

"You're talking nonsense," said Reuben, shortly and sharply. "I've not been so kind to you that you need set yourself against the parting."

"You are rare good to Peter, and when we were in a bad way, you stood by us, father. That's what I remember. I know well enough your savings are a deal smaller for what you did for us."

The old man uttered an impatient "Pooh-pooh!" and, rising from his chair, fidgeted about the room. Then he sat down again and silently watched Gwen's needle as it flew in and out of the work upon her knee.

"D'y'e really mean you'd like to learn o' me?" he asked at last, doubtfully, "after all the hard things I've said to you?"

"I couldn't have gone on doing for you so long," said Gwen, encouraged by the gentleness of his tone, "if I hadn't known that you thought kinder—more kindly o' me than ever you said. You didn't mean

it just now, when you said that you were used to neglect."

"No, lass," said Reuben, taking her hand. "I'd no call to mean such an untruth as that. You're a good gal; I'll teach you what you like."

After this, it was surprising how well Reuben got on with his daughter-in-law. Her intelligence delighted him, and he was never tired of boasting of the progress she made in history, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Not but what he often spoke snappishly, but the old constant friction was at an end, and past resentment quietly forgotten.

"It seems to me Peter and Gwen are running one another close," said Luke, looking up from his papers with a smile one evening.

"Bless you, no!" declared Reuben. "Peter's a sharp little lad, but he's nowhere beside his mother. She's one in a thousand, I tell you—one in a thousand!"

H. L.

BROTHER JONATHAN'S WOMANKIND.

A PAIR OF PORTRAITS.

I.—ONE TYPE OF NEW ENGLAND WOMEN.



WOMEN are all accustomed to hear great praise awarded to the persevering ambition of such men as Hugh Miller, Elihu Burritt, Robert Burns, and others, who have educated their faculties and developed their talents in the face of overwhelming obstacles. I propose to speak of a class who, in most cases without the incentive of genius—that restless and consuming fire—are daily pursuing self-culture

under the most disheartening circumstances, and without the neglect of a single household duty. It has often occurred to me that the life of the average New England woman, such as I am about to describe, would be impossible to any other than she who is born in the bracing air of Yankee-land, and descended from a goodly stock of sternly resolute Puritan ancestors.

We must consider, to begin with, that although the wife of a farmer, our Priscilla is by no means to be compared with persons of that station in England, but rather with the wives or daughters of thrifty merchants, who have had opportunities both in

school and in society to assist their development into sweet, refined, and cultured women. It is rarely, I believe, in England that one meets with education without a certain amount of material prosperity as a forerunner, so that an English woman who converses agreeably and intelligently may be pre-supposed to lead an easy life, comfortably pursuing her studies, whilst the drudgery of the house is performed for her by others.

Now contrast with this picture that of a Yankee farmer's wife, who was perhaps herself the daughter of a farmer. She has received a certain amount of instruction at a public school, then marries young, and begins her, to me, Herculean labours. It is her part to perform all the daily household tasks with but seldom any outside aid. She must make butter, milk the cows, feed the chickens, and attend to the kitchen-garden, as well as to her special pet flower-beds and vines. Then she harnesses her horse and drives to a neighbouring town to barter (as no one else can) with her butter, eggs, and garden produce. If anything is broken or out of order in the house or farm she mends it, and being a woman of infinite resources, she may even construct some of her own furniture or paint her fence. Her "parlor" is adorned with all the latest absurdities in the way of worsted-work or pressed bouquets, while her store-closet is well stocked with preserves, and her garret hung with dried fruits. It is probable that she has children, and none are more thoughtfully tended in all their needs, be they physical, moral, or mental. The clothing of the family, even to their stockings and mittens, is her handiwork, while occasionally a garment is made for one of the village poor.

But where is her self-culture? say you. Ah! there

is the mystery; now and when is it accomplished? And there is no denying the fact: a narrow provincial education it may be, but that is owing solely to her circumscribed life.

If you were to enter a small, common-place, white-washed farm-house in any of the straggling New England villages, which appears little else than a cluster of huts in a wilderness to English eyes—if you were so bold as to enter in, and so fortunate as to have an uninterrupted conversation with the mistress of the house, you would find her a plain, probably faded, woman, clad in neat calico, sharp-voiced, and sharp-visaged perhaps, but gentle in manners, and displaying as she talks a well-cultivated intelligence, and more or less familiarity with literature in all its branches of history, philosophy, science, and *belles-lettres*. You would find her a member of the nearest library, and a subscriber to all the leading periodicals. But in order to make this a strictly truthful account, I must add that she seldom reads the newspapers, and is utterly devoid of that knowledge of current affairs that distinguishes particularly the women of New York and Chicago. But then, consider how precious to her is each moment of time, and how far is she removed from the centres of life and civilisation! She has no amusements, no diversions, no trips away; nothing but the dull, everlasting grind. And yet is she patient, and never resting from her round of necessary duties, and that, to her, no less necessary one of self-culture. Some one has beautifully said that “the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rocks the world.” The children of Priscilla—or, more correctly, “Sairey Ann”—will doubtless be rich, and some will call them *parvenus*, perhaps; but as for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, what may they not become!

II.—A NEW YORK BUTTERFLY.

In contrast with the foregoing sketch, I append a pen-portrait of another type of American woman.

Many people have the idea that a New York woman is an epitome of fashion and frivolity, and this impression is indelibly imprinted on the hearts of her New England sisters. But there is a daily-increasing number of women in the Empire city to whom this is certainly an injustice, although they would still amiably deprecate any comparison with the staid and talented belles of Boston. As clearly as possible in a short outline sketch I would demonstrate to you what the New York woman really is, and does. Imagine, reader, that you are a sojourner and a stranger in America, passing through her proudest city. Owing to a letter of introduction, you are invited to dine at the home of a young couple, of whose hospitality, amiability, and gaiety you have heard much. The young wife, in particular, is an ornament to society, which she illumines with her beauty, wit, and fascination. On repairing to a quiet side street, and after treading its monotonous path for some distance, you arrive at a French apartment house, plain but spacious, and without much difficulty succeed in finding the suite occupied by your hostess. After being ushered into a small but beautifully furnished reception-room,

you glance around, and note the pure artistic taste that has selected the chairs, the hangings, the *bric-à-brac*, as well as the few choice pictures, and many good books peeping out from low, uncovered book-cases. Now rising at the entrance of your host and hostess, and surveying the latter furtively but critically, you perceive that she is pretty, graceful, and exquisitely arrayed. You will notice her enchanting manners afterwards, but half-unconsciously, as you feel the warm glow of her hickory-wood fire. This is when you are comfortably seated in the small but cheerful dining-room, talking at ease with your new friends while a little course dinner is faultlessly served, and with the daintiest possible table appointments. You talk of anything and everything, but change about from topic to topic as you may, you will find your hostess well-informed about the subject in hand.

“Tell me,” you say at last, “how you find time to keep abreast of current history and literature, while at the same time you go about so much in society?”

In reply she will smile, and relate to you her daily life. In the morning, after going to market, and perhaps taking a short walk, she returns home in time to give her baby a bath and put it to sleep; then stops a moment to rest and peruse the morning journals before going out to take a singing lesson, or meet a class of friends to read English or German literature. In the afternoon she makes ceremonious visits, and attends a reception, a concert rehearsal, or a lecture; while her evening is occupied during the season by the usual entertainments. That keeps her pretty busy, apparently, and yet she will always squeeze out one or two hours a day in the morning, the afternoon, or both, in which to read alone. What does she read? you ask. Oh! she has always a plan and system about her reading. Just now it may be a course of political economy or mental philosophy.

“I always take notes,” she adds, “as I read; and, on finishing a book, I write a *résumé* of its ideas and a review in criticism of the whole.”

One more item of her daily life, which she does not tell you, is that she is interested probably in both public and private charities, as far as her means will allow; and perhaps the night before you meet her she has sat up with, and read to, a sick and suffering friend. She is not only a good mother, but, what is far more rare, she does not sacrifice in any degree her husband's comforts to those of her child. When night comes baby must be asleep, while she is clothed like the “lilies of the field” to meet her husband, and devote to him her time and smiles. She is a good friend, an amiable member of society, and less of a gossip than any other of her American sisters in town or country. She is also a devout church-goer, notwithstanding that she reads the German philosophers.

Have you not met her, my friends, this fair daughter of Manhattan? And if so, did you not leave her presence carrying with you a subtle bright remembrance, like a faint but lingering perfume? When at other times and in other places you hear her called a “New York Butterfly,” stop and consider if, after all, this is not a misnomer.

A. Z. S.