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### BIOGRAPHY.

#### MEMOIR OF THE LEARNED ANNA MARIA A SCHURMAN.

So long as genius and talents of the most exalted order can command respect, the names of Leo and Crichton, of whom we have given comprehensive memoirs in our preceding numbers, will be mentioned by posterity with profound respect and distinguished honour. Mr. Leo, as an Oriental scholar, still continues to shine, like a star of the first magnitude; and as the lustre of Crichton's fame remains undiminished, notwithstanding the lapse of two centuries, we may fairly predict, that the history of their respective acquisitions will be perused with pleasing astonishment by generations that are yet unborn.

To these celebrated names, we now feel no hesitation in adding that of a learned female, who has justly procured for herself an illustrious station among those prodigies of genius and talent, which occasionally arise to illuminate the intellectual world. "Whether the mental powers of woman were created in a state of inferiority to those of man," is a question which has been much controverted. An important branch connected with, it employed for some time the pen of this learned lady; but the following memoir of her life, will furnish those by whom it is still agitated with the most satisfactory answer.

This eminent woman was born either at Cologne, or Utrecht, in 1606. At a very early age her genius for science began to appear. At six years old she cut all kinds of figures out of paper, with her scissors, without any pattern. When eight, she painted flowers admirably; and, when only ten years of age, she learned the whole art of embroidery in three hours. Afterwards she applied herself to music painting engraving, modelling, carving, and sculpture, and succeeded perfectly in each species. What she particularly excelled in, was miniature painting, and etching perfect likenesses on glass with a diamond point. She understood Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, so perfectly, and wrote in each language so correctly, that all the literati of Europe were astonished at her proficiency. To these she added the knowledge of the Chaldee, Syriac, Turkish, and Arabic. Besides the Low Dutch, which was her native tongue, she spoke French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English, with great ease and fluency. About the year 1650, she got acquainted with Labadie, a famous French mystic, in whose spirit she drank so deeply, that she relinquished all her literary pursuits, except what tended to the proof and defence of the religious system she had embraced. To the learned world, her conversion to what was called Quietism, and which was probably the religion of Christ, (thus misnamed in order to discredit it,) was an inauspicious event. Her house, says Bruyset, which was before an academy of learned men, became now a school of religious controversy and mysticism. When Labadie died, in 1674, she retired to Wicard, in Friesland, where she spent her time in correcting, revising, and continuing the works of him, whom she had received as an apostle of the Lord. In this place she died in 1678, aged 71 years. However Labadie may have been stigmatized as a hypocrite and impostor, Calumny herself has not been able to shoot one dart against the moral character of Schurman. Her practice was pure and her piety, however mistaken in some points, was fervent and sincere. She took her motto from Ignatius:—*My Love is crucified*; and she was faithful to it, for she never formed any matrimonial connections.

The most learned men of her day felt themselves honoured by her epistolary correspondence, and several princes and princesses honoured her with their letters and visits: among the former were Rivotus, Lydius, Spanheim, Salmasius, Vossius, Huygens, Crucius, Gassendus, Vorstius, Heinsius, and Melesius, archbishop of Ephesus, &c. Among the latter, were *Henricetta*, queen of England, *Anne of Austria*, the *Queen of Poland*, the princess of *Bohemia*, the princess *Anne de Rohan*, Cardinal de Richlieu, and several others.

When the Queen of Poland visited Utrecht, she wished particularly to have an interview with A. M. à Schurman. Of this visit, which was honourable to both parties, we have an interesting account, in a work entitled "Histoire et Relation d'un Voyage de la Reine de Pologne, 1648," by Mr. Le Labreur, who was one of the queen's attendants, and of whose words the following is a literal translation.—"The following day, December 26, 1645, the Queen of Poland did an action worthy of the majesty of literature. Having heard of the excellent attainments of the celebrated Anna Maria à Schurman, who is a native of this city, and of the splendor of her study, she wished to pay her a visit, but without ceremony, to prevent that concourse of people which would have followed, had it been known. She left the Court, and went, *incognita*, into the Lady Marshal's coach, followed only by the Bishop of Orange, and four or five persons, of whom I was one. After passing the great church, she alighted, and entered the habitation of this *tenth Muse*, the miracle of this age, and the wonder of her sex. The Queen was struck with admiration at the exquisitely fine works wrought by the hands of this lady. They chiefly consisted in large paintings, miniatures, illuminations, engravings on copper, and etchings or diamond engravings on glass; which have justly acquired for her the reputation of great excellency in the most noble mechanic arts. But her Majesty was still more astonished to hear her speak so many languages, and answer questions in so many different sciences. To the Bishop of Orange, who interrogated her by the Queen's desire, she answered in *Italian*, and argued very logically in *Latin*, on several points in theology. I paid her a compliment in *Latin*, in behalf of the Lady Marshal, to which she replied, very elegantly, in the same language. She spoke *Greek* with Mr. Corrade, chief physician to the Queen. To be short, she would have conversed with us in several other languages, had we known them: for, besides the *Greek*, *Latin*, *French*, *Italian*, *Spanish*, *German*, and the *Low Dutch*, which is her native tongue, she has an extensive acquaintance with *Hebrew*, *Syriac*, and *Chaldee*, and could speak them with facility, had she any opportunity to exercise herself in those languages. She is so well acquainted with the geography of every country, that she could travel through Europe as well without a guide as without an interpreter. Her knowledge of geography rendering the one needless, and her knowledge of languages precluding the necessity of the other."

Thus far *Le Labreur*, who was himself a sound scholar, and a good judge.

Of this eminent lady, *Salmasius*, who was one of her literary correspondents, and a man of vast erudition, gives the following account.—

"We need not refer to ancient times for examples of literary excellence among women; the existence of which, in some cases at least, many lawfully doubt: but we may come to our own times, and to our own nation.

"In a city, about a days journey hence, there is a noble virgin, equal, in the knowledge of numerous arts, to *Hippias*; and much more to be admired than she, because such a fecundity of genius is rarely to be met with in this sex. She cultivates the whole circle of arts, succeeds in each, and graces the whole assemblage of virtues, so that to her not one is lacking. What her understanding can conceive, or the hand bring to effect, this person can perform. In painting she is surpassed by none; she equally excels in sculpture, bronze, wax-modelling, and carving. In embroidery, and in all things which are objects of study and attention to the females, she surpasses the most eminent ancients and moderns; and she is possessed of so many sciences, that it is difficult to tell in which she excels most.—Her knowledge of languages is also so extensive, that not content with all *European* tongues, her active mind has travelled to the *East*, and acquired the *Hebrew*, *Arabic*, and *Syriac*. She writes *Latin* so correctly, that the most learned men who have,

during their whole lives, affected eminence in this way, cannot write with more purity and elegance. In French epistolary writing she is scarcely exceeded by *Balzac*.

"The other *European* tongues, she speaks with as much correctness, as those can to whom they are vernacular. She can maintain a literary commerce with the *Jews* in *Hebrew*, and with the *Turks* in *Arabic*. She is conversant in the most difficult and abstruse sciences: her attainments in philosophy and scholastic divinity are such, as strike every person with amazement: such knowledge appears almost miraculous. None needs attempt to emulate her excellence, for she is beyond imitation; and none can envy her, for she is placed beyond the reach of envy itself."

*Balzac*, who was proverbial for his elegant epistolary compositions, gives her the following character, in a letter to Mr. Gerard.—

"I must confess, Sir, that Miss Schurman is an astonishing young woman, and that her verses are not among the least of her excellencies. I do not think that *Sulpitia*, so highly extolled by *Martial*, has made finer poems, nor better Latin. But among the charms of her verse, what modesty and chastity appear! The purity of heart blends itself more pleasingly with the productions of her understanding. I am highly obliged to you for having procured me an acquaintance with this astonishing lady, and for those epigrams of her's, which you have sent me. I have just now received a book, said to be written by Mr. *de Saumaise*, (*Salmasius*) and requested that, in his second edition, he will alter that place, where, speaking of this young woman, he says, '*Gallicæ Epistolæ tales concinnat, ut vix meliore Balzacius*;'—'In French epistolary writing, she is scarcely exceeded by *Balzac*;' and let it run thus:—'*Gallicæ Epistolæ tales concinnat, multo minus bonas, and minus Gallicæ Balzacius*;'—'*Balzac's* French Epistles are vastly inferior in their matter, and less elegant in their composition.' And even with this qualification of the sentence, I shall feel myself too much honoured. It is no small glory to be near such a personage, even in any situation; and though, in the comparison above, I must appear to disadvantage; yet even that disadvantage, because I am compared with her, confers an obligation."

Mr. James Martin, of Paris, wrote a fine eulogium on this extraordinary woman, from which I shall at present borrow only the following elegant epigram:

"Græchorum matrem sileat Romana vetustas,  
Et taceat Sappho Græciæ victa suam  
Ceditæ Romane, Græcæ, quoque cedit Musæ.  
Nescio quid Batavo majus in orbe micat."

Of which the following by a Lady, is no inelegant paraphrase.—

"When heaven-born Wisdom beam'd from pole to pole,  
Her choicest rays illum'd the female soul.  
Brave Scipio's daughter taught her sons to know  
To govern Rome, and lay her tyrants low.  
The Grecian Sappho charm'd the list'ning throng  
With potent numbers and harmonious song.  
The beautiful Nine their sex's greatness prove,  
And charm the warring world to peace and love:  
But when e'en these contend for deathless praise,  
They yield to Schurman's brow the verdant bays."

Her works were collected by *Spanheim*, and printed by the *Elzevirs*, at *Leiden*, in 1648, 12mo. with the following title:—"Nobilissimæ Virginis Annæ Mariæ à Schurman Opuscula; Hæbræa, Græcæ, Latina, Gallicæ, Præterea et Metrica." To this is prefixed a likeness of this eminent woman, engraved, if not painted, by herself, taken in the 33d year of her age; from which the likeness prefixed to this Number has been correctly copied.

In these Opuscula is a famous dissertation on the question,—"Num femine Christianæ convenient studium Literarum?" "Is it consistent with the character of a Christian woman to study Literature?" This piece, which has never been translated, casts much light on the long-controverted subject,—*Was*