

Woman's Century.

Victor Hugo says, "this is woman's century." It has been left to our time to realize more fully the ideal as to woman's true place and work. Men have emphasized the thought that man was not made for woman, but woman for man, and that if he had not needed her she would not have been created. It was long thought unnecessary for a woman to have any of the education or training given to man. She was to be subject to him, to be guided by him, and to lose her personality in him. As Milton says,

"For contemplation he, and valor formed,
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace,
He for God only, she for God in him."

From the beginning of the nineteenth century woman has risen into a higher and broader field of thought and action. It is more clearly recognized now that woman has a work of her own in the world that man cannot do for her. While it may always be left to man to lead in the subjection of physical forces woman will lead in the higher realms of moral and spiritual.

In virtue of her motherhood, she is the character-builder of the race, the teacher of mankind, and to do this work she needs the broadest culture and the largest liberty. Women have made a great advance in all directions in the last one hundred years and especially in our own country.

One of the marked signs of woman's progress is her changed relations to law and government. To-day woman has a legal existence, she can inherit property, she can make a will, she can sue and be sued in the Courts. Formerly she was denied these privileges. She has gained in recognition as a citizen. In one of the States she has the full right of suffrage and in others the partial right. Women now hold a number of official positions of trust and responsibility. In educational affairs there has also been rapid progress. At one time little thought was given to woman's education, but the world has learned that woman has a mind that must be cultivated in order to secure the continued progress of the people.

Fifty years ago Oberlin was the only college in the United States open to women, while now a large proportion of the principal colleges and universities have co-education giving both sexes equal opportunities to prepare for the work of life.

To-day a woman can enter many of the professions or go into many kinds of business on an almost equal footing with man. In 1840 there were only seven occupations open to women while now there are three hundred and forty-two. The census of 1880 reports two thousand four hundred and eighty-two women physicians, one hundred and sixty women ministers, and seventy-five women lawyers.

Fifty years ago woman's efforts to study medicine met with malignant opposition and the doors of most of the medical colleges were closed against her. Now six hospitals of our country, all of which are in successful operation, have been founded and are managed by women physicians.

Woman's entrance to this profession was most bitterly opposed but by proving her special fitness for it she earned her welcome.

Though her success in the ministry and law has not been so striking she is making great progress in them and proving her fitness for professional life. In the teaching profession woman has long maintained a pre-eminence. As to any trade, or occupation, or profession, we may adopt the sentiment of Margaret Fuller who said, "Let a woman be a sea-captain if she will." Woman was not made either superior or inferior to man but equal to him. Matthew Henry said, "Woman was taken out of man, not out of his head to top him nor out of his feet to be trampled under foot; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved".

The broader culture and wider views of the modern woman has added a charm to her womanliness that was lacking before. Women who have opinions of their own and are not afraid to express them are to become the rule instead of the exception,

and yet they are just as lady like and as modest as their more quiet grandmothers.

The standards have changed, in former years it was thought in modest for a woman to address a public gathering whether social, religious, or political, while now she is listened to with respect.

These strong women of ours have taken hold of the work of the world with a will. Many of the leading reforms of the day were started by women and are supported by them even through the bitterest opposition. In the great temperance movement of this country, women have been leaders, and one of the grandest organizations in the world is their association for this work. Another sign of the times is the recent organization, under the leadership of Miss Grace Dodge, of working women for their mutual advancement.

Woman has also made her mark in the literature of the age. She is novelist, poet, historian, and philosopher and has earned fame in all alike. She has attained eminence in the fine arts and is a musician, actress, and artist.

When we read of the work of Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, and Frances Willard, do we call them superfluous? It is one of the glories of this age that self-respecting, high-minded, independent, single women are doing so much to make the world better and still retaining the noblest traits of womanhood.

Prominent among the noted names of this century are those of women. George Eliot, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Mitchell, and Louisa Alcott will not be forgotten with the century.

It has been well said that, "we read of the age of illustrious men, but we live in the age of illustrious women." When we see the great advance women have made in the present century we can well ask for its cause. When was it that woman commenced her upward march, and what made the great change in her condition? The whole world of

ancient times, the world of Paganism, united in dishonoring and degrading women, but with the birth of Christianity came the early morning light of woman's day.

A woman's commission will help manage the Columbian Exposition and a woman architect has already prepared plans for a splendid building devoted to woman's work.

Though woman has shown her fitness for these varied employments she still retains her pre-eminence as the homemaker. The homes of the civilized nations to-day are happier and better than those of the ancient time. In her home work a woman uses all the strength and energy she has gained by years of study.

She uses her refined taste and cultivated fingers for beautifying the home and adding to its comfort. The power of making a place home-like is an instinct with women, and cannot be bred out of ^{them}, but is rather increased by education. Someone has said, "Man can build a house or a palace, but it takes a woman to make a home."

As at all times, there are some women who do not make homes for others, but now they can be of use in the world instead of being 'superfluous women.'

One of the first and most powerful effects of Christianity on the barbarous and half civilized society in Europe was the new position it gave to woman.

The more Christian the world becomes, the more liberal is its treatment of women.

The woman of Christianity is the woman of our own time, the good, true, gentle,

Christian woman, who leads men on to better deeds and nobler ambitions. This is the most Christian age and one of the most Christian countries, and the American woman leads the women of the world to-day.

Even with her present high position, she is not content, she knows she is not yet filling the place for which she was fitted.

She is still denied her place by the side of man with full and equal privileges, she is still kept just a little below.

The Persians have a legend of birds where the male and female have each one wing and can not fly alone. But on the other side there is a small muscle attached and when these are interlocked they can fly together, each with its wing.

So it is with man and woman, each is incomplete without the other. They were created for each other, to work together, not one on one plane while the other is below, but on the same level.

The modern woman with her education and energy will keep on working, using her present privileges as stepping stones to something higher. She will not go backward but will keep looking ahead for the place she knows rightfully belongs to her. We call this century hers but the next will be more entirely in her possession, as a prominent American has said, "The Coming Man is a Woman."

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