

as has been in earlier times the political and social history of the two nations whose temperament and national characteristics bear so little resemblance. Always "en rapport" the one with the other; England has borrowed from France and France from England. Though each maintains always its individual character, yet when one takes a lead in a particular style or vein, the other is not slow to follow,

authors of the last two or three centuries we cannot but be struck by the absence, with one or two notable exceptions, of the names of women whose work has made a lasting impression upon our literature.

Perhaps more remarkable, when we consider this fact in reference to the women of the two countries, is the contrast between the women of French fiction and the women of English fiction.



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progressing in the main upon the same lines of development.

When we consider this relation between the two countries we are the more surprised by a notable fact which becomes apparent upon a comparative study of their literature.

French women have always, though perhaps more in the past than in the present, done much to give a distinctive character to the literature of their own country, both by their writing, and by their personal influence. On the other hand, when we look back over the list of names of English

It is a question whether women are the best advocates of their own sex, whether there is not an element of artificiality, a tendency to intrude their own personality, not a true personality but an imaginary one, which the writer associates with certain characteristics of her own. But, even granting that women are not the best portrayals of their own sex, this would not account for such a difference as we have noted, for, after all, the great mass of French fiction which has been sufficiently strong to force itself through the medium of other languages upon the attention of the world, has been written by men. If we take the writings of women only, both of memoirs and of fiction, the former of which are an important part of French literature, we get a very different estimate of the character of the women of France.

The fact remaining, therefore, that, though English women, have not, whether because lacking in intellectual power or the '*esprit*' characteristic of French women of the past at least, or because of the restraining influence of conventionality in their life and education, exerted the same influence upon their national literature; it is yet no less a fact that the English novelist has done better justice to his countrywomen than the French novelist has.

The lives of most men have been influenced to a greater or less extent by at least one woman. Authors, perhaps more