

LETTERS ON THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

BY AGNODICE.

LETTER II.

DEAR CLYTE,—I have before me your letter, ending with the words :

"The homely sympathy that heeds
The common life our nature breeds ;
A wisdom tuned to the needs
Of hearts at leisure."

The quotation is a very beautiful one, but not, I think, to the point. I am only demanding fuller employment and a greater sphere of activity for women who, like myself, have no "needs of hearts at leisure" to supply. Married men and women are placed in a wholly different position ; close companionship and mutual help and sympathy are essential to their well-doing and being ; the one can do nothing without the other. Let married women, then, cultivate "homely sympathy" as much as they will ; let them be "Marys in the House of God, and Marthas in their own" if they like, only let them not look upon the small domesticities of life as the all-important duty of life, but rather strive after the daily culture of mind and brain.

It is not, however, their duties and opinions that I wish to discuss with you now. I want to make you understand the disabilities of the Great Unemployed amongst women ; to consider how sad is that condition of things by which thousands of active, capable young women are shut out from work, and even the higher

branches of education, by usage, habit and prejudice. That I am not speaking without good ground for complaint I will prove to you by one instance among many. There is a school in England which, centuries ago, was endowed for the purpose of educating a certain number of boys and the like number of girls. Look at that school now ; many hundreds of boys annually leave its precincts prepared for college life or to enter any of the learned professions. Of the girls, some poor twelve are given that kind of education which will enable them to become maids of all work ! Why is this ? Can we answer the question in any other way than by saying that this is the result of men looking after the interests, so *dear to them*, of their countrywomen. We are asked : Who will have your interests so much at heart as your brothers, fathers and husbands ? We point to this school, and to many similar institutions, as proof of the fallacy of this argument.

I perfectly agree with you when you say *à propos* of my becoming a student of medicine, that most women would prefer consulting a male physician to a female. You say the individual sympathy given by a woman is not so grateful to most patients as is the idea that their doctors look upon them as mere machines out of order ; clocks whose works require looking to and brightening up. But then this objection belongs only to