

The only true reason that a woman can give for becoming an author is, "that she could not help it." Question any one whose genius has been acknowledged in the world, and she might truly answer that ever since she can remember, her heart has been full of strange, sweet fancies, haunted as it were, with visions of beauty which it seemed impossible to clothe in words or impart to any human being; that pictures of sublime scenery, ancient buildings, such as she had never witnessed or even heard described, with wild flowery places, and skies bewildering from the soft light that slept in their clouds, were continually passing through her brain long before she could comprehend the use and mystery of language. She may answer that as she grew older these fancies were blended with her reason, and become a sweet and subdued power capable of expression: and struggle against it as she might, the thoughts which lay buried, like jewels, in her heart, would flash up and weave themselves together like shifting rainbows when a burst of sunshine streamed over them from a kindred mind.

She may answer that at times these thoughts possessed a power which she had no strength to resist—that they held a pleasant dominion over her whole being, and at such times a melody was created, she scarcely knew how, for the pen which recorded it, seemed winged by an invisible spirit; and that the melody did not appear of her own, but something that had been wafted to her from a far off realm of dreams—yet there it was, clothed in language, and written out by her own hand. She gave it to the world with no thoughts of reward—that came naturally like the exertion, and thus she became an author.

But a groundless belief in her necessities is not the only idea which creates a false sympathy for the woman of genius. It is sometimes said of her that she lives in a charmed circle, isolated and lonely—that she is exalted above the common affections and sympathies of mankind, and that the highly gifted can alone appreciate her on earth, and her only happiness is to be found beyond the grave in a bright home amid the angels of heaven.

Very young and sentimental writers have invented this idea with a poetical sweetness which makes even sophistry beautiful. The image of a human soul caged like a singing bird, and exhausting its music in fruitless cries for sympathy, is so rich in sentiment that we are often willing to overlook the fiction which is entangled in the soft meshes of such poetry,

and really believe that for which we have no evidence.

If that creative power which is confined to the intellect alone can be called genius—when that power is found in the female character, independent of the sentiments and affections, the person so endowed may justly claim all the sympathy this poetical idea is calculated to excite. The woman whose intellect has been enriched at the expense of her heart, who arrogantly draws her own circle, and mounting the marble pedestal her pride of mind has erected, takes a position of graceful sentiment that men may crowd round to do her homage, must be content with the tribute which reason pays to exacting selfishness. The homage of mind may be rendered to her admiration, respect and cold esteem; but no home affection, no heart love. She is merely an *intellectual woman*, not a feeling one, and society renders back to her that which she has given coldly as she gave it.

In order to render justice to a band of women but little understood, and often ungenerously associated by the careless observer, it would be well to pass by the literary pretender—the merely talented and the intellectual woman—and applying the term "Literary Lady," as it was first intended, only to women of genius, enquire if there really does prevail a want of affection regarding them. If they are less cherished and beloved in the social circle, and at the domestic fireside than those gifted with the sleepy treasure of mediocrity.

The existence of any high and pure attribute, whether it be of the heart or intellect in a human being, cannot fail to enlist sympathy from like attributes, wherever they are to be found in society. A brilliant mind when it kindles the sentiments and feelings of an affectionate heart to action, is the most attractive and lovable power which a human being can possess; and genius is nothing more than this: "It is but the power to feel deeply, combined with an intellect capable of embodying feeling into words, and of conveying images of truth and beauty from the heart of the writer to the heart of the reader"—and this comprehends all that makes the loveliness of womanhood. Is it in the nature of things that a woman so endowed should be the isolated, companionless being which the sentimental poets make of her? Is there any thing in her nature which should chill the damask cheek of the infant as it nestles to her bosom, or does the poetry which sometimes breaks from her lips, render them