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## LITERARY LADIES OF AMERICA.

THIRTY years ago, and this would have been a strange term in America; something for our Down East mothers to wonder at, and search their dictionaries about. A book on religious subjects by Hannah Adams, one of history and of biography, perhaps, were written by females about the time of the Revolution. A few stray snatches of poetry sometimes appeared—like *Epithets* beautiful, but almost unnoticed—among the newspaper paragraphs which formed but a dim shadow of what is now a flourishing periodical literature, but except these slight manifestations of the future, the Genius of America, so far as her women are concerned, brooded among our household gods, a beautiful, but voiceless spirit.

New England, the birth-place of female genius, was full of wild and soul-stirring poetry, even before the white man's tread disturbed the lush of her forests. It dwelt in the solemn depths of the wilderness, and nature found there a thousand startling voices to awake the fancy, and arouse the high worship of mind, before human intellect dreamed of a western hemisphere. It lived in the golden sunshine where it broke on the mountain peak, and laughed in the silvery riot of her waterfalls, where they tossed their foam to the wind, and plunged from the cliff to the green valley below! It slept in the river vale, and trifled with the sweet south wind, when it went sighing among the wild flowers—it whispered in the forest leaves where the red man crept stealthily beneath them in search of the spotted deer. It was found every where haunting the sea shore and the wilderness with its melodies, a restless spirit yearning for some more touching power of expression than was found in the whispering leaves, something more delicate than lives in the manly heart, and with a higher strength than gushes forth in the bird song.

The depth of masculine mind was sounded, but in the human soul are many delicate strings ready to thrill at a gentle breath, but which give forth no music to the powerful touch of man's intellect. American poetry was deficient in its most refined attribute 'till a female mind awoke, capable of blending the most gentle feelings of the heart with the lovely things of nature, and of combining with the voice of masculine thought a soft, low-strain which harmonized and made a perfect melody.

Until Hope Leslie arose from the quiet bosom of New England, like a timid bird, half unconscious of the jewel which lay sheltered beneath its wings, no woman had sounded the chords of her own heart, that they might awake answering tones in the bosom of another. There was no *home music* in the literature of our country; nothing which might arouse the female heart to a knowledge of the high poetry which slept among our household gods. But Hope Leslie was answered by a kindred voice—another and another! 'till those who had deemed that genius and lofty thought, which is its attribute, could dwell in masculine intellect alone, were constrained to admit that thought and feeling in their most lovely combinations, might exist in the female heart, and still detract from no gentle or womanly virtue.

The author of Hope Leslie gave a beautiful example that female mind may be brilliant and yet delicate, capable of intense feeling, and of powerful thought, and that the highest intellectual exercise of which the heart and mind of woman is capable, may be modestly performed amid the light of her own home and surrounded by the domestic affections.

If there is a being on earth who should be held in love and reverence, it is that woman who first gave to female genius a voice and name in our land! Who became great through the brilliancy of her mind, but who, amid all her fame, remained womanly and modest fr m