

the poet's heart. The 'Essays of Elia' were sent me last spring in two dainty green volumes by the kind editor who prepared them for issue among the "Temple Classics." I would have him to know that never did the tender-hearted fun, the gleaming, exquisite irony of Elia so play and lighten in my dull wits before. I am sure the long, idle evenings by the lamp, and the indoor atmosphere, helped in the happy effect. Charles Lamb should never be read save by lamplight and in winter. We have so many summer authors. When the weather was very hot last August, and the hay-makers hard at work, I used to find great refreshment in the shady side of a big haystack, and Bacon's 'History of the Reign of Henry VII.' That cold-hearted, able monarch and his wives, as described in easy, modulated English by the cold-hearted, able historian, had an agreeably frigid effect that would have been simply wasted in winter. Nicolò Machiavelli describes, something in the same cool way, the riots of his hot and foolish Florentines, in words that hit their mark like pebbles delicately aimed. He too is a summer author. But I may not transgress into the mazy paths of literature. I only mean to say this much, that for reading of books and pleasures of the mind in general, a rancho is the choicest place imaginable.

Still, to every woman there is something more attractive than the gratifying of her special tastes, writing, literary, or domestic. Every woman seeks her vocation, and, consciously or not, desires a sphere in which to reign and serve, a place that no one else could fill, her own niche among "the polished corners of the Temple." Now the

greatest attraction of the West is that it offers such scope to the woman who really knows her *métier de femme*.

It is hard to say how far social and physical conditions can extend their sway against claims of instinct; but we all know that the present state of things in England is somewhat out of joint. Socially speaking, women are a drug on the market, simply from their exceeding numbers. They feel it too, and try by all kinds of curious means to create to themselves new standards of value, of importance. All this is unnatural and unpleasant, and it makes the change to a country where a woman is, socially speaking, a thing of value simply as a woman, a very welcome change indeed. Of course it may be slightly demoralising too, if the woman's vanity should mislead her into setting down all the warmth of her welcome and the interest she arouses to the credit of her own charms, instead of to the scarcity of her species. But I think the most tough-skinned vanity would not secure her long from feeling the prick of an all-surrounding criticism which addresses itself to take note of her work and ways from very unexpected quarters and from unfamiliar points of view, but with a keenness of interest really less indulgent than the passing comment of indifference which is all we have to expect at home.

I sometimes amuse myself by imagining certain women I have known set down for a time to live and learn in the North-West. Especially I should like to transplant here one of those firm believers in the natural depravity of man and the born superiority of woman. She would arrive—the woman I mean—with a high purpose, and very, very kind inten-