

THE DRAMA OF THE WOMAN OF GENIUS

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“THERE'S no such a person as Mrs. Harris!” exclaimed the quarrelsome friend of Dickens' Sairy Gamp, in her climax of jealousy of the much-vaunted but never-seen benefactress. “There is no woman of genius,” says de Goncourt; “women of genius are all men.” “There can never be a woman of genius,” says the author of *Sex and Character*, in whose view women are hardly human, although it is the duty of men to treat them as if they were.

This book, recently translated from the German into English and already in its third edition, is a curious testimony to the effect of prejudice upon the ability to see facts. The author, strangely precocious in his maturity of thought and style and in his wide reach of learning, yet betrays such an exaggerated and even diseased adolescence in his sex-antagonism that we do not wonder that he committed suicide before he was twenty-four years of age. What de Goncourt puts into an epigram has been laboriously wrought out in many heavy books. What Otto Weininger declares, with that intense hatred of women which the morbid ascetic has always shown, is asserted in more or less good-natured argument by many writers. In an *Essay on the Character, the Manners and the Understanding of Women in Different Ages*, published in 1781, the author, Mons. Thomas, gives it as his belief that women have never reached and never can reach that “very height of human nature from which great men have looked down and examined nature's laws, have showed to the soul the source of its ideas, assigned to reason its bounds, to motion its laws, to the universe its course; who have created sciences and aggrandized the human mind by cultivating their own.” Thus early, however, and most reasonably, Mons. Thomas raises the question, fundamental in the problem of woman's intellectual life, “If not one woman has ever raised herself to a level with the greatest men, is it the fault of education or of her nature?” Certainly the absence of women

from the highest-placed company of the Immortals in philosophy, science and art is too obvious to be discussed.

Plutarch in his account of "The Virtuous Actions of Women" gives recognition of their intellectual ability, but, moralist that he is, dwells most on the high degree of courage and honor in his chosen examples. He, however, has the insight to declare that "the talents and virtues are modified by circumstances and persons, but the source is the same"; thus linking men and women together in his company of the great and the good. He and later writers willingly grant women place among the lesser, if not among the supreme, geniuses.

At the outstart of discussion of women's intellectual attainments, it is well to remember how few are the men of first rank. Dr. Clouston, in his illuminating analysis of the "eleven orders of brain," gives the average man "four-fifths of the whole of humanity," while to the great genius he allows "only a few in each generation." To the class of "marked, all-round talent," however, he assigns one-eleventh part of the mass of mankind, and to "genius of the lesser rank" a chance to appear at any time in one to every four or five hundred of the population. It is in these two classes, that of the all-round talented, and that of the specialized genius of the secondary rank, that we count up most of the great women. For example, of the hundreds of religious sects which may be listed only a few can be placed to the credit of women as founders, and none of those is one of the great religions; but women have assisted men in establishing faiths of which they were the first and most important disciples—as in the second century of our era Apelles had his prophetess-friend, Philumene, to help him; and later, Montanus his two women assistants, Priscilla and Maximilla, who seem to have impressed even Tertullian himself with their zeal and ability. In philosophy many women appear of the second and third class, but no one great enough to found a school of thought. In poetry, Sappho, Sulpicia and Erinna lighten with their suggestion of youth and beauty the massive chorus of masculine poets of the ancient world; and in our own time Christina Rossetti and Mrs. Browning and many others wear their singing robes by right; but, as is often said, Dante and Shakespeare have no feminine

counterparts. In science, mathematics has so far proved the field of women's greatest achievements, counting many eminent women, from Laura Bassi, who graced so well her professor's chair in the University of Bologna, to Miss Herschel, whose work was so interwoven with that of her brother, that no one can know its exact scope and value. The fame of Mrs. Somerville in this branch of knowledge is secure, as is that of Constance Naden, so highly praised by Herbert Spencer as showing that "rare union of high philosophic capacity with intense acquisition," and whose untimely death probably deprived the world of one of its great expressions of feminine power. Sophie Kowalevsky, also, is accepted as a master and found her rightful place in the professor's chair in Stockholm. In music women have made a very poor showing in the field of composition, but a rich display in interpretation of song and in appreciative criticism. In literature, to which some deny the distinction of art, but which it is hard to describe adequately by any other word, women show better results; in the branch of letters, memoirs and journals excelling men, and in fiction now clearly leading the van, with Marian Evans at the head of the line. In acting, a subsidiary but important art of interpretation, women stand at the very top; and in oratory, wherever and whenever allowed by custom to practise it, they easily win first place, in point of numbers of excellent public speakers now clearly excelling the masculine side of the house. In politics and the art of government of States women have chief seats in the Pantheon. Surprise has repeatedly been expressed by students on discovering this fact, which shows how little the true genius of common womanhood itself has as yet been understood. In spite of their legal subjection to men, women have ruled and administered affairs in the family and in the smaller social groups since time began; they excel and have always excelled in power to read human nature, in detail-observation of facts and conditions and in skill in making needed social adjustments. This power, "writ large," is the power of the statesman. Hence there is the best of reasons in the practical, social capacity of women, why the great queens of history have compelled even the most reluctant historians to give them place among the leading political rulers and organizers of

the race. Democracy has not yet learned to use these innate powers of women to such advantage as aristocracy succeeded in doing. When it does, the rudely broken line of high display of women's political genius may be reunited to good effect. With this exception, and some rare but significant concessions which are beginning to be called for by such a woman as Madame Curie, women are generally required in respect to the supreme manifestation of genius to echo the plaintive humility of Anne Bradstreet, writing in 1640:

"Men can do best, and women know it well.
Preëminence in each and all is yours,
Yet grant some small acknowledgment of ours."

The failure of women to produce genius of the first rank in most of the supreme forms of human effort has been used to block the way of all women of talent and ambition for intellectual achievement in a manner that would be amusingly absurd were it not so monstrously unjust and socially harmful. A few ambitious girls in the middle of the nineteenth century in Boston, the Athens of America, want to go to High School. The Board of Education answers them, in effect: "Produce a Michael Angelo or a Plato and you shall have a chance to learn a bit of mathematics, history and literature." A few women of marked inclination toward the healing art want a chance to study in a medical school and learn facts and methods in a hospital. "Go to!" the managing officials in substance reply: "Where is your great surgeon; what supreme contribution has any woman ever made to our science?" A group of earnest students beg admission to college and show good preparation gained by hard struggle with adverse conditions. "You can't come in," the trustees respond, "until you produce a Shakespeare or a Milton." The demand that women shall show the highest fruit of specialized talent and widest range of learning before they have had the general opportunity for a common-school education is hardly worthy of the sex that prides itself upon its logic. In point of fact no one, neither the man who denies woman a proper human soul nor the woman who claims "superiority" for her sex, can have any actual basis for accurate answer to the ques-

tion, Can a woman become a genius of the first class? Nobody can know unless women in general shall have equal opportunity with men in education, in vocational choice, and in social welcome of their best intellectual work for a number of generations. So far women have suffered so many disabilities in the circumstances of their lives, in their lack of training in what Buckle calls "that preposterous system called their education," in their segregation from all the higher intellectual comradeship, in the personal and family and social hindrances to their mental growth and expression, that not even women themselves, still less men, can have an adequate idea of their possibilities of achievement. Nothing therefore is more foolish than to try to decide *a priori* the limits of a woman's capacity. What we do know is this, that there have been women of talent, and even of genius reaching near to the upper circles of the elect; and we know also that these women of marked talent have appeared whenever and wherever women have had opportunities of higher education and have been held in esteem by men as intellectual companions as well as wives and manual workers. The connection between these two facts is obvious.

Moreover we are to remember in this era of wider study and more inclusive generalization than the past has shown, that new scales of value in genius are being slowly evolved. Each critic and tabulator in the past has made his own grading of human powers and usually in accordance with his own taste or talent. The philosopher has put at the head those who have wrought out systems of thought and built a new universe out of the interior vision; the artist has given chief crown to those whose creative power has produced triumphs of the imagination; the scientist has placed first those who have discovered most of nature's secrets and put her forces at the service of man; the statesman has honored most highly those who have builded kingdoms and organized society. It so happens now that we are in need of more detailed and flexible administrative genius than has been consciously desired before, and it is not unlikely that in the revision of the lists of the Immortals which Time is always making, certain contributions of womanhood to social culture and social readjustment may loom larger than in the past. We are, how-

ever, still under the domination of the philosophic thinker, the pure scientist and the artist in making the record of genius, and women have to accept the conventional challenges of greatness as men have made them.

At this point it is well to remind ourselves not only how few are the men of supreme genius, but also how few have been fortunate enough in their biographies to get their names on the chief lists of the second rank. Not all "inglorious Miltons" were "mute." Many sang sweetly to their contemporaries, but lacked voice to echo down the ages. Doubtless many quite equal to Dr. Johnson, yet lacking his Boswell, received only a fine print recognition in a biographical dictionary. Women, far more than men, it is reasonable to suppose, have suffered hasty eclipse for want of adequate mention in the permanent records. Sappho has been sadly overworked as an instance of feminine genius; yet to be called "the poetess" as Homer was "the poet" in Greece, nearly five hundred years before our era, was not only proof of her own greatness, but also that there must have been many smaller poetesses to win her that distinction. The ancient world must also have produced numbers of women-philosophers of ability to have made a place for Hypatia at the head of a School; and her powers, which won her a martyrdom for truth equal in dignity to that of Socrates, must have had their rooting in the rich soil of the higher education of women. Indeed, we hear of over thirty "lady philosophers" and students of the most advanced learning in the School of Pythagoras. Again that Pulcheria, of whom Gibbon says, "She alone of all the descendants of the great Theodosius appears to have inherited any share of his manly spirit and abilities," could not have been the only woman of her time and her court to show intellectual achievements as well as noble statesmanship. And that Paula, friend of Jerome, descendant of the Gracchi, and one of the richest women of antiquity, who chose simplicity and frugality for herself, using her wealth for education and charity, could not have carried into effect such noble forms of self-sacrifice had she not lived in a time and place in which women had control over their purses and their lives. Superlative genius, although usually quite unexpected in appearance, always arises out of a group of secondary

great ones, and these in turn out of a crowd of the merely talented. Following this general law, when the Lady reached her heyday of supremacy in the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, her class gave to the world many women of marked intellectual power and of special gifts in many lines. In these days of girls' colleges and co-educational universities and of increasingly free opportunities for professional work, we remember and call over with a fresh sense of their natural place in the social economy, these learned and gifted women. But in the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, they seemed like fairy-tale heroines to the reader who chanced upon their biographies.

Budding genius in the Lady-class naturally developed along the lines of least resistance to the habits and conventions of the age and station of the exceptional woman. Writing, scholarship in all the learning of the period, teaching, public lecturing, preaching (then thought entirely suitable for the great lady who could do it well), leadership in church affairs and contribution to the higher statesmanship of royal houses and princely courts—these were her achievements. The “funeral oration” seems at that time to have been a favorite method of public instruction. It was used by that young girl of the thirteenth century, daughter of a gentleman of Boulogne, who at the age of twenty-three pronounced one in Latin in the great church of her city, of which it is recorded, “the orator to be admired had no need of her youth or the charms of her sex.” At twenty-six this young woman took her doctor's degree and began to read publicly the Institutes of Justinian in her own house, and at thirty was raised by her learning and gifts of speech to a professor's chair, “teaching the laws to a prodigious concourse of people of all nations.” It was said she “joined the elegance of the woman to the learning of the man,” and “when she spoke had the merit to make her hearers forget her beauty.” Again, we remember Casandre Fidèle who wrote equally well in the languages of Homer, Virgil and Dante and who, it is said, “by her graces embellished even theology.” She gave public lessons at Padua, sustained theses in public debate, and had also “many agreeable talents such as music.” She could not have stood alone, although probably none of the learned ladies of her town were her equals; and

surely to but few women of any age has it been given, as it was to her, to prove that higher education is not inimical to woman's health, by living more than one hundred years! As to the women preachers of that time, we may be sure that the Spanish Isabella who often spoke in the great church of Barcelona, "converting even the Jews by her eloquence," must have had humble followers who were the pride of their smaller congregations.

This was the period of extravagant praise for gifted women, as in Venice, where in 1555, Signora Jeanne d'Aragon had constructed for her a "Temple of Praise" for her wit, her learning and her eloquence, to which the greatest writers of her time contributed in all the principal languages of the world. And her sister was so nearly her equal in gifts and graces that it was thought necessary to give her a separate "decree of praise" made in much the same way. This genius passed down the family line with the son of Jeanne, a Prince of Colonne, to show that nature never balks at feminine transmission of power.

It was in this period also that books and treatises first appeared discussing the "woman question" and introducing the vexed problem of the relative powers of the sexes. One Cornelius Agrippa labored to prove by a book of thirty chapters, "The Superior Excellence of Women Over Men," calling upon "theology, physical science, history, cabalistic knowledge and morals" to establish his thesis. This man was a soldier of distinction and an all-round scholar, who gave lectures on St. Paul in England, on the Philosopher's Stone in Turin, on theology at Pavia, and practised medicine in Switzerland. Several other men wrote books to prove the ability of women, if not their superiority to men. One of these, Peter Paul Ribera, published a volume entitled *The Immortal Triumphs and Heroic Enterprises of Eight Hundred and Forty-Five Women*. Women also took a hand in proclaiming their own powers. A celebrated Venetian lady, Modesta di Pozzo di Forzi, in 1593 maintained the superiority of her sex in no uncertain words. Her biographer in giving an account of the "great success of her book" shrewdly remarks that "unfortunately for her that which perhaps assisted in that success was that men could praise her without fear, since

she died just as the work appeared." He also confesses that "men always see with pleasure these sorts of works by women; for pride, which calculates everything, makes men regard as a proof of their advantage the efforts which are made to combat them." In the seventeenth century another Venetian lady went so far as to entitle her book, *The Nobleness and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Imperfections of Men*. It is said that she too had "the success that beauty gives to wit." Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, undertook in a letter to prove the superiority of her sex; while Mlle. de Gournay contented herself with simply claiming equality. Then, as now, however, some of the most learned and able women found such comparisons odious, and would none of the merry war for supremacy. One man wrote two books, one on each side of the debate; the first in 1673, entitled *The Equality of the Sexes; a philosophic and moral discourse in which one sees the importance of getting rid of one's prejudices*; and the second in 1675, entitled *The Excellency of Men against the Equality of the Sexes*; but we are told that in the second book "he refuted himself gently, fearing to have reason against himself."

The whole discussion seems to have been a sort of play-battle, doubtless taken seriously by few, if any. It was the prelude to a more serious struggle for democratic rights in government, in education, and in industry which wrought itself out first by and for men, and in which for a long season all claims of women to justice and consideration were forgotten.

Carlyle reminds us that while the French Revolution was smouldering toward conflagration the "paper people" (those at ease in their own circumstances from having already profited by class privilege) were playing with radical ideas that were later to make rallying cries in the bloody struggle. It was a time, he says, when "Philosophism sat joyful in her glittering saloons, the dinner guest of Opulence grown ingenuous, the very nobles proud to sit by her, and Preaching, lifted up over all Bastilles, a coming millennium." So in the times when womanhood in general suffered all unspeakable outrage and misery, this little comedy of mock homage, which yet had in it some notes of true reverence, was played out on the stage of polite society.

There were hard days coming, days when the rights of man as man were to embroil the world in conflict; days when the common life was to surge up to the drawing room and rudely break up the dinners of Opulence; days when the Lady was lost sight of and the stern times called even for the woman of genius to bury herself in the primal labors of her sex, that so the home might be kept and the children saved alive and the grain harvested while the men held their hands at the throat of Despotism, until all the common folk were counted as people. When the time came for a genuine movement for equality of education and opportunity for women, it was the great middle class, not the nobility, that led in the sober struggle; and it was martyrdom, not "success," that came first.

Victor Hugo says: "The eighteenth century was man's century; the nineteenth is woman's." In that man's century of revolution against class privilege, the lowest level of "female education" seems to have been reached in our Anglo-Saxon civilization. In our own country, in the early days, the vigor of mind as well as of body of both men and women went of necessity into the pioneer building of our mighty States. So much was this the fact that the oft-repeated sneer, "Who reads an American book?" might well have been answered by a showing of Constitutions, Highways, Schools, ordered Settlements, as the front-row volumes in the library of American genius. This practical devotion to doing things that later historians would write about, made the women of colonial and revolutionary and western-pioneering days great persons, but small students. And the opportunity for learning in schools was even less than the incitement toward "the still air of delightful studies." Although in Massachusetts as early as 1636 the General Court established Harvard College, and in 1644 ordered the several towns to make sure that "Evry family alow one peck of corne or 12d. in money or other commodity to be sent in to ye Treasurer for the colledge at Cambridge," and in 1683 voted that "Every towne consisting of more than five hundred families shall set up and maintain scholes to instruct youth as the law directs," no girls were thought of in this connection. The provision of "free schools," "schools for the people," etc., left the girls entirely out of the count.

Hartford, Connecticut, indeed, in 1771, began to allow girls to learn "reading, spelling, writing" and sometimes "to add"; but not until the close of the eighteenth century did the majority of towns of New England make provision, even in a meagre manner, for the education of girls.

At first all the Common Schools for girls were held between April and October, when the boys were at work on the farms; and as late as 1792 Newburyport most reluctantly allowed girls over nine years of age, "instruction in grammar and reading during the summer months for an hour and a half after the dismissal of the boys." This opportunity was extended in 1804 to a provision for "girls' schools," "to be kept for six months in the year from six to eight o'clock in the morning and on Thursday afternoons," when the boys, presumably, were not using the school rooms! As late as 1788 the town of Northampton, Massachusetts, voted "not to be at any expense for schooling girls," and only yielded, after an appeal to the courts by the tax-paying fathers of the girls, a small chance to learn in the summer months. Up to 1828 girls did not go to public schools in Rhode Island; and not until 1852 was the "Girls' High School" securely established in Boston itself, and not until 1878 the "Girls' Latin School" of that city to prepare for college.

As Abigail Adams wrote in 1817, when over seventy years of age, speaking of the opportunities of women in her day: "The only chance for much intellectual improvement in the female sex, was to be found in the families of the educated class and in occasional intercourse with the learned." To this should be added the partiality of men teachers to some bright girls, which gave an exceptional training to a favored few. Thus we read that in 1783 Ezra Stiles, President of Yale, gave a certificate declaring that he had "examined Miss Lucinda Foote, twelve years old," and had found her "fully qualified, except in regard to sex, to be received as a pupil in the Freshman Class of Yale University." We are glad to learn that Lucinda received the full college course, including Hebrew, under President Stiles' private instruction, and that she then proved that learning does not undermine the family, by marrying and having ten children. To similar happy accidents of personal favoritism toward exceptional girls

must be added the earliest contributions to co-education made by the religious sects, the Moravians who founded in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1749, the first private institution in America which admitted girls to higher educational opportunities than the elementary school; and the Friends, who established in 1697 the Penn Charter School in Philadelphia which made provision for the education of "all Children and Servants, Male and Female, the rich to be instructed at reasonable rates and the poor to be maintained and schooled for nothing"; although in this provision the boys were provided with a more extended course of study than the girls.

These reminders of the period before the days of the Ladies' Academy for the well-to-do, of which Miss Willard's was the most ambitious, and of Mary Lyon's school in which the poorer girls could earn a part of their living by housework, cannot be omitted from consideration of the intellectual output of women in the United States. Oberlin, with its "Female Department" and its offers of education to black as well as white, the Cincinnati Wesleyan Woman's College and Ripon and Antioch Colleges, were object-lessons long more observed than followed. The establishment of Normal Schools gave the first great democratic opportunity in education to women in America; and, characteristically in the history of women's higher education, this opportunity was given women not for themselves as human beings entitled to intellectual development, but as women who could give the State a larger and cheaper supply of teachers for the free public schools. Even as such it was an innovation bitterly opposed as too radical. We recall the procession of hoodlums of "property and standing" that made an effigy of the gentle and learned Mr. Brooks and carried it through the streets, putting a fool's cap on the head on which was the legend "A Normal School in the Clouds." The valiant Horace Mann had to work hard and long to bring that vision down from the clouds into the actual public school system; and women teachers, trained in co-educational normal schools, shared his labor at every step. In spite of their poverty in education, however, the women of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries made some good showing in letters; and their struggles for professional

training and opportunity, especially in the field of medicine, show an heroic temper as well as a persistent purpose second to no class of men in a similar effort to obtain rights and chances in the larger life.

There have been so many definitions of the lesser genius that one is at liberty to vary the intellectual challenge to women in order to cover justly the demand upon them. If, for example, as some say, "genius is the power of prodigious industry in some one direction," then women might certainly win some prizes in literature—or in what is called that when it is fresh from the press and becomes "the best seller." Not only Mrs. Southworth with her near a hundred books translated into several languages and sold in six capitals of the world, but also Mrs. Willis Parton with her article each week for sixteen successive years in *The New York Ledger*, may challenge attention! Then we have Lydia H. Sigourney whose day-school education ceased at thirteen years and who was obliged to do all the rest of her studying by herself, varied only by a short term at a boarding school where she was taught "embroidery of historical scenes, filigree and other finger-works." She produced over fifty books and more than two thousand articles in prose and verse contributed to over three hundred periodicals. No wonder her Muse was anæmic from such exertion on such small sustenance! Mrs. Hall, collaborating with her husband through the forty years of his editorship of *The Art Journal*, and Mrs. Barbauld, adding to her large original work the editing of fifty volumes of the best English novels, show a like industry with better results.

If, again, as others say, genius is shown by the pioneer entrance into new fields of thought and action, then such a woman as Lydia Maria Child must surely have a place among those distinguished for translating the inventive faculty into literature. Pioneer—she was in so many ways—writing the first anti-slavery book; initiating the first series of travel and art letters from a great city; among the first to write novels using home material; starting the first children's magazine in the United States; becoming one of the first woman editors of other than a "Ladies'" magazine in her work for *The Anti-Slavery Standard*; and most original of all, writing the first comparative study of religions

published in this country, and one of the first published in the world from the standpoint of rational thought; and this from a stock of learning so small as to make the venture as audacious as it was provocative of thought in the better equipped students of her time. Nor must it be forgotten that in the very beginning of what may be called American literature Margaret Fuller founded the first quarterly published in this country in the interest of philosophy; and added other pioneer contributions as literary editor of *The Tribune* under Horace Greeley to what was the spring-time growth of intellectual life in the United States; besides proving herself the great improvisatrice of her day in conversation as an art. In fiction, the success of women in introducing new subject-matter is proof of their preëminence in at least one form of originality. Aphra Behn herself, the first woman in England to earn her living by her pen and made worthy of her burial in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey more by that fact than by the lasting value of her works, held the stage by her dramas so long chiefly because they in some degree initiated that realistic school which Jane Austen first made commanding and respected as a new type of story-telling. Many women writers of all the leading nations have carried on this adventurous spirit and shown high gifts in the imaginative treatment of the actual and the commonplace. This was the master quality in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's novels, the most popular of which, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, attested also woman's tendency toward the dramatic presentation of great moral ideals. The practical nature of women and their deep religious earnestness have often made them servants of their time, as was Mrs. Stowe, in ways that of themselves sometimes dwarf permanent results in literature and art. For example, Jane Grey Swisshelm, with intellectual power and business ability to found and maintain an influential newspaper in the days when many women could not read or write, used much of her strength in defending her anti-slavery propaganda against the mobs that opposed her, and later in nursing soldiers of the Civil War, and thus in all her life became a type of the numberless professional women who waver perpetually between social reform and intellectual achievement. Such devotion to duty, if not inimical to genius, harnesses it too early

to hard labor for full development of "frolic fancy" or of calm contemplation.

"Talent," says Lowell, "is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is." If genius, even in its lesser ranges, be this irresistible pressure toward some unique self-expression, then women cannot be left out of the charmed circle; especially when we remember Helen Hunt with her solitary but wide approach to love and life, and Emily Dickinson, that hermit thrush among poets. Nor can those unique interpreters of art and literature among women whose vital expression has so enhanced the works of genius as to make them seem new creations, be left out of the count. In modern times, the growing company of musicians, some of them composers, and the artists of pen and brush, and the sculptors among women who swell the secondary ranks of genius in numbers and in power, must have increasing recognition.

All this, however, does not reach the deepest considerations involved in taking account of the intellectual contribution of women to art, science, philosophy and affairs. Whatever may be the reasons in nature for the lower level of women along these lines of man's greatest achievement, there are the gravest reasons in circumstance for the comparatively meagre showing. In addition to the handicap of lack of education, a handicap which no exceptional success of the self-made man or woman can off-set for the majority of the talented, there is a no less important deprivation which all women have suffered in the past and most women now suffer. This deprivation is that of the informal but highly stimulating training which the good fellowship of their chosen guild of study and of service gives to men, but which is denied for the most part even to professional women. For example, women have been in the medical profession for a considerable time, and have obtained high distinction in it. They have won just recognition from many influential doctors of the other sex. Yet they can hardly be said to have entered the inner circle of their clan. They may stop to dinner at medical conventions, it is true, provided they make no fuss about smoking and do not mind being in the minority; but there are few men, even in that enlightened group, who can so sink sex-consciousness in profes-

sional comradeship as either to give or get the full social value that might be gained from a mixed company of like vocation. The women lawyers and members of the clergy are in even smaller minority, and hence suffer still more from that embarrassment of "the exception" which prevents easy and familiar association. In the teaching profession, where the relative numbers of the sexes are reversed, there is often more adequate professional intercourse; but the woman college professor, or college president, is still that one among many whose reception into her special class, even if courteous and friendly, is too formal and occasional for real guild fellowship.

In addition to these handicaps must be named the well-known but scarcely adequately measured interruptions to both study and self-expression which the women of talent and specialized power have always experienced. Anyone can see that to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the knee in the kitchen, with constant calls to cooking and other details of housework to punctuate the paragraphs, was a more difficult achievement than to write it at leisure in a quiet room. And when her biographer says of an Italian woman poet, "during some years her Muse was intermittent," we do not wonder at the fact when he casually mentions her ten children. No record, however, can even name the women of talent who were so submerged by child-bearing and its duties, and by "general housework," that they had to leave their poems and stories all unwritten. Moreover, the obstacles to intellectual development and achievement which marriage and maternity interpose (and which are so important that they demand a separate study) are not the only ones that must be noted. It is not alone the fact that women have generally had to spend most of their strength in caring for others that has handicapped them in individual effort; but also that they have almost universally had to care wholly for themselves. Women even now have the burden of the care of their belongings, their dress, their home life of whatever sort it may be, and the social duties of the smaller world, even if doing great things in individual work. A successful woman preacher was once asked "what special obstacles have you met as a woman in the ministry?" "Not one," she answered, "except the lack of a minister's wife." When we read

of Charles Darwin's wife not only relieving him from financial cares but seeing that he had his breakfast in his room, with "nothing to disturb the freshness of his morning," we do not find the explanation of Darwin's genius, but we do see how he was helped to express it. Men geniuses, even of second grade, have usually had at least one woman to smooth their way, and often several women to make sure that little things, often even self-support itself, did not interfere with the development and expression of their talent. On the other hand, the obligation of all the earlier women writers to prepare a useful cook-book in order to buy their way into literature, is a fitting symbol of the compulsion laid upon women, however gifted, to do all the things that women in general accomplish before entering upon their special task. That brave woman who wanted to study medicine so much that not even the heaviest family burdens could deter her from entering the medical school first opened to her sex, but who "first sewed steadily until her entire family was fitted with clothes to last six months," is a not unusual type.

Added to all this, the woman of talent and of special gifts has had until very lately, and in most countries has still, to go against the mass social pressure of her time in order to devote herself to any particular intellectual task. The expectation of society has long pushed men toward some special work; the expectation of society has until recently been wholly against women's choosing any vocation beside their functional service in the family. This is a far more intense and all-pervading influence in deterring women from success in intellectual work than is usually understood. Palissy the Potter is honored with a volume in the series on the Heroes of Industry. This is well; for his marked talent, his indomitable purpose pursued in poverty, his choice of inventive rather than of paying work, his final success after intense effort, all mark him as great in his devotion and in his gift to art. We note, however, that his family pay a heavy price for his choices in life; and when his wife objects to his burning up the baby's cradle and the kitchen table in that devouring furnace which has already consumed all their comforts, we are inclined to sympathize with her. She does not feel sure—as indeed how could she?—that Palissy will get the glaze he wants; but she sees

clearly that the children are hungry and she cannot feed them. His biographer, however, is clearly of the opinion that men should be sustained in their heroic efforts to solve problems and make inventions; and Palissy himself has that conviction of society concerning the worth and righteousness of man's specialized effort to give tone to his ambition. This it is which makes him feel himself a hero and not merely a selfish man who neglects his family. No book has yet been written in praise of a woman who let her husband and children starve or suffer while she invented even the most useful things, or wrote books, or expressed herself in art, or evolved philosophic systems. On the contrary, the mildest approach on the part of a wife and mother, or even of a daughter or sister, to that intense interest in self-expression which has always characterized genius, has been met with social disapproval and until very recent times with ostracism fit only for the criminal. Hence her inner impulsion has needed to be strong indeed to make any woman devote herself to ideas.

In view of these tremendous obstacles, it is fair to assume that when women in the past have achieved even a second or third place in the ranks of genius they have shown far more native ability than men have needed to reach the same eminence. Not excused from the more general duties that constitute the cement of society, most women of talent have had but one hand free with which to work out their ideal conceptions. Denied, at cost of "respectability" itself, any expression of that obstinate egotism which is nature's protection of the genius in his special task, and in the preparation for it, they have had to make secret and painful experiments in self-expression after spending first strength in the commonplace tasks required of all their sex.

The genius is at once the most self-centred and the most universal of human beings. He sees only himself and the world of thought or of affairs he would master for his special work. All that lies between, family, friends, social groups, is but material for his elect service. Delight in his own personality, absorbed attention to the processes of his own mind, have made him generally the master shirker in respect to the ordinary duties of life. He has been often "ill to live with," and greedy in demand upon the support and care of others. He is so rare and precious, how-

ever, that "with all his faults we love him still" when he enriches the commonwealth of thought, imagination or action with some new gift. But, alas, the "near" genius has too often the character frailties of the genuine great one without his power of achievement. We see therefore the social advantage of the poverty and hardships and lack of immediate appreciation which have so often weeded out from the lists, in advance, all but the giants in intellectual power. Seeing how many small people mistake their own strongly individualized taste for great talent, and feel justified in declining all disagreeable tasks of "menial" work on the plea of absorption in some form of effort which is mainly self-indulgence, we realize that nature has done well to discipline the would-be genius severely. The "artistic temperament" so often drops the final syllables to become mere vulgar "temper" that family life could not well bear the strain of greatly multiplying the type that for the most part only enjoys but does not produce masterpieces. But to suppress in wholesale fashion, and at the outset, all troublesome "variations" in women, while leaving men free to show what they can become and giving them besides a good chance to prove their quality, is to make that discipline too one-sided. The universal social pressure upon women to be all alike, and do all the same things, and to be content with identical restrictions, has resulted not only in terrible suffering in the lives of exceptional women, but also in the loss of unmeasured feminine values in special gifts. The Drama of the Woman of Genius has been too often a tragedy of misshapen and perverted power. Col. Higginson has said that one of the great histories yet to be written is that of the intellectual life of women. When that is accomplished, those truly great women whose initiative was choked by false ideals of feminine excellence, whose natures were turned awry for want of "space to burgeon out their powers," whose very purpose to "aggrandize the human mind by cultivating their own" was made a cross for their crucifixion, will be given just honor.

One woman of the nineteenth century might well hold the first place in such a record of the achievement and martyrdom of the woman of genius. Stepping out into the Western world from the dark shadows of Oriental subjection of her sex this

woman of India, Anandabai Joshee, appeals to the future for her full recognition. And if Being and Doing ever come to rank with Thinking and Imagining and Discovering as marks of greatness, no list of the Immortals will be complete without her. The record of her life epitomizes and makes heroic that historic conflict in women's lives between social duty and personal idealism. A child wife at nine years of age; a child mother at fourteen, her baby's death making her determine to study medicine for the benefit of her countrywomen; at seventeen overcoming tremendous obstacles in order to carry out this purpose, which obliged her to become the first high-caste Hindu woman, still loyal to her inherited religion, to leave her country for a foreign land; at eighteen years entering upon her studies in the United States and showing marvellous powers of scholarly acquisition and still more marvellous breadth of mind and exaltation of moral nature; at twenty-one graduating from the Woman's Medical College of Philadelphia, the first Hindu woman to take a medical degree in any country; and dying at twenty-two, just as she received her appointment as physician in charge of the Female Wards of Albert Edward Hospital in Kolhapur, India—her life reads like an incredible romance.

It has been said that although genius is so often allied to instability of character, we have in Darwin and in Shakespeare two examples of the wholly sane. In Dr. Joshee we have another; one whose mental power was so exceptional that it could bridge the chasms between centuries of intellectual development and continents of racial difference to make itself at home in the Anglo-Saxon civilization, whose finest fruits were so quickly made her own; and yet one whose gentle, unselfish, loving spirit showed no flaw in most intimate association. Writing to friends in America just before her voyage, she said: "When I think over the sufferings of women in India I am impatient to see the Western light dawn as the harbinger of emancipation." In that spirit of world-citizenship, without giving up her ancient faith, she so enlarged and purified it that she was able to say: "I have nothing to despise; the whole Universe is a lesson to me." When, before leaving India, she was urged by all who loved her not to undertake so perilous a venture, she calmly replied: "I am sure noth-

ing will harm me, or if it does it will be for my good." Addressing a great multitude of her wondering fellow-country people on the eve of sailing, in answer to the question, "Why should you do what is not done by any of your sex?" she made the answer that might well become the formula to justify all exceptional service—"Because society has a right to our work as individuals." Yet this woman, so rare in heroism and in mental and moral power that there are few to place beside her, declared her intention "to live and die a faithful Hindu wife." Knowing what that meant in personal subserviency and in chilling repression, her biographer declares that Dr. Joshee's untimely death was due most of all to this attempt to do the impossible, to be a servant in the home and a social leader in the community. However this may be, and with all due tribute to her husband's devotion and willingness for her to live the larger life, it must be true that the hurtful conditions of Hindu wifehood had already sapped the strength of Dr. Joshee before she left India; and the unique loyalty that made her seek to return to her caste restrictions while carrying the torch of enlightenment to her sisters in India entailed a double burden too heavy for her frail body. What women of less heroic mould, and in more favored circumstances, have suffered in the effort to do all that their world expected of them and also something of what their own inner natures demanded—and that toll of suffering is long and heavy indeed—Dr. Joshee embodied in the pathos and in the sublimity of her unique experience.

In this country of free opportunity, and in this time, when to work one's own way to one's own ends is so much easier for women than ever before, it is in the life and work of such a woman as Anandabai Joshee that we perceive the full significance of the Drama of the Woman of Genius.

THE ART OF J. M. SYNGE

DARRELL FIGGIS

THERE is a fashion of scenery in the West of Ireland of a kind peculiarly apart. A road, may be, will be running like an irregular ribbon of gray over a desolate scene, losing itself in a gray horizon, threading its journey painfully enough through a landscape of brown forbidding bog. Even to the very margin of the road will the bog encroach, making it seem as though it were poised over abysses. Not a tree stabs the skyline, or lends distinction to the landscape. Where the turf has been cut away, brown puddles gleam purple as they reflect the sweeping mists and clouds. If there is a habitation of man in sight it will not relieve the brooding passion of the scene. A cottage of stone at best, with an enclosure of coal-black soil furrowed for seed and hardly won from the morass, it falls into the formless unity of the visible universe. Such a scene has no distinction, yet it is passionate with temperament. It holds out no details for the eye to fasten on. It is one large, brooding gesture of magnificence, psychic and strange. The very hills are merged in the gesture. One could imagine it rising to a very fury of energy, but that it does not do so.

Such is his country; such was the man Synge; and of such a sort was his work, for, do what he will, a man cannot make his work other than an effluence of himself. He was a man in whom the very energy of thought turned to brooding, even as in his work the very energy of dramatic instinct achieved results that evade the more obvious meanings of the word dramatic. He was of a type of Irishman that, though pronounced enough in the race, has received but little heed in a day that clutches for the obvious. His very furling himself in undemonstrative emotion was the cry of greatness that sought a friendship that could not be granted it. That he was a peaceful man did not belie the earnestness of his Nationalist conviction: it flowed from the