

can be so degraded. Yet the audacious advocate of rights which no refined woman would accept—the imitator who echoes the idea which she can appropriate but scarcely comprehend, are coupled with the women of deep and earnest thought, and both are classed under one general title of “Literary Ladies.”

It may be said that poverty has a power to make even the most delicate woman forgetful of her sex. This may be true regarding persons too vain for useful labor, and without strength for a profitable exertion of intellect; but, in this country, and in this age of literary enterprise—never, by any possibility, can it apply to one deserving the title of a literary woman! The time has gone by when poverty is the necessary associate of genius. Indeed where that glorious attribute really exists, it cannot fail to be justly and generously estimated by a public enlightened and intelligent as ours; while the remuneration which it commands precludes all possibility of want when connected with economy, and even moderate habits of appreciation. The rules which regulate trade, operate on the creations of mind as on all things else; and a vast reading public has created a demand for intellectual wealth, which we have not in our whole country, and combined in both sexes, more than genius enough to supply.

The lady who cannot—even without the means of support—secure enough for honourable independence by devoting one-third of her time to intellectual pursuits, may reasonably suppose that her want of success, lies in the over-estimate which she has placed upon her own abilities, not from a want of just appreciation in the public mind, and that effort to improve her fortune by degrading the profession she has selected, will only result in more bitter disappointment to herself, and in wrong to those who have the dignity of a national literature at heart.

It is no proof that poverty is inseparable from genius, because some few persons of talent have made their necessities an excuse for adopting the profession of letters; for the woman who deems any excuse requisite for obeying the dictates of a high and pure nature, must possess little of that true dignity which is inseparable from genius.

If literature were in any way proven an improper pursuit, no lady would be excusable if she allowed mere necessity to influence her in accepting it. It is doubtful, indeed, if any motive independent of that prompted by genius itself, should lead to authorship as a profession!

Efforts which owe their birth to any cause, save the yearnings and aspirations of a spirit which cannot be hushed, are very seldom successful. Like those who occupy the sacred desk, the votary of literature should own her inspiration to lofty desires living within the heart, and not to the outward circumstances with which she is surrounded.

But why should any excuse be rendered for a pursuit honourable in itself, and which may be adopted by the most refined female, without one shadow of indelicacy falling upon her? Why, above all, should the most common apology be, poverty; one which a sensitive and proud woman would be reluctant to offer her dearest friend while reposing in confidence at the sanctuary of her own fireside?

There is not upon the broad earth a more ennobling or dignified profession than that of authorship, nor one more beautifully fitted to the female character. The woman who truly feels this will possess too high an estimate of her own bright inheritance ever to place herself before the public, crouching beneath a load of weak apologies, as if there existed something to be ashamed of in the exercise of a power inherited from God himself! A power of which—if pure and fervent—she can no more divest herself than the diamond could quench the rainbow tints that sparkle within its heart; or the nightingale force back the song that gushes up from her throat, when she is brim full of music, and sheltered among the moonlit roses of a southern clime.

The only necessity which female genius should ever plead, yet remain true to itself, is that of utterance, a right which no misfortune or circumstance can deny to it. Like music, it has a voice for every feeling; there is no lot so humble, no prison wall so thick that the voice of genius will not break through and make itself heard. All things else may perish with the dead, but that being in itself immortal, becomes sweeter and more solemn when the grave has left it but the echo of a melody that death cannot hush.

If it were not natural and right that women should become authors, why was the capacity in any one instance bestowed on the feminine mind, by a being who never yet blended tints that were not harmonious even in the most humble wild flowers? And why should her thoughts shrink from unfolding themselves in the light which is sent from heaven to nurture them, more than that humble flower should close its petals to the sunshine which gives it perfume and beauty?