

## LETTERS ON THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

BY AGNODICE.

### LETTER I.

DEAR CLYTE,

I HAVE not forgotten my promise to commence a correspondence with you on my return from abroad. Yes! your Agnodice (for I still keep the old name you gave me at school) is at home again with her brother and sister.

My brother has already settled down to his books and his studies, and his good, kind wife is immersed once more in her housekeeping affairs. To him, whether or no his last work will be favourable reviewed, is the most important consideration in the world; to her, the rise and fall of eggs or butter is the topic of the utmost importance. As for myself, I am still, dear Clyte, revolving in my mind the idea of following some profession. I know you are orthodox enough to be shocked at this, even in the face of the advanced views of the present day, but I shall meet your arguments, and I hope conquer them.

I am young, strong and determined. No one has a claim on my time as your delicate mother has on yours. Why should I be obliged to give up to Society, to whom, as yet, I owe nothing, the most active and vigorous part of my life? Is the aim of my education only to be accomplished by a constant round of garden-parties, balls, and receptions,—if so, why have I been taught anything else, but to read, write, dance, enter a room

gracefully, and chirp a feeble song to a wandering and uncertain accompaniment? These acquirements would have been enough to have given me a footing in what is called Society. No! I cannot submit to that kind of thing; I must have a purpose, a life-work, a determined end in what I undertake. Such a purpose my sister sets before me in marriage! It is no wonder marriages are so unhappy, when they are put before girls as the end, the thing to be achieved, "the one thing needful" in their lives. When we struggle for a thing, when we fight for a prize, at least we expect, with reason, that the thing shall be worth the winning. If, in archery, we gain a golden arrow, we have a right to be disgusted if the prize turn out to be of counterfeit metal, and the arrow cannot expect to be treated with the admiration and respect that would be given it if it were genuine. This is truly the way our future husbands are held up to us, and the result must often, of course, be disappointment and despair.

Oh! the shamefulness of those odious expressions—"playing her cards well," "*making* a good match," "*setting* her cap," &c. I burn with anger and indignation as I write them. Do you remember what John Stuart Mills says?—"What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinions and purposes, between whom there exists the best kind of equality, sim-