

IN DEFENSE OF XANTHIPPE.

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That wife of Socrates has acquired such a bad reputation that it may seem like quixotic chivalry to attempt, at this late day, any apology for her. She has become everywhere the symbol of shrewishness, and many a quiet joke has been made over the trials of the illustrious philosopher who was united to such a virago.

It seems only fair, however, to look at both sides of the question before passing a final judgment either upon her, personally, or upon that unwelcome sisterhood, of which she is the almost unchallenged prototype. Whatever were the faults of Xanthippe, they have certainly not been diminished by so much talk about them. Socrates himself, in a dialogue with his son recorded in the *Memorabilia*, speaks of her domestic virtues; and though the evidence concerning her daily manner of life is scanty, we know that when her husband was imprisoned, she showed a solicitous affection, and shed bitter tears over the gloomy fate which overshadowed him.

Masculine expectancy often runs high in regard to the "gentler sex," and when disappointed is easily stirred to a considerable display of indignation. There may be in this, perhaps, an indirect tribute to the sense of woman's worth and her almost infinite possibilities. But sufficient weight is not always given to the conditions under which her best qualities will be developed. Her more sensitive organism renders her peculiarly liable to the frustration of her true instincts, and to the abortive exercise of her legitimate powers of earthly ministry. She may very possibly show only the unilluminated disc of her soul to the gaze of selfishness, and, like a delicate plant, put forth no lovely blossoms in an uncongenial atmosphere. However great the range of sacrifice in any nature, it emerges bruised and disfigured when it fails to meet with sympathetic appreciation.

One does not like to tarnish the glory of a name which deservedly ranks so high among the immortals. But though