

THE DEPRESSED CONDITION OF FEMALES.

Miss Sarah M. Grimke, is publishing a series of letters in the Boston Spectator, in vindication of the rights of woman; who, she appears to think, are suffering very grievous disabilities in this country. Her ideas of what women ought to be, may be inferred from the examples she has given, of a few who have surmounted "the obstacles which impede the progress of woman towards that high state of mental cultivation for which her Creator prepared her." She says,—

"As the age of knight-errantry declined, men began to take pride in learning, and women shared the advantages which this change produced. Women preached in public, supported controversies, published and defended theses, filled the chairs of philosophy and law, harangued the Popes in Latin, wrote Greek and read Hebrew. Nuns wrote poetry, women of rank became divines, and young girls publicly exhorted Christian princes to take up arms for the recovery of the holy sepulchre. Hypatia, daughter of Theon of Alexandria, succeeded her father in the government of the Platonic school, and filled with reputation a seat where many celebrated philosophers had taught. The people regarded her as an oracle, and magistrates consulted her in all important cases. No reproach was ever uttered against the perfect purity of her manners. She was unembarrassed in large assemblies of men because their admiration was tempered with the most scrupulous respect. In the 13th century, a young lady of Bologna, pronounced a Latin oration at the age of 23. At 25, she took the degree of doctor of laws, and began publicly to expound Justinian. At 30, she was elevated to a professor's chair, and taught the law to a crowd of scholars from all nations. Italy produced many learned and gifted women, among whom perhaps none was more celebrated than Victoria Colonia, Marchioness of Pescara. In Spain, Isabella of Rosera, converted Jews by her eloquent preaching."

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Women have doubtless done all these things as represented by Miss Grimke, and yet I would not choose that my wife, or sister or daughter should "preach in public, support controversies, fill chairs of philosophy, or harangue Popes in Latin" or any other language. Nor should I greatly admire a woman who could boast of being unembarrassed in haranguing large assemblies of men. And, however agreeable a husband a Doctor of Laws may make, it is exceedingly doubtful whether any man would fancy a Doctor of Laws for a wife.

This attempt to break down the distinction between the province of men and women, is entitled to little commendation. That sphere is best for man or woman in which he or she can contribute most to the welfare and happiness of others, and in that sphere each will find the greatest happiness. And thus each sex should be kept to those duties in which the good of the whole will be best consulted. And whenever women of extraordinary powers of mind arise, they will find ample scope for the exercise of all their talents in the appropriate duties of their sex.

Was the age in which these talented women lived and acted on the broad arena of public life, more fruitful in domestic happiness—did it produce better citizens or extend wider the boundaries of human knowledge, than other ages, when women kept themselves in a distinct sphere of action? What was there in the learning of that period of substantial value? How much has come down to us worthy of a place in our libraries?

When Miss Grimke will prove to us that the human family will be rendered happier by females ceasing to give their attention to their families and domestic duties, and embarking in the bustle of public life, then we may well be inclined to enter

upon such an experiment as she proposes. Home, in any well regulated society, must be the place to which we look for by far the largest portion of earthly happiness. It is to this that our hearts must cling, and here must our treasured affections be poured out. Break up in the families of our country these deep and perennial sources of pleasure, and no ligaments can be found strong enough to bind together the restless spirits of men.

Home will be a place of attraction no longer than woman presides there. It is she who makes it what it is. It is her influence that subdues the turbulence and softens the ruggedness of the other sex. It is she who forms and shapes our first ideas, who implants the first principles in our breasts, and generally gives a direction to character which lasts through life. It is a great mistake in Miss Grimke, to imagine that the sphere allotted to woman, according to the present organization of society, is less important than that occupied by the other sex. It is a sphere which must be occupied by one of the sexes, and in the very nature of things can only be occupied to any good purpose by her. Would Miss Grimke insinuate that she is placed there only to add to the comfort and pleasures of the other sex? Just as well may it be said, that man is placed in his situation only to increase the comfort and pleasures of woman, relieving her from toils and employments to which, if modesty be an essential part of woman's character, she is unfitted. She can never assume that attitude in society which this lady would give her, without losing all that is attractive—all that can draw forth the pure love and respect of our sex, and of course, all that can give her a civilizing and refining influence.

If both the sexes are to occupy the same spheres, with the single exception of bodily labor, and, of course, to be engaged in the same employments so far as physical strength will permit, there would remain no advantages from the formation of different sexes, but the mere continuance of our race.—An iron age would csmé upon the world, destroying every earthly joy, and making existence in this world, amidst the outbreaks of unrestrained and impetuous passions, but the prelude to the madness and woe of the world of despair.