

dissection and overhauling which character, qualifications, mental structure, and motive must undergo when they are no longer here to explain or modify opinion. Doubtless the test of their work is in the fact that it lives and exerts an influence upon the minds of succeeding generations, but it is the work that lives, not the ephemeral and frequently impertinent, because ignorant, opinions put in print in regard to it.

A powerful English writer has said in a recent article, "Who now reads the whole of the ancient writers, to the study of whose works Milton devoted five years of his life before he commenced writing *Paradise Lost*? Who systematically reads the great writers, be they ancient or modern, whom the consent of ages has marked out as classics: typical, immortal, peculiar teachers of our race? Alas! the *Paradise Lost* is lost again to us beneath an inundation of graceful verse and well-turned phrases, sugary stanzas of lady-like prettiness, and ceaseless explanations in more or less readable prose of what John Milton meant, and what he did not mean, of what he saw, and what he did not see, why Adam and Satan were like that, and were not like the other. We read a whole library about *Paradise Lost*, but the *Paradise Lost* itself we do not read; we bury it, and pile up this mass of rubbish above it." Again he says, "For once that we take down our Milton, and read a book of that 'voice' whose 'sound is like the sea,' we take up fifty times a magazine with something about Milton, or Milton's grandmother, or a book stuffed with curious facts about his house, and furniture, and personal appearance, and ailments of his first wife." Gossip is as despicable in books as out of them—more so, for in this form it obtains a certain dignity, a *raison d'être* for admitting the necessity for its existence as an element of our modern society.

The faculty for talking about genius is not genius itself; it does not even argue thorough understanding or appreciation of genius. Everybody talks, and people must talk about something. What it is they talk about depends upon their habits of thought, their surroundings, the kind of persons among whom they have lived, their environment, in short, from their birth, and somewhat also upon the lives and habits of their ancestors; for though we are projected upon the present, we are made up largely of the past.

It will be seen, therefore, that when a necessity arises to earn a livelihood, or a desire for some occupation, or an ambition for distinction seizes the mind, how natural and easy it is for a ready talker or writer to imagine they have something to say that all the world ought to know—or, at least, something that some one may be induced to pay for. The number of books does not prove the greatness of either sex in literature. The question is: who are the masters?—who have written the books which sound the highest and lowest depths in the human heart, in human life, and, greater still, who have marshaled all intellectual forces, and swept the diapason of the universe? Are they not Shakespeare, Milton, and Scott? Had the works of these three authors been written by women, and not another

book, a woman's claim to the highest place in literature would have been unanswerable.

Still, since there has been any literature, women have been in it more or less; and, if they have not done the greatest work, they have done excellent secondary work. It is, I think, at least doubtful if women are capable of the concentration of power in one direction which is occasionally summed up in one man. They are naturally more quick, more versatile, more *sided*, than men—their lives are more spent in detail, they are more conscientious in the performance of small duties, and they cannot so easily separate themselves from social and other obligations as men.

It is of no use to say that women would be equally capable of great work if they were not bound by these minor claims. The simple fact is, that no woman has yet done for the world in the field of letters what some men have done:—Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Goethe, and others—Moliere and Beethoven, for example. Still it is true that this fact is not decisive: for the field of operations for women has been so restricted that a broad, accumulative experience was not possible. I mean that which comes from the ages, through the garnered thoughts and activities of men who have struck every note, and been able to estimate the present and judge of the future through the past which they have studied, and with the conditions and work of which they have made themselves acquainted.

The experiences through which women are now passing, the character which can only be acquired through individual struggle and effort, is doing much to broaden and deepen the sources of their achievements. Heretofore the work of women has been personal and social, necessarily confined to the things with which they were acquainted, and at most, and best, a sum of heart histories, of individual yearnings and neighborhood statement, or analysis. The two greatest representatives we have had in the field of pure literature in the English tongue, are Mrs. Lewes (George Eliot), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Why they are great it is not our present business to discover, but I have written thus far to very little purpose, if even the very young reader has not discovered that to touch the field of pure art in literature, not to speak of highest art, the author must get out of himself, or herself, and into the "open." He must be in sympathy with all natural and intellectual forces, and able to sound the gamut of human, as well as individual feeling and experience. The overflow of flashy books and worthless periodical literature, so called, is evidence of increased activity, but not of greater power. It is dissipating, rather than enlarging and strengthening. It stands in the way of the real study of good books, and is as intellectually demoralizing as reckless indulgence of the appetites is debasing to the body. The severity which denied to the girl all access to books in the past has reacted, and the rebound is almost as fatal to their strong and symmetrical development as the denial. The ignorance which formerly considered reading a waste of time, now believes all time well spent that is expended upon printed words.

But the human brain is limited in its powers, like the human stomach, and reading, like eating, is only of real use to us so far as it supplies nutritive elements for the mind to work upon and assimilate. A certain amount of good reading is almost infinitely better than unlimited skimming through superficial rubbish which enervates the mental faculties, vitiates the taste, and frequently lowers the moral tone.

One of the great uses of our "higher" education for women will be to reduce the number of women aspirants for literary honors, and the certainty of better work for those who remain; for the rest, we must look to the next hundred years to tell the story of women in literature.

The Ancient Language of Finland.

BY K. M. H.



UNTIL the close of the last century, all that was known of the ancient tongue of Finland was that the common people spoke an incomprehensible jargon, into which Bibles, hymn-books, and catechisms had to be translated for their comprehension.

The language of the Finns proper, those who have given their name to the country they inhabit, indicates an early knowledge on their part of agriculture and the various forms of handicrafts; but all words in the language which point to a more advanced stage of civilization can be traced to a Swedish origin, and consequently must have been introduced after the conquest of Finland by Sweden, or after the latter part of the twelfth century.

From Sweden, Finland received her schools and other educational institutions, as well as her government, and became externally a Swedish province. But in a land so extensive and thinly populated, it was not possible that the Swedish language and civilization should penetrate all localities so as to supersede the ancient tongue and the entirely distinct nationality of the people.

These were not destroyed, but they came to be represented by the rustic people of the interior, who in their isolation from the influences of the progressive civilization of successive ages, have kept alive their ancient language, and in great measure all things belonging to their ancient nationality, its modes of thought, its customs and manners, its traditions and superstitions, and its popular poetry, the songs of their Kuna singers.

Thus did Finland become as it were the abode of a two-fold nationality. The one clinging to the memories of the past and stagnating in its forms; the other acquiring new life by contact with modern European civilization and literary culture, though retaining much of its original character. This class

adopted the Swedish language as the organ of its mental life; and the Finnish tongue remained but as a monument of the past, the spoken idiom of the rural population.

Toward the close of the last century, however, the attention of some Finnish men of learning began to be attracted toward the popular tongue as the deposit of certain treasures of ancient poetry, kept alive on the lips of the people by oral tradition. But after the publication of contributions to Finnish mythology, in 1782, by Lennquist, and Genander, 1789, and a collection of Kunas by the celebrated Porthan of Abo, 1804, all efforts to make known these treasures to the civilized world were for a time abandoned.

Subsequent to 1809, however, when Finland came under the dominion of Russia, a new literary and scientific life was awakened. This was aroused by the great change in the political and governmental state of the country, which produced an extraordinary interest in everything connected with the ancient history of the nation. The forced cession of the province to Russia, broke all the bonds which were established between it and Sweden, and at the same time a reunion was effected between those parts of the country which had been separated from it at different times by Russian conquest.

The feelings of the educated classes, while they were flattered by the increased importance which their country thus obtained, were deeply wounded by their separation from Sweden, their superinduced nationality, whose civilization had become so dear to them.

Now they strove to find in the primitive source of the national consciousness an incitement to national progress; and thus arose an enthusiasm which gradually struck deep roots in the hearts of the younger generations.

So far from being displeased at this awakened enthusiasm for the original Finnish nationality, Russia did much to encourage and promote the feeling. She allowed the Finnish people a certain degree of self-government. She promoted the culture of the ancient tongue, which was introduced into the public schools as a medium of instruction. Literary associations were formed to collect and throw light upon matters connected with the primitive tongue, traditions, and poetry of the people, and much of the best talent of the country was exerted in this direction.

As one of the fruits of these endeavors, we have the Kalevala, a collection of thirty-two songs, forming part of a mythic *epos*. These songs were collected by Drs. Topelius and Lönnrot, after earnest investigations in localities never before visited for such purposes, being a few parishes in the government of Archangel, beyond the limits of Finland, where the people seemed to have undergone no change since the earliest times, and, therefore, had preserved their popular poetry. The songs, in their original tongue, were published in Helsingfors, in 1835. An excellent Swedish translation of the Kalevala, by M. A. Castren, which appeared in 1841, was called forth by a prize offered by the Literary Association of Helsingfors, and attracted the attention of other European nations to the popular poetry

of Finland. In 1852, a German translation, by Anton Schlieffner, was also published in Helsingfors.

As regards the character of the Kalevala, it is entirely mythic, possessing not a particle of the historical coloring or the heroic spirit which we find in the Lay of the Niebelungen. Witchcraft and sorcery play a large part, and the expression of the belief of the Finnish race in beings endowed with supernatural gifts and unlimited powers of metamorphosis is very prominent.

In many of the lyrical poems of the Finns the same characteristics prevail, though by no means in all. But these poems usually breathe the spirit of deep but gentle melancholy, of sorrow, unsatisfied longing, a feeling of solitude, and of mental sufferings of various kinds.

A native author, referring to one of the Kunas, in which a young maiden says that she has a "girdle of bad days and a web of sorrow," says of these lyrics that the whole collection of them might be termed a web of sorrow, for if the warp is ever of a brighter hue, the web is spun of sorrow.

The popular poetry of the North is often marked by this tone of sadness. The ballads of Sweden and Norway are full of it, but in their case it is the substance of the poem that is tragical, while in the Finnish lyrics the sadness comes from the heart of the poet.

In the Danish and Swedish ballads, the events, the representation of character, the action of the will in the outward world, play the principal part. The Finnish lyrics give expression to the inward life of man. They are the productions of a gentle people, with no historical splendor in which to glory, living in a country which though rich in natural advantages, is barren, solitary, thinly peopled. They are, however, superior to the Scandinavian ballads in variety and diversity. Dr. Lönnrot devoted himself still further to the culture of the ancient language by the publication of a number of treatises, in which, to the great satisfaction of the people of Finland, he laid the foundation of a written Finnish tongue, earnestly endeavoring to purify it from Swedish forms and intermixtures which abound in the Bible Finnish, the only form which till then had been used in writing, but which was neither grammatically nor lexically correct.

He also undertook, at the expense of the Literary Association of Helsingfors, a course of travels, of which he published several important works—Kantelas, harp songs from Kantela, the stringed instrument of the country, comprising 652 ancient Kunas, a volume of 7,000 Finnish proverbs, and a collection of Finnish riddles.

The Finnish language has been declared by a great Danish linguist to be the most original, the most flexible, regular, and musical of all existing languages, and no one who is interested in the development of races can fail to rejoice in the fact that this people of Finland, possessing such a tongue, and yet from the circumstance of their political relations with other countries, having had so little opportunities of showing its capacities, are now gaining for their native language and its literature the recognition and respect of the educated, both at home and abroad.

The Pink Boat.

BY HELEN WOODBURY.

"I pray you hear my song of a boat,
For it is but short:
My boat, you shall find none fairer afloat,
In river or port."



It was a waif, this strongly-built, pretty, pink boat. It had not even a name whereby one might guess at its history. Had it been lost by some passing vessel? Had some luckless one started across the lake in the darkness, lost reckoning, and been wrecked on a jagged rock? No one knew. It could not speak for itself and tell the tale, however tragical or sorrowful it might be. There was a mystery overshadowing its stout ribs, its bow, and painted sides.

Walter, going down on the beach in the early morning, had been surprised at the spectacle of a fair boat, without oarsman or guide, gayly riding the sunlit waters. As he looked it was lifted by a bold wave and laid at his feet. It was evident that this nameless boat had come ashore here for the especial benefit of us who were a trifle suspicious of the top-heavy sail boats and frail-looking row boats. This looked so strong, so reliable! Its broad seats seemed inviting one to enter, saying,—“Trust me, I am safe.”

Even Mrs. Wood had faith in this stranger craft; and several days were spent in pure enjoyment, rowing about, or idly floating with the tide; watching the spars of a vessel appear on the far-off horizon, and slowly grow into a full-rigged schooner. Often a steamer puffed past, a long trail of smoke in its wake; its decks thronged with happy faced people, who had left their toil and trials behind in the dusty city, and were out for a gala-day; and to whom, after the heat of the crowded streets, the fresh breeze, the clear, blue sky, and the dancing, sparkling waves were a new revelation of beauty.

Sometimes a snowy-winged Canadian yacht flitted into view, passed in the distance, and disappeared where the sky met and lost itself in the emerald waves, its passage as swift and noiseless as the flight of the gulls overhead.

Floating thus, one might almost fancy, high upon some bold-faced bluff, incense arising among the pinnacles of the Temple of the Fire Worshipers, and feel the air fanned by the wing of the mystical albatross. Or drifting dreamily past the green shores, not be at all startled at coming upon the happy Lotus Land, and seeing the fair lotus fruits growing within reach.

Thus drifting, near shore, watching for the ferns growing in profusion in the little hollows between the bluffs, we came, alas! to grief.

In our eagerness to catch sight of the ferns we came too near the line of sinister rocks, whose points almost reach the surface. Suddenly, to our horror, there was a rasping, scraping noise, as part of the boat's length passed over one of these sharp points. We