

# VARIOUS

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## FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

Discussions respecting suitable employments for women have for the last few years caused much unpleasant excitement. Society is divided on the subject. Shall women study to be medical practitioners or not? Are they not entitled to compete fairly with men in such occupations as are consistent with their strength and abilities? Surely you are not going to treat them as inferior beings? These are the sort of questions that have been debated, and not always in a very placid humour. Having never interfered one way or other in this matter of dispute, we approach it in a perfectly impartial spirit, and desire to treat it not from any of the partisan views usually presented, but in the broad light of Nature – for to that every temporary and local interest must in a great degree eventually give way.

Let us go practically to the point, as that is better than any abstract reasoning. In a late number of our contemporary, *The Queen*, a London periodical partly devoted to illustrations of ladies' fashionable apparel, it is intimated that a wood-engraver of high standing had opened a class in London for instructing ladies in the art of wood-engraving. The announcement proceeds to say that wood-engraving is a lucrative art, in which partial training is valueless, and that the artist referred to being 'deeply interested in the extension of this work as an employment for women, does his utmost to impress upon all whom it may concern that no one can hope to succeed as a wood-engraver who is not willing to devote six hours a day for six years to learning the work. It has often been a matter of surprise to us that ladies did not study wood-engraving as a profession. If any novelty in dress or millinery is brought to us, and we desire to illustrate it in our pages, experience has taught us – and we only say this after repeated trials – that to Paris it must go to be both drawn and engraved. We have tried artists of fame, as well as unknown men, and always with the same result – utter failure. The figures may be more natural, and the faces better drawn perhaps, but as illustrations of dress or bonnets the English engravings failed to convey any definite idea of them, and were practically useless. Now that the use of illustrations in the literature of the day is constantly on the increase, and the number of periodicals devoted to ladies' requirements, are legion; also now that catalogues issued by the leading London mercers of their latest novelties yearly become more complete, we marvel why ladies who have a talent for drawing do not attempt to bring it into the market, and acquire the French knack of drawing, even such trifling matters as bonnets, on wood. Delicacy of touch rather than strength of hand is required; the cost of the requisite tools is nominal; it is essentially a home occupation, cleanly in its nature, and free from any unpleasant accompaniments. Wood-engraving is certainly worth a trial to any ladies who have studied drawing, and like the occupation, but to succeed it should be taken up seriously, and not as a pastime.'

We should be exceedingly glad to learn that the artist mentioned was successful in finding a numerous class of young women, who having little or nothing to do, would patiently and intelligently 'devote six hours a day for six years' to acquiring a satisfactory proficiency in the art of drawing and cutting illustrations on wood. It is an elegant art, requiring taste and accuracy of observation. In London especially it is, as is stated, largely in request, and accordingly to the skilled who are ready with their services, can hardly fail to be fairly remunerative. Nor should we forget that it involves no more severe bodily labour than needlework, if so much, while it is ten times more interesting.

Unfortunately, there is a *per contra* in almost everything, and particularly as concerns the prosecution of industrial occupations by women – wood-engraving and doctoring included. We

frankly own that in many employments women are qualified to come up to men in proficiency, if not to go beyond them. We see this in various departments. It is much more observable in France than in England, perhaps because the draining away of men for the army has long been much greater in France than in our own country. In Paris, as we have seen, the man struts about in uniform, while Madame, under the pressure of domestic necessity, paints pictures, keeps the shop, or in some other way employs herself to secure a living, and sends baby to nurse with the chance of never seeing it more either alive or dead. That may be called making the most of women as bread-winners.

In England, society has not got this length, and we hope it never will. The foundation of our polity, civil and religious, is the family system, and it is the natural and proper system, anything else being abhorrent to cherished feelings and convictions. The destiny of man has been indicated with a plainness not to be mistaken. 'Man goeth forth to his labour.' In the old texts we do not hear of women having, like the over-drudged shop-keeping females in Paris, to toil for the support of husband and family. Knowing, and in no respect objecting to his fate, a young man learns and sticks to his profession. There is his work before him. It is the thing by which he proposes to live, as well as to maintain those for whom he may incur a responsibility. He may in the progress of affairs enlarge and improve upon his original employment, but unless he be a downright ne'er-doweel, or by good-luck falls into a fortune, he never entertains the idea of giving up work altogether as long as he is blessed with health and strength. The truth is, in most instances, work becomes so much a pleasure and a habit, as not to be readily relinquished, even when the pressure of necessity has passed away.

Such is the destiny of men according to the order of Nature. That of females is very different, or at least it is only modified by special and unavoidable circumstances. The young woman does not naturally look out for a trade which she will have to pursue for life. If she selects an employment to support herself, it is a kind of make-shift. It is something that may honourably provide for her wants in the meantime, or for a few years, as the case may be, but is not seriously viewed as a profession for life. The result is a degree of training and self-sacrifice inferior to that to which men feel obliged to devote themselves. Miss Nightingale has said that 'three-fourths of the mischief in women's lives arises from their excepting themselves from the rules of training considered needful for men.' Just so. Women might in many departments of labour be equal to, or outshine men, but they will not take the trouble. They are thinking about something else, as it is quite natural they should do.

Miss B. B. M'Laren, a lady in Edinburgh, who has interested herself in the instruction of young women in wood-engraving as a pleasant and remunerative profession, does not speak very hopefully on the subject, in a small pamphlet which she has issued. Her words are worth quoting: 'In some of the novels of late years, in which a heroine is suddenly thrown on her own resources for maintenance, she at once becomes an engraver on wood, the profession being invariably acquired in the course of a year! Accuracy had to be sacrificed for the exigences of the tale, and anything can be accomplished on paper; but in real life *several* years of daily work will pass before proficiency is acquired. This does not mean to say that a proficiency very pleasing to the amateur may not be reached at a much earlier period, and pictures for admiring friends to praise grow under her hands; but the amateur standard and the professional one are widely apart. Partial training has been the ruin of many attempts to gain new employment for women. It is often spoken of as desirable that they should do "a little" work, but the "little" which is meant to apply to the matter of quantity, is easily transferred to that of quality, and this effectually bars the way to success. It is very undesirable to see a lowered standard for women's work, and yet what reason is there to expect the attainment of the higher one in any way but with the same amount of time and labour given by young men? No one asks for more. It is sometimes said that girls "take up things" more quickly than boys; but even where this is the case, the intuitive quickness of perception which rapidly obtains some knowledge of art, will not do away with the need for that time and experience which alone will give the power to practise it.'

In the education of women, according to this lady, there is usually a fatal want of 'thoroughness.' Things are learned superficially. This she laments; but from what we have already hinted at, it does

not seem strange. The ordinary professions are not the vocation of women, and by no contrivance can we make them so, any more than we could make water run uphill. The hope of woman from the outset is some day to be married, and fall into the range of duties imposed on a wife and mother. Now, there is nothing wrong in aspirations of this kind. They are, on the contrary, to be commended, and at all events spring from moral and intellectual conditions which Nature has demonstrated from the earliest girlhood. Take, for example, the love of dolls. In every country in the world, dolls are the solace of female children. In the most savage nation, where the neatly manufactured doll, or *poupée*, as the French term it, was never seen, the little girl instinctively dresses up a piece of bone, and fondles it with an affection as ardent as that shewn by an English female child for a *poupée* of the most life-like and costly description. What is this but an inherent idiosyncrasy in the female mind, obviously implanted for a beneficent purpose. The girl playing with her dolls is the incipient mother loving and nurturing her children.

So is it in tracing girls up to womanhood. In their education, their domestic training, their style of dressing, and love of personal adornment, are recognised the position they are destined or hope to assume. Acute and clever as they may be, they seldom fail to make themselves as attractive as possible. From youth to age, dress runs in their head. The largest mercantile concerns in the world are got up and maintained purely for decorating their person. We find no fault with this prevalent taste, unless when it degenerates into something grotesquely absurd, as it occasionally does under the impulse of fashion. Every woman is entitled to make the very best of herself, to insure if possible the admiration of those whose good-will she especially cares for. But all such, and often very costly efforts, as regards dress are significant of the fact, that professional labour lies not within the course of life appointed for women. Their rôle is in the region of the heart – the domestic circle – not within the hard lines in which men find it incumbent on them to struggle for a subsistence.

Doubtless, through various exigences, large numbers of women betake themselves to professional employment of some kind. They become domestic servants, governesses, teachers, dressmakers, shop-assistants, and so on. While still young they work in factories. But we repeat that whatever they do in these several respects is done on the principle of a temporary make-shift; the predominant hope they indulge being that they will some day settle down as the happy and respected mother of a family. In this candid view of the matter it is hardly to be expected that women – taking them all in all – will ever make that resolutely persevering effort to attain the proficiency in a profession which is universally aimed at by men. To expect anything of the kind, is to hope for more than human nature can justify. In the notification which has been made respecting wood-engraving, it is specified that young ladies must make up their minds to study six hours a day for six years. Of the propriety of this obligation, we have no doubt. What concerns us to know is, how, besides paying fees, young ladies driven to the expedient are to live in the meanwhile, and how many will persist in giving six years of assiduous diligence in learning a profession which any day may be tossed aside on marriage, the paramount object in life, being happily achieved.

As far as we know, there are few or no instances of any regular trade being successfully appropriated entirely by women. Such, indeed, is not to be looked for, and, properly speaking, no blame ought to rest on females for essentially following a primarily assigned duty. We have known cases in which, from motives of benevolence, young women alone were invited to conduct a trading experiment, and they failed, not from want of skill, but want of perseverance. The members of the establishment broke away piecemeal, and went to other and more attractive pursuits. Where young men are employed along with young women in any commercial undertaking, there is less chance of disruption; and the reason why is so obvious as to need no particular explanation. No accusation can be made on this account. Celibacy is a violation of every instinct and sense of social obligation. It is often nobly submitted to as a duty by females, but the instinct is indestructible and to be respected.

When one reflects on the many reasons why young women are not, as a general rule, likely to give that close and lasting attention to any branch of scholarly or mechanical art qualifying

them to excel, the vehement objections sometimes made to female professionals seem not a little ridiculous. We should like to see the subject treated in a more practical and sympathising spirit. A little consideration might shew that only in a few remarkable instances – such as that of Mrs Somerville – do women possess that resolute spirit of study which leads to eminence in scientific or other learned pursuits. The thing is not to be done off-hand, or by fits and starts, and half-formed resolutions. Look at the hard and tedious work that young men must undergo before attaining proficiency in the practice of medicine. Success with them is a matter of life and death. No one can reasonably expect that any large number of young ladies are ever likely to make similarly enduring efforts.

To us there is something melancholy in the exigent circumstances that often in this old country drive ladies to look for subsistence in pursuits not very accordant with the delicacy of their sex. The redundancy of unmarried young women should set people thinking on the causes for so much enforced celibacy. That is a broad department of inquiry somewhat strangely neglected. Neither emigration nor drafting for the army will account for the phenomenon. We have space here only to hint at one or two prevalent errors – or call them failings – in which society is intimately concerned as regards the number of female celibates.

Let us first point to the extravagant modes of living – extravagance in dress, extravagance in house-furnishing, extravagance in nearly everything – that has conspicuously gained ground among the middle classes within the past forty years, and in the face of which marriage has become a much more serious affair for men to encounter than it ought to be. There, plainly enough, lies the basis of innumerable mischiefs. For such a state of things, both sexes must bear the blame. Fathers of families are seen mis-expending means, and leaving daughters unprovided for, but with tastes and habits which are incompatible with their position, the result being that they are reluctantly obliged to swell the already overswollen ranks of governesses. On the other hand, the lofty expectations erroneously entertained by many young women, drive away suitors who have still to make their way in the world. Hence, from various preventable causes, the vast numbers of young unmarried women crowding public places of resort.

Pondering on these social mistakes, who need feel surprised that women of an independent spirit should try to make their way as professionals. Applauding, we yet pity their meritorious endeavours. Only a few out of groups of aspirants are likely to be eminently successful; and we are prepared to learn, that as opportunity offers they will drop into the line of duty for which they were destined by the imprescriptive ordination of nature.

W. C.

## THE LAST OF THE HADDONS

### CHAPTER VI. – FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I did the best I could in the way of adorning for dinner with some of my dear mother's old lace, and a cherry-coloured bow or two on my black silk dress, and flattered myself that I was presentable enough for a family party. But on entering the drawing-room, I was somewhat dismayed to find Lilian in full evening dress. To my unaccustomed eyes her elaborate toilet appeared more suited to a ball-room than for dinner, and my taste in this case served as well as knowledge, for I know now that it was too much for home-dress, according to the decrees of Society. I think she saw what was passing in my mind, for she apologised in her half-shy graceful way by asking me to excuse it. It was 'a fancy of papa's to see her so; and she liked to gratify his lightest fancies now.'

Mrs Tipper had also made more change than seemed necessary for home toilet; and did not look at home in her rich moire and too massive jewellery, put on haphazard as it were: brooches stuck in upside down and on one side, as though it were enough for them to be there; rings, bracelets, &c. glittering with diamonds and other precious stones, not combined in the best taste.

But I soon had something to think of besides our toilets. Lilian whispered to me that 'he' had arrived; and when presently Mr Trafford entered the room and was introduced to me, my attention was concentrated upon him. Interested as I already was in Lilian Farrar, I was more than curious to see her lover. Moreover I was altogether inclined in his favour. No one could be more prepossessed in another's favour than was I in Arthur Trafford's; and yet I had been in his society barely half an hour before I was conscious of being not a little disappointed. Whether my expectations had been too exalted, or there was some graver cause for the disappointment, time would shew. I certainly had expected to find Lilian's lover and Mr Wentworth's friend very different from the fashionable-looking young man before me.

His bearing was that of a gentleman, and he was handsome – some might say very handsome. I would not allow even that much, in my disappointment, telling myself that his head wanted more breadth; that his features were too delicately chiselled for manly beauty; and that his hands were too small and soft and white. The very grace of his figure offended me, as indicating lack of power. What does the world want with graceful men, with hands incapable of grasping anything?

I had been prepared to like him for Lilian Farrar's sake; and already I was unpleasantly conscious that I might learn to dislike him for her sake. I tried to persuade myself that I was too hasty in my judgment – that his might be the type of manly beauty – the refined delicacy which in certain instances has accompanied a fine order of intellect. But no; Shelley had a different brow from that, and something very different looked out of Shelley's eyes.

While I was summing him up in this uncompromising way, I am bound to acknowledge that he was most courteously trying to make talk with me. Lilian had introduced us in her pretty graceful way, informing us that we were to become great friends; and he had taken the hint, making himself specially attentive and agreeable to me during dinner. He talked well, and appeared well read; and I must do him the justice also to say that his bearing towards Mrs Tipper was all that it should be, with no perceptible under-current of pride or satire. Above all, I must acknowledge that his love for Lilian was sincere; no woman could for a moment have doubted that; whatever its value in other respects, it was sincere. And yet I was perverse enough not to be satisfied with him. Why could I not take to him? I irritably asked myself, conscious that I had not sufficient grounds for my prejudice, and ashamed of feeling it. But there it was, and I could not overcome it.

Mr Farrar joined us in the drawing-room, which was lighted up as if for a large assembly, for an hour after dinner; and I, who had been accustomed to note certain signs and symptoms in an invalid, could see that the effort cost him a great deal. He was, however, not too weak to tell me the cost of building and furnishing Fairview; that he had paid two hundred and fifty pounds for the grand piano; a guinea a yard for the curtains; that the carpet had been made to his special order, &c.; whilst Mrs Tipper was smiling amiably in her after-dinner nap, her fat little jewelled hands folded at her capacious waist; and Lilian and her lover were sauntering amongst the flowers in the moonlight outside.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, Mr Farrar told me there were to be all sorts of entertainments given at Fairview; dinner-parties, garden-fêtes, and so forth. Then he named two or three City magnates as his friends, and went more fully into the Trafford pedigree for my edification, dwelling enjoyably upon the idea of being father-in-law to a Trafford. 'The Warwick Traffords, you understand, Miss Haddon; it is very essential that should be remembered.' Going on to point out the great things which might be expected from such an alliance. 'With money as well as birth, Arthur Trafford would enter parliament and make some mark in the world.' All of which proved that he too had faith in the young man's capabilities. I know now that it was Arthur Trafford's evidently sincere admiration for things great which misled so many who knew him. Were he capable of doing the deeds he could admire, he would have been what he had the credit for being. When I heard him dilate with glowing eyes and heightened colour upon some heroic deed, I could understand how he had obtained an influence over a young imaginative girl. He not only made her believe him to be endowed with the qualities of a hero, but honestly believed it himself; persuaded that he only lacked opportunity to prove that he was made of very different material from that of ordinary men.

I listened to Mr Farrar politely, as I was bound to do, and not a little pitifully too. All this was what he had set his heart upon; and he would not live to have his ambition gratified, even had Arthur Trafford been all he was imagined to be. Had no one warned him? Did not the sight of his own pinched and drawn face warn him that he was already on the threshold of the other life? Had I been speculatively inclined just then, I might perhaps have carried on the thought which suggested itself to me. I will only say that I felt more respect for the etherealised body at that moment than for the earth-bound soul. I think now that Mr Farrar would not be warned of what was approaching, and contrived to deceive his child and those about him as he deceived himself respecting his real state.

There certainly was at present no foreshadowing of the coming separation, in his daughter's face. She was altogether free from care; and I was presently very glad to find that my first estimate of her had been so far correct; she was not the kind of girl to be selfish in her happiness; in small things she shewed herself to be considerate for others. Mr Farrar was presently wheeled away in his invalid chair, bidding me good-night with the information that he was just at the period of convalescence when rest and seclusion are essential; and as soon as his daughter found that I was left companionless in the drawing-room, she came in, her lover's protests, which were carried on to the very threshold, notwithstanding.

But I begged to be allowed to make acquaintance with the garden; and went out into the moonlight, leaving the lovers at the piano together. It was the very best light in which to see the Fairview grounds where there were no trees higher than shrubs, and too much statuary, with vivid patches of colour, so fatiguing to the eye – masses of flowers without scent or leaves, arranged with mathematical precision, as though they had become strong-minded, and would only speak to you in problems. In fine, it was the newest fashion in gardening, which Mr Farrar prided himself upon keeping up at great expense. To my unaccustomed eye, it lacked the poetry of the old less formal styles. But it looked its best in the softening and subduing effect of moonlight; one got some hints of shadow, which was as lacking during most of the day as in the famous Elizabethan picture. In the light of day the silvan gods and goddesses looked specially uncomfortable, for want of a little foliage.

One 'Startled Nymph,' placed at the corner of a gravel-walk, without so much as a shrub near her, appealed to one's sense of justice in the most pathetic way.

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