

and reflecting mind and a distaste for what they conceived the only sphere of woman's duties, all their efforts were directed to eradicate or smother this erratic propensity, which they looked upon in a more heinous light than even crime—of which indeed they considered it the certain precursor. But that rain which has been gifted with a spark of intellectual fire must perish ere that bright ray can be extinguished. It will work out its destiny either for good or for evil, and on their heads who, while it yet may be directed in its course, seek to quench instead of guiding it, be the ills which mis-used mental gifts so often wreak upon the possessors and all within their influence. All books, save a few tiresome and childish lessons on the minor morals of life, were debarred me, pens and paper removed from my reach, and my time incessantly occupied in needle-work, household affairs, and as much music, dancing and flower-drawing as would serve (in my mother's words) to set off my charms and get me a good husband. Sometimes, by way of flattering me into a renunciation of my reason, I was told that I had been born a beauty, but would have marred my charms by setting up for a genius had not they in their wisdom prevented me. Learning and genius in a woman! Oh! acme of iniquity—the horror of one sex, the dread of the other, and the never failing sign of a predestined old maid! But peace be with their memory! In the narrow circle of their views and feelings they knew not of the evil they were doing me. They knew not that to have cultivated and strengthened my understanding, to have guided and directed my imagination, to have controlled and purified my feelings, instead of repressing my faculties, which are the source of all that is good and beautiful in our souls, was the only method of making me a happy and reasonable being. My father filled a high situation in the Commissariat of the confederated army of the Rhine and was much from home. We lived in a very retired situation, and no strangers ever entered our house; thus I had no realities but the tamest and most wearisome to occupy my thoughts, and while my fingers were mechanically employed my mind wandered free and unconstrained over the regions of imagination, and sick unto death of the painful monotony of my life

whose sameness bred
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change,"

I fancied scenes of unreal beauty and romantic interest and lived but in them. But, at last, a change did in reality come; my mother had a rich old aunt with whom my brother had always resided; she became ill and sent for my mother to

nurse her, my father was from home and I was left alone in the castle. My mother had taken care to provide employment for me during her absence, and when I promised that the tasks she had left me should be finished against her return I little thought how soon they would be thrown aside. I watched the vehicle which took her away disappear with a feeling of loneliness unmingled with respect, and turning from the window sat down to my netting with a heavy sigh. For two days after my mother's departure, I was as industrious as even she could have wished, but the third day I could not resist the beauty which streamed in at my chamber window, and tempted me forth. I determined to explore that lovely green recess which I had so often gazed upon from a distance, and which slept so peacefully in the light of the long summer's day; I would climb to that old grey ruin which towered loftily yet protectingly above it, like some time worn old warrior bending over a gentle and beautiful child. I would gather wild lilies from the river's brink, and roses from the copse that fringed it, and wander unbidden and unseen. With these thoughts a glad freshness seemed to rush into my heart and brain, like the pure breath of heaven on the brow of the captive, when his prison door is unbarred. I felt like one who leaves his dungeon behind, and looks up into the clear blue sky, yet at times can scarcely believe in the reality of his freedom, as I wandered through the leafy paths and flowery meadows and up into the wild wood on whose glens I had so often before gazed longingly. It was one of those evenings whose rich and golden beauty fills the soul with an intensity of delight like the fabled Elysium. The play of sunshine among the whispering leaves of the trees, upon the mountain side, on the ancient ruin, and the silver shining rivulet which stole past my feet to mingle with the kingly river below seemed to me like the glad dance of aerial beings; all heaven and earth were steeped in loveliness and bliss, and my soul drank deep draughts of enjoyment from their unsealed fountains. "Oh, beautiful, mysterious Nature!" I exclaimed, "that I could read thy deep love and hold communion with thy wondrous secrets! Oh! that I could this moment unsphere some celestial Intelligence and learn from his lips the mysteries of creation, and of my own soul!"

A gentle voice close at my side answered to my invocation, "And if that were possible you might not be the happier! knowest thou not that the fruit of the tree of knowledge brought evil and death into the world?"

So sweet were the accents of the speaker that,