VARIOUS

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, VOLUME 18, NO. 107, SEPTEMBER, 1866

Various

The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 18, No. 107, September, 1866

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=35502115
The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 18, No. 107, September, 1866 / A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics:

Содержание

Various
The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 18, No. 107, September, 1866 / A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics

THE SURGEON'S ASSISTANT

I

The sickness of the nation not being unto death, we now begin to number its advantages. They will not all be numbered by this generation; and as for story-tellers, essayists, letter-writers, historians, and philosophers, if their "genius" flags in half a century with such material as hearts, homes, and battle-fields beyond counting afford them, they deserve to be drummed out of their respective regiments, and banished into the dominion of silence and darkness, forever to sit on the borders of unfathomable ink-pools, minus pen and paper, with fool's-caps on their heads.

I know of a place which you may call Dalton, if it must have a name. At the beginning of our war,—for which some true spirits thank Almighty God,—a family as wretched as Satan wandering up and down the earth could wish to find lived there, close beside the borders of a lake which the Indians once called—but why should not your fancy build the lowly cottage on whatsoever green and sloping bank it will? Fair as you please the outside world may be,—waters pure as those of Lake St. Sacrament, with islands on their bosom like those of Horicon, and shores beautifully wooded as those of Lake George,—but what delight will you find in all the heavenly mansions, if love be not there?

"I'll enlist," said the master of this mansion of misery in the midst of the garden of delight, one day.

"I would," replied his wife.

They spoke with equal vigor, but neither believed in the other. The instant the man dropped the book he had been reading, he was like Samson with his hair shorn, for his wife couldn't tell one letter from another; and when she saw him sit down on the stone wall which surrounded their potato-field, overgrown with weeds, she marched out boldly to the corner of the wood-shed, where never any wood was, and attacked him thus:—

"S'pose you show fight awhile in that potato-patch afore you go to fight Ribils. Gov'ment don't need you any more than I do. May be it'll find out getting ain't gaining!"

She had no answer. The man was thinking, when she interrupted him, as she was always doing, that, if he could secure

the State and town bounty, that would be some provision for the woman and child. As for himself, he was indifferent as to where he was sent, or how soon. But if he went away, they might look for him to come again. Gabriel's trumpet, he thought, would be a more welcome sound than his wife's voice.

He enlisted. The bounties paid him were left in the hands of a trusty neighbor, and were to be appropriated to the supply of his family's needs; and he went away along with a boat-load of recruits,—his own man no longer. Even his wife noticed the change in him, from the morning when he put on his uniform and began to obey orders, for she had time to notice. Several days elapsed after enlistment before the company's ranks were complete, and the captain would not report at head-quarters, he said, until his own townsfolk had supplied the number requisite.

Even his wife noticed the change, I said; for, contrary to what is usual and expected, she was not the first to perceive that the slow and heavy step had now a spring in it, and that there was a light in his clouded eyes. She supposed the new clothes made the difference.

Nearly a year had passed away, and this woman was leaning over the rail fence which surrounded a barren field, and listening, while she leaned, to the story of Ezra Cramer, just home from the war. She listened well, even eagerly, to what he had to tell, and seemed moved by the account in ways various as pride and indignation.

"I wish I had him here!" she said, when he had come to the

end of his story,—the story of her husband's promotion.

Ezra looked at her, and thought of the pretty girl she used to be, and wondered how it happened that such a one could grow into a woman like this. The vindictiveness of her voice accorded well with her person,—expressed it. Where were her red cheeks? What had become of her brown hair? She was once a free one at joking with, and rallying the young men about; but now how like a virago she looked! and her tongue was sharp as a two-edged sword.

Ezra was sorry that he had taken the trouble to ascertain in the village where Nancy Elkins lived. Poor fellow! While enduring the hardships of the past year, his imagination had transformed all the Dalton women into angels, and the circuit of that small hamlet had become to his loving thought as the circuit of Paradise.

Some degree of comprehension seemed to break upon him while he stood gazing upon her, and he said: "O well, Miss Nancy, he's got his hands full, and besides he didn't know I was coming home so quick. I didn't know it myself till the last minute. He would 'a' sent some message,—course he would!"

"I guess there ain't anything to hender his *writing* home to his folks," she answered, unappeased and unconvinced. "Other people hear from the war. There's Mynders always a-writing and sending money to the old folks, and that's the difference."

"We've been slow to get our pay down where we was," said Ezra. "It's been a trouble to me all the while, having nothing to

show for the time I was taking from father."

The woman looked at the young fellow who had spoken so seriously, and her eyes and her voice softened.

"Nobody would mind about your not sending money hum, Ezra. They'd know *you* was all right. Such a hard-working set as you belong to! You're looking as if you wondered what I was doing here 'n this lot. I'm living in that shanty! Like as not I'll have its pictur' taken, and sent to my man. Old Uncle Torry said we might have it for the summer; and I expect the town was glad enough to turn me and my girl out anywhere. They won't do a thing towards fixing the old hut up. Say 't ain't worth it. We can't stay there in cold weather. Roof leaks like a sieve. If he don't send me some money pretty quick, I'll list myself, and serve long enough to find *him* out, see 'f I don't."

At this threat, the soldier, who knew something about war, straightened himself, and with a cheery laugh limped off towards the road. "I'll see ye ag'in, Miss Nancy, afore you start," said he, looking back and nodding gayly at her. Things weren't so bad as they seemed about her, he guessed. He was going home, and his heart was soft. Happiness is very kind; but let it do its best it cannot come very near to misery.

Nancy stood and watched the young man as he went, commenting thus: "Well, *he*'s made a good deal out of 'listing, any way." His pale face and his hurt did not make him sacred in her sight.

She was speaking to herself, and not to her little daughter,

who, when she saw her mother talking to a soldier, ran up to hear the conversation. A change that was wonderful to see had passed over the child's face, when she heard that her father had been promoted from the ranks. The bald fact, unilluminated by a single particular, seemed to satisfy her. She hadn't a question to ask. Her first thought was to run down to the village and tell Miss Ellen Holmes, who told *her*, not long ago, so proud and wonderful a story about her brother's promotion.

If it were not for this Jenny, my story would be short. Is it not for the future we live? For the children the world goes on.

Does this little girl—she might be styled a beauty by a true catholic taste, but oh! I fear that the Boston Convention "Orthodox," lately convened to settle all great questions concerning the past, present, and future, would never recognize her, on any showing, as a babe of grace!—does she, as she runs down the hill and along the crooked street of Dalton, look anything like a messenger of Heaven to your eyes? Must, the angels show their wings before they shall have recognition?

Going past the blacksmith's shop she was hailed by the blacksmith's self, with the blacksmith's own authority. "See here, Jenny!" At the call, she stood at bay like a fair little fawn in the woods.

"I'm writing a letter to my boy," he continued. "Step in here. Did you know Ezra Cramer had come back?"

"I saw him just now," she answered. "He told us about father." She said it with a pride that made her young face shine.

"So! what about him, I wonder?" asked the blacksmith.

And that he really did wonder, Jenny could not doubt. She heard more in his words than she liked to hear, and answered with a tremulous voice, in spite of pride, "O, he's been promoted."

"The deuse! what's *he* permoted to?"

"I don't know," she said, and for the first time she wondered.

"Where is he, though?" asked the blacksmith.

"I don't know,—in the war."

"That's 'cute. Well, see here, sis, we'll find that out,—you and me will." The angry voice of the blacksmith became tender. "You sit down there and write him a letter. My son, he'll find out if your pa is alive. As for Ezra, he don't know any more 'n he did when he went away; but, poor fellow, he's been mostually in the hospertal, instead of fighting Ribils, so p'r'aps he ain't to blame. You write to yer pa, and I'll wage you get an answer back, and he'll tell you all about his permotion quick enough."

Jenny stood looking at the blacksmith for a moment, with mouth and eyes wide open, so much astonished by the proposition as not to know what answer should be made to it. She had never written a line in her life, except in her old copy-book. If her hand could be made to express what she was thinking of, it would be the greatest work and wonder in the world. But then, it never could!

That decisive *never* seemed to settle the point. She turned forthwith to the blacksmith, smiling very seriously. At the same time she took three decided steps, which led her into his dingy

shop, as awed as though she were about to have some wonderful exhibition there. But she must be her own astrologer.

The blacksmith, elated by his own success that morning in the very difficult business of letter-writing, was mightily pleased to have under direction this little disciple in the work of love, and forthwith laid his strong hands on the bench and brought it out into the light, setting it down with a force that said something for the earnestness of his purpose in regard to Miss Jenny.

When he wrote his own letter, he did it in retirement and solitude, having sought out the darkest corner of his shop for the purpose. A mighty man in the shoeing of horses and the handling of hammers, he shrank from exposing his incompetence in the management of a miserable pen, even to the daylight and himself.

His big account-book placed against his forge, with a small sheet of paper spread thereon, his pen in Jenny's hands, and the inkstand near by, there was nothing for him to do but to go away and let her do her work.

"Give him a tall letter!" said he. "And you must be spry about it. He'll be glad to hear from his little girl, I reckon. See, the stage 'll be along by four o'clock, and now it's–"—he stepped to the door and looked out on the tall pine-tree across the road,—that was his sun-dial,—"it's just two o'clock now, Jenny. Work away!" So saying, he went off as tired, after the exertion he had made, as if he had shod all the Dalton horses since daybreak.

She had just two hours for doing the greatest piece of work she had done in her short life. And consciously it was the greatest

work. Every stroke of that pen, every straight line and curve and capital, seemed to require as much deliberation as the building of a house; and how her brain worked! Fly to and fro, O swallows, from your homes beneath the eaves of the blacksmith's old stone shop in the shade of the far-spreading walnut,—stretch forth your importunate necks and lift aloft your greedy voices, O young ones in the nests!—the little girl who has so often stood to watch you is sitting in the shadow within there, blind and deaf to you, and unaware of everything in the great world except the promotion of her father "in the war," and the letter he will be sure to get, because the blacksmith is going to send it along with *his* letter to his son.

She was doing her work well. Any one who had ever seen the girl before must have asked with wonder what had happened to her,—it was so evident that something had happened which stirred heart and soul to the depths.

So, even so, unconsciously, love sometimes works out the work of a lifetime, touches the key-note of an anthem of everlasting praise,—does it with as little ostentation as the son of science draws yellow gold from the quartz rock which tells no tale on the face of it concerning its "hid treasure." So, wisely and without ostentation, work the true agents, the apostles of liberty in this world.

"O dear papa! my dear papa!" she wrote, "Ezra has come home, and he says you are promoted! But he couldn't tell for what it was, or where you were, or anything. And O, it seems as if I

couldn't wait a minute, I want to hear so all about it." When she had written thus far the spirit of the mother seemed to stir in the child. She sat and mused for a moment. Her eyes flashed. Her right hand moved nervously. Strange that her father had not sent some word by Ezra; but then he didn't know, of course, that Ezra was coming. Ay! that was a lucky thought. What she had written seemed to imply some blame. So, with many a blot and erasure, her loving belief that all was right must make itself evident.

At the end of the two hours she found herself at the bottom of the page the blacksmith had spread before her. Twice he had come into the shop and assured himself that the work was going on, and smiled to see the progress she was making. The third time he came he was under considerable excitement.

"Ready!" he shouted. "The stage 'll be along now in ten minutes."

She did not answer, she was so busy, and so *hard* at work, signing her name to the sheet that was covered with what looked like hieroglyphics.

When she had made the last emphatic pen-stroke, she turned towards him, flushed and smiling. "There!" she said.

He looked over her shoulder.

"Good!" said he. "But you haven't writ his name out. Give me the pen here, quick!" Then he took the quill and wrote her father's name up in one blank corner, and dried the ink with a little sand, and put the note into the envelope containing his own, and the great work was done.

Do you know how great a work, you dingy old Dalton blacksmith?

Do *you* know, fair child,—who must fight till the day of your death with alien, opposite forces, because the blood-vessels of Nancy Elkins, as they sail through the grand canals of the city of your life, so often hang out piratical banners, and bear down on better craft as they near the dangerous places, or put out, like wreckers after a storm, seeking for treasure the owners somehow lost the power to hold?

In a few minutes after the letter was inscribed and sealed, the stage came rattling along, and Jenny stood by and saw the blacksmith give it to the driver, and heard him say: "Now be kerful about that ere letter. It's got two inside. One's my boy's, as ye'll see by the facing on it; t' other's this little girl's. She's been writin' to her pa. So be kerful."

They stood together watching the stage till it was out of sight, then the blacksmith nodded at Jenny as if they had done a good day's work, and proceeded to light his pipe. That was not her way of celebrating the event. She remembered now that she had promised a little girl, Miss Ellen Holmes indeed, that she would some time show her where the red-caps and fairy-cups grew, and there was yet time, before sunset, for a long walk in the woods.

The little town-bred lady happened to come along just then, while Jenny stood hesitating whether to go home first and tell her mother of this great thing she had done. The question was therefore settled; and now let them go seeking

red-caps. Good luck attend the children! Jenny will be sure to say something about promotions before they separate. She will say that something with a genuine human pride; and the end of the hunt for red-caps may be, conspicuously, success in finding them; but still more to the purpose, it will be the child's establishment on a better basis—a securer basis of equality—than she has occupied before. She forgets about Dalton and poverty. She thinks about camps and honor. She has something to claim of all the world. She is the citizen of a great nation. She bears the name of one who is fighting for the Union, who *has* fought, and fought so well that those in authority have beckoned him up higher. Why, it is as though a crown were placed on her dear father's head.

II

Going out of quiet and beautiful green Dalton, and into the hospital of Frere's Landing, 't is a wonderful change we make.

The silence of one place is as remarkable as the silence of the other, perhaps. That of the hospital does not resemble that of the hamlet, however. At times it grows oppressive and appalling, being the silence of anguish or of death. A stranger reaching Dalton in the night might wonder in the morning if there were in reality any passage out of it, for there the lake, on one of whose western slopes is the "neighborhood," seems locked in completely by the hills, and an ascent towards heaven is apparently the only way of egress. Yet there's another way; for I am not writing this true story among celestial altitudes for you. I returned from Dalton by a mundane road.

Out of Frere's Hospital, however, *its* silence and seclusion, many a stranger never found his way except by the high mountains of transfiguration, in the chariots of fire, driven by the horsemen of Heaven, covered with whose glory they departed.

Through the wards of this well-ordered hospital a lady passed one night, and, entering a small apartment separated from the others, advanced with noiseless step to a bedside, and there sat down. You may guess if her heart was beating fast, and whether it was with difficulty that she kept her gray eyes clear of tears. There were about her traces of long and hurried journeying.

Under no limitations of caution had she passed so noiselessly through the wards. Involuntary was that noiselessness,—involuntary also the surprise with which one and another of the more wakeful patients turned to follow her, with hopeless, weary eyes, as she passed on. Now and then some feeble effort was made to attract her attention and arrest her progress, but she went, absorbed beyond observation by the errand that constrained her steps and thoughts.

When she reached the door of the apartment to which the surgeon had directed her, she seemed for an instant to hesitate; then she pushed the door open and passed into the room. The next instant she sank into a chair by the bedside of a man who was lying there asleep. It seemed as if the silent room had a profounder stillness added to it since she entered.

It was Colonel Ames whom she saw lying on the cot before her with a bandage round his forehead, so evidently asleep. He was smiling in a dream. He was not going to give up the ghost, it seemed, though he had given up so much—how much!—with that passion of giving which possessed this nation, North and South, during four awful, glorious years. *He* had given up the splendor and the beauty of this world. All its radiance was blotted out in that moment of fury and of death when the shot struck him, and left him blind upon the field.

Never on earth would it be said to him, "Receive thy sight." The lady knew this who sat down by his bedside to wait for his awaking. The surgeon had told her this, when at last, after

having searched for her brother long among the dead, she came to Frere's Hospital and found him alive.

She sat so close beside him it seemed that he could not remain a moment unconscious of her immediate presence after waking. Her hand lay just where his hand, moving when he wakened, must touch it. She had rightly calculated the chances; he did touch it, and started and said: "Who's here? Doctor!" Then with a firmer grasp he seized the unresisting fingers, and exclaimed, "My God, am I dreaming? it ought to be Lizzie's hand."

"The doctor told me I should find you here, and might come," she answered; and, disguised as the voice was by the feeling that tore her heart, the Colonel, poor young fellow, listening as if for life, knew it, and said, "O Lizzie, my child, I don't know about this,—why couldn't you wait?"

"I waited and waited forever," she answered. "You're not sorry that I've found you out after such a hunt? Of course you'll make believe, but then—you needn't; I'm here, any way!"

Just then the surgeon came in. The Colonel knew his step, and said, "Doctor, look here; is this Lizzie?"

"I believe you're right," said the doctor. "She said she had a hero for a brother, and I have no doubt about that myself."

"O Dan, we had given you up! Though I knew all the time we shouldn't. I could not believe—"

"Must come to that Lizzie,—do it over again; for what you have here isn't your old Dan."

"My old Dan!" she exclaimed, and then there was a little break

in the conversation the two heroes were endeavoring to maintain.

Meanwhile the surgeon had seated himself on the edge of the bed waiting the moment when there should be a positive need of him. He saw when it arrived.

"Colonel," said he, in his hearty, cheery voice, which alone had lifted many a poor fellow from the slough of misery, and put new heart and soul in him, since his ministrations began in the hospital,—"Colonel, your aids are in waiting."

The soldier smiled; his face flushed. "My aids can wait," said he.

"That is a fine thing to say. Here he has been bothering me, madam, not to say browbeating me, and I've been moving heaven and earth for my part, and at last have secured the aids, and now hear him dismiss them!"

"Bring them round here," said the patient suddenly.

The surgeon quietly lifted from the floor a pair of crutches, and placed them in his patient's hands.

"How many years must I rely on my aids?" he asked quietly.

"Perhaps three months. By that time you will be as good as ever."

A change passed over the young man's face at this. Whatever the emotion so expressed, it had otherwise no demonstration. He turned now abruptly toward his sister, and said: "They can wait. I've got another kind of aid now. Come, Lizzie, say something."

A sudden radiance flashed across his face when he ceased to speak, and waited for that voice.

"I shall be round again in an hour," said the surgeon.

He could well be spared. The brother and sister had now neither eye nor thought except for each other.

The surgeon's face changed as he closed the door. Every one of their faces changed. As for the gentleman whose duty took him now from ward to ward, from one sick-bed to another, it was only by an effort that he gave his cheerful words and courageous looks to the men who had found day after day a tonic in his presence.

The brother and sister clasped each other's hands. Few were the words they spoke. He was looking forward to the years before him, endeavoring to steady himself, in a moment of weakness, by the remembrance of past months of active service.

She was thinking of the days when she walked with her hero out of delightsomeness and ease into danger and anxiety, all for the nation's succor, in the nation's time of need. Some had deemed it a needless sacrifice. Of old, when sacrifice was to be offered, it was not the worthless and the worst men dared or cared to bring. The spotless, the pure, the beautiful, these were no vain oblations. These two said in solemn conference, "We will make an offering of our all." And their all they offered. See how much had been accepted!

Having offered, having sacrificed, it was not in either of these to repent the doing, or despise the honor that was put upon them. No going back for them! No looking back! No secret repining! The Colonel had done his work. As for the Colonel's sister, there

was no place on earth where she would not find work to do.

And here in this hospital, in her brother's room, she found a sphere. Going and coming through the various wards, singing hymns of heavenly love and purest patriotism, scattering comforts with ministering hands, which found brothers on all those beds of languishing, how many learned to look for her appearing, and to bless her when she came! But concerning her work there, and that of other women, some of whom will go crippled to the grave from their service,—soldiers and veterans of the army of the Union,—enough has everywhere been said.

Among all these patients there was one, a sick man, to whom her coming and her going, her speech and her silence, became most notable events. Living within the influence of such manner and degree of social life as her presence in the hospital established, he was like a returned exile, who, yet under ban, felt all the awkwardness, constraint, and danger of his position. This man, who discovered in himself merely helplessness, was not accounted helpless, but the helper of many. He was, in short, the surgeon of the hospital.

One day the Colonel said to him, "You don't like to have my sister here. Are the hired nurses making a row?"

The surgeon's face betrayed so much interest in this subject, and so much embarrassment, it seemed probable he would come out with an absolute "Yes"; but his speech contradicted him, for he said with indifference, "Where did you get that pretty notion?"

"Out of you, and nowhere else. What puzzles me, though, is,

she seems to think she is doing some good here. And didn't you say you'd no objection to her visiting the wards?"

"I should think it a positive loss if she were called or sent away from the hospital," said the surgeon, speaking now seriously enough. "She is of the greatest service, out of this room as well as in it."

"Why do I feel then as if something had happened,—something disagreeable? We don't have such good times as we used to have when you sat here and told stories, and let me run on like a school-boy."

"You have better company, that's all. I'm not such a fool that I can't see it. You have better times, lad,—if I don't."

"Then all you did for me before she came was for pity's sake! Who's in the ditch now, getting all the favor you used to show to me?"

The voice and manner with which these words were spoken produced an effect not readily yielded to, though the surgeon was perfectly aware that his emotion was unperceived and unguessed by the man on the bed there, who was investigating a difficulty which had puzzled him.

So we have come to *this* point. Away down at Frere's Landing, amid scenes of anguish, tribulation, and death, where elect souls did minister, there was found ministration by these elect souls in their own behalf.

They had gained a "Landing-Place" that was sacred ground, and if Philosophy and Science would also stand there they must

put their shoes from off their feet, for the ground was holy. Priests whose right it was to stand within the veil were servants there; and day by day, as they discerned each other's work, it was not required of them always to dwell upon the nature of sacrifice.

Each, in such work as now was occupying the doctor and Miss Ames, had need of the other's strengthening sympathy, day by day, and of all the consolations of friendship, such as royal souls are permitted to bestow on one another.

With the surgeon, not a young man in anything except happiness, it was as if there were broad openings, not *rents*, in the heavy leaden skies. Pure, bright lights shone along the horizon, warmth overspread the cold.

With her, perpetual and sufficient are the compensations of love. To him who plants of this it is returned out of earth, and out of heaven, in good measure, pressed down, and running over. Nay, let us not argue.

The sick man lying on his cot, the convalescent guided by her to balcony or garden, the crippled and the dying, had all to give her of their hearts' best bloom. And if it proved that there was one among these who, to her apprehension, walked in white, like an angel, of whom she asked no thanks, no praise, only aid and sympathy, what mortal should look surprise? The constant, the pure, the alive through all generations, the Alive Forever, will not. And the rest may apologize for overhearing a story not intended for their ears.

It happened one evening that the surgeon and Miss Ames

met outside the hospital doors, near the old sea-wall. They were walking in no haste, watching, it seemed, the flight of the brave little sea-birds, as they made their way now above and now among the breakers. After the heart-trying labors of the day, an hour like this was full of balm to those who were now entered on its rest. But it was not secure from invasion. Even now a voice was shouting to the surgeon, and he heard it, though he walked on as if he were determined not to hear. He had taken to himself this hour; he had earned it, he needed it; surely the world could go on for one hour without him!

But the importunity of the call was not to be resisted. So, because the irresistible must be met, the surgeon stood still and looked around. A poor little fellow was making toward him with all speed.

"Mail for you, sir," he said, as he came nearer, and he gave a package of newspapers, and one little letter, into the surgeon's hands.

So Miss Ames and he sat down on the stone wall to scan those newspapers, and the surgeon opened his note.

Obviously a scrawl from some poor fellow who had obtained a discharge on account of sickness, and gone home. It was not rare for the surgeon to receive such missives from the men who had been under his charge. Wonderful was the influence he gained over the majority of his patients. Wonderful? No. The man of meanest talents, who gives himself body and spirit to a noble work, can no more fail of his great reward, than the seasons of

their glory. Never man on this Landing thought meanly of the hospital surgeon's skill, or questioned his right to rank among the ablest of his tribe,—no man, and certainly not the woman who was making a hero out of him, to her heart's great content.

While Miss Ames looked at the papers, he proceeded, without much interest in the business, to open and read his note.

One glance down the blurred and blotted page served to arrest his attention, in a way that letters could not always do. Here was not a cup of cold water to sip and put aside. He glanced at Miss Ames. She was absorbed in a report of "the situation," getting items of renown out of one column and another, which should ease many an aching body, smooth many a sick man's pillow, ere the night-lamps were lighted in the wards.

If she had chanced to look up at him just then, while he, with scared, astonished eyes, was glancing at her, it is impossible to say what words might have escaped him, or what might have forever been prevented utterance. But she was not looking. What heavenly angel turned her eyes away?

And now, before him whose prerogative was Victory, what vision did arise? An apocalyptic vision: blackness of darkness forever, and side by side with chaos, fair fields of living green, through which a young girl walked towards a womanhood as fair as hers who sat beside him. Unconscious of wrong that child, and yet how deeply, how variously wronged! If he had meditated a great robbery, he could not have quailed in the light of the discovered enormity as he did now before the vision of his Janet.

Years upon years of struggle and of conquest could hardly give to the surgeon of Frere's a more notable victory, one which could fill his soul with a serener sense of triumph, than this hour gave, when he sat on the old stone wall that guarded shore from sea, with the child's letter in his hands, which had not miscarried, but had moved straight, straight—do not Divine providences always?—as an arrow to its mark.

Out of the secret place of strength he came, and he held that letter open towards Miss Ames.

"Here's something to be thought of," said he, endeavoring to speak in a natural and easy tone of voice. "I don't know that I could ask for better counsel than yours. My little girl has written me a letter. I didn't know that she could write. See what work she has made of it. But what sort of parents can she have, do you think, twelve years old, and writing a thing like that?"

Miss Ames laid aside, or rather, to speak correctly, she *dropped* the newspapers. There was nothing in all their printed columns to compare with this item of intelligence,—that the surgeon had a living wife and a living daughter. She took the letter he was holding towards her, and said, "Indeed, Doctor," quite as naturally as he had spoken. But she did not look at him. She read the letter,—every misspelled word of it,—then she said: "Perhaps it doesn't say much for the parents. But something—I should think a great deal—for the child. Strange you didn't tell me about her before. But I like to have her introduce herself."

"You do!"

"Promotion, eh!" she was looking the scrawl over again.

The word, as she pronounced it, was not an interrogation. Miss Ames seemed to be musing, yet with no activity of curiosity, on the one idea which had evidently possessed the child's mind in writing.

There was silence for a moment after this ejaculation; then the surgeon spoke.

"I enlisted as a private," said he, speaking with a difficulty that might not have been manifest to any ordinary hearer. "My daughter did not know that I had a profession; but my diploma satisfied the Department when my promotion was spoken of. When I became a live man in the service, I wished to serve where I could bring the most to pass, and it was not in camp, or on the field,—except as a healer." He looked at his watch as he uttered these last words, and arose as if his hour of rest had expired; but then, instead of taking one step forward, he turned and looked at Miss Ames, and she seemed to hear him saying, "Is this a time for flight?"

He answered that question, for he had asked it of himself, by sitting down again.

"I *ought* to take a few minutes to myself," he said, with grave deliberation, "I shall have no time like this to speak of my child, —for her, I mean"; and if, while he spoke thus, he lacked perfect composure, the hour was his, and he knew it. "More than a dozen years ago," he continued, "I went to Dalton. I was sick and dying, as I thought. Janet's mother nursed me through a fever, and was

the means of saving my life. I married her. I was grateful for the care she had taken of me; and while regaining my strength, during that September and October, I fell into the mistake of thinking that it was she who made the world seem beautiful to me again, and life worth keeping. But you have seen enough since you have been in this hospital to understand that this war has been salvation to a good many men, as it will prove to the nation. I enlisted as much as anything to get away from—where I was. The Devil himself couldn't hold me there any longer. He had managed things long enough. The child is capable of love, you see. Can you help us? I don't know, but I think you were sent from above to do it, somehow. I see—I must live for Janet. When I think that she might live in the same world where you do, that I have no right to surround her with any other conditions —does God take me for a robber? No! for he managed to get this letter to me when—" He stopped speaking,—it seemed as if he were about to look at his watch again; but instead of that, he said "Good evening" to Miss Ames, and bowed, and walked back towards the hospital.

His assistant gathered up the newspapers, and then sat down again and looked out towards the sea. The tide was coming in. She sat awhile and watched the great waves lift aloft the graceful branches of green and purple sea-weed, and saw the stormy petrels going to and fro, and listened to the ocean's roar. She was sounding deeper depths than those awful caverns which were hidden by the green and shining water from her eyes.

If Janet Saunders, child of Nancy Elkins, at that moment felt a thrill of joy, and broke forth into singing, would you deem the fact inconsequent, not to be classed among the wonders of telegraphic achievement?

I think her little cold, pinched, meagre life—nay, *lot*—was brightened consciously on that great day of being,—that the sun felt warmer, and the skies looked fairer than they ever had before. The destiny which had seemed to be in the hands or charge of no one on earth was in the hands of two as capable as any in this world for services of love.

But now what was to be done by Dr. Saunders? Every man and woman sees the "situation." For the present, of course, he was sufficiently occupied; he was in the service of his country. But when these urgent demands on his time, patience, and humanity, which were now incessant, should no longer be made, because the country had need of him no longer,—what then? Men mustered out of service generally went home; family and neighborhood claimed them. What family, what neighborhood, claimed him? His very soul abhorred the thought of Dalton, where he had died to life; where he had buried his manhood. The very thought that the neighbors would not be able to recognize him was a thought which made him say to himself they never *should* recognize him. He would *not* be identified as the poor creature who went out of Dalton with one hope, and only one,—that the first day's engagement might see him lying among the unnamed and unknown dead. But if the neighbors and his wife exposed to him

relations which he swore he would not degrade himself so far as to resume, what was to become of his daughter? That was more easily managed. He could send her away from home to school, if he could find a lady in the land who would compassionate that neglected little girl, and teach her, and train her, and be a mother to her.

Miss Ames knew such a one. Let the little girl be sent to Charlestown to Miss Hall, Miss Ames's dear friend, and no better training than she would have in her school could be found for her throughout the land. Miss Ames gave this advice the day she went away from Frere's, for she had decided, for her brother, that he never would recover his strength until he was removed to a cooler climate. So they were going on a government transport, which would sail for Charlestown direct. This little business in regard to Janet Saunders could be managed by her immediately on arrival home. And so the surgeon wrote a letter, which he sent by his assistant, to Miss Hall, and another to the minister of Dalton, and another still to Janet and her mother. And all these concerned little Jenny; and all this grew out of the letter written in the blacksmith's shop, and the doctor's recovered integrity.

But the question yet remained, What could be done for Nancy? If education in that direction were possible,—to what purpose? That she might become his equal when the strength of his hope that he had done with her was lying merely in this, that they were unequal? But hope,—what had he to do with hope, especially with such a hope as this? What had he to do with hope,

who had come forth from Dalton as from a pit of despair? There were no foes like those of his own household; he was hoping that for all time he had rid himself of them. That would have been desertion, in point of fact. Well; but all that a man hath will he give for his life. He was safely distant from that place of disaster and death; but he must recognize his home duties, at least by the maintenance of his family. Yes, that he would do. He began to consider how much was due to him for services rendered to the government,—for the first time to consider.

So, long before winter came, Nancy Saunders found herself on intimate terms with the minister and his wife,—for the minister had received his letters from the surgeon, and promptly accepted his commission, securing comfortable winter quarters for Nancy, and escorting Janet to Charlestown, after his wife had aided the doctor's wife in preparing the child for boarding-school. All these changes and transactions excited talk in Dalton. Every kind of rumor went abroad that you can imagine; and it was currently believed at last that the doctor had made a fortune by some army contract. So well persuaded of this fact was his wife, that, as time wore on, she began to think, and to say, that, if such was the case, she didn't know why she should be kept on short allowance, and to inquire among the neighbors the easiest and the shortest route from Dalton to Frere's Landing. Nobody seemed able to answer the question so well as Ezra Cramer; and he assured her that she would lose her head before she got half through the army lines which stretched between her and the hospital. But then Ezra was

a born know-nothing, said Nancy,—that everybody knew.

Walking up and down the sea-wall, night after night, during the hour of rest he appropriated to himself,—knowing that these things were accomplished, for in due time letters came informing him of the fulfilment of his wishes,—the surgeon had ample leisure for considering and reconsidering this case. It was one that would not stay disposed of. What adjournments were made! what exceptions were taken! and what appeals to higher courts were constantly being made!

As often as a scrawl came from Colonel Ames reporting progress, and the plans he and his sister were making, the deeds they were doing, the grand-jury was sworn and the surgeon arraigned before it; the chief justice came into court, and all the witnesses, and the accusation was read. Then the counsel for the defendant and the counsel for the plaintiff appeared. But, with every new trial of the case, new charges and new specifications were brought forward and made, and it was equal to being in chancery. If the war lasted through a generation, it was likely that the surgeon's suit would last as long.

This was as notable a divorce case as ever was made public.

On the plaintiff's behalf the argument ran thus: Here was a man, a gentleman by birth, education, and profession, legally united to a woman low-born, low-bred, and so ignorant that she could neither read nor write. He had come to the neighborhood where she lived, to the door of the very house she occupied, sick in body and in mind. Disappointments and ill-health had reduced

him to the shadow of himself in person, and his mind, of course, shared his body's disaffection.

A sick person, as all experience in practice has proved over and over again, is hardly to be called a responsible being. Invalids love and hate without reason,—which is contrary, he said, as he stood in the presence of the court,—contrary to what is done among persons in sound health.

Under the shelter of her uncle's roof he had lain for weeks, sick of a fever. He was saved alive, but so as by fire. This girl waited on him through that time as a servant. He was thrown chiefly on her hands,—no other person could be spared to wait on the poor stranger. She comforted him. Her ways were not refined and gentle as if she had been taught refinement and tenderness by precept or example. She had strong good-sense. So far as she understood his orders, she obeyed them. When he could not give any, she made use of her own judgment, and sought first of all his comfort. She was kind. In her rough honesty and unwearied attention he found cause for gratitude.

Rising for the first time from his bed of sickness, he would have fallen if she had not lifted him and laid him back upon his bed. When he became strong enough to stand, but not without support, she gave him that support. She assisted him from the little room, and the little house when the walls became intolerable to him, and it happened to be in the early morning of a day so magnificent that it seemed another could never be made like it. He could not forget how the world looked that morning; how the

waters shone; how the islands stood about; how the surrounding hills were arrayed in purple glory; how the birds sang. This land to which he was a stranger, which he had seen before only on that night when he came in the dark to her uncle's door, looked like Paradise to him; he gazed and gazed, and silent tears ran down his pale face through the furrows of his wasted cheeks. She saw them shining in his beard, and said something to soothe him in a comforting way, as any woman would have spoken who saw any creature in weakness and pain. The manner or the word, whatever it was, expressed a superiority of health, if of no other kind, and he was in no condition to investigate either its quality or its degree.

When, with voice feeble and broken as a sick child's, he thanked her for all she had done, and she answered that it was nothing but a pleasure, and he need not thank her, he did not forthwith forget that she had watched day and night over him for nearly two months; that many a time weariness so overpowered her that she sat and slept in the broad daylight, and looked paler than when he lay like a dead weight on her hands.

He remembered in court, and could not deny it, that when, believing that this was destiny as it was also pleasure, he asked the girl to marry him, she answered, "No,"—as if she did not trust what he said, that she was necessary to his happiness. She told him that he did not belong in Dalton, and that he would not be happy there with her and her people. He answered that all he desired to know was whether she loved him. By and by he was

able to gather from the answers she gave, as well as failed to give, all he desired to know, and they were married.

And, since he was beginning life anew, it was shown in court, nothing of the old life should enter into this of Dalton. He buried his profession in the past, and undertook other labors,—labors like those of Uncle Elkins; he would abide on that level where he found himself on his recovery, and make no effort to lift his wife to that he had renounced. She was a child of Nature. He would learn life anew of her; but he failed of success in all his undertakings. Shall a man attempt to extenuate his failures? It seemed new to him; he acknowledged it in open court, that from the day of his entrance into Dalton to the day he left it, he was under some enchantment there. And if an insane man is not to be held responsible in law for his offences, he had the amplest title to a quitclaim deed from that which had grown out of the Dalton experience.

So the lower courts disposed of the case. He was free. But after a time the suit was carried up before superior powers, and thus the advocate for the defendant showed cause on the new trial.

She was living among the people of whom she had been born. In person she was attractive as any girl to be found on all the lake or hillside; a rosy-cheeked, fair-faced, fair-haired blue-eyed girl, with a frank voice and easy address. She had a "Hail fellow! well met!" for every man, woman, and child of the vicinity. She had lovers, all the way up from her childhood, rustic admirers,

and one who looked at her from a not far distance, who dressed himself in his best and went to her uncle's house on Sundays and other holidays, and who was courting Nancy after his fashion, with all plans for their future marked out fully in his mind,—and these would have fulfilment if his suit were only successful; and in regard to that he had no fears or doubts.

Until this stranger came to Uncle Elkins's house! During his long sickness the young lover was helpful in many ways to Nancy. But he began to be suspicious by and by of the results of this much waiting. At last, before he was himself ready to do it, he asked Nancy to be his wife; but he was too late. She had "given her word" to the poor fellow whom she had lured back from Death's door.

The court was admonished to take cognizance of this fact, that, if Nancy had married the man in whom her heart had been interested up to the time when the stranger came, she would have married in her own sphere, a man of her own rank, and would have loved him as he did her, with an equal love; they would have lived out their lives, animating them with skirmishes and small warfare, and winning victories over each other, which would have proved disastrous as defeats to neither.

It would have been no high crime to such a man that Nancy was ignorant up and down through the range of knowledge; he would not have turned away in disgust from his endeavors to teach her, if she took it into her head to learn, though she dropped and regained the ambition through every winter of her life. He

would have plodded on in his accustomed ways, would have protected his wife and child from starvation and cold, without imagining that a husband and father could retire from his position as such, or abrogate his duties. No vague expectations in regard to herself, no bitter disappointment in regard to him, would have attended her. The very changes in her character, which had made her not to be endured,—how far was he whose name she bore responsible for them? She had been accustomed to thrift and labor, she saw in him idleness and waste of power and life. She had exhausted the resources readiest to her hand in vain, and had only then given up her expectation.

It was not be denied that it was humiliation and wrath to live with her; but her husband had sought her,—she had not sought him! If he could plead for himself the force and constraint of circumstances, should not the same defence be set up for her? And what might not patience, and better management, and gentler and more noble demeanor towards her, have done for her? Was *he* the same man he was when he went away from Dalton? Was he the same man in Dalton that he had been in his youth? Was it not out of the pit that he himself had been digged? It became evident that the arguments for the defendant were producing a result in court. The judge on his throne, as well as the grand-jury, listened to the argument in favor of the woman. And at last the case was decided; for the judge charged the jury, that, if it could be shown that there was mere incompatibility, it was the business of the superior mind to make straight a highway

for the Lord across those lives. Let every valley be exalted, every hill be brought low.

Dr. Saunders *acquiesced* in this verdict, and wrote a letter to his wife. He knew she could not read it, but he knew also that she could procure it to be read to her. He filled it with accounts of his situation, occupation, expectation; and he sent her money. He said that, if he could get a furlough, he might run up North for a few days, as other men went home who could get leave of absence, to see that those whom he had left behind him were doing well; and they would both perhaps be able to go and see their daughter Jenny, or else they might have her home for a holiday. He wrote a letter saying these things and others, and any wife might have been proud to receive such from her husband, "in the war."

And when he had sent it, he looked for no answer. This was a kind of giving which must look for no return. And yet an answer was sent him. He did not receive it, however, it was sent at so late a date; he was then on his way to Dalton.

When the whistle of the miniature boat which plied the lake sent a warning along the hillside that a passenger was on board who wished to land, or that mail was to be sent ashore, a small boat was rowed from the Point by a lad who was lingering about, waiting to know if any such signal were to come, and one passenger stood at the head of the ladder, waiting for him to come alongside. This was Dr. Saunders, who, having been rowed ashore, walked three miles down the road, and up along

the mountain, to the Dalton neighborhood.

The first man whom he met as he walked on was the blacksmith, who had been instrumental in getting Jenny's letter written. He was sitting in front of his shop, alone. There was nothing about this man who was walking into Dalton to excite a suspicion in the mind of the shrewdest old inhabitant who should meet him that his personality was familiar to Dalton eyes. He might safely ask what questions he would, and pursue his way if he chose to do it. Nobody would recognize him.

The doctor lingered as he went past the shop; but the blacksmith did not speak, and he walked on; and he passed others, his old neighbors, as he went. This was hardly pleasant, though it might be the thing he desired.

He walked on until he came to the red farm-gate of Farmer Elkins, Nancy's uncle. There he stopped. Under the chestnut-trees, before the door, the farmer sat. The doctor walked in, and towards him like a man at home, and said, "Good evening, Uncle."

The wrinkled old farmer looked up from his drowse. He had hardly heard the words spoken; but the voice that spoke had in it a tone that was familiar, were it not for the cheeriness of it; and—but no! one glance at the figure before him assured him of anything rather than Saunders! Yet the old man, either because of his vague expectation or because of the confusion of his half-awake condition, said something audibly, of which the name of Nancy, and her name alone, was intelligible.

"Well, where *is* Nancy," said the other, laying his hand on the farmer's shoulder in a manner calculated to dissipate his dream.

The old man looked at the doctor with serious, suspicious eyes, scanned him from head to foot, and there was a dash of anger, of unbelief, of awe, and of deference in the spirit with which he said, "If you're Saunders, I'm glad you've come, but you might 'a' come sooner."

"You're right, and you're wrong, Uncle. I'm Saunders, true enough. But I couldn't come before,—this is my first furlough."

"Did you get the letter?"

"No, what letter? Who wrote to me?"

The judge and the jury looked down from the awful circle, in the midst of which stood Saunders, and surveyed the little hard-faced, yellow-haired farmer, with eyes which seemed intent on searching him through all his shadowy ambiguity. If only he would make such answer as any other man in all the land might expect,—thought the prisoner,—"Why, your wife, of course." The doctor was prepared to believe in a miracle. Since he went away his wife might have been spurred on by the ambition to rival her daughter, who was being educated. She perhaps had learned to write, and in her pride had written to her husband!

The answer Elkins gave was the only one of which the doctor's mind had taken no thought.

"Nancy died a month ago." There the old man paused. But as the doctor made no answer, merely stood looking at him, he went on. "She got your letter first, though, Nancy did. I think,

if anything could a-hindered her dying, that would. She came out here to read your letter," (he did not say to hear it read, and Saunders noticed that,) "and my folks, she found, was busy, and nobody was round to talk it over with her, so nothing could stop her, but she put right in and worked till night, and on top o' that she would go back to the village, and it was raining, and so dark you could scurce see the road; but she'd made up her mind to go South and find you, and so we couldn't persuade her to stop over night. But the next day, when she come back to tell us when she was going to start for Dixie, she was took down right here, that suddin. There's been a good deal of that sickness round here sense, and fatalish, most always. But I tell 'em it took the smartest of the lot off first, when it took Nancy."

The doctor stood there when the teller of this story had stopped speaking. He was not looking at *him*,—of that the old man was certain. He seemed to be looking nowhere, and to see nothing that was near or visible.

"Come into the house and take something," said Uncle Elkins, for he began to be alarmed.

"Was Janet here?" asked the doctor, as if he had not heard the invitation.

"We had to send for her. Nancy was calling for her all the time," said Farmer Elkins, as if he doubted how far this story ought to be continued, for he did not understand the man before him. He only knew that once he had fallen down on his door-step, and lain helpless beneath his roof hard on to two months; and he

watched him now as if he anticipated some renewal of that old attack,—and there was no Nancy now to nurse, and watch, and slave herself to death for him; for that was the way folk in the house were talking about Nancy and her husband in these days.

"Did she get here in time? Who went after her?"

"The minister went. We had 'em here a fortnight,—well on to 't."

"What, the minister, too?"

"No, I mean the young woman who come from Charlestown with Jenny. Her name was—" He paused long, endeavoring to recall that name. It trembled on the doctor's lips, but he did not utter it. At last said Farmer Elkins, "There! it was Miss Amey, —Amey? Yes. She took the little girl back hum with her. It was right in there, in the room where you had that spell of fever of yourn. She got you well through that! Ef anything could 'a' brought her through that turn, your letter would. It came across my mind once that, as she'd saved *your* life, may be you was going to save hern by that are letter! And she was so determined to get to your hospital!"

"Thank God she got the letter, any way!" exclaimed the doctor.

At that the old man walked into the house to set its best cheer before Nancy's husband, who looked so much like a mourner as he stood there under the trees, with the bitter recollections of the past overwhelming every other thought and feeling of the present.

Because it seemed to him that he could not sleep under old Elkins's roof that night, he remained there and slept there,—in the room where his fever ran its course,—in the room where Nancy died.

Because this story of the last months of her life was as gall and wormwood to him, he refused it not, but went over it with his wife's relations, and helped them spread a decent pall, according to the custom of mourners; over what had been.

Was he endeavoring to deceive himself and others into the belief that he was a mourning man? He was but accepting the varied humiliations of death; for they do not all pertain to the surrendering life. He was not thinking at all of his loss through her, nor of his gain by her. He was thinking, as he stood above the grave of fifteen years, how high Disgrace and Misery had heaped the mound. So bitterly he was thinking of the past, it was without desire that he at last arose and faced the future.

When he went to Charlestown—for a man on furlough had no time to lose—and saw his Janet in the Colonel's house,—Miss Ames took Janet home with her after that death and funeral,—when he saw how fair and beautiful a promise of girlhood was budding on the poor neglected branch, he said to his assistant, "Will you keep this child with you until the war is over? I am afraid to touch her, or interfere with her destiny. It has been so easy for me to mar, so hard to mend."

Miss Ames kept the child; the war ended. The surgeon then, like other men, returned home; his regiments were disbanded,

and now, one duty, to mankind and the ages, well discharged, another, less conspicuous, but as urgent, claimed him. There was Janet, and Janet's mother,—she who had risen, not from the grave indeed, but from the midst of dangers, sacredly to guard and guide the child.

On his way to them he asked himself this question, "How many times must a man be born before he is fit to live?"

He did not answer that question; neither can I.

He informed his assistant of the court's decision in reference to the plea of "incompatibility," and she said that the justice of the sentence was not to be controverted with success by any counsellor on earth; but the reader may smile, and say that it was not difficult to come to this decision under the circumstances.

We will not argue that point. I had only the story to tell, and have told it.

ON TRANSLATING THE DIVINA COMMEDIA

THIRD SONNET

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;
And Beatrice, again at Dante's side,
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!

WOMAN'S WORK IN THE MIDDLE AGES

"King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."

Sir Bedivere's heart misgave him twice ere he could obey the dying commands of King Arthur, and fling away so precious a relic. The lonely maiden's industry has been equalled by many of her mortal sisters, sitting, not indeed "upon the hidden bases of the hills," but in all the varied human habitations built above them since the days of King Arthur.

The richness, beauty, and skill displayed in the needle-work of the Middle Ages demonstrate the perfection that art had attained; while church inventories, wills, and costumes represented in the miniatures of illuminated manuscripts and elsewhere, amaze us by the quantity as well as the quality of this department of woman's work. Though regal robes and heavy church vestments were sometimes wrought by monks, yet to woman's taste and skill the greater share of the result must be attributed, the professional hands being those of nuns and their pupils in convents. The life of woman in those days

was extremely monotonous. For the mass of the people, there hardly existed any means of locomotion, the swampy state of the land in England and on the Continent allowing few roads to be made, except such as were traversed by pack-horses. Ladies of rank who wished to journey were borne on litters carried upon men's shoulders, and, until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, few representations of carriages appear. Such a conveyance is depicted in an illustration of the Romance of the Rose, where Venus, attired in the fashionable costume of the fifteenth century, is seated in a *chare*, by courtesy a chariot, but in fact a clumsy covered wagon without springs. Six doves are perched upon the shafts, and fastened by mediæval harness. The goddess of course possessed superhuman powers for guiding this extraordinary equipage, but to mere mortals it must have been a slow coach, and a horribly uncomfortable conveyance even when horses were substituted for doves. An ordinance of Philip le Bel, in 1294, forbids any wheel carriages to be used by the wives of citizens, as too great a luxury. As the date of the coach which Venus guides is two hundred years later, it is difficult to imagine what style of equipage belonged to those ladies over whom Philip le Bel tyrannized.

With so little means of going about, our sisters of the Middle Ages were perforce domestic; no wonder they excelled in needle-work. To women of any culture it was almost the only tangible form of creative art they could command, and the love of the beautiful implanted in their souls must find some expression.

The great pattern-book of nature, filled with graceful forms, in ever-varied arrangement, and illuminated by delicate tints or gorgeous hues, suggested the beauty they endeavored to represent. Whether religious devotion, human affection, or a taste for dress prompted them, the needle was the instrument to effect their purpose. The monogram of the blessed Mary's name, intertwined with pure white lilies on the deep blue ground, was designed and embroidered with holy reverence, and laid on the altar of the Lady-chapel by the trembling hand of one whose sorrows had there found solace, or by another in token of gratitude for joys which were heightened by a conviction of celestial sympathy. The pennon of the knight—a silken streamer affixed to the top of the lance—bore his crest, or an emblematic allusion to some event in his career, embroidered, it was supposed, by the hand of his lady-love. A yet more sacred gift was the scarf worn across the shoulder, an indispensable appendage to a knight fully equipped. The emotions of the human soul send an electric current through the ages, and women who during four years of war toiled to aid our soldiers in the great struggle of the nineteenth century felt their hearts beat in unison with hers who gave, with tears and prayers, pennon and scarf to the knightly and beloved hero seven hundred years ago.

Not only were the appointments of the warriors adorned by needle-work, but the ladies must have found ample scope for industry and taste in their own toilets. The Anglo-Saxon women as far back as the eighth century excelled in needle-work,

although, judging from the representations which have come down to us, their dress was much less ornamented than that of the gentlemen. During the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries there were few changes in fashion. A purple gown or robe, with long yellow sleeves, and coverchief wrapt round the head and neck, frequently appears, the edges of the long gown and sleeves being slightly ornamented by the needle. How the ladies dressed their hair in those days is more difficult to decide, as the coverchief conceals it. Crisping-needles to curl and plat the hair, and golden hair-cauls, are mentioned in Saxon writings, and give us reason to suppose that the locks of the fair damsels were not neglected. In the eleventh century the embroidery upon the long gowns becomes more elaborate, and other changes of the mode appear.

From the report of an ancient Spanish ballad, the art of needle-work and taste in dress must have attained great perfection in that country while our Anglo-Saxon sisters were wearing their plain long gowns. The fair Sybilla is described as changing her dress seven times in one evening, on the arrival of that successful and victorious knight, Prince Baldwin. First, she dazzles him in blue and silver, with a rich turban; then appears in purple satin, fringed and looped with gold, with white feathers in her hair; next, in green silk and emeralds; anon, in pale straw-color, with a tuft of flowers; next, in pink and silver, with varied plumes, white, carnation, and blue; then, in brown, with a splendid crescent. As the fortunate Prince beholds each transformation, he is bewildered (as well he may be) to choose

which array becomes her best; but when

> "Lastly in white she comes, and loosely
> Down in ringlets floats her hair,
> 'O,' exclaimed the Prince, 'what beauty!
> Ne'er was princess half so fair.'"

Simplicity and natural grace carried the day after all, as they generally do with men of true taste. "Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone," says that nice observer of human nature, Jane Austen. "Man only knows man's insensibility to a new gown." We hope, however, that the dressmakers and tirewomen of the fair Sybilla, who had expended so much time and invention, were handsomely rewarded by the Prince, since they must have been most accomplished needle-women and handmaids to have got up their young lady in so many costumes and in such rapid succession.

A very odd fashion appears in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, of embroidering heraldic devices on the long gowns of the ladies of rank. In one of the illuminations of a famous psalter, executed for Sir Geoffery Loutterell, who died in 1345, that nobleman is represented armed at all points, receiving from the ladies of his family his tilting helmet, shield, and *pavon*. His coat of arms is repeated on every part of his own dress, and is embroidered on that of his wife, who wears also the crest of her own family.

Marie de Hainault, wife of the first Duke of Bourbon, 1354,

appears in a corsage and train of ermine, with a very fierce-looking lion rampant embroidered twice on her long gown. Her jewels are magnificent. Anne, Dauphine d'Auvergne, wife of Louis, second Duke of Bourbon, married in 1371, displays an heraldic dolphin of very sinister aspect upon one side of her corsage, and on the skirt of her long gown,—which, divided in the centre, seems to be composed of two different stuffs, that opposite to the dolphin being powdered with *fleurs de lis*. Her circlet of jewels is very elegant, and is worn just above her brow, while the hair is braided close to the face. An attendant lady wears neither train nor jewels, but her dress is likewise formed of different material, divided like that of the Dauphine. Six little parrots are emblazoned on the right side, one on her sleeve, two on her corsage, and three on her skirt. The fashion of embroidering armorial bearings on ladies' dresses must have given needle-women a vast deal of work. It died out in the fifteenth century.

It was the custom in feudal times for knightly families to send their daughters to the castles of their suzerain lords, to be trained to weave and embroider. The young ladies on their return home instructed the more intelligent of their female servants in these arts. Ladies of rank in all countries prided themselves upon the number of these attendants, and were in the habit of passing the morning surrounded by their workwomen, singing the *chansons à toile*, as ballads composed for these hours were called.

Estienne Jodelle, a French poet, 1573, addressed a fair lady

whose cunning fingers plied the needle in words thus translated: —

> "I saw thee weave a web with care,
> Where at thy touch fresh roses grew,
> And marvelled they were formed so fair,
> And that thy heart such nature knew.
> Alas! how idle my surprise,
> Since naught so plain can be:
> Thy cheek their richest hue supplies,
> And in thy breath their perfume lies;
> Their grace and beauty all are drawn from thee."

If needle-work had its poetry, it had also its reckonings. Old account-books bear many entries of heavy payments for working materials used by industrious queens and indefatigable ladies of rank. Good authorities state that, before the sixth century, all silk materials were brought to Europe by the Seres, ancestors of the ancient Bokharians, whence it derived its name of Serica. In 551, silk-worms were introduced by two monks into Constantinople, but the Greeks monopolized the manufacture until 1130, when Roger, king of Sicily, returning from a crusade, collected some Greek manufacturers, and established them at Palermo, whence the trade was disseminated over Italy.

In the thirteenth century, Bruges was the great mart for silk. The stuffs then known were velvet, satin (called samite), and taffeta,—all of which were stitched with gold or silver thread.

The expense of working materials was therefore very great, and royal ladies condescended to superintend sewing-schools.

Editha, consort of Edward the Confessor, was a highly accomplished lady, who sometimes intercepted the master of Westminster School and his scholars in their walks, questioning them in Latin. She was also skilled in all feminine works, embroidering the robes of her royal husband with her own hands.

Of all the fair ones, however, who have wrought for the service of a king, since the manufacture of Excalibur, let the name of Matilda of Flanders, wife of William the Conqueror, stand at the head of the record, in spite of historians' doubts. Matilda, born about the year 1031, was carefully educated. She had beauty, learning, industry; and the Bayeux tapestry connected with her name still exists, a monument of her achievements in the art of needle-work. It is, as everybody knows, a pictured chronicle of the conquest of England,—a wife's tribute to the glory of her husband.

As a specimen of ancient stitchery and feminine industry, this work is extremely curious. The tapestry is two hundred and twenty-two feet in length and twenty in width. It is worked in different-colored worsteds on white cloth, now brown with age. The attempts to represent the human figure are very rude, and it is merely given in outline. Matilda evidently had very few colors at her disposal, as the horses are depicted of any hue,—blue, green, or yellow; the arabesque patterns introduced are rich and varied.

During the French Revolution, this tapestry was demanded by the insurgents to cover their guns; but a priest succeeded in concealing it until the storm had passed. Bonaparte knew its value. He caused it to be brought to Paris and displayed, after which he restored the precious relic to Bayeux.

We have many records of royal ladies who practised and patronized needle-work. Anne of Brittany, first wife of Louis XII. of France, caused three hundred girls, daughters of the nobility, to be instructed in that art under her personal supervision. Her daughter Claude pursued the same laudable plan. Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre, and mother of Henry IV. of France, a woman of vigorous mind, was skilled also in the handicraft of the needle, and wrought a set of hangings called "The Prison Opened," meaning that she had broken the bonds of the Pope.

The practice of teaching needle-work continued long at the French court, and it was there that Mary of Scotland learned the art in which she so much excelled. When cast into prison, she beguiled the time, and soothed the repentant anxieties of her mind, with the companionship of her needle. The specimens of her work yet existing are principally bed-trimmings, hangings, and coverlets, composed of dark satin, upon which flowers, separately embroidered, are transferred.

The romances and lays of chivalry contain many descriptions of the ornamental needle-work of those early days. In one of the ancient ballads, a knight, after describing a fair damsel whom he

had rescued and carried to his castle, adds that she "knewe how to sewe and marke all manner of silken worke," and no doubt he made her repair many of his mantles and scarfs frayed and torn by time and tourney.

The beautiful Elaine covered the shield of Sir Launcelot with a case of silk, upon which devices were braided by her fair hands, and added, from her own design,

> "A border fantasy of branch and flower,
> And yellow-throated nestling in the nest."

When he went to the tourney she gave him a red sleeve "broidered with great pearls," which he bound upon his helmet. It is recorded that, in a tournament at the court of Burgundy in 1445, one of the knights received from his lady a sleeve of delicate dove-color, which he fastened on his left arm. These sleeves were made of a different material from the dress, and generally of a richer fabric elaborately ornamented; so they were considered valuable enough to form a separate legacy in wills of those centuries. Maddalena Doni, in her portrait, painted by Raphael, which hangs in the Pitti Palace at Florence, wears a pair of these rich, heavy sleeves, fastened slightly at the shoulder, and worn over a shorter sleeve belonging to her dress. Thus we see how it was that a lady could disengage her sleeve at the right moment, and give it to the fortunate knight.

The art of adorning linen was practised from the earliest times.

Threads were drawn and fashioned with the needle, or the ends of the cloth unravelled and plaited into geometrical patterns. St. Cuthbert's curious grave-clothes, as described by an eyewitness to his disinterment in the twelfth century, were ornamented with cut-work, which was used principally for ecclesiastical purposes, and was looked upon in England till the dissolution of the monasteries as a church secret. The open-work embroidery, which went under the general name of cut-work, is the origin of lace.

The history of lace by Mrs. Bury Palliser, recently published in London, is worthy of the exquisite fabric of which it treats. The author has woven valuable facts, historical associations, and curious anecdotes into the web of her narrative, with an industry and skill rivalling the work of her mediæval sisters. The illustrations of this beautiful volume are taken from rare specimens of ancient and modern lace, so perfectly executed as quite to deceive the eye, and almost the touch.

Italy and Flanders dispute the invention of point or needle-made lace. The Italians probably derived the art of needle-work from the Greeks who took refuge in Italy during the troubles of the Lower Empire. Its origin was undoubtedly Byzantine, as the places which were in constant intercourse with the Greek Empire were the cities where point-lace was earliest made. The traditions of the Low Countries also ascribe it to an Eastern origin, assigning the introduction of lace-making to the Crusaders on their return from the Holy Land. A modern writer, Francis

North, asserts that the Italians learned embroidery from the Saracens, as Spaniards learned the same art from the Moors, and, in proof of his theory, states that the word *embroider* is derived from the Arabic, and does not belong to any European language. In the opinion of some authorities, the English word *lace* comes from the Latin word *licina*, signifying the hem or fringe of a garment; others suppose it derived from the word *laces*, which appears in Anglo-Norman statutes, meaning braids which were used to unite different parts of the dress. In England the earliest lace was called *passament*, from the fact that the threads were passed over each other in its formation; and it is not until the reign of Richard III. that the word *lace* appears in royal accounts. The French term *dentelle* is also of modern date, and was not used until fashion caused *passament* to be made with a toothed edge, when the designation *passament dentelé* appears.

But whatever the origin of the name, lace-making and embroidery have employed many fingers, and worn out many eyes, and even created revolutions. In England, until the time of Henry VIII., shirts, handkerchiefs, sheets, and pillow-cases were embroidered in silks of different colors, until the fashion gave way to cut-work and lace. Italy produced lace fabrics early in the fifteenth century; and the Florentine poet, Firenzuola, who flourished about 1520, composed an elegy upon a collar of raised point lace made by the hand of his mistress. Portraits of Venetian ladies dated as early as 1500 reveal white lace trimmings; but at that period lace was, professedly, only made by nuns for

the service of the Church, and the term *nuns' work* has been the designation of lace in many places to a very modern date. Venice was famed for point, Genoa for pillow laces. English Parliamentary records have statutes on the subject of Venice laces; at the coronation of Richard III., fringes of Venice and mantle laces of gold and white silk appear.

> "To know the age and pedigrees
> Of points of Flanders and Venise,"

depends much upon the ancient pattern-books yet in existence. Parchment patterns, drawn and pricked for pillow lace, bearing the date of 1577, were lately found covering old law-books, in Albisola, a town near Savona, which was a place celebrated for its laces, as we infer from the fact that it was long the custom of the daughters of the nobles to select these laces for their wedding shawls and veils. There is a pretty tradition at Venice, handed down among the inhabitants of the Lagoons, which says that a sailor brought home to his betrothed a branch of the delicate coralline known as "mermaids' lace." The girl, a worker in points, attracted by the grace of the coral, imitated it with her needle, and after much toil produced the exquisite fabric which, as Venice point, soon became the mode in all Europe. Lace-making in Italy formed the occupation of many women of the higher classes, who wished to add to their incomes. Each lady had a number of workers, to whom she supplied patterns, pricked

by herself, paying her workwomen at the end of every week, each day being notched on a tally.

In the convent of Gesù Bambino, at Rome, curious specimens of old Spanish conventual work—parchment patterns with lace in progress—have been found. They belonged to Spanish nuns, who long ago taught the art of lace-making to novices. Like all point lace, this appears to be executed in separate pieces, given out by the nuns, and then joined together by a skilful hand. We see the pattern traced, the work partly finished, and the very thread left, as when "Sister Felice Vittoria" laid down her work, centuries ago. Mrs. Palliser received from Rome photographs of these valuable relics, engravings from which she has inserted in her history of lace. Aloe-thread was then used for lace-making, as it is now in Florence for sewing straw-plait. Spanish point has been as celebrated as that of Flanders or Italy. Some traditions aver that Spain taught the art to Flanders. Spain had no cause to import laces: they were extensively made at home, and were less known than the manufacture of other countries, because very little was exported. The numberless images of the Madonna and patron saints dressed and undressed daily, together with the albs of the priests and decorations of the altars, caused an immense consumption for ecclesiastical uses. Thread lace was manufactured in Spain in 1492, and in the Cathedral of Granada is a lace alb presented to the church by Ferdinand and Isabella, —one of the few relics of ecclesiastical grandeur preserved in the country. Cardinal Wiseman, in a letter to Mrs. Palliser, states

that he had himself officiated in this vestment, which was valued at ten thousand crowns. The fine church lace of Spain was little known in Europe until the revolution of 1830, when splendid specimens were suddenly thrown into the market,—not merely the heavy lace known as Spanish point, but pieces of the most exquisite description, which could only have been made, says Mrs. Palliser, by those whose time was not money.

Among the Saxon Hartz Mountains is the old town of Annaburg, and beneath a lime-tree in its ancient burial-ground stands a simple monument with this inscription:—

"Here lies Barbara Uttman, died on the 14th of January, 1576, whose invention of lace in the year 1561 made her the benefactress of the Hartz Mountains.

> 'An active mind, a skilful hand,
> Bring blessings down on Fatherland.'"

Barbara was born in 1514. Her parents, burghers of Nuremberg, removed to the Hartz Mountains for the purpose of working a mine in that neighborhood. It is said that Barbara learned the art of lace-making from a native of Brabant, a Protestant, whom the cruelties of the Duke of Alva had driven from her country. Barbara, observing the mountain girls making nets for the miners to wear over their hair, took great interest in the improvement of their work, and succeeded in teaching them a fine knitted *tricot*, and afterwards a lace ground. In 1561, having

procured aid from Flanders, she set up a work-shop in Annaburg for lace-making. This branch of industry spread beyond Bavaria, giving employment to thirty thousand persons, and producing a revenue of one million thalers.

Italy and Flanders dispute the invention of lace, but it was probably introduced into both countries about the same time. The Emperor Charles V. commanded lace-making to be taught in schools and convents. A specimen of the manufacture of his day may be seen in his cap, now preserved in the museum at Hôtel Cluny, Paris. It is of fine linen, with the Emperor's arms embroidered in relief, with designs in lace, of exquisite workmanship. The old Flemish laces are of great beauty and world-wide fame.

Many passages in the history of lace show how severely the manufacture of this beautiful fabric has strained the nerves of eye and brain. The fishermen's wives on the Scottish coast apostrophize the fish they sell, after their husbands' perilous voyages, and sing,

"Call them lives o' men."

Not more fatal to life are the blasts from ocean winds than the tasks of laborious lace-makers; and this thought cannot but mingle with our admiration for the skill displayed in this branch of woman's endless toil and endeavor to supply her own wants and aid those who are dear to her, in the present as well as in

the past centuries.

In the British Museum there is a curious manuscript of the fourteenth century, afterwards translated "into our maternall englisshe by me William Caxton, and emprynted at Westminstre the last day of Januer, the first yere of the regne of King Richard the thyrd," called "the booke which the Knight of the Towere made for the enseygnement and teching of his doughtres."

The Knight of the Tower was Geoffory Landry, surnamed De la Tour, of a noble family of Anjou. In the month of April, 1371, he was one day reflecting beneath the shade of some trees on various passages in his life, and upon the memory of his wife, whose early death had caused him sorrow, when his three daughters walked into the garden. The sight of these motherless girls naturally turned his thoughts to the condition of woman in society, and he resolved to write a treatise, enforced by examples of both good and evil, for their instruction. The state of society which the "evil" examples portray might well cause a father's heart to tremble.

The education of young ladies, as we have before stated, was in that age usually assigned to convents or to families of higher rank. It consisted of instruction in needle-work, confectionery, surgery, and the rudiments of church music. Men were strongly opposed to any high degree of mental culture for women; and although the Knight of the Tower thinks it good for women to be taught to read their Bibles, yet the pen is too dangerous an instrument to trust to their hands. The art of writing

he disapproves,—"Better women can naught of it." Religious observances he strictly recommends; but we shudder at some of the stories which even this well-meaning father relates as illustrations of the efficacy of religious austerities. Extravagance in dress prevailed at that time among men and women to such a degree that Parliament was appealed to on the subject in 1363. From the Knight's exhortations on the subject, this mania seems to have affected the women alarmingly, and the examples given of the passion for dress appear to surpass what is acknowledged in our day. Yet the vast increase of materials, as well as the extended interests and objects opened to woman now, renders the extravagance of dress in the Middle Ages far less reprehensible.

The record of woman's work in the Middle Ages includes far more than the account of what her needle accomplished. The position of the mistress of a family in those centuries was no sinecure. When we look up at castles perched on rocks, or walk through the echoing apartments of baronial halls, we know that woman must have worked there with brain and fingers. The household and its dependencies, in such mansions, consisted of more than a score of persons, and provisions must be laid in during the autumn for many months. As we glance at the enormous fireplaces and ovens in the kitchens of those castles and halls, and remember the weight of the armor men wore, we can readily imagine that no trifling supply of brawn and beef was needed for their meals; and the sight of a husband frowning out of one of those old helmets because the dinner was scanty, must

have been a fearful trial to feminine nerves. The title of "Lady" means the "Giver of bread" in Saxon, and the lady of the castle dispensed food to many beyond her own household.

The task of preparing the raiment of the family devolved upon the women; for there were no travelling dealers except for the richest and most expensive articles. Wool, the produce of the flock, was carded and spun; flax was grown, and woven into coarse linen; and both materials were prepared and fashioned into garments at home. Glimpses of domestic life come down to us through early legends and records, some of which modern genius has melodized. Authentic history and romantic story often show us that women of all ranks were little better, in fact, than household drudges to these splendid knights and courtly old barons. The fair Enid sang a charming song as she turned her wheel; but when Geraint arrived, she not only assisted her mother to receive him, but, by her father's order, led the knight's charger to the stall, and gave him corn. If she also relieved the noble animal of his heavy saddle and horse-furniture, gave him water as well as corn, and shook down the dry furze for his bed, she must have had the courage and skill of a feminine Rarey; and we fear her dress of faded silk came out of the stable in a very dilapidated condition. After the horse was cared for, Enid put her wits and hands to work to prepare the evening meal, and spread it before her father and his guest. The knight, indeed, condescended to think her "sweet and serviceable"!

The women of those days are often described only as they

appeared at festivals and tournaments,—Ladies of Beauty, to whom knights lowered their lances, and of whom troubadours sang. They had their amusements and their triumphs, doubtless; but they also had their work, domestic, industrial, and sanitary. They knew how to bind up wounds and care for the sick, and we read many records of their knowledge in this department. Elaine, when she found Sir Launcelot terribly wounded in the cave, so skilfully aided him that, when the old hermit came who was learned in all the simples and science of the times, he told the knight that "her fine care had saved his life,"—a pleasing assurance that there were medical men in those days, as well as in our own, who expressed no unwillingness to allow a woman credit for success in their own profession.

Illuminated books sometimes show us pictures of women of the humbler ranks of life at their work. On the border of a fine manuscript of the time of Edward IV. there is the figure of a woman employed with her distaff, her head and neck enveloped in a coverchief. The figure rises out of a flower. In a manuscript of 1316, a country-woman is engaged in churning, dressed in a comfortable gown and apron, the gown tidily pinned up, and her head and neck in a coverchief. The churn is of considerable height, and of very clumsy construction. A blind beggar approaches her, led by his dog, who holds apparently a cup in his mouth to receive donations. In another part of the same volume is a beautiful damsel with her hair spread over her shoulders, while her maid arranges her tresses with a comb of

ivory set in gold. The young lady holds a small mirror, probably of polished steel, in her hand. Specimens of these curious combs and mirrors yet exist in collections. A century later we see a pretty laundress, holding in her hands a number of delicately woven napkins, which look as if they might have come out of the elaborately carved napkin press of the same period in the collection of Sir Samuel Myrick at Goodrich Court.

Although the Knight of the Tower disapproved of young ladies being taught to write, there were women whose employment writing seems to have been; but these were nuns safely shut up from the risk of *billets-doux*. In Dr. Maitland's Essays on the Dark Ages, he quotes from the biography of Diemudis, a devout nun of the eleventh century, a list of the volumes which she prepared with her own hand, written in beautiful and legible characters, to the praise of God, and of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the patrons of the monastery, which was that of Wessobrunn in Bavaria. The list comprises thirty-one works, many of them in three or four volumes; and although Diemudis is not supposed to have been an authoress, she is certainly worthy of having her name handed down through eight centuries in witness of woman's indefatigable work in the scriptorium. One missal prepared by Diemudis was given to the Bishop of Treves, another to the Bishop of Augsburg, and one Bible in two volumes is mentioned, which was exchanged by the monastery for an estate.

We can picture to ourselves Diemudis in her conventual dress, seated in the scriptorium, with her materials for chirography.

The sun, as it streams through the window, throws a golden light over the vellum page, suggesting the rich hue of the gilded nimbus, while in the convent garden she sees the white lily or the modest violet, which, typical of the Madonna, she transfers to her illuminated borders. Thus has God ever interwoven truth and love with their correspondences of beauty and development in the natural world, which were open to the eyes of Diemudis eight hundred years ago, perhaps as clearly as to our own in these latter days. That women of even an earlier century than that of Diemudis were permitted to read, if not to write, is proved by the description of a private library, given in the letters of C. S. Sidonius Apollinaris, and quoted in Edwards's "History of Libraries." This book-collection was the property of a gentleman of the fifth century, residing at his castle of Prusiana. It was divided into three departments, the first of which was expressly intended for the ladies of the family, and contained books of piety and devotion. The second department was for men, and is rather ungallantly stated to have been of a higher order; yet, as the third department was intended for the whole family, and contained such works as Augustine, Origen, Varro, Prudentius, and Horace, the literary tastes of the ladies should have been satisfied. We are also told that it was the custom at the castle of Prusiana to discuss at dinner the books read in the morning, —which would tend to a belief that conversation at the dinner-tables of the fifth century might be quite as edifying as at those of the nineteenth.

A few feminine names connected with the literature of the Middle Ages have come down to us. The lays of Marie de France are among the manuscripts in the British Museum. Marie's personal history, as well as the period when she flourished, is uncertain. Her style is extremely obscure; but in her Preface she seems aware of this defect, yet defends it by the example of the ancients. She considers it the duty of all persons to employ their talents; and as her gifts were intellectual, she cast her thoughts in various directions ere she determined upon her peculiar mission. She had intended translating from the Latin a good history, but some one else unluckily anticipated her; and she finally settled herself down to poetry, and to the translation of numerous lays she had treasured in her memory, as these would be new to many of her readers. Like other literary ladies, she complains of envy and persecution, but she perseveres through all difficulties, and dedicates her book "to the King."

Marie was born in France. Some authorities suppose she wrote in England during the reign of Henry III., and that the patron she names was William Langue-espée, who died in 1226; others, that this *plus vaillant* patron was William, Count of Flanders, who accompanied St. Louis on his first crusade in 1248, and was killed at a tournament in 1251. A later surmise is that the book was dedicated to Stephen, French being his native language. Among the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Royale at Paris, is Marie's translation of the fables which Henry Beauclerc translated from Latin into English, and which Marie

renders into French. A proof that Marie's poems are extremely ancient is deduced from the names in one of these fables applied to the wolf and the fox. She uses other names than those of Ysengrin and Renard, which were introduced as early as the reign of Cœur de Lion, and it would seem that she could not have failed to notice these remarkable names, had they existed in her time. A complete collection of the works of Marie de France was published in Paris in 1820, by M. de Roquefort, who speaks of her in the following terms: "She possessed that penetration which distinguishes at first sight the different passions of mankind, which seizes upon the different forms they assume, and, remarking the objects of their notice, discovers at the same time the means by which they are attained." If this be a true statement, the acuteness of feminine observation has gained but little in the progress of the centuries, and her literary sisters of the present era can hardly hope to eclipse the penetration of Marie de France.

The Countesses de Die, supposed to be mother and daughter, were both poetesses. The elder lady was beloved by Rabaud d'Orange, who died in 1173, and the younger is celebrated by William Adhémar, a distinguished troubadour. He was visited on his death-bed by both these ladies, who afterwards erected a monument to his memory. The younger countess retired to a convent, and died soon after Adhémar.

In the Harleian Collection is a fine manuscript containing the writings of Christine de Pisan, a distinguished woman of the

fourteenth century. Her father, Thomas de Pisan, a celebrated *savant* of Bologna, had married a daughter of a member of the Grand Council of Venice. So renowned was Thomas de Pisan that the kings of Hungary and France determined to win him away from Bologna. Charles V. of France, surnamed the Wise, was successful, and Thomas de Pisan went to Paris in 1368; his transfer to the French court making a great sensation among learned and scientific circles of that day. Charles loaded him with wealth and honors, and chose him Astrologer Royal. According to the history, as told by Louisa Stuart Costello, in her "Specimens of the Early Poetry of France," Christine was but five years old when she accompanied her parents to Paris, where she received every advantage of education, and, inheriting her father's literary tastes, early became learned in languages and science. Her personal charms, together with her father's high favor at court, attracted many admirers. She married Stephen Castel, a young gentleman of Picardy, to whom she was tenderly attached, and whose character she has drawn in most favorable colors. A few years passed happily, but, alas! changes came. The king died, the pension and offices bestowed upon Thomas de Pisan were suspended, and the Astrologer Royal soon followed his patron beyond the stars. Castel was also deprived of his preferments; and though he maintained his wife and family for a time, he was cut off by death at thirty-four years of age.

Christine had need of all her energies to meet such a succession of calamities, following close on so brilliant a career.

Devoting herself anew to study, she determined to improve her talents for composition, and to make her literary attainments a means of support for her children. The illustrations in the manuscript volume of her works picture to us several scenes in Christine's life. In one, the artist has sliced off the side of a house to allow us to see Christine in her study, giving us also the exterior, roof, and dormer-windows, with points finished by gilt balls. The room is very small, with a crimson and white tapestry hanging. Christine wears what may be called the regulation color for literary ladies,—blue, with the extraordinary two-peaked head-dress of the period, put on in a decidedly strong-minded manner. At her feet sits a white dog, small, but wise-looking, with a collar of gold bells round his neck. Before Christine stands a plain table, covered with green cloth; her book, bound in crimson and gold, in which she is writing, lies before her.

Christine's style of holding the implements,—one in each hand,—and the case of materials for her work which lies beside her, are according to representations of the *miniatori caligrafi* at their labors; and, as the art of caligraphy was well known at Bologna, so learned a man as Thomas de Pisan must have been acquainted with it, and would have caused his talented daughter to be instructed in so rare an accomplishment. It is not therefore unreasonable to believe that, in the beautiful volume now in the British Museum, the work of Christine's hand, as well as the result of her genius, is preserved. The next picture shows us Christine presenting her book to Charles VII. of France, who is

dressed in a black robe edged with ermine; he wears a golden belt, order, and crown. The king is seated beneath a canopy, blue, powdered with *fleurs de lis*. Four courtiers stand beside him, dressed in robes of different colors,—one in pink, and wearing a large white hat of Quaker-like fashion. Christine has put on a white robe over her blue dress, perhaps as a sign of mourning, —she being then a widow. A white veil depends from the peaks of her head-dress. She kneels before the king, and presents her book.

Another and more elaborate picture represents the repetition of the same ceremony before Isabelle of Bavaria, queen of Charles VI. We are here admitted into the private royal apartments of the fourteenth century. The hangings of the apartment consist of strips, upon which are alternately emblazoned the armorial devices of France and Bavaria. A couch or bed, with a square canopy covered with red and blue, having the royal arms embroidered in the centre, stands on one side of the room. The queen is seated upon a lounge of modern shape, covered to correspond with the couch. She is dressed in a splendid robe of purple and gold, with long sleeves sweeping the ground, lined with ermine; upon her head arises a structure of stuffed rolls, heavy in material and covered with jewels, which shoots up into two high peaks above her forehead. Six ladies are in waiting, two in black and gold, with the same enormous head-gears. They sit on the edge of her Majesty's sofa, while four ladies of inferior rank and plainer garments are contented with low

benches. Christine reappears in her blue dress, and white-veiled, peaked cap. She kneels before the queen, on a square carpet with a geometrical-patterned border, and presents her book. A white Italian hound lies at the foot of the couch, while beside Isabelle sits a small white dog, resembling the one we saw in Christine's study. As we can hardly suppose Christine would bring her pet on so solemn an occasion,—far less allow him to jump up beside the queen,—and as this little animal wears no gold bells, we are led to suppose that little white dogs were in fashion in the fourteenth century.

We cannot say that the portrait of Isabelle gives us any idea of her splendid beauty; but "handsome is that handsome does," and as Isabelle's work was a very bad one in the Middle Ages, we will say no more about her.

Christine was but twenty-five years of age when she became a widow, and her personal charms captivated the heart of no less a personage than the Earl of Salisbury, who came ambassador from England to demand the hand of the very youthful princess, Isabelle, for his master.

They exchanged verses; and although Salisbury spoke by no means mysteriously, the sage Christine affected to view his declarations only in the light of complimentary speeches from a gallant knight. The Earl considered himself as rejected, bade adieu to love, and renounced marriage. To Christine he made a very singular proposal for a rejected lover,—that of taking with him to England her eldest son, promising to devote himself to

his education and preferment. The offer was too valuable to be declined by a poor widow, whose pen was her only means of supporting her family. That such a proof of devotion argued a tenderer feeling than that of knightly gallantry must have been apparent to Christine; but for reasons best understood by herself, —and shall we not believe with a heart yet true to her husband's memory?—she merely acknowledged the kindness shown to her son; and the Earl and his adopted boy left France together. When Richard II. was deposed, Henry Bolingbroke struck off the head of the Earl of Salisbury. Among the papers of the murdered man the lays of Christine were found by King Henry, who was so much struck with their purity and beauty, that he wrote to the fair authoress of her son's safety, under his protection, and invited her to his court.

This invitation was at once a compliment and an insult, for the hand that sent it was stained with the blood of her friend. Christine, however, had worldly wisdom enough to send a respectful, though firm refusal, to a crowned head, a successful soldier, and one, moreover, who held her son in his power. Feminine tact must have guided her pen, for Henry was not offended, and twice despatched a herald to renew the invitation to his court. She steadily declined to leave France, but managed the affair so admirably that she at last obtained the return of her son from England.

Like her father, Thomas de Pisan, Christine seems to have been sought as an ornament of their courts by several rulers.

Henry Bolingbroke could not gain her for England, and the Duke of Milan in vain urged her to reside in that city. Seldom has a literary lady in any age received such tempting invitations; yet Christine refused to leave France, although her own fortunes were anything but certain. The Duke of Burgundy took her son under his protection, and urged Christine to write the history of her patron, Charles V. of France. This was a work grateful to her feelings, and she had commenced the memoir when the death of the Duke deprived her of his patronage, and threw her son again upon her care, involving her in many anxieties. But Christine bore herself through all her trials with firmness and prudence, and her latter days were more tranquil. She took a deep interest in the affairs of her adopted country, and welcomed in her writings the appearance of the Maid of Orleans. We believe, however, that she was spared the pain of witnessing the last act in that drama of history, where an innocent victim was given up by French perfidy to English cruelty.

The deeds of Joan of Arc need no recital here. A daughter of France in the nineteenth century had a soul pure enough to reflect the image of the Maid of Orleans, and with a skilful hand she embodied the vision in marble. The statue of Joan of Arc, modelled by the Princess Marie, adorns—or rather sanctifies—the halls of Versailles.

Of woman's work as an artist in the early centuries we have a curious illustration in a manuscript belonging to the Bibliothèque Royale at Paris, which exhibits a female figure

painting the statue of the Madonna. The artist holds in her left hand a palette, which is the earliest notice of the use of that implement with which antiquarians are acquainted. The fashion of painting figures cut in wood was once much practised, and we see here the representation of a female artist of very ancient date. Painting, music, and dancing come under the designation of accomplishments; yet to obtain distinction in any of these branches implies a vast amount of work. An illustration of Lygate's Pilgrim shows us a young lady playing upon a species of organ with one hand; in the other she holds to her lips a mellow horn, through which she pours her breath, if not her soul; lying beside her is a stringed instrument called a sawtry. Such varied musical acquirements certainly argue both industry and devotion to art. Charlemagne's daughters were distinguished for their skill in dancing; and we read of many instances in the Middle Ages of women excelling in these fine arts.

The period of time generally denominated the Middle Ages commences with the fifth century, and ends with the fifteenth. We have in several instances ventured to extend the limits as far as a part of the sixteenth century, and therefore include among female artists the name of Sofonisba Anguisciola, who was born about 1540. She was a noble lady of Cremona, whose fame spread early throughout Italy. In 1559, Philip II. of Spain invited her to his court at Madrid, where on her arrival she was treated with great distinction. Her chief study was portraiture, and her pictures became objects of great value to kings and popes.

Her royal patrons of Spain married their artist to a noble Sicilian, giving her a dowry of twelve thousand ducats and a pension of one thousand ducats, beside rich presents in tapestries and jewels. She went with her husband to Palermo, where they resided several years. On the death of her husband the king and queen of Spain urged her to return to their court; but she excused herself on account of her wish to visit Cremona. Embarking on board a galley for this purpose, bound to Genoa, she was entertained with such gallantry by the captain, Orazio Lomellini, one of the merchant princes of that city, that the heart of the distinguished artist was won, and she gave him her hand on their arrival at Genoa.

History does not tell us whether she ever revisited Cremona, but she dwelt in Genoa during the remainder of her long life, pursuing her art with great success. On her second marriage, her faithful friends in the royal family of Spain added four hundred crowns to her pension. The Empress of Germany visited Sofonisba on the way to Spain, and accepted from her hand a little picture. Sofonisba became blind in her old age, but lost no other faculty. Vandyck was her guest when at Genoa, and said that he had learned more of his art from one blind old woman than from any other teacher. A medal was struck in her honor at Bologna. The Academy of Fine Arts at Edinburgh contains a noble picture by Vandyck, painted in his Italian manner. It represents individuals of the Lomellini family, and was probably in progress when he visited this illustrious woman, who had

become a member of that house.

Stirling in his "Artists of Spain" states that few of Sofonisba's pictures are now known to exist, and that the beautiful portrait of herself, probably the one mentioned by Vasari in the wardrobe of the Cardinal di Monte at Rome, or that noticed by Soprani in the palace of Giovanni Lomellini at Genoa, is now in the possession of Earl Spencer at Althorp. The engraving from this picture, in Dibdin's *Ædes Althorpianæ*, lies before us. We think the better of kings and queens who prized a woman with eyes so clear, and an expression of such honesty and truth. The original is said to be masterly in its drawing and execution. Sofonisba is represented in a simple black dress, and wears no jewels. She touches the keys of a harpsichord with her beautiful hands; a duenna-like figure of an old woman stands behind the instrument, apparently listening to the melody.

Whatever of skill or fame women have acquired through the ages in other departments, the nursery has ever been an undisputed sphere for woman's work. Nor have we reason to think that, in the centuries we have been considering, she was not faithful to this her especial province. The cradle of Henry V., yet in existence, is one of the best specimens of nursery furniture in the fourteenth century which have come down to us. Beautifully carved foliage fills the space between the uprights and stays and stand of the cradle, which is not upon rockers, but apparently swings like the modern crib. On each of these uprights is perched a dove, carefully carved, whose quiet influences had not much

effect on the infant dreams of Prince Hal.

Henry was born at Monmouth, 1388, and sent to Courtfield, about seven miles distant, where the air was considered more salubrious. There he was nursed under the superintendence of Lady Montacute, and in that place this cradle was preserved for many years. It was sold by a steward of the Montacute property, and, after passing through several hands, was in the possession of a gentleman near Bristol when engraved for Shaw's "Ancient Furniture," in 1836.

In the Douce Collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, there is figured in a manuscript of the fifteenth century a cradle, with the baby very nicely tucked up in it. The cradle resembles those of modern date, and is upon rockers. Another illustration of the same period shows us a cradle of similar form, the "cradle, baby, and all" carried on the head of the nursery-maid,—a caryatid style of baby-tending which we cannot suppose to have been universal. The inventories of household furniture belonging to Reginald de la Pole, after enumerating some bed-hangings of costly stuff, describe: "Item, a pane" (piece of cloth which we now call counterpane) "and head-shete for y^{e} cradell, of same sute, bothe furred with mynever,"—giving us a comfortable idea of the nursery establishment in the De la Pole family. The recent discovery in England of that which tradition avers to be the tomb of Canute's little daughter, speaks of another phase in nursery experience. The relics, both of the cradle and the grave, bear their own record of the joys, cares, and sorrows of the nursery in

vanished years, and bring near to every mother's heart the baby that was rocked in the one, and the grief which came when that little form was given to the solemn keeping of the other.

A miniature in an early manuscript, called "The Birth of St. Edmund," gives us a picture of a bedroom and baby in the fifteenth century. St. Edmund himself was born five hundred years previous to that date; but as saints and sinners look very much alike when they are an hour old, we can imagine that, as far as the baby is concerned, it may be considered a portrait. A pretty young woman, in a long white gown, whose cap looks like magnified butterflies' wings turned upside down, sits on a low seat before the blazing wood-fire burning on great andirons in a wide fireplace, which, instead of a mantelpiece, has three niches for ornamental vases. She holds the baby very nicely, and, having warmed his feet, has wrapt him in a long white garment, so that we see only his little head in a plain night-cap, surrounded indeed by the gilded nimbus of his saintship, which we hope was not of tangible substance, as it would have been an appendage very inconvenient to all parties concerned. The mother reposes in a bed with high posts and long curtains. She must have been a woman of strong nerves to have borne the sight of such stupendous head-gears as those in which her attendants are nid-nodding over herself and baby, or to have supported the weight of that which she wears by way of night-cap. One nurse raises the lady, while another, who, from her showy dress, appears to be the head of the department, offers a tall, elegant, but

very inconveniently-shaped goblet, which contains, we presume, mediæval gruel. The room has a very comfortable aspect, from which we judge that some babies in those times were carefully attended.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.