

WOMEN OF ANTIQUITY—HOW EMPLOYED.

In the earlier ages of antiquity, it was not inconsistent with the highest dignity, to act in what we should now reckon the lowest of menial employments. Gideon and Arunah assisted in the various labours of husbandry. Abraham went and brought a calf from the flock, skinned it, and gave it to his wife, who dressed it; a custom to this day continued among many of the Eastern nations—where nothing is more common than to see their princes fetch home from their flocks, and kill, whatever has been selected for the use of their families; while the princesses, their wives, or daughters, prepare a fire, and perform the office of an European cook-maid.

Another part of female employment in the earlier ages, was grinding corn; the ancients had not, and in many countries they have not even now, mills so constructed as to go by wind or water; there were only two small stones used for the purpose, the uppermost of which was turned by the hand, a task generally performed by two women. Such were used in the time of Pharaoh; for Moses, in the relation of the plagues which infested that country, says that "the first-born throughout the land died, from the first-born of Pharaoh, who was upon the throne, to the first-born of the maid-servants who were behind the mill." They were used in the time of our Saviour, who says, "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." They are used to this day all over the Levant, and in the North of Scotland, where the women who turn them have a particular song, which they sing, intended, perhaps, to divert them from thinking on the severity of their labour. When the women had grinded their corn into meal, it was likewise their province to make it into bread. Sarah was ordered by her husband, when he entertained the angels, to make cakes for them. Cakes, among many of the ancients, were offered at the altars of their gods; from which custom even the Israelites did not altogether abstain, as the Scriptures frequently inform us that their women baked cakes to the Queen of Heaven.

Pasturage was almost the only method of subsistence in the times we are speaking of; and the women, of every rank and condition, as well as the men, were not exempted from attending on the flocks, drawing water for them to drink, and all the other offices which the nature of such an employment required. Pasturage obliged the Israelites, and other inhabitants of the East, to embrace a wandering life, that they might procure fresh food for their flocks. Instead, therefore, of dwelling in houses, as we do, they erected tents for the convenience of frequent removals. These tents were made of camel hair and wool, the spinning or weaving of which was a part of the occupation of the women; and, from the time that cloth was substituted for the skin of animals, for a covering of the body, the whole occupation of making it devolved also on women, who wove it in the most simple manner, by conducting the wool with their fingers instead of a shuttle.

In all countries where the arts are only in their infancy, every man is generally his own artificer. The men make the various instruments which they employ in their work, and the women make the cloth for covering themselves and their family; but, in the days of Moses, the Israelites seem to have advanced a few degrees beyond this. Metallurgy seems to have made a considerable progress. Even in the time of Abraham they had instruments, probably of steel, for shearing their sheep; Abraham had a sword, with which he was preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac; and they had even arrived to works of taste in gold and silver. They must, therefore, have been more advanced in the arts at this period, than the Greeks at the siege of Troy, whose arms and shields were made of copper; or than many savage nations at this time, whose arms are only wood, sometimes pointed with flints, or bones of animals.

From the subversion of the Roman empire, to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, women spent most of their time alone, almost entire strangers to the joys of social life; they seldom went abroad, but to be spectators of such public diversions and amusements as the fashions of the time countenanced. Francis I. was the first who introduced women on public days to court; before his time, nothing was to be seen at any of the courts of Europe, but grey-headed politicians, plotting the destruction of the rights and liberties of mankind; and warriors clad in complete armour, ready to put their plots in execution. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, elegance had scarcely any existence, and even cleanliness was hardly considered as laudable. The use of linen was not known, and the most delicate of the fair sex wore woollen shifts. In Paris they had wear only three times a week; and one hundred livres, (about five pounds sterling,) was a large portion for a young lady. The better sort of citizens used splinters of wood, and rags dipped in oil, instead of candles, which, in those days, were a rarity hardly to be met with. Wine was only to be had at the shops of the apothecaries, where it was sold as a cordial; and to ride in a two-wheeled cart, along the dirty rugged streets, was reckoned a grandeur of so enviable a nature, that Philip the Fair prohibited the wives of citizens from enjoying it. In the time of Henry VIII., of England, the peers of the realm carried their wives behind them on horseback, when they went to London; and in the same manner took them back to their country seats, with hoods of waxed linen over their heads, and wrapped in mantles of cloth, to secure them from the cold.

ENGLAND'S DEAD.

Son of the ocean isle!
Where sleep your mighty dead?
Show me what high and stately pile
Is rear'd o'er Glory's bed.

Go, stranger! track the deep,
Free, free, the white sail spread!
Wave may not foun, nor wild wind sweep,
Where rest not England's dead.

On Egypt's burning plains,
By the pyramid o'erstay'd,
With fearful power the noon-day reigns,
And the palm-trees yield no shade,

But let the angry sun
From heaven look fiercely red,
Unfelt by those whose task is done!
There slumber England's dead.

The hurricane hath might
Along the Indian shore,
And far by Ganges' banks at night,
Is heard the tiger's roar.

But let the sound roll on!
It hath no tone of dread
For those that from their toils are gone;
There slumber England's dead.

Loud rush the torrent-floods
The western wilds among,
And free, in green Columbia's woods,
The hunter's bow is strung,

But let the floods rush on!
Let the arrow's flight be sped!
Why should they reck whose task is done?
There slumber England's dead!