

no more, let us pause and perpend the tremendous influence for good or for evil a single woman—"a weak woman"—as the cant phrase runs, may exert over her own and succeeding times. (Hear, hear.)

"Hardly does a capital or court exist to-day, hardly has one existed for nineteen centuries, where a society so cultured can be, or could have been found, as that of Rome in the time of Augustus. To get anything like it we have to go to the Athens of the Periclean age. Statesmen as sagacious as Macenas can be named—but when has a statesman been able to surround himself with such a galaxy of men of genius? Still some might maintain for this a parallel could be had. But where shall we find shining amongst these the more dazzling stars of women highly cultivated, well read in the best reading of their time—the best reading of all times? The writings of Horace and of the elegiac poets; of Cicero; of the historians lift the curtain from a stage where we see women of surpassing loveliness, well acquainted with Greek literature and with Latin literature, skilled to sing and play, full of grace and wit. The description given of Sulpicia in the letter of compliment addressed to her by Tibullus on the 1st of March, the Matronalia, when gracious messages and graceful gifts were sent to matron or maid, bodies forth the 'infinite variety' of many a lady of that day.

*Ilam, quidquid agit, quoquo vestigia movit,
Componit fortim subsequiturque decor—*

I hardly dare attempt a rendering, and poor is the following:—

*Whate'er she does, where'er her footsteps stray,
A thousand graces round each movement play.*

And Sulpicia could write as well as Tibullus himself—witness the brief, beautiful little poems in which now she wishes openly to avow her love for Cerinthus; now repents of an appearance of coldness,

Ardores cupiens dissimulare meum,

because she wished to hide the warmth of her feelings; and now declares her unwillingness to leave Rome on her birthday because all the beauty of wood and stream and sea would be overshadowed with gloom because Cerinthus would not be there:—

*Invisis natalis adest, qui rure molesto,
Et sine Cerintho tristis agendus erit.
Dulcius urbe quid est? an villa sit apta puella,
Atque Arcetino frigidus amnis agro?*

Numbers of freed-women were highly cultivated and beautiful like the Hetairai at Athens—but with these we are not concerned. In good society the young noblewomen were well-read in the masterpieces of Grecian art, and wrote and sang, and met in equal converse with young men of high birth, the greatest of whom such accomplished wits as Ovid—one of the finest and brightest young gentlemen of his time. In men and women literary and artistic accomplishments were combined in extraordinary perfection with personal fascination. ('Hear, hear,' from Professor Glaucus.)

"It is clear from Horace's great national odes that there was a desire on the part of Augustus, and on that of all thinking men, to restore, if possible, the old Roman simplicity and virtue. The lady who was, before she had thrown off all restraint, at the head of young Roman society, had she fallen in with these noble dreams, might have infused a serious purpose into the lives of those around her by moving herself along the lines of high intent. But Julia—the most highly cultivated, the most brilliant, the most beautiful woman of her time, and distinguished by her rare personal and mental gifts as highly as by her imperial station—saw no meaning in life of larger significance than the rose-foam of its pleasures, or profounder than the ebb and flow, the joy and pang of delight. And she gave the tone to the fashionable world of Rome—the tone to the gay young writers who catered to the fashion of the hour. Hence it is that Ovid, whose writings are a mirror of society, has every gift of the poet—but heart. Good taste, readiness of wit, quickness of resource, duplicity had taken the place of good faith, manly gravity, matronly dignity and female worth. His love is of the shallowest vein, and his 'Ars Amandi' is a didactic poem, full of wit, with fine bursts of genuine poetry, in which he teaches the most vile of all arts. Carefully planned and composed, abounding with Attic salt and beautiful passages, so that it was a favourite with the grave Milton, it is the most striking index to the morals of the fashionable world of the day. Ovid is not driven to mockery and cynicism as Lord Byron was by real or fancied wrongs, and Byron seems at times ashamed of 'Don Juan.' But Ovid gives no hint that his work needed any apology. A man who knew what married happiness was, he has no trace of the old Roman respect for family life. Unrestrained to enjoy—this is the key-note of his writings, and this is embodied in the life of the beautiful woman, the daughter of an emperor, of a race prolific of great men, the wife of princes, whose end was to be banished to a barren isle by a father who could no longer either for his own or his people's sake, brook her disorders. (Here Irene sighed.)

"Who can doubt but that had she had the spirit which animated such Roman matrons as the mother of the Gracchi—of thousands who added dignity and beauty to Roman homes in earlier days—the tone of Roman fashionable society would have taken tint and temper from her and the brilliant young noblemen, and noblewomen would have lived lives more useful to themselves and the world,

and the poets of society would have 'moralized their song'?" (Loud cheers.)

Glaucus: "Is it not Pascal says, if Cleopatra's nose was turned the hundredth part of an inch the history of the world would have been wholly different?"

McKnom: "My friend Glaucus has given us an instance of a lady who, Heaven knows, was powerful enough. Beaten—at the mercy of the conqueror—a glance of her eye, and the victor of a hundred battles, the master of the world, is at her feet. It will not be inappropriate to conclude my speech by saying that I lean towards granting the ladies the right to vote—and the only question is whether we might not make with them a treaty of reciprocity, and insist that if we give them the right to vote they shall abandon some of their existing privileges. (Laughter.) A committee composed of the Minister of Justice, the Hon. Edward Blake, Mr. Laurier and the 'mover,' whoever he may be, might meet four of the ladies taking a lead in the movement. The number of beaus a fashionable beauty, allowed to vote, should be allowed to have would be a question of nice deliberation. (Laughter.) What privileges a handsome young widow should be permitted to retain would be a grave and complex question. (Renewed laughter.) Under what circumstances a matron should have the franchise would raise delicate issues. What offences on her part would entail disqualification? If for instance her husband ratted from her party, or utterly refused to support her favourite candidate, and she threatened to give him cold mutton for dinner for a whole week, would this be an offence entailing the loss of her franchise? (Cries of 'certainly,' and 'hear, hear.') A number of questions bearing on canvassing, personation, treating, would come up. Suppose a lady to act like the fair Devonshire in Fox's election, would it void the member's seat? (Cries of 'yes' and 'no.') Under what category would it come? Bribery? Undue influence? Coercion? Or would a new offence be created—osculation?"

"Osculation? (A voice, 'obfuscation'; and laughter.) These are difficult matters, but not beyond solution if we have a really efficient committee. The last point would give infinite scope for the fine analytical faculty of Mr. Blake. A kiss could not be bribery, because nothing of tangible worth passes (a laugh); nor coercion, for nobody need be kissed unless he likes; nor undue influence—for the very essence of undue influence is that those using it shall be able, by reason of some spiritual or temporal relation, to affect to the hopes or fears of the other party. Looking at fears—it would seem to bring it within the bounds of the definition, but only if there should be a menace to kiss (cries of 'oh,' and 'shame,' and laughter); hopes, too, might be appealed to by, say, a great heiress. It's a very nice question. It is obvious that a great deal would depend on the lips themselves (hear, hear); then a good deal would turn on the position of their owner; what estate she was possessed of. After all we have only touched the hem of this great question; ripped up a gusset, so to speak, of a complicated matter; for, if kissing is to be tabooed, what about hand squeezing? Altogether, the question is full of difficulties. The one thing certain is that the ladies have immense power for good or evil now, and no enfranchisement will add to their capacity for raising and ennobling society—none to their power of bringing the tragic element into human affairs, unless, indeed, taking part in elections should coarsen them, in which case that peculiar influence, now so potent for good or evil, might be greatly impaired. Voting is not an unmixed good—and we see men constantly apply a different standard to their conduct in an election from what they would in the ordinary affairs of life. The man sighs and does it, and cries with our friend Ovid in that same poem, the 'Ars Amandi':—

*Videor meliora proboque
Deteriora sequor.*

*I see the good and I approve it too,
And yet perversely I the bad pursue."*

(Loud and prolonged cheers.)

A burst of eulogistic comment followed, and "the old man eloquent" looked greatly pleased. Gwendolen looked and spoke her thanks, and Irene threw in her smiles.

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

THE CRITIC.

THE Astronomer Royal for Ireland, Sir Robert Ball, discusses in a most interesting paper in a recent number of the *Fortnightly Review* that often-discussed and vexing rather than vexed question, the duration of terrestrial habitability. He points out that "the question as to the continued existence of man on this globe resolves itself eventually into an investigation as to the permanence of the heat supply"; passes in review, with that light but firm touch which shows mastery of the subject, the sources from which heat is derivable; shows that the problem turns on "the possibility of the infinite duration of the sun as a source of radiant energy"; and concludes, from calculations made by Professor Langley, that "the race is as mortal as the individual, and, so far as we know, its span cannot under any circumstances be run out beyond a number of millions of years which can certainly be told on the fingers of both hands, and probably on the fingers of one."

Often as this startling conclusion has been repeated, just as often is it just as startling. The mortality of the

individual is tame in comparison; for though a man dies, his works do follow him; there is a continuation of his energy in his accomplished achievements, his wealth, his progeny, his memory, his thought, his good, and, alas! his evil. But when the race ends, what is there? Mind, we say, cannot exist without matter, and we mean matter of a certain degree of organization. But when matter becomes disorganized, inert, mindless, what is left?

It is curious and it is disappointing that the question seems always to be discussed from its physical aspect only. Sir Robert Ball is content to leave the momentous issue he has reached with the simple sentence last quoted. It is enough for the physicist to know that some day this planet will be dead and all life on it extinct. He busies himself chiefly with calculations on the continuance of the supply of heat, and is satisfied if he come within some half-dozen millions of years. But will the metaphysician rest here?

Looking at it purely from its secular aspect, and putting aside for the time the theory of a new heavens and a new earth, what thoughts will not Sir Robert Ball's conclusion suggest? Man, or the highest evolved successor of man, with all his progress, all his thought, and all his art—which is but the concretion of thought—will, in some quite measurable period of time, be simply as if he had never been. This generation works that it and the next may live. For what shall the last generation work? Towards what goal shall all effort strive? This earth one day, it matters little how long hence, will lose its heat and its habitability, will be moistureless, its oceans ice, its soil dead, its night undawned upon. Is then all man's progress progress towards annihilation, a blind hastening towards a sheer wall of eternal negation, a leaping into a silent abyss of universal nihility? Strange! life appears, it knows nothing of itself, whence it came, what it is; yet it is impelled onwards, with toil and turmoil, turbulent and tumultuous. Whence the impulse, whither the impulse? The question is oppressive in its stupendousness; its utter inexplicability makes us shudder, and the very recognition of our ability to ask it terrifies us.

There are philosophies that give an answer. Theosophy talks of spiral evolutions, of migration from planet to planet, of life in other worlds than ours. But of such science takes no thought. Enough for science that this rotatory globe is man's habitat, and that man and his habitat will ere long be a dark, rolling mass of moving death. And yet we talk of poetry as a thing divine, of art as foreshadowing the eternal, of thought as a glimpse into the infinite. Whereas to the pure physicist man is but *homo sapiens*, to be classed with trilobites and cave-bears, and man's works of no more permanence or worth than the coral of the polyp or the ant hills of the hymenoptera.

Truly science cannot rede for us the riddle of the universe. If there is a meaning to life, if there is a goal for progress, an aim for thought and effort, the extinction of a planet or of a solar system will not obliterate it. Here surely is a field for philosophy, for a sort of cosmogonic psychology. Psychology to-day investigates the intimate relations subsisting between thought and matter as obtained in the human mind and its corporeal envelope; can we not conceive a tribal, or rather a racial, psychology which shall investigate the relations between thought and matter as obtaining in the human race and its planetary habitat? Here indeed is a quite legitimate field for speculation, though at present, no doubt, science and metaphysics are too far apart to be able to co-operate in the problem. At present, though we believe in the persistence of thought, science demands a material vehicle for thought. But when the material vehicle is no more, what becomes of thought? Neither metaphysics nor science dare give answer, though both profess to believe in the interdependence and unity of the Kosmos.

To many surely this unequivocal decision of science as to the total extermination of Life presents an amazing puzzle. "Evolution," "differentiation," "progress," are words to which modern writers have so accustomed us, that we have lost sight of this fact of a limit to our onward march, and of the accompanying fact of our absolute ignorance as to what lies beyond that limit. To say that although all the concrete and tangible products of spirit may be swallowed up in death, yet spirit itself will persist, is a mere metaphysical hypothesis upon which science will express no opinion whatever. In fact science, so far as Life is concerned, is as absolutely limited to our planet, as psychology, so far as Life is concerned, is as absolutely limited to the individual. When will metaphysics and science enter hand-in-hand upon that larger psychology which shall investigate the relations between all matter and all life? Will this be the philosophical problem of the twentieth century? Meanwhile we must acquiesce in ignorance and stifle amazement, comforting ourselves with those comforting words of Carlyle:—

But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

To the minnow every cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little native creek may have become familiar; but does the minnow understand the ocean tides and periodic currents, the trade winds and monsoons, the moon's eclipses—by all which the condition of its little creek is regulated, and may from time to time be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is man; his creek, this planet earth; his ocean, the immeasurable all.—*Carlyle.*