

THE FIRST MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

By Celia Logan

QUEEN ANNE, of England, justly entitled "The Good," was the first woman to bring her influence to bear to effect a reform in favor of her sex. She declared that not only should there be no ban against self-supporting women, but that many male pursuits were better adapted to women than to men.

Besides the founding of many charitable establishments and the opening to women of many pursuits which, up to that time, had been exclusively in the hands of men, the Queen, although not herself either learned or literary, encouraged women to follow the profession of letters for a livelihood, and advised and encouraged learning among them. In this admirable course she was ridiculed and attacked by the great literary male celebrities of her reign, such as Swift, who laughed her out of endowing a female college which a certain Mary Astell was desirous of founding.

Mary Astell's idea of a female college would now be considered as peculiar as comprehensive. There was to be gratuitous instruction given to young girls in order to fit them for the pursuit of literature as a profession. In case of failure in that calling, and in the event of their remaining single, the college was to afford them shelter and support for life.

Queen Anne promised Miss Astell funds with which to found the college, but, ridiculed by Swift and overruled by her ministers, she could not fulfill her promise, and the college was not built.

MISS ASTELL was among the first to take up her pen after the Queen had signified her approval of literature as a feminine pursuit. Mary Astell had some success as a writer, notwithstanding her being a pioneer in the calling.

Queen Anne having announced that in her opinion literature was an occupation "peculiarly fitted for ladies of gentle birth and superior education," many attempts were made by them to divide the field of letters with men. One startling innovation was made—of a kind never before attempted in England. This was the establishment of a magazine catering exclusively to women. It was the first journal for women ever issued in England, and was called "The Ladies' Diary, or Woman's Almanack."

THE editor was one W. Tippet, quite an appropriate name for the editor of a ladies' fashion periodical. Her salutatory ran thus: "This being the first Almanack printed for the use of the fair sex, and under the reign of a glorious woman, some would advise me to dedicate it to the Queen, with some such dedication as this: 'To the Queen's most excellent Majesty, this 'Ladies' Diary, or Woman's Almanack,' being the first ever published for the peculiar use of the fair sex, is, with all humility, dedicated to your most sacred Majesty.'"

In the first issue there was a "picture in copper" (engraving) of the Queen, and a string of verses in her praise. According to the prospectus, the Almanack contained "directions for love, marriage, preserving (not hearts but fruit), cookery, perfumery, bills-of-fare, and many other concerns peculiar to the fair sex." Editor Tippet was fond of the word "peculiar." Then followed the calendar "with the common notes of the year, when marriage comes in and out," and the eclipses. All this filled one page. The leader treated of the happiness enjoyed in England under the reign of Elizabeth and of the then reigning Queen Anne. The rest of the Almanack consisted of what the editor called "delightful tales." The magazine, as it would now be termed, was highly successful, and was extensively read by the fair sex, for whom it was designed.