

Eminent Literary Ladies.

No. 1.
Lady Jane Grey.

For the Calliopean.

It is a remarkable fact, that though wonderful advances have been made toward perfection in the Sciences and Arts, during the last two or three centuries; yet we seem to be becoming superficial in the same proportion, as the field of knowledge is extended. There was a solidity in the character and attainments of our ancestors, which we rather admire than imitate. The same was the case with the ancients. Possessed of very few books, in consequence of their ignorance of printing, they perused these the more carefully, and drew more from the resources of their own minds: hence, they produced poets, historians, and philosophers, who have never been surpassed—showing conclusively, that it is not the number of books an individual reads, but the manner in which he reads them, which makes him a man of knowledge. “If I had read as many books as other persons,” said the learned philosopher Hobbes, “I should probably know as little.” “Instead of always reading,” says Sheridan, “think on every thing—there are only a few leading ideas, and these we may excogitate for ourselves.”

The education of our progenitors affords an excellent index of their attainments. The instruction, even of their females, was stern and severe—carried among the abstruse depths of logic and philosophy, and extending to the most intimate acquaintance with the classics. A better example of this can hardly be found than lady Jane Grey. The grand-daughter of the youngest sister of Henry the eighth, and daughter of one of the most powerful noblemen in England, she was nourished in the bosom of luxury, titles, and wealth; but, though these have enticements, which few, especially females, have the moral courage to resist, and devote themselves to literary pursuits, she became the most celebrated woman of her age for vigorous understanding and extensive attainments. Though excelling in music, embroidery, and penmanship, she did not confine her attention to these. The French, Italian, and Latin languages, but especially the Greek, she read and wrote with the greatest facility. She was also conversant with Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic; and acquainted with most of the sciences. All this was accomplished before she was fifteen years of age. At this time she was visited by the famous Roger Ascham, who has given us the following interesting account of his interview with her:—

“Before I went into Germany, I came to Broadgate, in Leicestershire, to take my leave of that noble lady Jane Grey, to whom I was exceeding much beholden. Her parents, the duke and duchess, with all the household, gentlemen and gentlewomen, were hunting in the park. I found her in her chamber, reading *Phædo* Platonis, in Greek, and that with as much delight as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in *Boecæ*. After salutation, and duty done, with some other talk, I asked her why she would lose such pastime in the park? Smiling, she answered me, “I wist all their sport in the park is but a shadow, to that pleasure I find in *Plato*. Alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant.”

It was this education, and the application of the precepts of philosophy and religion to her own situation, which enabled her, as it did the noble *Cornelia* of ancient times, to bear up under sufferings the most painful and trying. Led to the throne by ambitious and designing relatives, she received the crown with the greatest reluctance; and when called upon, after nine days of sovereignty, to resign it to her prosperous rival, she did it with the greatest satisfaction. Gloomy as was the confinement which followed her unfortunate exaltation, it could not disturb for a moment the equanimity and peace of her well-disciplined mind—and when, at last, the death-sentence came, she meekly exclaimed, “that she was prepared to receive patiently her death,” in any manner it would please the Queen to appoint. True, her flesh shuddered, as was natural to frail mortality; but her spirit would spring rejoicingly into the eternal light; when she hoped the mercy of God would receive it.”

It was hard, when the day of execution arrived, to see her beloved husband, Lord Dudley, borne away to the scaffold; and then to view his mangled corpse, as it returned; but she beheld these affecting spectacles with a settled countenance; and afterwards wrote in her table-book three short sentences, in Latin,

Greek, and English; the last of which was as follows,—“If my fault deserved punishment, my youth, at least, and my imprudence, were worthy of excuse. God and posterity will show me favor.” It was hard, herself to be carried away to an ignominious death; but even this did not ruffle the heavenly calm which pervaded her soul.

Knowledge and piety, in her, seemed to become but one principle; so beautifully and harmoniously were they united. It was not one of them, but a happy blending of both, which gave her that resignation, humility, and confidence, which triumphed over suffering, and trampled on vanities. How necessary, then, that both these should be combined in the education of every young lady; that if she is called upon, like Lady Jane Grey, to suffer affliction and sorrow, (and how few are not,) she may bear them with the same resignation and peace; and if placed in circumstances of prosperity and wealth, she may not be carried away by the enticements of the world. Palsied be the hand that would separate knowledge from piety, or piety from knowledge, in training up the young and tender minds of youth.

Education for females has often been decried, as giving rise to pride and conceit, in its possessors; but in her it produced exactly the opposite, because it was sound and practical. The great Bishop Burnet says—

“She read the Scriptures much, and had attained great knowledge in divinity. But with all these advantages of birth and parts, she was so humble, so gentle and pious, that all people both admired and loved her. She had a mind wonderfully raised above the world; and at the age when others are but imbibing the notions of philosophy, she had attained to the practice of the highest precepts of it. She was neither lifted up with the hope of a crown, nor cast down, when she saw her palace made afterwards her prison, but carried herself with an equal temper of mind in those great inequalities of fortune, that so suddenly exalted and depressed her. All the passion she expressed in it, was that which is of the noblest sort, and is the indication of tender and generous natures, being much affected with the troubles into which her husband and father fell, on her account.”

She was one of the first victims of the “bloody Queen;” but her piety and knowledge, as one has observed, “spread a glory around her, which eclipsed the faint lustre of the superstitious and cruel Queen Mary on her throne.” JUNIA.

Breathings of Nature.

For the Calliopean.

NATURE is full of language. Everything, from the tall proud pine on its cloud-capped mountain, to the simple flowret rearing its little head in the vale beneath, breathes a more powerful eloquence than man, in all his boasted glory, could ever utter. Music, poetry, joy, sadness; these are thy breathings, Nature! How beautifully potent the language of the moon, as in her crescent state she seems faintly smiling to meet the star-beams, till at length, full disked with silvery sheen, she greets those heaven-born orbs. Slumbering beneath is a beautiful lake, whose bosom seems hushed to repose as by the magic influence of *Cynthia*'s softly falling beams. Mark the setting sun, when with the gorgeously reposing clouds around, he sinks, in all his greatness, gradually to rest. Impressively emblematic of life's close, how irresistible are his breathings of another world, of the hour when the truly great pass in calm security to a purer, holier region. What were life without these communings of the soul with nature? a blank—a wilderness! The magic power of her beauty, softens and soothes the asperities of life,—lifts the tried and wearied man of earth above his grovelling cares, and teaches him to adore his Creator. Each season has its music, its poetry, its charms; but Autumn, thy pensive loveliness, thy rich beauty breathes a more thrilling, a more diversified language than any other. Thy harvest-home nerves the peasants arm, and fills his heart with gladness. For the Poet and Divine thou spreadest a rich and varied banquet, where thought may regale and imagination revel.

Thy animating amusements serve to dispel ennui, and cause the vital current to leap more warmly through the veins of the gay and sportful. To the heart-broken and dying, thou speakest of the decay of earthly things, and elevatest the thoughts and affections, to the unwithering beauties and perennial bloom of immortality. Thou art dear to all—at least to all—who have a soul, responsive to the beauty and harmony of nature. EDITH.