

"FOR LADIES ONLY."

For her happiness in this New Year, the style whereof still seems strange, each reader of this page carries the best wishes of the Craftsman who addresses her. The months of 1869, laden with the joys and sorrows of the whole human family, sail to us slowly out of the Infinite with the tidings of the destinies of our lives. It is well, as they first loom on the horizon, to consider how we are prepared to meet them, and for you, my dear children, to reflect how you can best mould the story of their issue.

We cannot hope to turn the page of the new decade, and once again to write 15th January, without having known many solemn changes of the time. Whether I shall be here to write or you to read, is in the will of the Great Architect alone. And, in what stage of our short Progress—whether in the Valley of the Shadow, or high on the Delectable Mountains looking down upon the pleasant land of Boulah—that day shall dawn for those of us who are left to greet it, we are, this morning, mercifully forbidden to know. It has been mine to talk to you now and then of the dress that has seemed most fitting for you to wear. Thank God that He hides from us the fashion of twelve months to come—whether it be of white or black, of bridal flowers or of widow's weeds!

There is nothing more awful to imagine than the Fate that is silently marching on to surprise the unconsciousness of so many of you. Through what strange scenes, and over what rough roads, and amid what undreamed of companionships, are pressing towards her this moment the footsteps of the man whose name she has never heard and whose face she has never seen, but who is, nevertheless, to make or mar the future of the young lady who carelessly skims these sentences in her peaceful childhood's home! In what armory is being forged the gun, or over what cave of ocean rolls the wave, that shall carry to the blooming bride of January the wild agony of her December's widowhood! And in what foul corner of the great city's squalid misery is even now lurking the pestilence before which shall this year bow the bright laughing curls that make the glory of mamma's young dignity in her pleasant country home? He who has met these lions in his path before most of you were born, and who still bleeds from the wounds of the encounter, shrinks from the apprehensions of your young sufferings in the battle, and refuses to anticipate the chances of the opening year.

Whatever these chances may be, for good or evil, they are most keenly enjoyed or most bravely confronted, in the strength of the memories of some real work preceding. You are told very often that your work lies by your own fireside, which many of you believe, and a great many more are indolent enough to act upon. To me the creed appears utterly unworthy, and indeed insulting, that it is a constant source of wonder how your sex have admitted it so long. It practically confines benevolence and charity and active kindness to men, and assigns selfishness alone as your portion in the world. It goes farther, for it places your lives utterly at the disposal of your lords, who assign to you what "homes" they please, and then announces as a sort of inspired revelation, that your Sphere is there—where they have placed you. Theirs is in the great world, to do what good their opportunity may allow. Theirs are all the nobler virtues of humanity to cultivate, while to you fall the duties of a lower grade. You are to be good mothers and good house-keepers and affectionate companions—that is, you are carefully to take example by the pelican and the ant and the shell-parrot, until the fidelity of your imitation shall have worked out the lofty designs of Providence. While the higher organizations, a little lower than the angels, are to do such noble deeds outside that your respect and veneration may daily grow stronger than before.

To this theory I will never subscribe, though it be demonstrated by every tradition of antiquity. I am quite ready to admit that, at her first creation, woman's sphere was home. But that home was in the murmuring fragrance of Eden, in which, to each of those who walked there, was the voice of God equally audible, and where, we may surely argue, there was no such unequal distribution of honors as to-day. Since then the times are altered, and if the wisest man who ever lived thought that the proper sphere for a thousand gentlewomen was within the walls of his seraglio, I am afraid he made no more enormous mistake than some of us do to-day in our lofty advocacy of the claims of the kitchen and the nursery. By the way the theory is carried out fairly and legitimately by the Indians of our own country. They have thoroughly realized the grand truth that women are weaker than themselves, and may therefore be safely condemned to the ignoble side of existence. But it is scarcely to be asserted that we should know no better.

The sphere of woman is beauty, and her mission the adornment of the world. Happy homes are redolent of beauty, and therefore

her sphere is among them. But homes are not to be made happy on the brute instinct of furnishing all the mouths therein with sufficient food, or even on the more refined principle of keeping the children's faces perpetually washed clean. On the contrary, they are to be made happy by the pervading influence of generous large-hearted womanhood, with sympathy for the whole suffering world, and with love for all within it that is noble and liberal and true.

It is for this reason that I protest against the canon which would close to your sex the more honorable business of our lives. It is for this reason that I find in the Scutari and Crimean hospitals, and in the tents of the Sanitary Commission, some of the most encouraging episodes of our age. And it is for this reason that I derive supreme satisfaction in the sight of a woman's performance of useful worldly labor, whether of head or hand, that may remunerate her sufficiently while tasking her lightly, and, above all and everything, will preclude the contracted selfishness that the "home" theory involves.

There is no country of the world where is shown more chivalrous deference to women than in France. There is no country in the world where women take so large a share in the conduct of affairs. Through every phase of politics, industry, commerce or art, you may, in that pleasant land, mark the traces of a lady's touch. The cabinet intrigues of Parisian salons; the dealings with customers in all sort of shops, the sale of tickets at every depot; the conduct of considerable estates—each managed by Madame with the mathematical precision of her nation—; the guardianship and signal duty of a thousand miles of railway, the accountancy of vast establishments, the design of novel patterns and the execution of delicate pieces of *fantaisie*,—these and an hundred other such avocations are yours on the soil where you have highest honor. I never knew a single Frezza hotel that was not ruled by a woman's brain, and regulated by a woman's care. And I would like to know exceedingly where such houses can be met with except there.

It would then please me not a little to see the limits of your Canadian usefulness enlarged. The year upon which we enter promises to bring with it some progress in the direction in which I am looking. Between the exaggeration of America and the backwardness of England we may hope to take a medium course consistent with the tendencies of the broadening Age. We have some reason in our modest successes hitherto, to find augury of encouragement for such advances as we anticipate. The work to which our ladies of culture mainly apply themselves is that of teaching, and of how well they do it, and of how gracefully it becomes them, we here have evidence around us every day. I know of no prettier sight than is given us occasionally in the examination of some great Central School, where column after column of little ones, (and of large ones sometimes) is being marshalled in its proper station by the gentle order of a lady's command. There is perhaps no "sphere" of our community where it is possible to see your sex—our sisters—to greater advantage. I know that, meeting the other day one of the handsomest faces and most graceful figures which it has been mine to encounter for some time, I could not have chosen for them more appropriate or attractive surroundings than the bright, lappy childish smiles which told of the lady's gentle rule; nor could I have more heartily admired the most elaborate effort of millinery than I did the straight, simple, black *droguet*, relieved only by a narrow green braiding, which spoke to us of the wearer's earnest working purpose, and of her knowledge of that highest practical art by which to make her life as beautiful as is her presence.

Have you read in the newspapers that the Young Queen of Greece walks about Athens every morning, with her baby in her arms, entering upon maternal gossip with casual and equally juvenile mammas? It seems to me that a nursemaid and perambulator would be more sensible. But the Princess Olga is daughter-in-law to that thrifty royal lady whom two American morning visitors found mending her stockings in her reception room at Elsinore. She evidently accepts the "sphere," but I should have thought that there were poor women in Copenhagen to whom employment was of consideration, and should feel a greater fervour of Danish loyalty did the mistress of the country think more of aiding her poor, and less of parading her virtue. G. RAION.

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