

October 9, 1880.]

THE SPECTATOR.

1279

cannot be excluded from education any more than respiration can be forbidden in the class-rooms; but in praising the exclusion of theology, Mr. Huxley stultifies himself. He allows that one grand object of education must be the attainment of a power of "criticism of life," and how can there be a criticism of life of any value, when the greatest phenomenon of life, the fact that all nations in all ages have been penetrated with the belief that this life is nothing to another unseen life to come, is systematically ignored? Grant that the belief in the supernatural is the grossest of the illusions, and still it is the most universal, most influential, and most deserving study by those who would attain to a lofty faculty of "criticism of life." The materialist may be a good doctor, but what is he worth, if he does not even perceive the effect of the great illusion on his patient's mind? To strike out theology and condemn Greek and Latin when the object is full culture, is as foolish as to prohibit to the physicist the study of astronomy, because there was once an astrology, or to forbid the student to read the "Principia," because there are other and newer methods of arriving at the results of Newton's thought. We have read somewhere that Russian country carpenters plane and saw with axes; is the axe, therefore, to be, in a regenerated Russia, the one proscribed tool?

The truth is that Mr. Huxley is more influenced than he thinks he is, or than a philosopher ought to be, by a sentiment of recoil. Because during the middle-ages the teachers of mankind thought that the only fitting or valuable object of study was how to live so that the eternal life might be blissful, and therefore despised or persecuted physical inquiry, he justifies the proscription of theology. And because later teachers of mankind, penetrated with the value of all they had gained from the Renaissance, unduly exalted the knowledge of Greek and Latin as the one road to culture, therefore Mr. Huxley is content to banish those languages from the curriculum of men intended for scientific life. Theology was all in all, so it shall be nothing; Latin and Greek were the only tools, so all shall be used but Latin and Greek. Those are not the arguments of reason, but of irritation, an irritation visible in a curious injustice which Mr. Huxley does to modern humanists. So far as they, or the best of them, from exalting literature as the only path to culture, that both in this country and in France they have raised the grandest instrument of science, mathematics, to a complete equality with it, have taught that the man who has not the command of both is mentally incomplete, and have, as regards many of the practical objects of education—winning State examinations, for instance—given to the latter a faint but perceptible superiority. No doubt, they have not been quite as fair to modern languages, but it has been from no contempt for them, any more than the gymnast has a contempt for riding, but because they have thought those languages, like the "ologies," only subjects for the application of the mental strength which the classics and mathematics secure. And so irritated intellectually is Mr. Huxley, that he does not see how completely he has himself satirised his own argument. The pietists who taught that theology was the only knowledge worth acquiring are to him objects of ridicule, and even dislike, for their narrow-minded exclusiveness; but exchange theology for science, and he himself, in this apology for the Mason scheme, is as exclusive as any monk. Grant Science all she claims, and still she does not cover the whole field of life, or explain either man's affections, or his conscience, or his dread and longing for an influence not visible to his senses. Those are "facts" in the strictest scientific sense, just as much as the tides are, and why are they to be excluded from the field of study? Mr. Huxley is bitter over the monopoly enjoyed by Greek and Latin, and condemns, while in a passage of striking eloquence he explains, the exclusive worship of them; but why is it less narrow-minded to exclude those instruments for acquiring knowledge, than to declare them the only ones that man can use? The theologian may be narrow, but he does not, except in India, prohibit the study of anatomy as *nil*; and the University Don may be bigoted, but he does not legislate out any language as certainly useless to the student. Science is great, and will be greater still; but it is not all, and cannot become all, and in making it all, the framers of the rules for Mason's College are as foolish as the Khalif who burnt all other books, because the Koran contains all that it is necessary to know. Mr. Huxley says a man might be as great a scholar as Erasmus, and know no more of the causes of the present fermentation of men's minds than Erasmus did. That is true, and a man may be trained into the greatest of physicists, and know no more why

men are free in Birmingham, or why mankind lose their reason in straining after the unknown, than the students of Mason's College will, if educated only there. Which is the larger loss?

THE POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMAN.

AMONG the many points of interest in the Trades-Union Congress at Dublin, not the least appears to us to be the light it throws on the changed position of women. No member of a workman's Congress a few years ago would have had an opportunity of expressing an opinion on female suffrage such as was elicited from Mr. Broadhurst, and the fact that his opinion was adverse seems to us far less significant, as a sign of changed public opinion, than the fact that it was called for. We will not inquire into the justice of his opinion that women are too unreasonable and too obstinate to be entrusted with power, but the remark suggests some consideration of the question, —How far do the political feelings of women differ, in moral colouring, from those of men? That they do differ will be denied only by one who is exceedingly prejudiced, or whose experience is very narrow. Women have common sympathies as well as common interests, and as they become more educated, and enter more into men's professions and interests, these common sympathies, belonging as they do to more than half the population of Great Britain, can hardly fail to become more distinct. In what direction are they likely to tell?

History has but little to say in answer to our question, and unless we are cautious in putting it may prove not only an incompetent, but a misleading witness. It could speak of those alone in whom political zeal was an outlet for the spirit of intrigue and of the desire of personal influence, or in whom it was the produce of one of those eras of political upheaval from which no inferences can be drawn for ordinary life. Neither a Madame de Longueville nor a Madame Roland would afford much guidance in speculating on the political Englishwoman of the future. It is, indeed, no new thing for women to take an interest in social questions, and many figures rise to the mind's eye as we turn to social reform, quite as memorable, if not as brilliant, as those for whom that hero of the Fronde declared that,

— pour plaire à ces beaux yeux,

J'ai fait la guerre aux Rois, je l'aurai fait aux Dieux."

Political zeal in womankind (if we give the expression its due scope) is commemorated on better soil than a land wasted with fire and sword. For let it be remembered that it is only by a most narrow and arbitrary restriction of the ideal of *Politics* that we exclude from it the consideration of social questions, properly so called. To make *Politics* mean no more than the polemics of party interest, and suppose a strong political interest to show itself necessarily and exclusively in the endeavour to turn the Government out, or keep the Opposition out, is to narrow the application of the word no less than if one were to speak of London as a short expression for Great Britain. We would here use the word "*Politics*" in its largest sense, and understand by it everything that concerns the welfare of those masses of human beings who make up a polity.

Taken in this larger sense, the world has seen, it is true, not a few specimens of the political interest of women,—women who have entered with lively self-devotion into the amelioration of a class, and set the stamp of their zealous effort on legislation, or at all events on that public feeling which leads to legislation. But in all of them there is almost as much to forget as to remember, before we accept them as specimens of what the political woman may be in the future. We are looking for a state of things in which a strong public interest, and all that it implies, shall be thought just as natural and laudable in a woman as a man. No one can say that this has ever yet been the case. A woman has always been able to justify her interest by working out any valuable result; but she has always had to begin by doing something unconventional, peculiar; and we cannot argue from the influence of exceptional circumstances to the influence of ordinary circumstances, even when the only thing changed in them is the fact of their being exceptional. It is difficult to overrate the disadvantages of singularity. The degree in which people in general allow for it is always below its true value. They hardly ever see how anything, whether it be defect or power, which makes a person remarkable, should tell on his *whole* nature, and modify parts of the character which seem to have no relation to it. Heat, which has to liquefy ice as well as to warm water, does

not reveal itself to the thermometer. We must wait till all those crystal bonds are dissolved before we can feel the genial neighbourhood of the busy worker. Nor can we judge of the true influence of zeal by watching zeal which has to justify its own existence, as well as effect its object. We must see it exhibited in a sympathetic medium, before we can really know what it is.

But although all inference from the political activity of women, as exhibited in the past, is subject to large correction, it is not valueless. To see how people behave in one set of circumstances is a help towards judging how they will behave in another, and while it is difficult to remember that circumstances which seem the same are really different, yet perhaps those who do remember this difference are in danger of exaggerating it. The obstacles which women have found in the way of public work, so far as they arise from a general sense of its being unwomanly, will disappear in the future, and have to a considerable extent disappeared already. But so far as these obstacles belong to the nature of the employments which they already carry on, and which they cannot give up, we have no right to expect any change. Speaking generally, we should say that the change of feeling will liberate single women from the barriers that have made a career difficult, and them alone. No change of feeling can set free for a career the mother of ten children. We could not say, indeed, that all our reformers have been single women. Mrs. Fry is not the only wife whose activity will be remembered in connection with the welfare of a class, but an exception here and there does not invalidate the obvious rule that a household gives work enough for one person to do. And not only the amount of work must be considered, but its character. A man's work is continuous, and a great many women might make their work continuous, if they would exercise sufficient self-control; but the mother of a family, under ordinary circumstances, must consent to be interrupted at any moment. The leisure that remains after work that is interrupted is as unlike the leisure that remains after work that is continuous, as the corn-fields quitted by a foraging party in the enemy's country are to the cornfields left by reapers who have finished their day's work. It is an idle dream to suppose that better arrangements could cure this evil. The demands of the nursery and the household could never be compressed into a compact division of the day, from which no straggling detail should ever invade the territory given up to a study of social or political problems. The attention of women to such problems is always affected by its fragmentary nature. "Work is not interfered with by homogeneous interest," says one of the most profound observers of human nature—Aristotle—"but by heterogeneous." The mind, therefore, unconsciously seeks to preserve a certain continuity of interest through any change of attention, and sifts out what is familiar from much that may be far more important, not from any frivolous tendency, but from a healthy desire to grasp only what can be incorporated with possessions already gained. It is not difficult to foresee what aspect of political matters will always prove most homogeneous with a woman's interests. A difficult political problem requires the same kind of attention as a volume of history; hardly any one could read a volume of Hallam or Hume at odd ten minutes while he was kept waiting; and any valuable opinion, for instance, on Mr. Forster's Irish Bill would be equally difficult to form under these circumstances. But a vehement wish for the defeat or the success of a party or the defeat of a party is readily formed amid the most multifarious occupation, and a stinging personal attack is as easy to read as a novel; there is, indeed, a good deal in politics that has the same kind of interest as fiction has. Their personal aspect is that under which they are more readily approached by all, but, of course, most readily by those who live mainly in the personal world. Personal feeling cannot be too strong, if it is formed on a sufficient knowledge of fact; to know that A B is a good man or a bad man is a much more valuable piece of knowledge about his fitness to represent a constituency, than to know his opinion of all political questions he will be called to influence and their true bearing. But hardly any one can know whether a man is bad or good in the sense that most people may know what he thinks, for instance, of Free-trade or of the Irish question; and women being always much occupied with conduct, and generally ignorant of affairs, are ready to form an opinion on the moral point, and then to consider, as we think they justly might, if only the opinion were founded on good evidence, that it precludes all necessity of considering anything else.

It may be objected that we have been considering the disadvantages, not of women, but of wives, while almost all women who have come forward to take any prominent part in social matters have been single. But there are valid reasons why circumstances which strictly affect only married women should mould the characters of all women. The single woman will always remain in some sense an exceptional woman—either more fastidious than her sisters, or more unattractive, or, perhaps, simply less conversant with men, and, therefore, more ignorant of the world—for some reason or other, not the type of womanhood. Some of the best of women are to be found among those whom we thus describe,—many of the best, and some of the most interesting. But human beings naturally wish for a full human life, and the desire will occupy most space in the mind of those who cannot turn it into a claim. There are many exceptions, but they are exceptions. And the influence of the life that all desire tells on those to whom it is not given, for while this desire or hope lasts it holds other interests at bay. A man will work all the harder because he hopes to marry. Marriage does not to him mean giving up work. But, unless in peculiar circumstances, a woman cannot really set herself to work (in the sense in which any one would use the word when speaking of a man) till that anticipation is laid aside. It would be like a man studying medicine till he could make up his mind whether he would devote his life to painting. To set oneself to one kind of work with energetic resolution, expecting in a year or two to be drawn off to something quite different, for which it is a preparation only so far as hard work is a preparation for any pursuit,—this is not impossible, perhaps, but very few persons have the self-control, whether they are men or women. Whether the life of the affections, in its fullest development, is, in the case of men, more attractive than the life of public interests, we cannot possibly say; there is never any rivalry between them; indeed, there is very often a close alliance between them. But a woman has to choose between the two. She has, and, as far as we can see, she always will have to break away from those solicitations which appeal to the strongest part of human nature, before she can devote herself to any large public object. And when she has done this, a large part of life is past, and for the formation of character the most important part of life. There are some women who have from the first been in heart and spirit what at last they have become in objective activity. They have not had to renounce the hope of domestic life,—its rival was there from the first. But the majority of women are not made thus. The strong and steady influence of the old ideal of womanhood has acted, and always must act, on the character of all but a few women. We can hardly imagine that any new ideal will displace that which is made illustrious by the whole genealogy of past genius as an *educating* influence, or that it should ever cease to be true that, in describing the temptations of a wife, we describe the temptations of a woman, even when she is not a wife, and chooses not to be one.

While we look, therefore, for a strong modifying influence on female character from an infusion of public interest into female life, we still expect that it will remain true in the future, as it has been in the past, that women carry into public life many of the temptations of domestic life,—that they should be keener partisans than men, their sympathies quicker, their sense of proportion far less exact; that they should be more ready to sacrifice themselves, and more ready to sacrifice everybody else, than men are. So far as we can interpret the answer of experience, it confirms this expectation. Women have not, hitherto, gained balance and a sense of proportion in the degree in which they have achieved success in the world of public interest; we sometimes see these defects exhibited most strikingly in connection with such success. Among the best women who are devoted to a public object, this want of balance is shown in an exaggerated estimate of their special object. Miss Cobbe gives an amusing instance of this in her "Recollections of Mary Carpenter," who wondered, in a mixed company, how everybody could help devoting themselves to "the most important object in the world." The assumption that all would recognise this to be identical with her own, was certainly no peculiarity of hers. Others give the same disproportionate space to their own importance, or their own influence. "There are plenty of men quite as vain as —," said a distinguished man, not long ago, speaking of a distinguished woman; "but it would be impossible for a man with anything like her ability, to be so possessed by the importance of his own personality." The want of balance,

is shown in the feeling towards others as well as oneself, and indeed, the strong personal feeling colours all feeling. Likes and dislikes may warp our feeling to a nation or a class, nearly as much as to an individual.

It is a curious illustration of the law that extremes meet, that while this dread of women's influence, as of something unbalanced and fitful, has been a very common argument against endowing her with political power, it is equally common to deprecate the concession as likely to throw an undue weight into the side of the Conservative body. "Nach Freiheit strebt der Mann, die Frau nach Sitte," says Goethe, through the mouth of one of his most amiable heroines. *Sitte* is a word very difficult to translate; it is, as far as we can remember, generally rendered "order" here, and the love of Order is the most antagonistic influence possible to that impulsive and unbalanced spirit which is the danger of women in politics, as it is unquestionably also an opposite influence to that love of freedom which the poet here claims for his own sex. The sympathy with Order is to the sympathy with Freedom, as the oxygen of the atmosphere is to the carbon, with which it combines in combustion; the flame to which we owe our light and heat is the result of their embrace. But the properties of the two substances are as different as two substances can be. Perhaps the ascription to women of both an eager desire for change and an obstinate resistance to change is not so unreasonable as it sounds. It must be a remark often made by those who looked on life with an observant eye, that it is much easier to invert than to invoke sympathy. A lively feeling on one side of a question much more often becomes a lively feeling on another than it passes into indifference, or to a calm feeling. No movement is so impetuous as the recoil from a discarded allegiance. Women know the temptations of the weak, and men and women alike are alternately tempted to be hard and lenient towards their own temptations. It depends on a very slight shifting of the point of view which of these positions any one will take up. We are sure that the behaviour of women towards their own sex, if they were allowed to sit on juries, would afford some striking illustrations of this quick inversion of sympathy. In public matters, however, our opinion is very decided that the dread which associates the political influence of women with unreasoning gusts of feeling, is better justified than that which associates it with any timid clinging to the past. And whatever weight of opinion could be produced against us, we are certain that, so far as history has anything to say on the matter, the evidence would be on our side. However, we began by throwing discredit on the evidence of history, and we must allow that it will always betray a great want of impartiality in the space it allots to revolutionary influence. Both these tendencies, we believe, are stronger with women than with men, who live mainly in the present, while women are capable of more vivid emotion towards what has been and what will be. But while those impulses which make women Conservative are weakened by the change we are considering, this very change tends to develop more turbulent and revolutionary sympathies. The spirit of compromise is one that will never be characteristic of women. We believe, for our own part, that there is rather too much than too little of it in the world. Still, we are fully alive to the profound and enduring disaster which a policy deficient in this element might inflict on national life. "Let us gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost," should be the motto of every reformer, if only he does not live in one of those terrible eras when a reformer must be a revolutionist. Among women, we suspect, the spirit of reform will always tend to become the spirit of revolution.

The truth is that the old notions about a woman's place were right at their centre, and wrong only at their circumference. We have only to take the starting-point of our ancestors, and pass beyond their boundaries. It is true, as the Noodle says in Sydney Smith's "Oration," that woman's proper place is in the sick-room; give her, then, authority in those large sick-rooms which we have built for many sick, and call hospitals. It is true that woman's proper occupation is with the poor; allow her, then, a voice in what is surely a very important part of the duty of the State,—its dealings with the Pauper class. It is true that woman's most especial vocation is the bringing-up of children; give her, therefore, an influential position with regard to the still more important part of the duty of the State, that indeed which, on the whole, seems to us its most important duty,—the education of its future citizens. When we go beyond this, and enter the

circle of questions which, in the last resort, must be settled by the arbitrament of arms, we enter on ground which appears to us much more questionable. It is a wise general rule, though subject to many exceptions, that people should abstain from interference with their equals in those questions of duty the strain of which will in no case fall upon them; and those who cannot allow that one-half of mankind are justified in putting any limit on the activity of the other, except such limit as we all mutually impose in asserting our own claims, may yet feel that the danger of a strong impulse from womanly sympathies, given in a direction in which it could not be followed up by womanly activity, is neither unreal nor insignificant.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

A CHURCH PARLIAMENT.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—It is with much reluctance that I ask you again to allow me to combat in your own columns your views about Church government. But I am emboldened to do so, not only by your justly appreciated readiness to give a hearing to different opinions, but because it so happens that on some questions of Church policy the *Spectator* has diverged from the opinions of most of those who, in religious matters generally, are heartily in sympathy with it. I know that I speak for many such persons, when I express entire dissent from your confidently pronounced judgment in favour of a Church Parliament.

The Bishop of Peterborough has inferred, from the continued existence of Church Congresses, that there is a need of some regular Church Assembly, and you accept the inference with a vigorous assent. You express a reasonable doubt, however, whether Bishop Magee and those who hold with him are prepared to give a definite shape to their opinion, by formulating a scheme for the constitution of such a body. "The Dr. Magees in the Church are very ready to describe the needs of the Church, and extremely disinclined to transmute their speeches into Bills." I think this is hardly a just animadversion. The Bishop of Peterborough has himself shown an honourable readiness to transmute his objections to abuses of patronage into legislation. But my impression is that the Bishop's inference on this occasion was only a piece of imaginative logic, having no root in his mind. If I am not mistaken, he had never attended a Church Congress before; and he intimated that he had yielded a reluctant assent to the meeting of the Congress in his diocese. Evidently it is not in Bishop Magee personally that the supposed Congress *natus* has been working strongly. I see nothing in the Congress movement which warrants the conclusion that the country is ripe for a General Assembly of the Church of England. You might as well argue from the annual recurrence of Social Science Congresses that an assembly is needed to represent the interests of Social Science. A Church Congress is a great pleasure-meeting of the Church, which it is a business of much anxiety to make a "success." The programme must be one which will draw. It was a signal advantage for the recent Congress to start with a Bishop Magee for president. But the promoters of a Congress have to spend weary hours in soliciting every popular ecclesiastic in the country to lend the attraction of his name to the programme. They are generally blamed for not having more laymen on their list, when they know well what efforts they have made, with so small a result, to persuade laymen of good name to take part in the discussions. Ingenuity and labour are spent freely on the devising of subjects. A subject is the more eligible, if it is likely to give rise to lively debate. And perhaps there is something more than "courtesy" in that liberal representation of different schools on a Congress programme, which would, no doubt, be modified according to your desire—and possibly more than you would think desirable—in an elected body. Managers' instincts may have something to do with it. People like to see and hear an ecclesiastic for whom they would not vote, and not the less if he is likely to prevent a discussion from being dull. If the Newcastle Committee could get Dean Stanley to come to their Congress next year, I daresay there would not be the fewer ticket-buyers, even of those who disapprove of the Dean's opinions. What has such a meeting to do with a legislative assembly? A Church Congress always gives a great deal of satisfaction. It creates a lively interest amongst the residents in the locality; it stimulates all kinds of genial sentiments; it abates personal prejudice. It gives grand opportunities to