

the goodness of her heart. If there is honour due to woman for her loveliness, or to genius for its beautiful creations, it should be rendered to the author of *Hope Leslie*, and the equally great and gentle woman whose genius is floating in a thousand melodies through our country: whose mind has been one continued tribute to her sex; and whose life supplied us with an example of intellectual pursuits, harmonizing with the duties of a wife and mother, beautiful as colours ripen on the cheek of a peach in midsummer.

The author of *Zinzendorf*, and her illustrious compeer, followed immediately by two or three others of almost equal worth, were the pioneers to a class of women who are exerting quiet, but powerful influence in the land; an influence increasing every day, and which will be felt, for good or for evil, centuries and centuries hence. And it is this influence of female literature, more than any other, which will exalt and refine the sex, and which will establish a true position for woman in the scale of social life. It will extend the dominion of her influence by increasing her resources of enjoyment; by giving dignity and grace to the beautiful world of home which is her undisputed kingdom; by rendering her content with that little domain which has more space for cultivation than female mind has yet suspected.

Miss Sedgwick and Mrs. Sigourney, Mrs. Child and one or two others who became authors almost the same year, were among the first to clothe our history and social life with the hues of their own bright imagination.—They exerted mental wealth to render domestic life lovely, and to persuade their sisters into content with the blessings of their natural condition. Their fiction was full of truthfulness, and the sweet lessons which it gave were calculated to exalt woman in her proper sphere, but never to entice her beyond it. They have taught the ambitious of the sex, in many a beautiful page, and by their own blameless lives, that women may become great, yet remain humble and affectionate, and that the most lofty ideal is not necessarily divorced from the useful. They have taught us that genius may be combined with firm principle and plain common sense, yet lose nothing of its brightness: that female genius is, in truth, a household spirit, that infancy may nestle in its bosom, and childhood need not fear to crown it with flowers, or play at hide and seek in its vestments. They have exhibited it a gentle spirit, smoothing the pillow of age, hovering around the sick bed, with plumage

which but grows brighter from the dews that fall over it from the green roof tree.

It is true that this little band of women have been followed by others of more or less pretensions to kindred excellence. But they first broke a path in the wilderness of letters, and when the thorns were removed and the rugged places made smooth, it required no great effort of courage to follow their footsteps.—The toil of adventure was almost accomplished, and the laurels green on their foreheads, before those who have since become known in the world of letters, ventured to imitate their illustrious example. Within the last few years the walks of female literature have become peopled with votaries. Intellectuals as brilliant as the examples that have been chosen, may be found among them—nay, greater genius and more startling manifestations of female mind may exist, now or hereafter—but equality or even superiority of mental power in those who may come after, can detract nothing from the reverence and gratitude due to those who unlocked the treasure of their genius, when the result was uncertain, and when the effort might be followed by glory or reproach, as the generosity or prejudices of their countrymen should determine.

At the time these ladies devoted themselves to literature, they might indeed tremble for the opinion which men would form of them, for at that time a woman who wrote books was considered almost a rival to masculine intellect and regarded as something strange and unapproachable by her sister women. The division lines which are now so strongly drawn between the masculine and feminine mind, were little understood in that day, and the idea that a woman of genius could be domestic, cheerful and unpretending, would have been considered visionary in the extreme.

The first impulse was given by women who were doubtful of the result; and to their moral courage and spirit of self-sacrifice is due, a degree of praise which no votary of the present, however brilliant, can hope to receive; for the circumstances under which they wrote can never exist again to test the strength of woman's courage, though every day exhibits some new and beautiful power of her genius.

With this band of gifted women arose the title which heads our essay. They were a new, and rare class, springing up like exotics in the wilderness. So our countrymen imported a name from over sea, and they were called "Literary Ladies."

Did this little group of women dream of