

wide and bright the circle would spread, when they cast their pearls on the waters of society, and saw them sparkle and eddy beneath their influence for the first time? Did they guess that the air was all alive with kindred spirits and new voices of melody—or think how high and bright the flame of female mind would rise and shine, and that the country would be studded with answering fires, in less than twenty years after their own timid watch lights were kindled on the hills of New England?—Did they anticipate that progress in the mechanic arts, by which thoughts slumbering in the heart one week, may on the next claim sympathy from a hundred and fifty thousand readers? *Could* they have known how beautifully their influence would spread among the sex—how many gems would flash around their feet when, like angels of old, they went down to trouble the still waters of human thought?

Did they anticipate all this? No! no!—Genius is a sweet impulse, and calculation unknown to its first exertions! As the bird panting beneath the burden of its own rich melody, pours its song upon the air—they gave up a treasure of thought which was pleading for utterance—and the result came naturally as flowers blossom beneath the kisses of an April sun. Their spirits were haunted with music, and taking no thought of the morrow, they gave it freely to the breeze without one anticipation of the echo which society might send back to them—of the affection they have excited, and the reverence which will cling around their memory. They acted from the impulse of a high nature, and with all their genius remained true women, faithful to their sex, firm in the domestic duties which are imperative alike on the gifted, and those of humble endowments.

With the examples just dwelt upon joined to many others scarcely inferior either in qualities of mind or heart, it will hardly be contended even by the most obstinate, that in order to write well a woman must invest her mind and personal habits with the attributes of masculine greatness; or that she must sacrifice one feminine or gentle quality in order to attain literary distinction. The history of female mind from the landing of the Pilgrims to the present day, has been a beautiful contradiction to this false idea; and so far as our literature is concerned, the ladies of America have little to regret, and less to blush for. commonplace and feeble books may occasionally emanate from their pens, but a decidedly immoral or irreligious volume has not, to the writer's

knowledge ever left a disgraceful record against the sex since America was a nation. In our land few ladies of genius, or even talent, exist, who would not reject the distinction, however high, which must be purchased by a sacrifice of delicacy or principle. If this unnatural desire for popularity did exist, there is no safeguard against it so powerful as the cultivation of a truly feminine taste for letters. There is something in a study of the beautiful which ennobles and refines the intellect; and if the pursuit of letters led to no higher result, the author might secure an exceeding reward in the cultivation of her taste—in the delicacy and refinement which habits of pure thought blend with the character, adding new grace to that already existing in her woman's nature.

But in the very luxuriance and success of our female literature there is danger of its deterioration. The indiscriminate use of a term, by which women of genius were first known in our land, threatens to destroy its dignity, and in some degree check the progress of female mind. The appellation once bestowed on our distinguished females as a title of dignity and honour has become perverted by society, and is thoughtlessly rendered to the pretender, who, mistaking ambition for talent, assumes, under the delusion, more than the highest grade of genius would arrogate to itself. And more reprehensible still!—it is given to the woman who degrades her sex, by a bold companionship of rights which ought to shock the feminine nature. Who can rise audaciously before a multitude of men, comprising all classes of mind, and amid the coarse cheers and rude clapping which heralds her unnatural appearance, hold a political discourse, or exhaust presumptuous eloquence in defence of "woman's rights," and equality of the sexes—equality, which if it did exist, would deprive us of the sweetest blessing ever inherited by the sensitive and feminine heart! For in order to sustain it, woman must sacrifice that feeling of trust and dependence on some being of sterner strength and purpose than herself, which is the most beautiful want known to her existence.

The rights and equality which these bold teachers claim would sweep away all the little world of confiding tenderness, which is the richest dower of womanhood. Females who can so misrepresent the female character, should be rejected in the arena of manly intellect, and shut out from the Eden of their own sex forever. It is impossible to read and think much, without comprehending how beautifully