety yet imprisoning her, as effectually as iron bars once imprisoned her. To these restrictions of jealousy, of “propriety,” woman is especially sensitive; and rather than there be the semblance of a breach of them, rather than expose herself to the slightest imputation of unbecoming forwardness, of unfeminine conduct, she enforces them on herself with a strictness that might put jealousy to shame. The sacrifice on her part is not in appearance only, but is real; for it involves an abnegation of all culture but that fitting her to be the servant of man.

There is a social class that from the beginning of time has, in contrast with other classes, shown an absence of jealousy in its estimate and in its treatment of women;—we mean the priesthood—not of the Roman Catholic Church merely, in which, with the celibacy of its clergy, the principal occasion of jealousy is wanting, but in all times and in all religions. As a natural consequence of this, we likewise find that women have frequently filled spiritual offices, and have obtained in them great consideration. In the prophetesses of Israel, in the priestesses of Egypt and of the Druids, among the bards of pastoral countries, in the convents of the Romish Church, in the parish of a Protestant clergyman, in the homes of literary men, in the pages of literature,—woman has always

held a position most honourable. If we add to these examples, the worship of goddesses in ancient times, and of the Virgin and of female saints among Roman Catholics, we may safely say that the church,—pagan, Jewish, Christian, and philosophical,—has done much to redeem woman from jealous degradation. If she has received so much consideration at the hands of the intellectual and spiritual guides of mankind, and if she has justified their estimate of her powers, her claim is vindicated to a like freedom from jealous restriction at the hands of the general community.

### § 3.

Till very recently war was the only occupation reckoned worthy of noble blood; war the only source of great wealth; and a warrior's life the only road to political and social distinction. Land and its revenues were the substance of riches, and military service their tenure. Now, whatever be in dispute regarding the relation of the sexes, it has never been denied that, in muscular strength, woman is by far the inferior; and it follows that, in times when war was the only honourable occupation, was almost the sole public business of the state, and the sole private business of its free subjects, woman could have little part in social ongoings, and that the

supposition of equality in the sexes could not have been for a moment entertained. Certainly the weaker sex has never attempted to compete with man in military prowess, any more than women in the prior stages of barbarism thought of resisting his power to make them slaves or beasts of burden. In warrior times, therefore, woman necessarily remained with none but a domestic function.

But it is only within these few generations that war has ceased to be the chronic condition of society; that swords have been turned into cotton machinery; that industry has no longer been regarded as a degrading avocation; that social and personal distinction has rested on other services than those rendered in the field of battle. All that measure of man's superiority to woman, therefore, that may be fairly attributed to the part he has played in the public affairs of life and in the development of political history, during the military civilization of the last three thousand years, can by no means be regarded as a proof of woman's inferiority. Her deficiency in physical strength was alone sufficient to exclude her during these ages from all public councils.\*

A distinction has with justice been drawn between the

\* Unless we except tribes like the barbarous Germans, where women were present in battle, and where (as a natural consequence *corroborating the argument of our text*) women took part in warlike councils, and enjoyed a large measure of freedom and equality.

anterior and the later periods of warlike civilization ;\* between the civilization marked by aggressive warfare, and corresponding for the most part with ancient times ; and the civilization of defensive warfare, corresponding for the most part with the middle ages, with the feudal system, and with the empire of Romish Christianity. The later military development, known as the feudal system, was far more favourable to an advance in the social position of woman than the prior stage of aggressive conquest. The warlike barons had set themselves down in their strongholds, with no wish but to defend what they had acquired ; there was no longer a national ferment to conquer the world. With armed peace, war ceased to occupy the mind so exclusively as before ; it degenerated to feudal bickerings and forays ; the pursuits of industry acquired importance ; religion was consolidated ; letters were revived ; and, on the whole, much of the time was spent in the ordinary cares of life. At the same time, the sphere of social intercourse was transferred from the few luxurious towns, to which freed-men in ancient times almost entirely resorted, to the seclusion of isolated fortresses. In circumstances like these, it was natural that in the higher ranks the character of woman should be held in greater esteem than before ; that her

\* M. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*.

society should be prized ; that the consideration formerly paid to her sex in the frugal households of the poorer classes, should now also be paid her in the households of the great ; and this tendency was encouraged at once by the spread of Christianity, and by the influence of the Germanic races, early characterised by frugality and by respect for the female sex.

The rise thus generated in the social status of woman soon took a systematic, and even an exaggerated form. Woman became an object of worship—or little less—in the sentiment of gallantry or chivalry that took so deep a hold on feudal manners ; and, although much of that romantic devotion was mere mannerism, nevertheless, when the position held by woman in feudal times, as it may be judged of from the records of chivalry, is compared with her position in ancient times, the advance is seen to be prodigious. Gradually, too, as time went on, and the Quixotism of chivalry died out, there arose to woman in its stead a still more substantial benefit. At last the highest of all honours was paid in regarding her in the same light as man alone was before regarded ; neither placing her on a Quixotic pedestal, nor trampling her under foot, but recognising in her a human being like ourselves, with equal sensibility to misery or happiness, with an equal desire to serve and to influence, with like faculties, like powers, and a like destiny.

In the maturity, therefore, of feudal times woman had acquired a position in comparison satisfactory. She possessed much influence, much independence; was esteemed by man, was truly his companion. In high ranks she enjoyed a liberal education, and, when her station demanded it, gave attention to the great state questions of the day. In Western Europe this happy culture reached its acme in the sixteenth century, and was well represented in the courts of Queen Elizabeth of England and Queen Isabella of Spain. It continued to a later age in Eastern Europe, where feudalism is even yet paramount; and the eighteenth century saw its great queen in Maria Theresa of Austria.

The state of feudalism however is transitional; it stands midway between incessant war and established industry—keeping back the ravages of the former, and nurturing the growth of the latter.\* And now that for the last few centuries industrial civilization has gained ground, woman is once more thrown out of the current of human affairs. Had the feudal system kept its predominance in the West as in the East, woman, in place of losing ground since the sixteenth century, would have maintained and strengthened the position she had then

\* M. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*.

acquired ; but, with the elevation of the middle classes, feudal aristocracy has been dethroned ; and, through the industrial engrossment of man in the middle ranks, woman has again slipped her hold of social ongoings ; during these two centuries she has lost ground in place of gaining it ; and till, through participation in industry, she again reconcile herself to society, and thereby acquire an interest in public life and a development and culture in harmony with the prevalent civilization, she must retain her present isolated position. A queen in these times can differ little from her humblest subject ; she presides, or is supposed to preside, over a civilization in which her sex has no fitting part ; she cannot aspire to govern—as once a queen might do ; her greatest mission is, like her sisters of the humblest rank, to attend to domestic duties, and give her subjects a good example in ruling her own household.\*

\* “By a curious anomaly, though ineligible to even the lowest offices of state, they (women) are in some countries admitted to the highest of all, the regal ; and if there is any one function for which they have shown a decided vocation, it is that of reigning. Not to go back to ancient history, we look in vain for abler or firmer rulers than Elizabeth ; than Isabella of Castille ; than Maria Theresa ; than Catherine of Russia ; than Blanche, mother of Louis IX. of France ; than Jeanne d’Albret, mother of Henri Quatre. There are few kings on record who contended with more difficult circumstances, or overcame them more triumphantly, than these. Even in semi-barbarous Asia, princesses who have never been seen by men, other than those of their own family, or never spoken with them, unless from behind a curtain, have as regents, during the minority of their sons, exhibited many of the

Hitherto, therefore, the restrictions of jealousy and of "the proprieties" have confined woman at home, to her woman's apartments; physical weakness has precluded her participation in war, and in military civilization; and hitherto at least she has also been conventionally excluded from industry and industrial civilization.\* These restrictions seem sufficient to account for almost any amount of mental inferiority on the part of woman as compared with man,—quite independently of the question of cerebral inferiority. Had man, from jealous restrictions, or from deficiency in physical strength, been subject to like disabilities—in his case the result would have been the same. Experience shows it: the class of

most brilliant examples of just and vigorous administration. In the middle ages,—when the distance between the upper and lower ranks was greater than even between women and men, and the women of the privileged class, however subject to tyranny from the men of the same class, were at a less distance below them than any one else was, and often in their absence represented them in their functions and authority,—numbers of heroic châtelaines, like Jeanne de Montfort, or the great Duchess of Derby, as late as even the time of Charles I. distinguished themselves not only by their political but their military capacity. In the centuries immediately before and after the Reformation, ladies of royal houses, as diplomatists, as governors of provinces, or as the confidential advisers of kings, equalled the first statesmen of their time; and the treaty of Cambray, which gave peace to Europe, was negotiated in conferences where no other person was present, but the aunt of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and the mother of Francis the First."—*West. Rev., July, 1851, pp. 296-7.*

\* "There has been no political community or nation in which, by law and usage, women have not been in a state of political and civic inferiority."—*West. Rev., July, 1851.*



slaves are treated with pretty much the same jealousy as women have always inspired, and have for conventional reasons been as inexorably denied the exercise of every social function. Compare the intelligence of free women with the intelligence of bondsmen, in whatever state of society or in whatever time these may be found, and—Does there appear so marked a difference in the result as to justify our attributing inferior mental development in the one case to conventional sources, and in the other to cerebral organization?

#### § 4.

But granting that opportunity was denied to woman of attaining adequate mental development through participation in active life, it may yet be said that there was no hindrance to her intellectual development properly so called. It may be said that she might have studied and written books, and elaborated thoughts at home, to her heart's content; that nevertheless she has made no great contribution to literature or art, to philosophy or science; and that her inferiority in intellectual power is thereby proved. It may be useful to dwell on this argument for a few pages, in order to illustrate how impossible it has been for woman to make progress in intellect while labouring under the social disabilities that are so strictly enforced against her.

In the first place, consider the education of woman as it has hitherto obtained. Intellectual culture is not the conquest of one life, but is for the most part inherited through education and study. The eminence enjoyed by any one man could not have been attained by his own powers alone, though they had been many times as great as now. Before the individual can lead his fellows in a new step of progress, he must be well grounded in the labours of those that preceded him. He cannot otherwise fit his own thoughts to the thoughts of his fellow-men, he cannot otherwise avoid desultory repetition of advances already made by others. The mental progress of the race is itself an organism, into which the individual must fit himself as a duly proportioned atom.

But hitherto the education of woman has seldom or never attempted to qualify her to take her place in this organism. Till modern times, the storehouse of man's intellectual labour was for the most part classical literature—a literature beyond which in many departments we have not yet advanced, or have made very little advance; and, prior to modern times, no man achieved intellectual greatness, that had not by systematic education and long study made himself master of the classics. Modern times have added treasures of their own, including many new sciences;

but, in the one case as in the other, man never fails to receive a thorough intellectual education, as a preparative to an intellectual career; and, even after the ordinary course of education, has to spend years of experiment or of study before he is qualified to benefit his fellow-men. No wonder, therefore, that the intellectual development of woman is yet in embryo. Some centuries ago a few accomplished individuals of her sex may have been familiar with the pages of the more elegant classics; but in our day these are known to woman but by name; and to modern science she is even a greater stranger.

It would be a mistake to fancy that to train any one in graceful accomplishments, is truly intellectual education; that such training, combined with comparative leisure, is fitted to qualify women to produce either a good book, or a good work of art; and that their failure to produce such works must be attributed to mental inferiority to the other sex. There is a gallant body of men that have enjoyed the same polite education, and the same abundant leisure, and that turn these advantages to pretty much the same account as women;—indeed, time out of mind, there has been a fellow-feeling between the two. Gallant officers of the British army distinguish themselves in the field and in the drawing-room—enjoying pretty much the same desultory

life as women ; but excepting books of travel and novels, which women too are expert enough in writing, and some heavy books by sappers and miners (who have had a scientific education), the intellectual attainments of a British officer do not entitle him to claim much superiority over the fair idols of his gallantry!

But in addition to formal education and recluse study, there is a requisite scarcely less important. Small success will attend a life devoted to the profound elaboration of thought or of sentiment, unless the individual likewise enjoy a genial free nurturing intercourse—not alone with the dead pages of books, but also with living men—men that have already attained maturity in spiritual life, or are at least somewhat in advance of the young aspirant. We say “young,” for, though valuable at all times, there is a period of life when such living influence is almost essential to the formation of taste and character, and to the evocation and the direction of such measure of originality as the individual is capable of—the period of passage from youth to manhood. How invaluable at that stage of life to be the companion, the admirer, of some one of congenial taste—himself acquainted with the intellectual elements of the time ; able to encourage, to guide, to inform, to correct ; the spell of whose character charms the soul of his worshipper, his friend. In these years, when our aspirations grow, and our powers

take root,—then chiefly, but not only then,—during the whole of life, it is invaluable to the man that would influence the minds of others, that he enjoy free communion with men of greater or equal mark.

Have women hitherto enjoyed this free communion? If their taste be intellectual, could they, with the same freedom as man, mingle in companionship with those that have already attained to intellectual eminence, that know the intellectual wants of the time, that are able to encourage, guide, and inform? And, in particular, in their present social position, has this been possible at the age when youth is passing into womanhood—the age when aspirations take form, and the mental powers are evoked? No—for, let it be remembered, such a friend in present times must necessarily belong to the other sex, with whom as yet can alone be found the requisite education, the requisite breadth of reading and experience, the requisite acquaintance with the intellectual ongoing of the time.

While then the man of intellectual talent has gained his way, not by hard study alone, but also by genial sociality, by the free interchange of thought and feelings, by easy accessions of information picked up in friendly conversation, by adapting his progress to the practical tests furnished by intercourse with the world, by having (through early guidance) fostered aspirations in youth

that the labours of after life have enabled him to fulfil—the intellectual life of woman has had no such genial course. There is even a prejudice against women of learning; an instinctive perception that, in the present position of the sex, learning is only attainable in the general case at the sacrifice of geniality—by becoming a “blue-stocking!”

### § 5.

Women have likewise wanted a natural channel of expressing their thoughts; and, without a channel of expression, mental power must always remain rudimentary. Man is a social and active being; action is essential to his nature; and expression is to the intellect what action is to the feelings. Without expression the thoughts remain shapeless, the perceptions confused, the impulses vague—without it the mind ceases to *grow*.

Have women hitherto enjoyed this privilege of expression? Not even has conversational expression been freely open to them; for the social intercourse of the sexes has from earliest times been subject to great restriction, from which it is not yet free. But conversational expression, though enjoyed to the full, would not suffice; many derive little stimulus from it, and at best it only favours a certain evanescent brilliancy of wit. It is not less

necessary, therefore, to permit woman to address her thoughts to an audience prepared to listen to them *in silence*; an audience for whom she shall feel a stimulus to arrange these thoughts with patience, skill, and care; in whose applause or appreciation she may read a sign of success, a guarantee of the worth or usefulness of her labours. It is in the presence of such an audience—their presence, either in reality or in imagination,—that thoughts catch fire, that language glows, that nature is roused to her full intellectual strength.

Now, writing for the press is not the most genial channel of expression; it is cold and abstract in form, distant in effect, difficult of execution; and had the mental development of man depended on being worked out under such discouragements, it is impossible to say how backward it might have been. No great works, or few (at least, till very recent times) have been elaborated in the cold and abstract form of writing; between the crude conception of great ideas, and the clear expression of them—between the rude outburst of emotion, and the refined embodiment of it in the written page, there is an intermediate stage necessary, or almost necessary, to the transformation—that intermediate stage being vocal utterance. The audience may consist of few or many, a friendly circle, or an assembled multitude; but in one form or other it affords an invaluable

encouragement to sentiment and thought, and a stimulus to their effective expression. Without oral utterance, these die down within the mind. The bards of wandering tribes sang their poems, their legends, and their prophecies ; Greek philosophers plodded out their theories and their ideals in discourses addressed to pupils thronging their schools ; Greek poets recited their hymns and dramas on festive days in honour of the gods ; ecclesiastics elaborated their discourses for the pulpit ; and how much has emanated from the stimulus of the professorial chair, from the relation of teacher to pupil, in our universities, in our schools, in our households ? Nay, most great men owe the first start in their intellectual career to the stimulus afforded to thought and expression by the discussions of some juvenile debating club. All men that have told directly on the world through the written page, except some writers of modern times, first uttered their sentiments, not in that cold form, but to a living audience ; and if we find some books written without such stimulus, they are probably the productions of men that have already enjoyed the full culture of oral address, and have acquired habitual facility in their command of thought and expression.

From the constitution of woman she must be even more dependent than man on the sympathy of an audience ; must be more dependent than he on



the geniality of vocal expression, as the natural means of elaborating sentiment and thought. Yet, in subjects of higher study she has never enjoyed that privilege.\* The only means of expression open to her, besides conversation, has been epistolary correspondence ; and even this was accessible only from the time writing became common. While, as illustrating our principle, it is said that the letter-writing of women is more brilliant than that of men, we would ask, on the other hand, what man's development would have been, had the means of expression open to him *been also confined to epistolary correspondence* ? In answering this question, let it be kept in mind that letters of famous men have frequently advantage of the habitual culture derived by them from other sources.

Since the opening of the present century, cheap printing has rendered much we have now said inapplicable to the present times ; since it has converted the periodic press into a sort of pulpit, to which admission

\* There are some exceptions. In the Middle Ages, the women of Italy asserted a place in literary and philosophic discussion, which drew the attention of the civilized world. They were noted for their education and learning, became members of universities, and gave lectures on law, philosophy, and letters. It was natural, situated as women must have been even in those days, that the effort should be transitory ; but it was brilliant for the time. The whole sex, however, must be elevated before even a favoured few can attain permanent consideration.

may be had by either sex. Although the benefits of oral address as a stimulus to the elaboration of thought can scarcely be fully realised by this substitute, yet access to the press is now so easy, the contributions it admits so various, ranging from an elementary attempt to the most erudite essay, and the audience it affords so familiar to the mind, that its influence as a channel of expression is most important. The press, as a popular organ, has only come into existence with the century, but already it has shown its importance in affording to woman an efficient means of culture. In current literature women have already assumed a position little behind that of man; and it cannot fail being remarked, that the mental training they so acquire, and the recognised place awarded them in the literary world, tend to consolidate their powers, and gradually to fit them for competition with man in the highest mental efforts.

Finally, the intellectual development of woman has been retarded by want of acquaintance with the medium in which man moves, and with the course of human civilization. Woman has been at best but a drawing-room appendage to society.

Had an intelligent man to address his thoughts to an unknown audience—suppose, for instance, that an Englishman must write books, not for Englishmen, but for Germans, and that he must speak, not of English

manners and ideas, but of the manners and ideas of foreigners, of whom he knows little, having paid them only a few passing visits ;—in such circumstances would books be written at all? Nevertheless, it is precisely a similar position that women have occupied throughout the ages of civilization. To the public life, the everyday life, the thoughts, the sentiments of men, they have been strangers—as thoroughly so as the Englishman is to the Frenchman or to the German. It was out of the question, therefore, to expect with women the general information or the practical knowledge qualifying them to write for the public, or the command of materials necessary to enable them to fill in a vague sketch with rich and familiar details. The sense of the deficiency has been in itself powerful enough to repress all attempt at what must have ended in failure.

Nor was it possible, till of late years, for women to find an audience even in their own sex; an alternative that might have afforded them an opportunity of nurturing a literature of their own, of exchanging their own experiences, of discussing duties peculiar to their sex, or of picturing its peculiar vicissitudes. The female sex have never been permitted free agency as a class, and without social freedom a civilization of their own was impossible.

## § 6.

Considerations such as these serve to show how illogical it is to ascribe the historic inferiority of woman to any supposed short-coming in innate mental capacity. It is possible, and even probable, that woman is inferior to man in mental powers; but the historic argument cannot be taken as measuring the degree of the inferiority, or even as proving that there is inferiority at all. Whichever sex was exposed, by the superior physical strength of the other, to the jealous social imprisonment that has been the lot of woman,—to banishment from participation in the *rôle* of social ongoings,—to abnegation of intellectual culture and intellectual expression; that sex behoved to take the inferior place, whatever its innate mental powers. All men that have contributed to the evolution of civilization enjoyed in a remarkable degree the favourable influences to which, in the present chapter, our attention has been directed; and since these influences have been wanting in the case of woman, it is but a natural consequence that as yet she should have filled no considerable place in social history. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that, wherever any large class, caste, or community of *men* are withdrawn from the influences under which their

more fortunate brethren have risen to distinction, they, too, sink to a nameless level. Yet who attributes this to cerebral inferiority? The brain is nowhere constitutionally stronger than among our happy agriculturists, our tenant-farmers; yet, as these enjoy no very profound education, have no marked political freedom, have little social intercourse, and have no call to express their thoughts before their fellows—there is naturally among them no superabundance of great men. In the vast mass of the labouring classes, the brain is constitutionally strong; but does a larger proportion from these reach distinction, than from the class we now seek to compare them with?

This comparison of the general level of intellectual attainment in woman with the same general level of intellectual attainment characteristic of men composing the great mass of society, and removed like woman from influences favourable to mental growth, fails only in one particular, which itself still further illustrates the principle—viz., that many *children* of the poor or of the uneducated may become great men; while the circumstance of a woman belonging to a younger generation by no means improves *her* prospects. For the young man that would attain intellectual eminence, may from youth upwards place himself under the favourable influences we have enumerated; and when these are not enjoyed as

incidental to his station in life, the aspirant of a lower station may in early years go and seek them for himself; the farmer's son may become a student, may attend classes, read books, make acquaintances of congenial taste, write essays, dispute at debating clubs; or, if his tastes be not bookish, he may seek out influences equally favourable to a rise in any other profession he has chosen. Woman has not hitherto enjoyed the same facilities for rising above the natural level of her class. To make the parallel complete, therefore, we must go to the system of caste prevalent in eastern countries, or of slavery prevalent in the west; and, if in our own social framework, the mere circumstance of belonging to an humble class suffices, with all our liberty, to keep the intellectual culture of man at the lowest pitch, how much greater is that depression where the maxims of society retard the free agency, even of the young, in an attempt to acquire the culture of a higher class. It is in such a state of society that we must look for a true parallel to the position now occupied by the female sex.

Comparing, therefore, the intellectual circumstances (so to speak) of women in general, with the intellectual circumstances of men in a large section of the community, we find them pretty much alike, and the result also pretty much alike. In neither do we meet much of what is called intellectual greatness; neither count in their

ranks many individuals exercising a direct influence on society or on history; neither have produced many great books or great works of art. What is still more remarkable, in the only branches of the fine arts, the culture of which can be regarded as in any degree compatible with their circumstances—namely, lyric music and lyric poetry—the attainments of the sexes are pretty nearly equal. The higher descriptions of poetry and music are subject to other laws. To write an epic or a dramatic poem, to compose an opera or a symphony, requires a command of materials and a mastery of style that can be drawn only from a rich and extensive acquaintance with life and literature, demands that the artist belong to a class already possessing a large measure of self-reliant culture; is inconsistent with confinement to a secluded sphere. The higher descriptions of poetry and music seem therefore in reason to be, as they are found to be in fact, as far beyond the powers of women, as in similar circumstances they are beyond the powers of men. And, we repeat it, in the only arts possible in the circumstances of both—in our songs and melodies—it is impossible to say which are the more beautiful, those composed by men, or those composed by women.

For eminence in painting woman need not look, so long as she ignores anatomy, and the other means of proficiency in that art. One is sick of these ladies'

sentimental pictures of angels and angelic children, whose round eyes, round cheeks, round everything, shirk all detail, all expression, all study, all patience. Women to be painters must go to school—must work up the elements—must grind for the task—must study hard and long. It is our old complaint, they do not adopt the art as a profession. We thankfully, however, observe that a change is promised in this respect. In the works of Rosa Bonheur, Mrs. McLan, and others, we are at last greeted with freshness and originality.

In theatrical representation, in musical execution, in dancing, in graceful and dignified deportment, the genius and culture of woman have not been surpassed.

Discussing the historical argument for the intellectual inferiority of women, we have assumed that, with very limited exception, no great writer, no artist of eminence, no social luminary, has belonged to that sex; and, even on that assumption, have endeavoured to show that the conventional position of woman accounts for her apparent inferiority, without the necessity of supposing any great short-coming in mental capability. But it is scarcely necessary to add that in many departments of literature and of social life there have flourished eminent women. The Queens of the sixteenth century; Madame de Staël, Madame Roland; our many living authoresses; cannot be regarded as exceptional instances of female



development. Hundreds might be named illustrious for their ability, for their culture, for their character, for the influence they exercised on their times.

“How many ages did it take to establish that simple maxim of good sense—all men are equal in the eye of the law? The slow advance of an idea, far from proving its uselessness or its injustice, pleads often for its greatness; the principles of liberty, of love, of fraternity, are all modern principles; and woman is, perhaps, a gainer that her cause has not yet triumphed!”\*

\* Legouvé.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY OF WOMEN CONSIDERED IN THE ABSTRACT.

## § 1.

WE took pains to explain in the two preceding chapters, that sufficient data have not yet been gathered, from which to contrast the mental powers of the sexes in the abstract; that the great historical inferiority of the female sex is explicable entirely on special grounds; that experience as yet has enabled us to judge only of the relative industrial capacity of the sexes; that the abstract question of their relative mental powers must lie over to a future time. There are, nevertheless, some particulars in the comparison of the mental powers of the sexes in the abstract that even now call for notice, chiefly owing to frequent reference to them by writers on the subject of our inquiry.

An argument for the inferior intelligence of woman is drawn from the hierarchical relation of the sexes throughout the animal kingdom; in every species of

which the male seems to possess a more vigorous and more developed nature than the female, who falls into a corresponding state of subjection. And it is undeniable that in size, weight, and muscular strength, as well as in the nervous spirit and energy that are exhibited in vigorous *muscular action*, the male, in the great majority of species, though scarcely in all, is by far the superior. The superiority, however, seems to be confined to strength of muscle and vigour of muscular action; and we must remember that there are other kinds of strength besides that of muscle, and other kinds of energy and spirit besides that exhibited in muscular activity. In endurance, in fierceness, in affection, in intelligence, the female frequently shows the greater strength, the greater energy, the greater spirit. Besides, in those species in which intelligence predominates, as with the elephant, the dog, the eagle, &c., even the general physical system of the sexes becomes more allied. On the other hand, neither in the lower animals nor in man is muscular strength by any means a measure of intelligence; cerebral action is most frequently developed at the expense of muscularity, and muscularity at the expense of cerebral action. Doubtless the man that is at once intellectual and muscular has the more complete development; and, if his endowments be of high order, will show a power and versatility of faculty, that a large

brain in a puny body has little chance of attaining ; but usually, so far from intellectual development and muscular development going together, they are complementary to and supplant each other. The superior muscularity of the male throughout the animal series by no means, therefore, carries with it superior capacity of intelligence ; nay, if reasoned from at all, must rather weigh in the opposite scale. Indeed, it is generally remarked that, among the lower tribes, the female shows the greater intelligence — a fact partly owing no doubt to her greater docility and tractableness, but attributable also in a certain measure to higher cerebral capabilities.

“During childhood the lumbar strength of boys is about one-third more than that of girls ; towards the age of puberty, one-half ; and the strength of a developed man is double that of a woman. \* \* The manual power of man \* \* is greater than that of woman ; \* \* before puberty the ratio is three to two ; and it afterwards becomes nine to five.”\*

These large proportions probably give but a contrast of the strength of the sexes, in the direct exertion of force to overcome a resistance, but can scarcely represent the relative proportion of the *sum* of their muscular

\* Quetelet on Man.

activity. The form of the skeleton (narrow in the thoracic region, and expanded in the pelvic) places the female sex at a disadvantage, a like amount of muscular exertion in woman going for less than it will in man. Moreover, a woman may show less power when concentrating her strength in a single effort, than when distributing it over a longer time, or a larger surface. Taking the sum of muscular action in the body, as shown for instance in travelling a long journey on foot, we should not expect to find a disproportion between the sexes so great as that shown in Quetelet's results. On other grounds also we had wished to compare the results given by M. Quetelet with observations of other statisticians; for the former seems to have made no experiments to test female strength between the ages of twenty-five and fifty, his proportions bearing reference chiefly to ages below twenty-five. This is to be regretted the more that, so far as can be judged, after the age of twenty-five, female strength exhibits a greater ratio to that of man than prior to that age; and in particular, is possessed of greater endurance, maintaining itself more firmly after reaching maturity.

Nevertheless, making full allowance for these considerations, in muscular strength is the great inferiority of woman; and, while this by no means implies inferiority of intelligence, the hardship of restricting her to menial

occupations of industry, where deficient strength must tell most against her, is sufficiently obvious.\*

The average weight of the brain in adult man is  $49\frac{1}{2}$  ounces, in adult woman, 44 ounces; but, on the other hand, the whole body of man is heavier than that of woman. The proportion borne by the weight of the brain to that of the body, is in adult man as 1 to 36·5 in adult woman as 1 to 36·45. At birth, the corresponding proportions were—in boys, 1 to 5·85, in girls, 1 to 6·5.† Thus, though at birth the boy has proportionally a somewhat larger brain, in adult life the proportion is exactly, or almost exactly, alike—a fact not without significance; for, assuming the relative size of the brain to be a measure of cerebral power, and seeing that so much of the nervous energy of man is spent in muscular activity, there is left to woman a larger measure of cerebral faculty for intellectual or other appliances.

The weight of the cerebellum, as compared with that

\* “If the moral and intellectual strength (of women) be less (than that of men), they should enjoy more of the protecting care of civilized society, one of the great objects of which is to place the weak on a level with the strong. Their education should be such as to develop to the utmost whatever moral and intellectual power they are possessed of; and when compelled to fight the stern battle of life, with stronger and it may be abler competitors, they should at least have fair play, and have no other difficulties thrown in their way than nature has imposed.”—*Westminster Review*, July, 1850.

† Quain's Anatomy, Fifth Edition, p. 668, *et seq.*

of the cerebrum, is in man as 1 to  $8\frac{4}{7}$ , in woman as 1 to  $8\frac{1}{4}$ .

The proportion borne by the weight of the lungs to the weight of the whole body is in man as 1 to 37, in woman as 1 to 43;\* and it is argued that the smaller proportion, indicates in woman a corresponding inferiority in respiratory action, and that this, in turn, implies a constitutional inferiority in all vital action, including that of the mind. In answer to this inference, we would simply remark that, till it be ascertained to what extent the smaller measure of respiration is referable to the confessedly inferior muscular action of the female, it is impossible to attribute it in any degree to deficient mental vigour. Muscular action, seeing it is so constant and voluminous, must draw deeply on all the vital energies; and, if the muscular strength of woman is so very inferior to that of man, the difference in the amount of respiration (which is only as 6 to 7) may be traceable to that source alone.

It will probably be found, that difference of sex has much the same influence on the human constitution as difference in climate; that the contrast obtaining between the qualities of the two sexes inhabiting a given latitude, is pretty much the same as the contrast between the

\* Quain's Anatomy, fifth edition, p. 1143.

mental qualities of individuals of the same sex inhabiting different latitudes; that the physiological and mental attributes of women inhabiting the wheat regions, are more nearly allied to those of men inhabiting the vine regions, than to those of men living in the same countries as the former; that women inhabiting the vine districts are more nearly allied to men of the olive districts, and so on. Observation seems to warrant an analogy of this sort:—the female sex differing in general from the male in a given clime, not only in smaller size and inferior muscularity, but also in possessing greater vivacity of disposition, of mental faculty, and of expression; in exhibiting a stronger development of personal and social sentiment, superior taste, and a more intimate subjection of intellect to the sensations and emotions. These diversities correspond to the contrast between individuals of the same sex inhabiting different climates—as we find on comparing the men of North Germany with those of England, the men of England with those of France, the men of France with those of Italy. If the analogy now drawn be true, the mental development of the female sex in England, supposing it to follow an independent growth, would probably correspond more with the warm civilization of Italy than with that hitherto characteristic of the other sex in our own country.



## § 2.

It remains for us to notice the contrast that it is sometimes attempted to draw between the sexes, not in general cerebral power, but in specific qualities of mind, from which also as is contended may be seen the inferiority of the female. It is said that, in specific intellectual operations, deficiencies can be traced in women, referable only to fundamental weakness of intellect.

Nevertheless, we believe that it is difficult, if not impossible, to point to any one talent, to any one faculty, to any specific intellectual quality, that woman is deficient in. Is, for instance, her perception less clear than that of man? Is her memory weaker? Are her powers of comparison less happy? Has she a less fertile invention? Has she less skill in balancing and combining diverse agencies? Judging woman by her bearing within the sphere to which she is familiar, we are not aware of any great defect in these mental qualities; and yet, supposing a mind well furnished with these, where can there lurk any great intellectual deficiency?\*

\* "As long as boys and girls run about in the dirt, and trundle hoops together, they are both precisely alike. If you catch up one-half of these creatures and train them to a particular set of actions and opinions, and the other half to a perfectly opposite set, of course

According to some, it is in want of concentration that the mental inferiority of woman lies; they think that she cannot at a given time summon so many faculties as man to meet a difficult juncture; that she cannot sustain her effort for an equal time; that she cannot acquire and turn to definite account a similar breadth of accomplishment. Had it been necessary to obviate this view by extraneous considerations, we might have adverted to the imperfect health of women of the middle ranks—to the failure, the disappointment, the misdirected aim of their lives—agencies amply sufficient to account for the broken mental energies of many; or we might have taken refuge in the views of those holding that, if woman is wanting in power to summon up faculty for a great effort, she compensates the want by more assiduous return at short intervals to any task assigned to her; but on these considerations, important as they are, we need not dwell, seeing that, to our belief, women are not inferior to men in power of concentration. There is no want among us of women possessing strength of mind and energy of character, fitted to cope manfully with reverses of fortune, with unforeseen diffi-

their understandings will differ, as one or the other sort of occupations has called this or that talent into action. There is surely no occasion to go into any deeper or more abstruse reasoning in order to explain so simple a phenomenon.”—*Sidney Smith's Works*, vol. i. p. 200.

culties, with painful grievances or active evils that, but for care, tact, and bravery, would involve in ruin all connected with them; there is no want of women of clear and firm purpose, capable of sustained energy towards the attainment of that purpose; there is no want of women of versatile faculty and varied accomplishment, apt in the use of these for compassing a definite end. Ill-health, want of steady occupation, a fritted away life, the habit of deferring in their judgments and in their actions to the dicta of others, have paralyzed, no doubt, the usefulness of many; but fortunately there are others to whom at some time of life, sound health, busy hands, freedom of action, and adequate motive, afforded ample stimulus to the energies, and an opportunity of displaying the firm purpose, the perseverance, the skill, and the address, of which the sex is truly capable.

But (others urge), is not woman unable to conduct, or even to follow, a chain of reasoning? Can she understand the abstract sciences? Is it possible for her to appreciate the rules of logical inquiry, or to reason but at haphazard and empirically? We believe of woman that she in present circumstances *dislikes* abstract reasoning, but not that she is incapable of it. A shrewd man of the world, too, dislikes abstract reasoning, would not trust one link of it; this, however, is not to say

that, had his education afforded the necessary training, he could not have understood its methods and its force. For our powers of reasoning we are indebted almost entirely to education—to long and artificial training in grammar, in mathematics, in logic—to the technical instruction we received in preparation for our professions ; had it not been for the many years devoted to this elaborate training, we too should have been impatient under abstract reasoning. The inability of woman to follow its intricacies is nothing more than the inability of 999 out of every 1000 men to do the same, seeing neither were ever trained to it. Besides, abstract reasoning as usually practised, has defects of its own, which, under the keen eye of woman, bring upon it some measure of just contempt. The debates and arguments of men appear to her to be for the most part artificial and wire-drawn, tilts of lawyer-like skill, at once insecure and insincere.

Nor is there any inaptitude in the female organization to undergo the amount of drill requisite to proficiency in a complex art or in a complex branch of study. The wonderful amount of labour gone through by young women at school (in learning languages, for example, or in pianoforte practice), indicates an endurance, a pliability of nerve, and a power of application equal to what is requisite for the most abstruse study. The

complex nervous action exhibited in the use of a foreign tongue, or in the performance of a piece of music, is the result of drill as continuous, as elaborate, and in itself as distasteful, as any other kind of intellectual drill. It is from custom that women are led to reconcile themselves to the one; and it is from custom that they are led to cherish dislike to the other.

It is said that woman's dislike to abstract study is shown very early—at school, for instance, in her aversion to the multiplication table; but we would fain see the boy that liked the multiplication table! Girls, if there were any object to look forward to, as at present there is none, could learn mathematics as well as boys (and that is not saying much), and would find the study as congenial as any other. In point of fact, many women are good mathematicians. To the study by women of the other sciences, as natural philosophy, there is really no obstacle, provided the same measure of care, patience, and preparation is allotted to it as is at present given by boys. The usual attempt to overleap the difficulties of scientific study, by cramming artificially into a few lessons what should have a year or two's growth in the mind, serves only to irritate and disgust the student. Indeed, considering the means usually adopted to indoctrinate the female mind with scientific lore, it is rather to the credit of the sex that they

protest against the unnatural dose. With their present preparation, women (in this also resembling the vast majority of men) prefer that their faculties grapple with the concrete, the tangible, the practical.

And this remark leads us to another important inquiry—will not the taste of woman always lean to the concrete? Assuming that, if fittingly educated, she may show no incapacity for abstract scientific culture, would her choice, her taste, lead her to devote much time to it? This is an important question, though it does not involve the point of intellectual capacity at all; assuming capacity, would not woman, in preference to the material sciences, cultivate rather those departments of philosophy that address themselves to the phenomena of human life—the philosophy of mind, character, and morals, the philosophy of society and its various organisms?

It may be so; indeed, there are striking reasons for thinking that it will be so; that women will direct their powers more especially to the mental and social sciences, and will be able to do mankind good service in that field of thought. But, before noting these reasons, we would once more, and for the last time, renew a caution, so frequently urged in this essay, that for every great work there is a still greater preparation,—that though the fruit may be pulled in a day, to obtain that fruit the

tree has first to be planted and reared. Nowhere more than in their crude speculations in mental and social philosophy is shown that impulse of women to run full tilt, but without armour, training, or weapon, wherever their fancies see some shadow of a "mission" to achieve, and nowhere is the futility of such fitful effort more apparent. Aspiration, the vague desire to effect some good, however essential that sentiment may be to perfection of character, and even to ultimate success in any great effort, must never be mistaken for *ability* to effect. Aspiration is quite another thing from talent, combined with suitable preparation and fit means. In reference to industrial pursuits, the folly has already been pointed out of supposing women can look for success if they enter on business late in life, merely as a second thought, instead of devoting themselves in early years to preparation for it; and *a fortiori*, for the highest intellectual undertakings, is early, careful, and devoted preparation essential. If it were folly to set to amputate a limb a person that never learned anatomy, to set to watch a fever or an obstetric case a person that never learned physiology,\* it were still greater folly to attempt to read the laws of astronomy without

\* And yet by such physicians are the humbler classes usually served; midwives and nurses, even where they pretend to take medical instruction, are, from advanced age and want of early education, incapable of benefitting by it.

first learning mathematics ; to think of understanding the differential calculus, without first learning algebra ; to think of solving problems of physiology without first learning chemistry ; and it were the highest folly of all to dogmatize on mental and social science without a careful grounding in the methods of material science. We are far, therefore, from believing that, with the inadequate preparation women now have, any important contribution to mental or social science can at present be expected of them ; but, with improved culture, and from a new generation, we believe that much may be looked for.

There are certain branches of scientific inquiry in which, owing to peculiar intellectual characteristics, women, with suitable preparation, have a greater chance of success than men. In the first place, woman can more readily than man detect, in a group of connected phenomena, the presence of a pervading element, which it were impossible to trace by physical analysis. Did the element to be detected admit of separation from its concrete group by means of any mechanical, chemical, or similar process, man, with his present training, would have less difficulty than woman in tracing it out ; but, combined inseparably with its concrete, it is far more amenable to her delicate sense and keen perception. The fondness of woman for the study



of natural history indicates the faculty we speak of. It is impossible by ordinary processes to analyze the characteristics of the various species of plants and animals—characteristics lurking chiefly in the general arrangement of parts, in shades of form and colour, in an aggregate of minute distinctions, which cannot be tested in a crucible or put into an equation, but must be studied in the concrete, must be detected in the individual organism, as it grows or lives; in short, to trace the protean types of natural history implies an eye of peculiar sense, a peculiar perceptive talent, a peculiar faculty of mind. To the same source is attributable the taste or tastefulness characteristic of woman, which is neither more nor less than the perception of some æsthetic quality pervading an object or group of objects—a quality incapable of analysis, or of separate existence, but characteristic of the group as a whole, and constituting its tone, its harmony, its beauty, or breathing its expression, its artistic effect. And to the same source is to be traced another power universally accorded to woman—the instinctive detection of character, the faculty of divining the mainspring of the conduct, the ruling motive of life, the principal desire or taste by which the mind is actuated. As in the preceding examples, elements of character cannot be tested by ultimate analysis, but must be judged of in their place, as

they are seen in the concrete; for they are inseparable from the individual, from the thousand circumstances of his position, from his thousand sayings and doings, many of which are in themselves trifling. Being so, they are more open to the ken of woman than to the duller sight of man. She more readily than man can test, can divine, can measure the motives and the character of others.

Superiority in a faculty so important (combined with due preparation), cannot but give woman great advantages for the culture of many departments of literature, for the pursuit of many industrial callings; but above all it seems to confer upon her a special qualification to aid in advancing the moral and social sciences. The construction of these depends in a peculiar degree on the exercise of the perceptive faculty now under notice, applied to the classification of phenomena according to types or families. The qualities characteristic of mental and social organisms, the laws of mental and social action, are as little cognizable by separative analysis, as were, in the science of natural history, the characteristics and the laws of development of plants and animals. And, not only is it impossible to separate any one element from the living organism in which it is found, or to submit it to special tests and special study, as a chemical element is tested and studied; but, in

organisms of mental and social life, the component elements are so constantly subject to change,—now vanishing, now re-appearing,—assuming each hour, and in each individual, a degree of strength different from that shown at other times or in other individuals; acting on each occasion in combination with new elements, new circumstances, new arrangements—that all attempt to tabulate the phenomena were hopeless. The presence of a given element, therefore, or the strength of that element, can only be judged of by a nice balancing of our perceptions, by a nice comparison in the mind's eye, of the many phases the organism assumes in its ever-changing details, viewing these details in their mutual relations with each other, and with the organism as a whole. By this method of observing, this method of judging from “concomitant variations,” does it alone appear possible to detect the presence or to gauge the strength of moral and social elements as they are seen, actuating the individual in every day life, or swaying the stationary or progressive social atom. To moral and social science, then, has the method of investigation now pointed out to be yet applied with the most interesting results. The whole region of character, its elements, and its development, have yet to be laid open; the social philosophy of each MOTIVE has yet to be worked out,

perhaps with as great elaboration and with as remarkable results, as the motive of money-making has its laws set forth in the science of political economy; and this great work must be accomplished chiefly by classifying the phenomena according to types or families, and by determining laws through the logical method of "concomitant variations." In the field thus marked out much aid is to be looked for from woman—always provided that in early life she receive due preparation.

But there is another advantage possessed by women, fitting them for special culture of the moral and social sciences, and consisting in that very characteristic of mind usually assigned as the source of their distaste for abstract science—the difficulty women have in acquiring an interest in those intellectual problems that have no direct relation with the feelings. In man, intellect has been developed chiefly in its relations with the external world, with the abstractions of number and form, with the laws that govern movements of unconscious, or at least of objective, nature. But, according to the principles both of physiology and psychology, the intellect has also relations with the internal or subjective world—relations that hitherto have not received the same development. For the full development of these subjective relations of intellect we look to woman rather than to man. Nature furnishes her more amply with

the materials to be worked upon, and her intellect is more wedded than his both to these materials and to that work.

For the intellect is an organ of mind by no means unconnected with its other faculties ; so far from being independent of our sensations and ideas, it is truly but an active quality of these. Our sensations, our ideas, combine together or repel each other, recal the past or suggest the future, according to their natural relations or associations ; and the laws observed to govern these combinations and relations are known as the laws of intellect. Intellectual character depends, therefore, first on the nature of the sensations or ideas dominant in our mind ; and secondly, on the intellectual quality either inherent in these ideas or added to them by culture. In man, as we have said, the dominant sensations have hitherto been objective, have had reference to the material world ; and although, doubtless, subjective feelings fill a certain breadth of his nature, in woman these occupy a far larger place. The emotional nature of woman is wider and richer than the emotional nature of man.

Moreover it appears to us that the emotions of women exhibit higher *intellectual qualities* than the emotions of men. Despite her inferior culture, it appears to us that woman not only possesses a richer

store of materials than man, but that the intellectual quality of these materials is of a higher order than his; that her emotional nature is not only richer, but more discriminative; that in self-examination or in testing the character of others, she has a more delicate sense of the various shades of feeling—can keep these more constantly present to the mind—can follow their action more rapidly and more accurately—can compare them with more nicety—can recall the memory of them, the idea of them, more vividly—can project them into the future in happier combinations; in a word, those processes of intellect so efficiently applied by man to a study of the outer world, woman seems capable of applying as efficiently to a study of the inner world. She has the same easy command of emotional elements as man has of material elements; with proper culture will be able to analyze, discriminate, and classify the one, as man has analyzed, discriminated, and classified the other; will be able to trace the relations, the laws, of spiritual life, with the same exactness as man has traced the relations and the laws of matter and of organic life. Very little progress has yet been made in the development of emotional and social science; and if we are right in believing that the subjective sensations of woman are more vivid and more articulate than those of man; that her intellect is more bound up with

these as its natural material, more founded on these as its natural substratum; that, with her, intellect consists to a marked degree in the intellectual action of one emotion, or shade of emotion, on another;—is it too much to expect, when her education in the methods of inquiry pursued in other sciences shall have fitted her to grapple with the more complex problems of social and mental philosophy, that she may in these even outstrip the other sex?

### § 3.

We would sum up the conclusions arrived at in these three chapters on the intellectual capacity of woman, in this,—that it is impossible, with the data as yet at command, satisfactorily to compare her mental powers with those of man; that the historic inferiority hitherto characteristic of her position is attributable to sources in no way connected with her inherent qualities of mind; and that, confining our regard to her fitness for undertaking the ordinary duties of industry, in its higher as in its lower branches, experience has shown no deficiency of capacity sufficient to justify the present restrictions to her free employment in these.

We here close our review of the industrial and social

position of women in the middle and lower ranks ; and, considering the large proportion of the population comprised in these ranks, the high consideration they in modern times enjoy, the personal culture they have acquired, and the promise they hold out of still higher culture, it is not unnatural for us to fear lest we have been found unequal to the responsibilities imposed by so grave a task. We have endeavoured, however, to form our judgments impartially, to offer suggestions temperately, to pay due regard to existing circumstances, and, above all, to deal with realities. The subject is a difficult one to grapple with, and one on which it is proper that opinions should not be rashly formed; the most, therefore, we can look for is, that the views we have urged receive attentive consideration, and, in future discussions, have greater weight given them than heretofore.

In the estimate attempted of the character and aptitude of woman, we have endeavoured neither to flatter nor to depreciate; neither to ascribe to her superhuman endowments, or immunity from the hardships of human destiny, nor to degrade her to a level unworthy of her. And we have shown no wish to raise up one sex against the other; for, unfairly treated as woman is, the injustice has re-acted too severely on the other sex to admit of any other



result, than that both should now make common cause to remedy the evil. We are equally far from desiring to make woman unhappy in her present sphere. Great as the drawbacks are that characterise it, it still possesses for her many sources of satisfaction. A large share of the affections, the exercise of a sympathetic nature, the kindly offices of life, the quiet of home, the prudent management of the household, the graces of personal accomplishment, are all, in some measure, within her reach. Whatever effort be made after improvement, at least let woman keep hold of these. There are degrees in everything; and the satisfactions available to her within her present sphere are much impaired by the many drawbacks attending her imperfect social relations; but we fully admit the importance of preserving, in all changes, the influence of home, as the healthiest, the most lasting, the warmest, the deepest source of human happiness, and of social and individual worth; and we trust that, in the present treatise, we have not failed to do justice to that important element.

THE END.











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