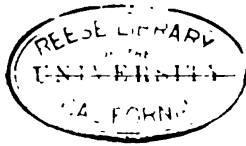


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ESSAYS, TRACTS OR ADDRESSES
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL.

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INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL TENDENCIES OF
FEMALE SUFFRAGE.—1867.

IT is already observable that the same persons are earnest for Female Suffrage and for a more solid Female Education. This is no accident. The one object is a complement of the other.

Women, with no school but that of life, may exercise the suffrage for the benefit of their whole sex, wherever the interests of the two sexes clash. Obviously neither woman nor man can use the vote to its noblest purposes without a wide groundwork of solid knowledge. Less obvious is it, that superficiality in women's education will be undermined, when the sexes have equal weight in the ultimate decision of social questions; a topic which may here be briefly opened.

Energy in mental pursuits is with most natures dependent on the further objects proposed. A few, only a few, are naturally bent on thorough knowledge, with perhaps a genius for one study, which they will follow for its own sake: but the majority ask, what after-ends it will serve. It is in vain that a College gives prizes for Latin and Greek, if it has not a career to which they lead. It is of little avail to open free schools to the poor, if they see no benefit to be gained by their children. To have a *motive* for study which acts uniformly on minds not of themselves on fire for knowledge, is the first desideratum for any wide-spread mental activity.

If to shine in the drawing-room be the object held up before a young lady's mind, we know what accomplishments and what graces it will chiefly foster. We admire them; we praise them; but it is felt that to stop there is superficial culture, having in fact little moral basis. Unless the Philanthropy native to the sex have given sufficient impulse to solid thought, their conversation soon exhausts its topics and becomes insipid. If it is to be *only* volatile, if it *always* dreads depth and earnestness, the person who lives much for it can hardly be deep and earnest. Conversation must often be, and ought to be, on the surface alone of things; but even that is most charming, when a richly endowed intellect underlies and the heart is full of noble desires.

Philanthropy and Politics, now flowing apart, will unite in one stream, when philanthropists become conscious of power to reach the sources of crime and misery, and when statesmen understand that their functions are assigned to them for none but a philanthropic end. While women are totally unable to influence public measures, no sooner are they relieved from inevitable duty, than, like men under despotism, too many of them tend to frivolity or to petty thoughts. Religion and kindness may carry some into efforts to relieve distress ; special studies may attract others ; but these are the exception. How few of us will or can persevere in self-denial, if we seem to be striving for the impossible ; if, while we are painfully draining a small pool of misery, a new and full tide pours in ! Under the crushing belief that, labour as we may, the result will be imperceptible, most of us turn away from a heartbreaking task, and try to forget other people's wretchedness.

That mankind may reach a better state, philanthropy, like religion, must be the work and duty of all, not of a select few. With a view to this, women (whose heart is our great reservoir of tenderness) must have a hope of, not merely palliating, but, uprooting national evils. This hope will be born within them, when with a voice in public counsel they get some power to reach the *causes* of evil. Men too will then imbibe more of gentleness and sympathy ; men, who have hitherto held nearly exclusive sway over human history with so very meagre success. Party politics will go down, philanthropic politics will come up, when it is understood that, because our common welfare is our common duty, therefore we are *all* bound to become politicians in that wide and genial sense, in which an ancient philosopher pronounced, that "the human being is a political animal."

Women who are aware that the power gained by knowledge may bring substantial benefit—to themselves first, and through the public efficacy of their vote, to others also,—will not, collectively as a sex, prefer the abstract and pretentious to the solid and fruitful. If then in the richest classes they continue to care chiefly for showy accomplishments, they will have to feel the superior influence of other women. The great majority will be unable to limit their aspirations to the drawing-room, and to these study will present itself in a new point of view, when it has a practical bearing. They need *first*, not high science, nor knowledge of things remote in time and interest, but a thorough practical understanding of that world with which we are in immediate contact.

The laws of Health, the properties of Food, the laws of Heat, the laws of the Market, the doctrine of Vulgar Fractions and of Compound Interest, may be called homely science, but are as important to women, married or unmarried, as to men. To understand daily facts, modern languages, the state of modern nations, the origin and history of landed property, and the whole of our complex modern life ; to be sound in all elementary knowledge and in the homely branches of science just mentioned ;—are really the rudiments both of politics and of practical good sense. With SOCIAL UTILITY held up as the end of ordinary and general education, the studies of women, even in classes which now live for elegance, will gravitate towards solidity ; while the genius of the sex itself assures us, that refinement and grace will never be too little valued by them.