

to furnish the standard of our civilization, it becomes us to bear in memory :—

—“What has tamed
Great nations, how ennobling thought depart,
When men change swords for ledgers and depart
The student's bower for gold.”

Yet inevitably, in young countries like this, the whole energies of the community are liable to be absorbed in the working-day business of life. We can scarcely spare, as yet, that leisure class, devoted to study for its own sake. Higher education is apt to assume, accordingly, too professional an aspect. We have as promising a set of young men among our undergraduates as any University could desire. Yet I may venture to confess that I have often reflected with sorrow on the contrast with which I was familiar in earlier days, when the young graduates of Edinburgh were to be seen eagerly claiming a share in critical discussion and scientific research; whilst here our Canadian institute languishes in the hands of the same old exotics; and we look in vain for the new generation of scientific labourers, of which the University prize lists seem so full of promise.

It will be mourned over; yet I fear it is inevitable that our best honour men shall desert science and letters, and press on, eager for the prizes in the real battle of life.

But if it is premature to look for those evidences of a high civilization which belong to older nations, where the thinker finds his true sphere, and achieves his higher triumphs; there is one respect at least in which our civilization is indisputable, and that is in the position accorded to woman. In her dower-rights, tenure of property, inheritance and admission to all privileges and duties to which she may fitly aspire, much has been done by the yeoman of Canada, without pretence of chivalry, which neither a Bayard nor a Sydney could surpass. There is no country in the world where woman enjoys more leisure and independent freedom of action than in this Province, emancipated as she is alike from the sordid cares and the oppressive exactions of social conventionalities. If men toil with even undue ardour in the pursuit of wealth, they are well content that sisters, wives and daughters enjoy its rewards. It is a new social organization in which, unconsciously, is being conferred on women all which once pertained to the old world's privileged orders. But let us not sacrifice thereby that womanhood which forms the fit counterpart to England's vigorous manhood. Let us not strive, as it sometimes seems to me is the result in neighbouring States, to clothe woman in all that is costly, surround her with all that is attractive and luxuriant, and then leaving her to her own resources, exclaim, “These be the lillies, glorious as Solomon's; they toil not, neither do they spin.”

May we not rather look to you for the true leisure class, for whom the great world of thought lies invitingly open, as your legitimate sphere? I see in this bright hopes for the future.

A class of highly educated women in our midst would do more to elevate the tone of feeling, and to awaken nobler aspirations in the intellectual manhood of this young country than anything else I can conceive of. I see no other means in any degree equally calculated to wean some of our young men of high promise from the enslavement of professional pursuits: the mere trading drudgery—whether it be of commerce or medicine, of the counting-house or the bar—which seems now their highest goal.

I have no thought, and equally little fear, of thrusting woman, by such means, out of her true sphere; of obtruding her into arenas which, by their very requirements, are the prerogative of the rougher sex; or of transforming her into the odious modern idea of “a strong-minded woman.” That is no product of higher education, widening the intellectual horizon, refining and invigorating the mind, and, like the polish of the lapidary, bringing to light all the hidden beauty native to the gem.

“Let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live, and learn, and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow:
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor loose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till, at the last, she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words.”

It is not, therefore, unmeet, nor in any degree Utopian, that we should conceive of a true woman's college rising in our midst, provided not less liberally than those already supplied for the other sex, with professors, apparatus, libraries, and all else needful to enable you to turn to view account that enviable leisure which you possess to an extent wholly beyond the reach of us, who, whether

mechanics, traders, doctors, lawyers or professors, constitute alike the working classes of this young country.

And if so, then I can look forward with no ungenerous envy to the pleasures in store for you; the delight of study for its own sake; the true enjoyment of grappling with some of those higher problems of science which demand patient labour and long research, but bring at length so abundant a reward. I have no fear that such resources will make you less learned in gracious household ways. Assuredly such elevated themes are in no degree incompatible with duties daily expected at your hands; nor with the tenderer obligations of care and loving sympathy which are so peculiarly your own. Still less will such elevated themes conflict in any degree with the highest of all duties; or with those earnest and devout thoughts which the study of God's visible universe, or the investigation of the more mysterious realm of mind, is calculated to awaken. When, at length, amid the boundless works of creation, a being was made in the Divine image, gifted with reason, a living soul, he needed a companion of like endowments, that he might exchange with her the first utterances which gave audible form to thought. Thenceforth the study of the Creator's works blended with the worship of himself; nor—when reflecting on the inconceivable vastness of that universe, of which our sun and all its planets are but star-dust, and of the power with which the human intellect grapples with its immensities, weighing the sun, analysing the fixed stars, determining the very chemical elements of the nebulae, and reducing to law and order the whole phenomena of the heavens—can I doubt that this is but a page in the ample volume of God's works, on which the purified intellect shall, in a future life, dwell with ever growing delight, and ever ampler recognition of what God's infinitude is.

Such enjoyment of immortal intelligences cannot be incompatible with the devoutest reverence and worship, but will rather fitly form a part of it. Nor need we fear that here intellectual culture will prove irreconcilable with the practical ideas and duties of every-day life. God did not make man in his own divine image only to place him in a world requiring fools for its government. England, the most practical of nations, has also proved herself the most intellectual. Her Bacon and Newton were no cloister-bred dreamers; nor does it surprise us—but, on the contrary, we accept it as the most natural of things—to find a Derby or a Gladstone, amid the cares of a vast empire, sporting with the toils of highest scholarship; a Herschel stepping down from the lofty abstractions of pure science, to contend with them in the same literary arena; or a Grove or Mill, practically asserting the compatibility of the abstrusest scientific and metaphysical speculations, with their duties to clients in the courts, and constituencies in the legislative council of the nation.

And if it be thus true that an earnest devotion to letters, or the pursuit of some of the abstrusest branches of science, in no degree conflicts with the cares of statesmanship and responsible professional duties, it is an insult to our common sense to tolerate the idea that the highest mental culture need interfere in any degree with those domestic duties which so gracefully adorn true womanhood.

Ladies shrink from the ascription of learning as though ignorance sat as gracefully on them as modesty, or virtue itself. It rests with you to banish this lingering remnant of medieval barbarism. Frown it down as an insult to your sex, while there rings in your ear the plaintive close of Browning's noble dramatic lyric, “The Ring and the Book,” in which the widowed poet recalls his “Lyric Love,” and the rare gold-ring of verse of his poet bride, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a lady of high scholarships, familiar with the classics of ancient and modern tongues, the greatest of all England's poetesses, but with her memory treasured still more lovingly as wife and mother.

And so it is when we turn from real to mimic life, and look on Shakespeare's Portia; no longer the barrister in doctor's robes, but the true wife, by whom, only to rescue her husband's friend, had they been worn, as she says :—

“How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection.”

The greatest poets have been among the most practical of men, and none more so than Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. In truth, while it is well to find in the common round of daily life, employment for those who appear to have no capacity for higher things, no idea is more opposed to the world's experience than that they best perform those duties on which so much of the happiness of wise men and women depend. When Wordsworth dedicates one of his noble sonnets to Milton, his climax shows his own estimate of such duties :—

“Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice, whose sound was like the sea—
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free—
So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.”