

WOMAN'S GOOD NAME.

FOR many years we have, through the pages of the *LADY'S BOOK*, striven to secure for our sex the name which the usage of the great masters of the English language and the elegance of grammatical composition alike required. We have tried to show that Woman is our God-given name; and that any such term as *female*, which associates one half of mankind with the beasts, must, when used in any other sense than that of a common gender, convey a degrading significance. We have seen with pleasure the gradual disuse of the absurd and improper appellation. We no longer hear so often of "a gentleman walking with a female," "a beloved female child," or "a female seminary."

Yet this last phrase reminds us that the reform has not been complete. Vassar College has long ago gotten rid of the obnoxious epithet; but many of our institutions for the education of women still retain it. The animal side of our sex is still brought forward by schools and colleges that are dedicated, among other things, to the refinement and correctness of English speech; and we must make one final protest, in the name of decency and good sense, against the degrading appellation.

It is sometimes said that we are driven to the use of the word *female* by the paucity of terms for occupations or professions when exercised by women. This notion we have often combated by showing that, in olden times, a feminine termination was fearlessly added to any word which might be used to express feminine action. We quote in this connection from an article published years ago in this magazine:—

"The importance of the study of words is now universally conceded. Their double power to instruct those who know their history and transformations, and to mislead those who do not know them, is dwelt upon by many contemporary philosophers. We have learned that a vital connection exists between the language of a nation and its modes of thought; that change in the latter results from and reacts upon change in the former; that when a thing becomes obsolete the corresponding term, unless saved by a change of meaning, must share its fate; and that when a new thing or new combination of things emerges from the tumult of affairs, it cannot long remain without a fitting appellation.

"Associated with this general conviction is a special impulse to recur to the earliest forms of national speech; to trace back each word to its origin; to learn the time of its appearance, its primitive meaning, the difference between that and its present significance, and the reasons for it; to discover what terms and what meanings have dropped from the current speech; to take an inventory, in a word, of national loss and gain in the matter of language.

"In these pursuits, the publications of 'The Early English Text Society,' and similar associations, have made it easy for educated men—and women, too, if they will take the trouble—to compare and examine for themselves; and one most important result is a determination that, so far as possible, all future introductions into a language shall be drawn from itself, and formed upon its peculiar laws of development; in English, for instance, that new words shall, by preference, be made from a Saxon root by adding a Saxon termination.

"In pleading for an ending to mark the sex, in words that denote employments or functions common to men and women, we thus appeal to a double motive. We declare that from the necessary participation of women in pursuits and activities hitherto closed to them, such terms are becoming more and more necessary; and we show that no innovation is intended, but a restoration of words familiar to great writers in the early times of English literature.

"The history of the feminine termination is singular. Chaucer and Spenser used it constantly; Shakspeare and the writers of his time employed it, but less frequently; and thus it continued to fall out of the language till within the last fifteen or twenty years. But with the modern movement for the en-

largement of the sphere of women, came a necessity for distinction before unmet. Professions and pursuits, heretofore monopolized by men, are now open also to women; while yet the fact of sex, from its effects on methods of acting, is of predominant importance. In such cases the word *female* has been prefixed; but such a collocation is both cumbrous and weak, and savors often of vulgarity. The unpleasant effect of calling a lioness a *female* lion, or an actress a *female* actor, is obvious. The reaction for some years in favor of the old terminations has been too strong to be overlooked, and too desirable to be checked. Wherever it is now necessary to use an awkward phrase beginning with *female*, as *female physician*, or *female doctor*, we think the substitution of a single word, with the ending of sex—as *doctress*, will be a wonderful gain to our language alike in strength and sweetness.

"Where a word, if coined, would from the nature of things be very rarely used, or where the sex has little effect upon the method of discharging the duty, then, we think, it should not be used. Such words as *soldieresses* and *builderesses*, or *childresses* have very properly fallen out of our language. But where the new terminations—or, rather, the old revived—would be in frequent use, driving out the inferior word *female*, detestable as a duplicate, and where the sex is a fact of importance, there the *ess* and *esses* are eminently appropriate. Such words as *actress*, *poetess*, *teacheress*, *doctress*, are doubtless required for precision of speech and elegance of style. The poetry of women is distinctive and peculiar; their acting is of wholly different parts; their manner of teaching has influences which men cannot reach; their medical practice is required for human preservation; and the language gains greatly in beauty, force, propriety, and power, by conveying these differences in a single word.

LIST OF FEMININE TITLES OR PROFESSIONS ENDING IN *ess*.*Professions, Pursuits, Epithets.*

Actor,	Actress.	Preceptor,	Preceptress.
Adventurer,	Adventuress.	Professor,	Professoress.
Arbiter,	Arbitress.	Sculptor,	Sculptress.
Author,	Authoress.	Shepherd,	Shepherdess.
Citizen,	Citizeness.	Songster,	Songstress.
Doctor,	Doctress.	Sorcerer,	Sorceress.
Hunter,	Huntress.	Steward,	Stewardess.
Instructor,	Instructress.	Tailor,	Tailoress.
Monitor,	Monitress.	Teacher,	Teacheress.
Murderer,	Murderess.	Tormentor,	Tormentress.
Negro,	Negress.	Traitor,	Traitress.
Painter,	Paintress.	Tutor,	Governess.
Poet,	Poetess.	Victor,	Victress.
Postmaster,	Postmistress.	Waiter,	Waitress.
Porter,	Portress.		

Titles of Office, Rank, Respect.

Abbot,	Abbess.	Jew,	Jewess,
Ambassador,	Ambassad- dress.	Manager,	Managress.
Ancestor,	Ancestress.	Marquis,	Marchioness.
Baron,	Baroness.	Mayor,	Mayoress.
Benefactor,	Benefactress.	Mediator	Mediatress.
Briton,	Britoness.	Mr.,	Mistress or Mrs.
Canon,	Canoness.	Patron,	Patroness.
Chieftain,	Chieftainess.	Protector,	Protectress.
Deacon,	Deaconess.	Priest,	Priestess.
Director,	Directress.	Prince,	Princess.
Earl,	Countess.	Prior,	Priores.
Educator,	Educatress.	Prophet	Prophetess.
Enchanter,	Enchantress.	Python,	Pythoness.
Emperor,	Empress.	Seer,	Seeress.
Giant,	Giantess.	Sultan,	Sultana.
God (Heathen),	Goddess.	Viscount,	Viscountess.
Inheritor,	Inheritress.		

We may take our leave of this subject with the emphatic words with which an article upon this topic was once concluded:—

"If new terms or terminations are found necessary to the perfecting of our noblest of living tongues, as it moves on progressively with the progress of the Anglo-Saxon Peoples, let new terms or terminations, in harmony with the language, be added. But first let us use properly what we have. Do not write *female* for woman or lady, and *masculine* for man, as parallel words. It vulgarizes the style, and degrades feminine humanity. It is not grammatical nor Biblical."