

worshippers of Jesus Christ have their monster meetings, if I may call them so; and these are no doubt the most remarkable manifestations of the religious spirit of Britain. Certainly, the thing most worthy of admiration is not the meetings of those societies, but their labors and their acts. The Bible, Missionary, Tract, and Christian Instruction Societies, with many others, are the highest glory and the chief strength of England. Not only has she taken the lead, but she has nowhere been outstripped. The reports of these societies are everywhere; you have read them over and over again. It will therefore be more interesting to give you a description of their meetings.

To speak in that immense area of Exeter Hall, to four thousand auditors,—nay, four thousand impassioned auditors,—who reply by acclamations to the least word that finds an echo in their hearts, is no trifle, especially to foreigners. The remarkable capacity of the English and the Scotch for speaking well, clearly, and eloquently, is known to every one. This is in some degree a natural gift, but it is partly also an acquired one. Every son of Britain grows up in the midst of public life. Every one accustoms himself to think clearly, and to express forcibly, whatever is essential in all things. Besides this, the English, those at least who speak in these meetings, are familiar with the two great treasures from which all elegant diction and eloquence is drawn: the one is the Bible, the other is the Greek and Latin classics. The art with which these assemblies are prepared, the continued progress, the animated, onward march which the leaders seek to impress upon them; the appearance, at one time of a Syrian, at another of a North American Indian, now of a New Zealander or of a Chinese, in the full costume of their respective countries, and each making a speech in his turn, like others (I was myself confounded with these orators from the different parts of the world); the art with which the most powerful speakers are generally reserved for the conclusion—all these things render the meetings overpowering and wonderful. If I were asked which affords the most exquisite enjoyment to the mind; the intimate conversations in a German study, where three or four eminent theologians assemble, with whom the mind freely ranges over the highest regions of thought; or these stupendous meetings, in which the souls of the auditory are drawn on by an orator as in a race, are subdued with him, and then on a sudden carried away amidst shouts and acclamations,—were I to be asked which of these two enjoyments I prefer, really I should not know on which side the balance would incline; but were I to judge of the intensity, or rather the enthusiasm of enjoyment, I think I should decide in favor of the London or Scottish meetings. Oh, how much do we live in those few hours! how do our hearts burn within us! And yet, after those volcanic explosions, and those streams of burning lava which flow in torrents, it must be owned, something more calm and more intimate is salutary, and we love to return to “the waters of Shiloah that go softly.”

#### Milton's Character of Eve

I HAVE been sometimes surprised, when in conversation I have been expressing my admiration of the character of Eve in her state of innocence, as drawn from our immortal poet, to hear objections stated by those, from whom, of all critics, I should have least expected it—the ladies. I confess that, as the Sophia of Rousseau had her young imagination captivated by the character of Fenelon's Telemachus, so I early became enamoured of that of Milton's Eve. I never formed an idea of conjugal happiness, but my mind involuntarily adverted to the graces of that finished picture.

The ladies, in order to justify their censure, assert that Milton, a harsh domestic tyrant, must needs be a very inadequate judge, and, of course, a very unfair delineator, of female accomplishments. These fair cavillers draw their inference from premises, from which I have always been accustomed to deduce a directly contrary conclusion. They insist that it is highly derogatory from the dignity of the sex, that the poet should affirm that it is the perfection of the character of a wife,

“To study household good,  
And good works in her husband to promote.”

Now according to my notion of ‘household good,’ which does not include one idea of drudgery or servility, but which involves a large and comprehensive scheme of excellence, I will venture to affirm, that let a woman know what she may, yet if she knows not this, she is ignorant of the most indispensable, the most appropriate branch of female knowledge. Without it, however, she may inspire admiration abroad, she will never excite esteem, nor of course durable affection at home, and will bring neither credit nor comfort to her ill-starred partner.

The domestic arrangements of such a woman as filled the capacious mind of the poet, resembles, if I may say it without profaneness, those of Providence, whose under-agent she was. Her wisdom is seen in its effect. Indeed it is rather felt than seen. It is sensibly acknowledged in the peace, the happiness, the virtue of the component parts; in the order, regularity and beauty of the whole system, of which she is the moving spring. The perfection of her character, as the divine poet intimates, does not arise from a prominent quality, or a showy talent, or a brilliant accomplishment; but it is the beautiful combination and result of them all. Her excellences consist not so much in acts as in habits, in

Those thousand decencies which daily flow  
From all her words and actions

A description more calculated than any I ever met with to convey an idea of the purest conduct resulting from the best principles. It gives an image of that tranquillity, smoothness, and quiet beauty, which is of the very essence of perfection in a wife; while the happily chosen verb *flow* takes away any impression of dullness, or stagnant torpor, which the *still* idea might otherwise suggest.

But the offence taken by the ladies against this uncourtly bard, is chiefly occasioned by his having presumed to intimate that conjugal obedience

Is woman's highest honour and her praise.

This is so nice a point, that I, as a bachelor, dare only just hint, that on this delicate question the poet has not gone an inch farther than the apostle. Nay Paul is still more uncivilly explicit than Milton. If, however, I could hope to bring over to my side critics, who, being of the party, are too apt to prejudice the cause, I would point out to them, that the supposed harshness of the observation is quite done away by the recollection that this scruple ‘obedience’ is so far from implying degradation, that it is connected with the injunction to the woman ‘to promote good works’ in her husband; an injunction surely inferring a degree of influence that raises her condition, and restores her to all the dignity of equality; it makes her not only the associate, but the inspirer of his virtues.

But to return to the economical part of the character of Eve. And here she exhibits a consummate specimen and beautiful model of domestic skill and elegance. How exquisitely conceived is her reception and entertainment of Raphael! How modest, and yet how dignified! I am afraid I know some husbands who would have had to encounter very ungracious looks, not to say words, if they had brought home even an angel, *unexpectedly* to dinner. Not so our general mother.

“Her despatchful look”  
Her hospitable thoughts,—intent  
What choice to choose for delicacy best.

all indicate not only the ‘prompt,’ but the cheerful ‘obedience.’ Though her repast consisted only of the fruits of paradise:

Whatever earth, all bearing mother, yields;

Yet of these, with a liberal hospitality,

She gathered tribute large, and on the board,  
Heaps with unsparing hand.

The finest modern lady need not disdain the arrangement of her table, which was

So contrived as not to mix  
Tastes not well join'd, inelegant, but bring  
Taste after taste, upheld by kindest change.

It must, however, I fear, be conceded, by the way, that this