

ESSAYS
ON THE
PURSUITS OF WOMEN.

REPRINTED FROM
FRASER'S AND MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINES.

ALSO
A PAPER ON FEMALE EDUCATION,
Read before the Social Science Congress, at Guildhall.

BY
FRANCES POWER COBBE.



LONDON:
EMILY FAITHFULL,
Printer and Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty,
PRINCES STREET, HANOVER SQUARE, AND 83A, FARRINGDON STREET.
1863.

ESSAY III.
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR
OLD MAIDS?

Reprinted from Fraser's Magazine for November, 1862.

IN the Convocation of Canterbury for this year of 1862, the readers of such journals as report in full the sayings and doings of that not very interesting assembly, were surprised to find the subject of Protestant Sisterhoods, or Deaconesses, discussed with an unanimity of feeling almost unique in the annals of ecclesiastic parliaments. High Churchmen and Low, Broad Churchmen and Hard, all seemed agreed that there was good work for women to do, and which women *were* doing all over England; and that it was extremely desirable that all these lady guerillas of philanthropy should be enrolled in the regular disciplined army of the Church, together with as many new recruits as might be enlisted. To use a more appropriate simile, Mother Church expressed herself satisfied at her daughters "coming out," but considered

that her chaperonage was decidedly necessary to their decorum.

Again, at the Social Science Congress of this summer, in London, the employment of women, the education of women, and all the other rights and wrongs of women, were urged, if not with a unanimity equal to that of their reverend predecessors, yet with, at the very least, equal animation. It is quite evident that the subject is not to be allowed to go to sleep, and we may as well face it valiantly, and endeavour to see light through its complications, rather than attempt to lecture the female sex generally on the merits of a "golden silence," and the propriety of adorning themselves with that decoration (doubtless modestly declined, as too precious for their own use, by masculine reviewers), "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." In a former article ("Celibacy v. Marriage," *Fraser's Magazine* for April, 1862) we treated the subject in part. We now propose to pursue it further, and investigate in particular the new phases which it has lately assumed.

The questions involved may be stated very simply.

It appears that there is a natural excess of four or five per cent. of females over the males in our population. This, then, might be assumed to be the limits within which female celibacy was normal and inevitable.

There is, however, an actual ratio of thirty per cent. of women now in England who never marry, leaving

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one-fourth of both sexes in a state of celibacy. This proportion further appears to be constantly on the increase. It is obvious enough that these facts call for a revision of many of our social arrangements. The old assumption that marriage was the sole destiny of woman, and that it was the business of her husband to afford her support, is brought up short by the statement that one woman in four is certain not to marry, and that three millions of women earn their own living at this moment in England. We may view the case two ways: either—

1st. We must frankly accept this new state of things, and educate women and modify trade in accordance therewith, so as to make the condition of celibacy as little injurious as possible; or,—

2nd. We must set ourselves vigorously to stop the current which is leading men and women away from the natural order of Providence. We must do nothing whatever to render celibacy easy or attractive; and we must make the utmost efforts to promote marriage by emigration of women to the colonies, and all other means in our power.

The second of these views we shall in the first place consider. It may be found to colour the ideas of a vast number of writers, and to influence essentially the decisions made on many points—as the admission of women to university degrees, to the medical profession, and generally to free competition in employment. Lately it has met a powerful and not unkindly

exposition in an article in a contemporary quarterly, entitled, "Why are Women Redundant?" Therein it is plainly set forth that all efforts to make celibacy easy for women are labours in a wrong direction, and are to be likened to the noxious exertions of quacks to mitigate the symptoms of disease, and allow the patient to persist in his evil courses. The root of the malady should be struck at, and marriage, the only true vocation for women, promoted at any cost, even by the most enormous schemes for the deportation of 440,000 females. Thus alone (and by the enforcing of a stricter morality on men) should the evil be touched. As to making the labours of single women remunerative, and their lives free and happy, all such mistaken philanthropy will but tend to place them in a position more and more false and unnatural. Marriage will then become to them a matter of "cold philosophic choice," and accordingly may be expected to be more and more frequently declined.

There is a great deal in this view of the case which, on the first blush, approves itself to our minds, and we have not been surprised to find the article in question quoted as of the soundest common sense. All, save ascetics and visionaries, must admit that, for the mass of mankind, marriage is the right condition, the happiest, and the most conducive to virtue. This position fairly and fully conceded, it *might* appear that the whole of the consequences deduced followed of necessity, and that the direct promotion of marriage

and discountenancing of celibacy was all we had to do in the matter.

A little deeper reflection, however, discloses a very important point which has been dropped out of the argument. Marriage is, indeed, the happiest and best condition for mankind. But does any one think that all marriages are so? When we make the assertion that marriage is good and virtuous, do we mean a marriage of interest, a marriage for wealth, for position, for rank, for support? Surely nothing of the kind. Such marriages as these are the sources of misery and sin, not of happiness and virtue; nay, their moral character, to be fitly designated, would require stronger words than we care to use. There is only one kind of marriage which makes good the assertion that it is the right and happy condition for mankind, and that is a marriage founded on free choice, esteem, and affection—in one word, on love. If, then, we seek to promote the happiness and virtue of the community, our efforts must be directed to encouraging *only* marriages which are of the sort to produce them—namely, marriages founded on love. All marriages founded on interest, on the desire for position, support, or the like, we must discourage to the utmost of our power, as the sources of nothing but wretchedness. Where, now, have we reached? Is it not to the conclusion that to make it a woman's *interest* to marry, to force her, by barring out every means of self-support and all fairly remunerative

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labour, to look to marriage as her sole chance of competency, is precisely to drive her into one of those sinful and unhappy marriages? It is quite clear we can never drive her into *love*. That is a sentiment which poverty, friendlessness, and helplessness can by no means call out. Nor, on the contrary, can competence and freedom in any way check it. It will arise under its natural conditions, if we will but leave the matter alone. A *loving* marriage can never become a matter of "cold philosophic choice." And if *not* a loving one, then, for heaven's sake, let us give no motive for choice at all.

Let the employments of women be raised and multiplied as much as possible, let their labour be as fairly remunerated, let their education be pushed as high, let their whole position be made as healthy and happy as possible, and there will come out once more, here as in every other department of life, the triumph of the Divine laws of our nature. Loving marriages are (we cannot doubt) what God has designed, not marriages of interest. When we have made it less women's interest to marry, we shall indeed have less and fewer interested marriages, with all their train of miseries and evils. But we shall also have more *loving* ones, more marriages founded on free choice and free affection. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that for the very end of promoting marriage—that is, such marriage as it is alone desirable to promote—we should pursue a precisely opposite course to that sug-

gested by the reviewer or his party. Instead of leaving single women as helpless as possible, and their labour as ill-rewarded—instead of dinning into their ears from childhood that marriage is their one vocation and concern in life, and securing afterwards if they miss it that they shall find no other vocation or concern;—instead of all this, we shall act exactly on the reverse principle. We shall make single life so free and happy that they shall have not one temptation to change it save the only temptation which *ought* to determine them—namely, love. Instead of making marriage a case of “Hobson’s choice” for a woman, we shall endeavour to give her such independence of all interested considerations that she may make it a choice, not indeed “cold and philosophic,” but warm from the heart, and guided by heart and conscience only.

And again, in another way the same principle holds good, and marriage will be found to be best promoted by aiding and not by thwarting the efforts of single women to improve their condition. It is a topic on which we cannot speak much, but thus far may suffice. The reviewer alludes with painful truth to a class of the community whose lot is far more grievous than either celibacy or marriage. Justly he traces the unwillingness of hundreds of men to marry to the existence of these unhappy women in their present condition. He would remedy the evil by preaching marriage to such men. But does not all the world know

that thousands of these poor souls of all degrees would never have fallen into their miserable vocation had any *other* course been open to them, and they had been enabled to acquire a competence by honest labour? Let such honest courses be opened to them, and then we shall see, as in America, the recruiting of that wretched army becoming less and less possible every year in the country. The self-supporting, and therefore self-respecting woman may indeed become a wife, and a good and happy one, but she will no longer afford any man a reason for declining to marry.

It is curious to note that while, on the one hand, we are urged to make marriage the sole vocation of women, we are simultaneously met on the other by the outpourings of ridicule and contempt on all who for themselves, or even for their children, seek ever so indirectly to attain this vocation. Only last year all England was entertained by jests concerning "Belgravian mothers;" and the wiles and devices of widows and damsels afford an unending topic of satire and amusement in private and public. Now we ask, in all seriousness, Wherefore all this ridicule and contempt? *If* marriage be indeed the one object of a woman's life—*if* to give her any other pursuit or interest be only to divert her from that one object and "palliate the symptoms while fostering a great social disease"—then, we repeat, *why* despise these match-making mothers? Are they to do nothing to help their daughters to their only true vocation, which, if

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they should miss, their lives *ought* to be failures, poverty-stricken and miserable? Nay; but if things be so, the most open, unblushing marketing of their daughters is the *duty* of parents, and the father or mother who leaves the matter to chance is flagrantly neglectful. Truly it is a paradox passing all limits of reason, that society should enforce marriage on woman as her only honourable life, and at the same time should stigmatize as dishonourable the efforts of her parents to settle her in marriage.

The spontaneous sentiment of mankind has hit a deeper truth than the theories of economists. It is in the nature of things disgraceful and abominable that marriage should be made the aim of a woman's life. It can only become what it is meant to be, the completion and crown of the life of either man or woman, when it has arisen from sentiments which can never be bespoken for the convenient fulfilment of any vocation whatsoever.

But it is urged, and not unreasonably—If it be admitted on all hands that marriage is the best condition, and that only one-fourth of the female sex do not marry, how can we expect provision to be made for this contingency of one chance in four by a girl's parents and by herself, in going through an education (perhaps costly and laborious) for a trade or profession which there are three chances in four she will not long continue to exercise?

It must be admitted here is the great knot and

difficulty of the higher branches of woman's employment. It does require far-seeing care on the part of the parent, perseverance and resolution of no mean order on that of the daughter, to go through in youth the training which will fit her to earn her livelihood hereafter in any of the more elevated occupations. Nay, it demands that she devote to such training the precise years of life wherein the chances of marriage are commonly offered, and the difficulties of pursuing a steady course are very much enhanced by temptations of all kinds. If she wait till the years when such chances fail, and take up a pursuit at thirty, merely as a *pis aller*, she must inevitably remain for ever behindhand and in an inferior position.

The trial is undoubtedly considerable; but there are symptoms that both young women and their parents will not be always unwilling to meet it, and to invest both time and money in lines of education which may, indeed, prove superfluous, but which likewise may afford the mainstay of a life which, without them, would be helpless, aimless, and miserable. The magnitude of the risk ought surely to weigh somewhat in the balance. At the lowest point of view, a woman is no worse off if she marry eventually, for having first gone through an education for some good pursuit; while, if she remain single, she is wretchedly off for not having had such education. But this is, in fact, only a half-view of the case. As we have insisted before, it is only on the standing-

ground of a happy and independent celibacy that a woman can really make a free choice in marriage. To secure this standing-ground, a pursuit is more needful than a pecuniary competence, for a life without aim or object is one which, more than all others, goads a woman into accepting any chance of a change. Mariana (we are privately convinced) would have eloped out of the Moated Grange not only with that particular "he" who never came, but with any other suitor who might have presented himself! Only a woman who has something else than making love to do and to think of, will love really and deeply. It is in *real lives*—lives devoted to actual service of father or mother, or to work of some kind for God or man—that alone spring up *real feelings*. Lives of idleness and pleasure have no depth to nourish such plants.

Again, we are very far indeed from maintaining that *during* marriage it is at all to be desired that a woman should struggle to keep up whatever pursuit she had adopted beforehand. In nine cases out of ten this will drop naturally to the ground, especially when she has children. The great and paramount duties of a mother and wife once adopted, every other interest sinks, by the beneficent laws of our nature, into a subordinate place in normally constituted minds, and the effort to perpetuate them is as false as it is usually fruitless. Where necessity and poverty compel mothers in the lower ranks to go out to work,

we all know too well the evils which ensue. And in the higher classes doubtless the holding tenaciously by any pursuit interfering with home duties must produce such Mrs. Jellabys as we sometimes hear of. It is not only leisure which is in question. There appear to be some occult laws in woman's nature providing against such mistakes by rendering it impossible to pursue the higher branches of art or literature, or any work tasking mental exertion, while home and motherly cares have their claims. We have heard of a great artist saying that she is always obliged to leave her children for a few weeks before she can throw herself again into the artist-feeling of her youth, and we believe her experience is corroborated on all hands. No great books have been written, or works achieved by women while their children were around them in infancy. No woman can lead the two lives at the same time.

But it is often strangely forgotten that there are such things as Widows, left such in the prime of life, and quite as much needing occupation as if they had remained single. Another chance must fairly be added to our one in four that a woman may need such a pursuit as we have supposed. She may never marry, or, having married, she may be left a childless widow, or a widow whose few children occupy but a portion of her time. Suppose, for instance, she has been a physician. How often would the possibility of returning to her early profession be an invaluable

resource after her husband's death! The greatest female mathematician living was saved from despairing sorrow in widowhood, by throwing herself afresh into the studies of her youth.

It may be a pleasantly romantic idea to some minds, that of woman growing up solely with the hope of becoming some man's devoted wife, marrying the first that offers, and, when he dies, becoming a sort of moral Suttee whose heart is supposed to be henceforth dead and in ashes. But it is quite clear that Providence can never have designed any such order of things. All the infinite tenderness and devotion He has placed in women's hearts, though meant to make marriage blessed and happy, and diffusing as from a hearth of warm affections, kindness and love on all around, is yet meant to be subordinated to the great purposes of the existence of all rational souls—the approximation to God through virtue. With reverence be it spoken, GOD is the only true centre of life for us all; not any creature He has made. "To live unto God" is the law for man and woman alike. Whoever strives to do this will neither spend youth in longing for happiness which may be withheld, nor age in despair for that which may be withdrawn.

To resume. It appears that from every point of view in which we regard the subject, it is desirable that women should have other aims, pursuits, and interests in life beside matrimony, and that by possessing them they are guaranteed against being driven

into unloving marriages, and rendered more fitted for loving ones, while their single life, whether in maidenhood or widowhood, is made useful and happy.

Before closing this part of the subject, we cannot but add a few words to express our amused surprise at the way in which the writers on this subject constantly concern themselves with the question of *female* celibacy, deplore it, abuse it, propose amazing remedies for it, but take little or no notice of the twenty-five per cent. old bachelors (or thereabouts), who needs must exist to match the thirty per cent. old maids. *Their* moral condition seems to excite no alarm, their lonely old age no foreboding compassion, their action on the community no reprobation. Nobody scolds them very seriously, unless some stray Belgravian grandmother. All the alarm, compassion, reprobation, and scoldings are reserved for the poor old maids. But of the two, which of the parties is the chief delinquent? The *Zend Avesta*, as translated by Anquetil du Perron, contains somewhere this awful denunciation:—"That damsel who, having reached the age of eighteen, shall refuse to marry, must remain in hell till the Resurrection!" A severe penalty, doubtless, for the crime, and wonderful to meet in the mild creed of Zoroaster, where no greater punishment is allotted to any offence whatsoever. Were these Guebre young ladies so terribly cruel, and *mazdies-nans* (true believers) so desperately enamoured? Are we to imagine the obdurate damsels despatching whole

dozens of despairing gentlemen in conical caps to join the society in the shades below—

Hapless youths who died for love,
Wandering in a myrtle grove!

It takes a vivid stretch of imagination in England, in the nineteenth century, to picture anything of the kind. Whatever other offences our young ladies may be guilty of, or other weaknesses our young gentlemen, obduracy on the one hand, and dying for love on the other, are rarities, at all events. Yet one would suppose that Zoroaster was needed over here, to judge of the manner in which old maids are lectured on their very improper position. "The Repression of Crime," as the benevolent Recorder of Birmingham would phrase it, seems on the point of being exercised against them, since it has been found out that their offence is on the increase, like poaching in country districts and landlord shooting in Ireland. The mildest punishment, we are told, is to be transportation, to which half a million have just been condemned, and for the terror of future evil doers, it is decreed that no single woman's work ought to be fairly remunerated, nor her position allowed to be entirely respectable, lest she exercise "a cold philosophic choice" about matrimony. No false charity to criminals! Transportation or starvation to all old maids!

Poor old maids! Will not the Reformatory Union, or some other friends of the criminal, take their case in hand? They are too old for Miss Carpenter.

Could not Sir Walter Crofton's Intermediate System be of some use? There is reason to hope that many of them would be willing to adopt a more honest way of life were the chance offered them.

If the reader should have gone with us thus far, we shall be able better to follow the subject from a point of view which shall in fact unite the two leading ideas of which we made mention at starting. We shall, with the *first*, seek earnestly how the condition of single women may be most effectually improved; and with the *second*, we shall admit the promotion of marriage (*provided it be disinterested and loving*) to be the best end to which such improvements will tend.

In one point there is a practical unanimity between the schemes of the two parties, and this we should desire to notice before proceeding to consider the ways in which the condition of single women may be improved as such. The scheme is that of emigration for women to the colonies. Here we have multitudes of women offered in the first place remunerative employment beyond anything they could obtain at home; and further, the facilitation of marriage effected for large numbers, to the great benefit of both men and women. What there might appear in the plan contradictory to the principles we have laid down above, is only apparent, and not real. The woman who arrives in a colony where her labour, of head or hands, can command an ample maintenance, stands in the precise condition we have desired to make marriage—

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a matter of free choice. She has left "Hobson's choice" behind her with the poverty of England, and has come out to find competence and freedom, and if she choose (but *only* if she choose), marriage also.

It is needless to say that this scheme has our entire sympathy and good wishes, though we do not expect to live to see the time when our reviewer's plans will be fulfilled by the deportation of women at the rate of thirty or forty thousand a year.*

An important point, however, must not be overlooked. However far the emigration of women of the working classes may be carried, that of educated women must at all times remain very limited, inasmuch as the demand for them in the colonies is comparatively trifling. Now, it is of educated women that the great body of "old maids" consists; in the lower orders celibacy is rare. Thus, it should be borne in mind that emigration schemes do not essentially bear on the main point, "How shall we improve the condition of the thirty per cent. of single women in England?" The reviewer to whom we have so often alluded, does indeed dispose of the matter by observing that the transportation he fondly hopes to see effected, of 440,000 women to the colonies, will at

* We rejoice to hear that Miss Maria S. Rye, who has already done so much for this cause, is on the point of sailing to Otago with one hundred female emigrants, to superintend personally the arrangements for their welfare. This is doing woman's work in working style truly. [Miss Rye has carried out her intention, and is now at Otago. March, 1863.]

least *relieve the market* for those who remain. We cannot but fear, however, that the governesses and other ladies so accommodated will not much profit by the large selection thus afforded them among the blacksmiths and ploughmen, deprived of their proper companions. At the least we shall have a quarter of a million of old maids *in esse* and *in posse* left on hand. What can we do for them?

For convenience, we may divide them into two classes. One of them, without capital or high cultivation, needs employment suitable to a woman's powers, and yet affording better remuneration than woman's work has hitherto usually received. Here we find the efforts of Miss Faithfull, Miss Parkes, Miss Crowe, Miss Rye, and the other ladies in combination with the society founded by Miss Boucherett, labouring to procure such employment for them by the Victoria Printing Press, the Law Copying Office, and other plans in action or contemplated for watchmaking, hair-dressing, and the like. We may look on this class as in good hands; and as the emigration of women will actually touch it and carry away numbers of its members, we may hope that its destinies are likely henceforth to improve.

The other and higher class is that of which we desire more particularly to speak, namely, of ladies either possessed of sufficient pecuniary means to support themselves comfortably, or else of such gifts and cultivation as shall command a competence. The

help these women need is not of a pecuniary nature, but a large portion of them require aid, and the removal of existing restrictions, to afford them the full exercise of their natural powers, and make their lives as useful and happy as Providence has intended. 'Of *all* the position is at the present moment of transition worthy of some attention, and suggestive of some curious speculations regarding the future of women. Channing remarks that when the negro races become thoroughly Christianized we shall see a development of the religion never known before. At least equally justly may we predict that when woman's gifts are at last expanded in an atmosphere of freedom and happiness, we shall find graces and powers revealed to us of which we yet have little dreamed. To the consideration, then, of the condition and prospects of women of the upper classes who remain unmarried, we shall devote the following pages.

All the pursuits of mankind, beside mere money-getting, may be fitly classed in three great orders. They are in one way or another the pursuit of the True, the Beautiful, or the Good. In a general way we may say that science, literature, and philosophy are devoted to Truth; art in all its branches (including poetic literature) to the Beautiful; and politics and philanthropy to the Good. Within certain limits, each of these lines of action are open to women; and it is in the aspect they bear as regards women's work

that we are now to regard them. But before analysing them further, I would fain be allowed to make one remark which is far too often forgotten. Each of these pursuits is equally noble in itself; it is our fitness for one or the other, not its intrinsic sanctity or value, which ought to determine our choice; and we are all astray in our judgments if we come to the examination of them with prejudices for or against one or the other. In these days, when "the icy chains of custom and of prejudice" are somewhat loosened, and men and women go forth more freely than ever of old to choose and make their lives, there is too often this false measurement of our brother's choice. Each of us asks his friend in effect, if not in words—"Why not follow my calling rather than your own? Why not use such a gift? Why not adopt such a task?" The answer to these questions must not be made with the senseless pedantry of the assumption, that because to *us* art or literature, or philanthropy or politics, is the true vocation, therefore for all men and women it is the noblest; and that God meant Mozart to be a statesman, and Howard a sculptor, and Kant a teacher in a ragged school. The true, the beautiful, and the good are all revelations of the Infinite One, and therefore all holy. It is enough for a man if it be given him in his lifetime to pursue any one of them to profit—to carry a single step further the torch of humanity along either of the three roads, every one of which leads up to God. The philosopher, who studies and

teaches us the laws of mind or matter—the artist, who beholds with illumined eyes the beauty of the world, and creates it afresh in poetry or painting—the statesman or philanthropist, who labours to make Right victorious, and to advance the virtue and happiness of mankind,—all these in their several ways are God’s seers, God’s prophets, as much the one as the other. We could afford to lose none of them, to undervalue none of them. The philosopher is not to be honoured only for the goodness or the beauty of the *truth* he has revealed. All truth is good and beautiful, but it is to be prized because it is *truth*, and not merely for its goodness or beauty. The artist is not to be honoured only for the truth or the goodness of the *beautiful* he has revealed. The beautiful is necessarily good and true, but it is to be loved because it is *beautiful*, and not merely for its truth or goodness.* Like the old Athanasian symbol, we may say, “The Truth is divine, the Beautiful is divine, and the Good is divine. And yet they are not three divine things, but three revelations of the One Divine Lord.” If men would but feel this each in his own pursuit, and in judging of the pursuits of others, how holy and noble would all faithful work become! We are haunted yet with the Romish thought that a life of asceticism, of preaching, of prayer, of charity, is altogether on a different plane of being from a life devoted to other tasks. But it is not so. From *every* field of

* See Victor Cousin, “*Du Vrai, du Beau, et du Bien.*”

honest human toil there rises a ladder up into heaven. Was Kepler further from God than any Howard or Xavier when, after discovering the law of the planetary distances, he bowed his head and exclaimed in rapture, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" Was Milton less divine than any St. Theresa locked in her stony cell, when his mighty genius had soared "upon the seraph wings of ecstasy" over the whole beautiful creation, and he poured out at last his triumphant Psalm—

These are Thy glorious works, Parent of Good—
Almighty!

Of these three great modes of Divine manifestation, it would appear, however, that, though equal in sanctity and dignity, the pursuit of the True and of the Beautiful were designed for comparatively few among mankind. Few possess the pure abstract love of Truth in such fervour as to fit them to become the martyrs of science or the prophets of philosophy. Few also are those who are endowed with that supreme sense of the Beautiful, and power to reproduce it in form, colour, or sound, which constitute the gifts of the artist. Especially does this hold good with women. While few of them do not feel their hearts warmed with the love of goodness, and the desire to relieve the sufferings of their fellows, a mere fraction, in comparison, interest themselves to any extent in the pursuit of the abstract truths of philosophy or science, or possess any powers to reproduce the Beautiful in Art,

even when they have a perception of its presence in nature. We may discuss briefly, then, here the prospects of the employment of women in the departments of Truth and Beauty, and in a future paper consider more at length the new aspect of their philanthropic labours and endeavours to do Good.

Till of very late years it was, we think, perfectly justifiable to doubt the possibility of women possessing any creative artistic power. Receptive faculties they have always had, ready and vivid perception of the beautiful in both nature and art, delicate discrimination and refined taste, nay, the power (especially in music and the drama) of reproducing what the genius of man had created. But to originate any work of even second-rate merit was what no woman had done. Sappho was a mere name, and between her and even such a feeble poetess as Mrs. Hemans, there was hardly another to fill up the gap of the whole cycle of history. No woman has written the epics, nor the dramas, nay, nor even the national songs of her country, if we may not except Miriam's and Deborah's chants of victory. In music, nothing. In architecture, nothing. In sculpture, nothing. In painting, an Elisabetta Sirani, a Rosalba, an Angelica Kauffman—hardly exceptions enough to prove the rule. Such works as women did accomplish were all stamped with the same impress of feebleness and prettiness. As Mrs. Hemans and Joanna Baillie and Mrs. Tighe wrote poetry, so Angelica Kauffman painted pictures, and

other ladies composed washy music and Minerva-press romances. If Tennyson's hero had spoken of woman's *Art* instead of woman's passions, he would have been as right for the one as he was wrong as regards the other. *It was*

As moonlight is to sunlight
And as water is to wine.

To coin an epithet from a good type of the school—it was all “Angelical,” no flesh and blood at all, but super-refined sentiments and super-elongated limbs.

But there seem symptoms extant that this state of things is to undergo a change, and the works of women become remarkable for other qualities beside softness and weakness. It may be a mere chance conjunction, but it is at least remarkable, that the same age has given us in the three greatest departments of art—poetry, painting, and sculpture—women who, whatever be their faults or merits, are pre-eminently distinguished for one quality above all others, namely, strength. *Aurora Leigh* is perhaps the least “Angelical” poem in the language, and bears the relation to *Psyche* that a chiselled steel corslet does to a silk bodice with lace trimmings. The very hardness of its rhythm, its sturdy wrestlings and grapplings, one after another, with all the sternest problems of our social life—its forked-lightning revelations of character—and finally, the storm of glorified passion with which it closes in darkness (like nothing else we ever read since the mountain-tempest scene in *Childe Harold*)

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—all this takes us miles away from the received notion of a woman's poetry.

And for Painting, let us look at Rosa Bonheur's canvas. Those droves of wild Highland black cattle, those teams of trampling Norman horses—do they belong to the same school of female art as all the washed-out saints, and pensive ladies, and graceful bouquets of Mesdemoiselles and Signorine Rosee, and Rosalba, and Panzacchi, and Grebber, and Mérian and Kauffman? We seem to have passed a frontier, and entered a new realm wherein Rosa Bonheurs are to be found.

Then for Sculpture. Will woman's genius ever triumph here? We confess we look to this point as to the touchstone of the whole question. Sculpture is in many respects at once the noblest art and the one which tasks highest both creative power and scientific skill. A really good and great statue is an achievement to which there must contribute more elements of power and patience than in almost any other human work, and it is, when perfected, one of the most sublime. We know generally very little of this matter in England. We possess pictures by the great masters sufficient in number and excellence to afford a fair conception (though of course an incomplete one) of the powers of painting. But notwithstanding the antique treasures in the Elgin and Arundel Collections, and a few fine modern statues to be found in private houses in this country, it is, I believe, to every

one a revelation of a new agency in art when he first visits Italy and beholds the "Laocöon," the "Apollo," the "Niobe," and the "Psyche," of Praxiteles. Hitherto sculpture has appeared to be merely the production of beautiful forms, more or less true to nature. Now it is perceived to be genius breathing through form, the loftiest thoughts of human souls. "Apollo Belvidere" is not the mere figure of a perfect man in graceful attitude, as we thought it from casts and copies in England. It is POWER itself, deified and made real before our eyes. The "Laocöon" is not the hapless high priest writhing in the coil of the serpent. It is the impersonation of the will of a giant man, a Prometheus struggling with indomitable courage against the resistless Fate in whose grasp meaner mortals are crushed helplessly. The "Niobe" is not merely a woman of noblest mould inspired by maternal anguish. She is glorified MOTHERHOOD, on whose great bosom we could rest, and round whose neck we could throw our arms. And the "Psyche" in the Museo Borbonico?—is this a poor fragment of a form, once perhaps graceful and fair, but now a mere ruin? No! It is the last gleam of the unknown glory of ancient art, the one work of human hands which we forget to admire because we learn to love it—the revelation to each of us of our innermost ideal of friend or wife, the sweetest, purest of our dreams made real before our eyes.

Not untruly has sculpture been named the *Ars*

Divinior. A deep and strange analogy exists between it and the highest we know of the Supreme Artist's works. Out of the clay, cold and formless, the sculptor slowly, patiently, with infinite care and love, moulds an image of beauty. Long the stubborn clay seems to resist his will, and to remain without grace or proportion, but at last the image begins, faintly and in a far-off way, to reflect that prototype which is in the sculptor's mind. The limbs grow into shape, and stand firmly balanced, the countenance becomes living and radiant. And last of all, the character of true sculpture appears; there is calm and peace over it all, and an infinite divine repose, even when the life within seems higher and fuller than that of mortality. The moulding is done, the statue is perfected.

But even then, when it should seem that the sculptor's great work is achieved, and that his image should be preserved and cherished evermore, what does he in truth do with his clay? Return hither, oh traveller, in a few short days, and the image of clay is gone, its place knows it no more. It has returned to the earth whence it was taken, thrown by, perchance for ever, or else kneaded afresh in some new form of life. Did he make it, then, but for destruction, and mould it so carefully but to crush it out at last in dust? Look around with illumined eyes! In the great studio of the universe the Divine image is still to be found, not now moulded in clay and ready to perish, dull of hue and dead in lustre, but sculp-

tured in eternal marble, white, and pure, and radiant; meet to stand for ever in the palaces on high.

Sculpture is the noblest of the arts; nay, it is above all others in this very thing which has been pointed at as its bane and limitation. Its aim must ever be the expression of calmness and repose. No vehement wildness of the painter's dream, no storm of the musician's harmony, no ecstasy of the poet's passion; but the stillness and the peace of which earth knows so little. To bring our souls into sympathy with a great work of sculpturesque repose, is to bring them into the serener fields of the upper air, where the storms approach not, nor any clouds ascend. We do not naturally in the earlier moral life feel in union with things calm and still like these. The struggle in our own breasts, the lordly will wrestling with the lower powers for mastery, leaves us rather able to sympathize with all nature's warfare of wind and wave, all human death-battles, than with the repose in which the saint's soul rests, loving the cloudless sky and waveless sea, and the smile of a sleeping child nestled in the long sweet grass of summer. To reach that rest of the whole nature, which is at the same time absolute repose and absolute action of every power and every faculty in perfect balance, is the "Beulah land,"

Where blessed saints dwell ever in the light
Of God's dear love, and earth is heaven below.
For never doubt nor sin may cloud their sight,
And the great PEACE OF GOD calms every human woe.

The art which is the idealizing, the perpetuation of repose is, then, the divinest art—the art to be practised only by great souls,—great races of men. Egyptians and Greeks were races of sculptors; Hindoos and Mexicans stone-cutters of goblins. We repeat that the sharpest test to which the question of woman's genius can be put is this one of sculpture. If she succeed here, if a school of real sculptresses ever arise, then we think that in effect the problem is solved. The greater includes the less. They may still fall below male composers in music, though we have seen some (inedited) music of wonderful power from a female hand. They may produce no great drama—perhaps no great historical picture. Yet if really good statues come from their studios, statues showing at once power of conception and science of execution, then we say, women can be artists. It is no longer a question whether the creative faculty be granted to them.

Now, we venture to believe that there are distinct tokens that this solution is really to be given to the problem. For long centuries women never seem to have attempted sculpture at all; perhaps because it was then customary for the artist to perform much of the mechanical labour of the marble-cutter himself; perhaps because women could rarely command either the large outlay or the anatomical instructions. But in our time things are changed. The Princesse Marie d'Orleans, in her well-known Joan of Arc, accom-

plished a really noble work of sculpture. Others have followed and are following in her path, but most marked of all by power and skill comes Harriet Hosmer, whose Zenobia (standing in the International Exhibition, in the same temple with Gibson's Venus) is a definite proof that a woman can make a statue of the very highest order. Whether we consider the noble conception of this majestic figure, or the science displayed in every part of it, from the perfect *pose* and accurate anatomy, to the admirable truth and finish of the drapery, we are equally satisfied. Here is what we wanted. A woman—ay, a woman with all the charms of youthful womanhood—can be a sculptor, and a great one.

Now we have arrived at a conclusion worthy of some little attention. Women, a few years ago, could only show a few weak and washy female poets and painters, and no sculptors at all. They can now boast of such true and powerful artists in these lines as Mrs. Browning, Rosa Bonheur, and Harriet Hosmer. What account can we give of the rise of such a new constellation? We confess ourselves unable to offer any solution, save that proposed by a gifted lady, to whom we propounded our query. Female artists, hitherto, have always started on a wrong track; being persuaded beforehand that they ought only to compose sweet verses and soft pictures, they set themselves to make them accordingly, and left us Mrs. Hemans' Works and Angelica's paintings. *Now*, wo-

men who possess any real genius, apply it to the creation of what they (and not society for them) really admire. A woman naturally admires power, force, grandeur. It is these qualities, then, which we shall see more and more appearing, as the spontaneous genius of woman asserts itself.

We know not how this may be. It is, at all events, a curious speculation. One remark we must make before leaving this subject. This new element of *strength* in female art seems to impress spectators very differently. It cannot be concealed that while all true artists recognise it with delight, there is no inconsiderable number of men to whom it is obviously distasteful, and who turn away more or less decidedly in feeling from the display of this or any other power in women, exercised never so inoffensively. There is a feeling (tacit or expressed) "Yes, it is very clever; but, somehow, it is not quite feminine." Now we do not wish to use sarcastic words about sentiments of this kind, or demonstrate all their unworthiness and ungenerousness. We would rather make an appeal to a better judgment, and entreat for a resolute stop to expressions ever so remotely founded on them. The origin of them all has perhaps been the old error that clipping and fettering every faculty of body and mind was the sole method of making a woman—that as the Chinese make a lady's foot, so we should make a lady's mind; and that, in a word, the old ale-house sign was not so far wrong in depicting "The Good Woman" as a woman without any head whatsoever.

Earnestly would we enforce the opposite doctrine, that as God means a woman to *be* a woman, and not a man, every faculty He has given her is a woman's faculty, and the more each of them can be drawn out, trained, and perfected, the more *womanly* she will become. She will be a larger, richer, nobler, woman for art, for learning, for every grace and gift she can acquire. It must indeed be a mean and miserable man who would prefer that a woman's nature should be pinched, and starved, and dwarfed, to keep on his level, rather than be nurtured and trained to its loftiest capacity, to meet worthily his highest also.

Thus we quit the subject of woman's pursuit of the Beautiful, rejoicing in the new promise of its success, and wishing all prosperity to the efforts to afford female students of art that sound and solid training, the lack of which has been their greatest stumbling-block hitherto. The School of Art and Design in London, is a good augury, with its eight hundred and sixty-three lady pupils !

But for woman's devotion to the True in physics and metaphysics, woman's science and woman's learning, what shall we venture to say ? The fact must be frankly admitted—women have even more rarely the powers and tastes needful to carry them in this direction than in that of art. The love of abstract Truth as a real passion is probably antithetic in some measure to that vivid interest in persons which belongs to the warm sympathies and strong affections of women. Their

quickness of perception militates against the slow toil of science, and their vividness of intuitive faith renders them often impatient of the discussions of philosophy. Many women love truth warmly enough, and for religious truth, female martyrs have never been wanting since the mother of the Maccabees. But few women complete their love of truth by such hatred of error as shall urge them to the exertion of laboriously establishing and defining the limits of the truths they possess. These natural causes, again, have been reinforced by endless artificial hindrances. The want of schools and colleges, the absence of such rewards as encourage (though they cannot inspire) the pursuit of knowledge, popular and domestic prejudices rendering study disfavoured, difficult access to books or leisure from household duties, the fluctuating health fostered by the unwholesome habits of women; and, lastly, the idleness and distractions of those very years of youth in which education can rise above the puerile instruction of a girls' schoolroom.

Far be it from us to wish to force all women into courses of severe study—to put (as has been well said of late) Arabian horses to the plough, and educate directly against the grain; only we desire thus much, that those women who do possess the noble love of knowledge and are willing to undergo the drudgery of its acquirement, should have every aid supplied and every stumbling-block removed from their paths. The improvements which in our time are making in these

directions may be briefly stated. First, popular prejudice against well-educated women is dying away. It is found they do *not* "neglect infants for quadratic equations," nor perform in any way less conscientiously the various duties of life after reading Plato or even Kant. Secondly, the opening of ladies' colleges, such as Bedford-square and Harley-street, where really sound and solid instruction is given by first-rate teachers at a cost not equal to half that of the shallow and superficial boarding-schools of twenty years ago. Thirdly, women have benefited even more than men by the general progress of the times, the facilitation of travelling (formerly impossible to them without protection), the opening of good lending libraries, cheap books and postage. The dead sea of *ennui* in which so many of them lived is now rippled by a hundred currents from all quarters of heaven, and we may trust that the pettiness of gossip which has been the standing reproach of the sex will disappear with the narrowness of life which supplied no wholesomer food for conversation or thought. To cramp every faculty and cut off all large interests, and then complain that a human being so treated is narrow-minded and scandal-loving, is precisely an injustice parallel to that of some Southern Americans whom we have heard detail those vices of the negroes *which slavery had produced*, as the reason why they were justified in keeping so degraded a race in such a condition. It would be indeed a miracle often if a woman manufac-

tured on some not unpopular principles were anything else than a very poor and pitiful piece of mechanism. The further improvements which may be sought in these directions are of various kinds. The standard of ordinary female education cannot perhaps be elevated above that of the ladies' colleges already mentioned, but *this* standard will become not (as now) the high-water mark for a few, but the common tide-line for all women of the middle and higher classes supposed to be fairly educated. Above this high standard, again, facilities and encouragements may be given to women of exceptionally studious tastes to rise to the level of any instruction attainable. One important way in which this last end may be reached—namely, the admission of women to the examinations and honours of the London University—has been lately much debated. The arguments which have determined its temporary rejection by the senate of the University (a rejection, however, only decided by the casting vote of the chairman), seem to have been all of the character discussed a few pages ago,—the supposed necessity of keeping women to their sole vocation of wives and mothers, and so on. The benefits which would accrue from the measure were urged by the present writer before the Social Science Congress,* and were briefly these—that women need

* *Female Education, and how it would be affected by University Examinations.* A Paper read before the Social Science Congress. Published by Emily Faithfull, Princes-street, Hanover-square. Price 2d. (Reprinted in the present volume.)

as much or more than men a stimulus to carry their education to a high pitch of perfection and accuracy ; that this stimulus has always been supplied to men by university examinations and rewards of honour ; that it ought to be offered to women, as likely to produce on them the same desirable results ; lastly, that the University of London requiring no collegiate residence, and having its examinations conducted in special apartments, perfectly unobjectionable for women's use, it constitutes the one University in the kingdom which ought to admit women to its examinations.

Intimately connected with this matter is that of opening to women the medical profession, for which university degrees would be the first steps. The subject has been well worn of late ; yet we must needs make a few remarks concerning it, and notably to put a question or two to objectors. Beloved reader (male or female, as the chance may be), did it ever happen to you to live in a household of half a dozen persons in which some woman was *not* the self-constituted family physician, to whom all the other members of the party applied for advice in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred ? A cold, a cough, a rheumatism, a sprain, a cut, a burn, bile, indigestion, headaches and heartaches, are they not all submitted to her counsel, and the remedies she prescribes for them devoutly taken ? Usually it is the grandmother or the housekeeper of the family who is consulted ; but

whichever it may chance to be, mistress or servant, it is always a *woman*. Who ever dreamed of asking his grandfather or his uncle, his butler or footman, "what he should do for this bad cold," or to "be so kind as to tie up this cut finger"? We can hardly imagine the astonishment of "Jeames" at such a request; but any woman abovestairs or below would take it as perfectly natural. Doctoring is one of the "rights of women," which albeit theoretically denied is practically conceded so universally that it is probable that all the M.D.'s in England, with the apothecaries to boot, do not order more drugs than are yearly "exhibited" by their unlicensed female domestic rivals. It is not a question whether such a state of things be desirable; it exists, and no legislation can alter it. The two differences between the authorized doctors and unauthorized doctresses are simply these—that the first are paid and the second unpaid for their services, and the first have *some* scientific knowledge and the second none at all. It behoves us a little to consider these two distinctions. First, if patients choose to go for advice to women, and women inspire them with sufficient confidence to be consulted, it is a piece of interference quite anomalous in our day to prevent such services being rewarded, or in other words, to prevent the woman from qualifying herself legally to accept such reward. A woman may or may not be a desirable doctor, just as a dissenter may or may not be a desirable teacher; but unless we are to go back

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to paternal governments, we must permit patients and congregations to be the judges of what suits them best and not any medical or ecclesiastical corporation. It is not that *women* are called on to show cause why they should be permitted to enter the medical profession and obtain remuneration for their services, but the *doctors*, who are bound to show cause why they should exclude them and deprive them of the remuneration which there are abundance of patients ready to bestow. This is the side of the rights of the doctor. But are we not still more concerned with the second point of difference, which involves the safety of the patient? As we have said, men and women *will* go continually to women for medical advice in all those thousand contingencies and minor maladies out of which three-fourths of the mortal diseases of humanity arise. There is no use scolding, and saying they *ought* to go to the apothecary or the M.D. People will *not* do so, least of all will delicate women do so when it is possible to avoid it. The only question is, whether the advice which in any case they will get from a woman will be good advice or bad advice—advice founded on some scientific knowledge, or advice derived from the wildest empiricism and crassest ignorance.

We have sometimes lamented that we have lacked the precaution of making memoranda of the wonderful remedies which have become known to us in the course of time, as applied by that class of domestic

doctoresses of which we have spoken. They would have afforded a valuable storehouse of arguments to prove that, if "the little knowledge" of medicine (which we are told is all women could hope to acquire in a college) is a "dangerous thing," the utter absence of all knowledge whatever which they at present display, is a hundred times more perilous still. Well can we recall, for instance, in the home of our childhood, a certain admirable old cook who was the oracle in medical matters of the whole establishment. Notwithstanding the constant visits of an excellent physician, it was to her opinion that recourse was had on all emergencies; and the results may be imagined when it is avowed that in her genius the culinary and therapeutic arts were so assimilated, that she invariably *cooked* her patients as well as their dinners. On one occasion a groom having received an immense laceration and excoriation of the leg, was treated by having the wound *rubbed with salt, and held before a hot fire!*

At the opposite end of the social scale we can remember a lady of high degree and true Lady Bountiful disposition pressing on us, in succession, the merits of Morison's pills, hydropathy, and brandy and salt; "and if none of them cure your attack, there is St. John Long's remedy, which is *quite* infallible." It would not be easy to calculate how often such practitioners might incur the same chance as a grandmother of our own, who, asking an Irish labourer his name,

received the *foudroyante* reply—"Ah! and don't you know me, my lady? And didn't your ladyship give the dose to my wife, and she died the next day?—*long life to your ladyship!*"

All this folly and quackery—nay, the use of quack medicines altogether—would be vastly diminished, if not stopped, by the training of a certain number of women as regular physicians, and the instruction derived through them of females generally, in the rudiments of physiology and sanitary science. It is vain to calculate whether individual lady physicians would be as successful as the ordinary average of male doctors. To argue about an untried capacity, *à priori*, seems absurd; and such experience as America has afforded us appears wholly favourable. But the point is, not whether women will make as good doctors as men, but how the whole female sex may be better taught in a matter of vital importance, not only to themselves, but to men whose health is modified through life by their mother's treatment in infancy. As the diffusion of physiological knowledge among women *generally* must unquestionably come from the instruction of a few women *specially* educated, the exclusion of females from courses of medical study assumes the shape of a decree that the sex on whom the health of the community peculiarly depends, shall for ever remain in ignorance of the laws by which that health is to be maintained.

With the highest possible education for women in

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ladies' colleges, with University examinations and the medical profession opened to them, we have little doubt that new life would enter into many, and the pursuit of knowledge become a real vocation, where it has been hitherto hardly more than an amusement. Many a field of learning will yield unexpected flowers to a woman's fresh research, and many a path of science grow firm and clear before the feet which will follow in the steps of Mrs. Somerville. Already women have made for themselves a place, and a large one, in the literature of our time; and when their general instruction becomes deeper and higher, their works must become more and more valuable. Whether doctoresses are to be permitted or not, may be a question; but authoresses are already a guild, which, instead of opposition, has met kindest welcome. It is now a real profession to women as to men, to be writers. Let any one read the list of books in a modern library, and judge how large a share of them were written by women. Mrs. Jameson, Mrs. Stowe, Miss Brontë, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Susan and Catherine Winkworth, Miss Martineau, Miss Bremer, George Sand, Mrs. Browning, Miss Procter, Miss Austen, Miss Strickland, Miss Pardoe, Miss Mulock, Mrs. Grey, Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Trollope, Miss Jewsbury, Mrs. Speir, Mrs. Gatty, Miss Blagden, Lady Georgiana Fullarton, Miss Marsh, and a dozen others. There is little need to talk of literature as a field for woman's future work. She is ploughing it in all

directions already. The one thing is to do it thoroughly, and let the plough go deep enough, with good thorough drainage to begin upon. Writing books ought never to be thought of slightly. In one sense, it is morally a serious thing, a power of addressing many persons at once with somewhat more weight than in common speech. We cannot without offence misuse such a power, and adorn vice, or sneer at virtue, or libel human nature as all low, and base, and selfish. We cannot without offence neglect to *use* such a power for a good end ; and if to give pleasure be the object of our book, make it at least to the reader an ennobling and refining pleasure. A book ought always to be *the high-water mark* of its author—his best thoughts, his clearest faith, his loftiest aspiration. No need to taunt him, and say he is not equal to his book. His book ought not to be merely the average of his daily ebb and flow, but his flood-line—his spring-tide jetsam of shells and corallines, and all “ the treasures of the deep.”

And again, writing is an Art, and as an art it should be seriously pursued. The true artist spirit which grudges no amount of preparatory study, no labour of final completion,—this belongs as much to the pen as to the pencil or the chisel. It is precisely this spirit which women have too often lacked, fondly imagining their quickness would do duty for patience, and their tact cover the defect of study. If their work is (as we hope and believe) to be a real contri-

bution to the happiness and welfare of mankind hereafter, the first lesson to be learnt is this—conscientious preparatory study, conscientious veracity of expression, conscientious labour after perfection of every kind, clearness of thought, and symmetry of form. The time will come, we doubt not, when all this will be better understood. Writing a novel or a book of travels will not be supposed to come to a lady by nature, any more than teaching children to a reduced gentlewoman. Each art needs its special study and careful cultivation; and the woman who means to pursue aright either literature or science, will consider it her business to prepare herself for so doing, *at least* as much as if she purposed to dance on the stage, or make bonnets in a milliner's shop.

Then, we believe we shall find women able to carry forward the common progress of the human race along the path of the True, as well as of the Beautiful and the Good; nay, to give us those views of truth which are naturally the property of woman. For be it remembered, as in optics we need two eyes to see the roundness and fulness of objects, so in philosophy we need to behold every great truth from two stand-points; and it is scarcely a fanciful analogy to say, that these stand-points are provided for us by the different faculties and sentiments of men's and women's natures. In every question of philosophy there enters the intuitive and the experimental, the arguments *à priori* and *à posteriori*. In every question of morals

there is the side of justice and the side of love. In every question of religion there is the idea of God as the Father of the world—the careful Creator, yet severe and awful Judge; and there is the idea of God as the Mother, whose tender mercies are over us all, who is grieved by our sins as our mothers are grieved by them, and in whose infinite heart is our only refuge. At the highest point all these views unite. Absolute Philosophy is both intuitive and experimental; absolute Morality is both justice and love; absolute Religion is the worship (at once full of awe and love) of the “Parent of Good, Almighty,” who is both parents in One. But to reach these completed views we need each side by turns to be presented to us; and this can hardly be better effected than by the alternate action of men’s and women’s minds on each other.

Essays on the pursuits of women.

Cobbe, Frances Power, 1822-1904.

London, E. Faithfull, 1863.

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