SAPPHO.

After a cycle of twenty-five centuries, history has again been solving in Great Britain and her colonies, the same problem that formerly was presented for solution to Ancient Greece and her colonies, viz; Shall women with the advance of civilization move forward as the equal and true helpmate of man, or shall she be condemned to

A sort of bird-cage life, born in a cage
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Is act and joy enough for any bird.

In the Homeric period the position of the Greek woman was simple and free. In the Iliad and Odyssey she is always treated with respect; unlike the great poems of modern Europe, they do not contain an indelicate line. But with the advancing culture there inevitably arose the question, what shall be the statues of women? Should she be admitted to share this culture or be excluded? Athens herself under the influence of Asiatic models decided to exclude them. Sparta and the Dorian colonies, on the other hand, preferred to exclude the culture. It was only the Aeolian colonies, such as Mitylene, that undertook to admit the culture and the women also. Nowhere else did women occupy what we should call a modern position. Among the Ioinans of Asia, according to Herodotus, the wife did not share the table of her husband; she dared not call him by his name but addressed him with the title of "Lord;" and this was hardly an exaggeration of the habits of Athens itself. But among the Dorians of Sparta, and probably among the Aeolians as well, the husband called his wife "mistress" not in subserviency, but after the modern peasant fashion; Spartan mothers preserved a power over their adult sons such as was nowhere else seen; the dignity of maidenhood was celebrated in public songs called "Parthenia," which were peculiar to Sparta; and the women took so free a part in the conversation, that Socrates in a half-sarcastic passage compares their quickness of wit to that of the men. The Aeolian women were also permitted to share the meals of their husbands, and as a compensation, they made for their husbands such excellent bread that it has preserved its reputation for two-thousand years. The old Greek poet Archestratus, who wrote a book on the art of cookery, said that if the gods were to eat bread they would send Hermes to the Aeolians to buy it, and according to "Travels and Discoveries in the Levant," the same excellent receipt and art is still in vogue. And these women shared not only in the meals and labors of their husbands, but also in their intellectual pursuits. In short, the Spartan women were free, though ignorant, and this freedom the Athenians thought bad enough. But when the Aeolians of Mitylene carried the equality a step further, and to freedom added culture, the Athenians found it intolerable. Such an innovation was equivalent to opening, to-day, the Universities of Cambridge and Toronto to women, and to setting up the English theory of woman's position against that of the French.

In the present century such women as Charlotte Bronti, Elizabeth Browning (of whom, on the occasion of her death, an opponent of the women's rights agitation said: No more Aurora Leighs, thank God! A woman of real genius I know; but what is the upshot of it all? She and her sex had better mind the kitchen), and George Elliot may be considered at the same time the product and cause of the continuation of the movement towards women's rights. So in the early centuries the elevation of the status of women produced many women who were "divinely tongued." Of these Greek poetesses, the admitted chief was Sappho. Among the Greeks "the poet" meant Homer, and "the poetess" equally designated her. "There flourished in those days" said Strabo, writing a little before our era, "Sappho, a wondrous creature, for we know not any woman to have appeared within recorded time, who was in the least to be compared to her in respect to poesy."

The decaying Turkish village of Mitylene marks the site of what was, some centuries before the Christian era, one of the great centres of Greek civilization. The great theatre of Mitylene was such a masterpiece of architecture, that the Roman Pompey wished to copy it in the metropolis of the world. The city was classed by Horace with Rhodes, Ephesus, and Corinth, yet each of these places we now remember for itself, while we think of Mitylene only as the place "where burning Sappho loved and sung." The dates of the birth and death are uncertain, but she lived somewhere between the years 628 and 572 B. C., thus flourishing three or four centuries after Homer, and less than two centuries before Pericles. Of the actual events of Sappho's life almost nothing is known, except that she had once to flee for safety from Mitylene to Sicily, perhaps to escape the political persecutions that prevailed. It is hard to ascertain whether she possessed beauty even in her prime. Tradition represents her as being "little and dark," but tradition describes Cleopatra in the same way, and we should clearly lose much from history by ignoring all the execution done by small brunettes. The Greek Anthology describes her as "the pride of the lovely haired Lesbians," Plato calls her "the beautiful Sappho." After her return from her refuge in Sicily, she became the centre of a group of girls whom she taught the fine arts. Concerning the morality of this academy, opinions have varied. One critic has pronounced it to have been a school of vice. The German professors sec in it a school of science. Others think that it resembled the Courts of Love in the Middle ages. But it seems evident that Sappho having undertaken the duty of instruction in the most difficult music, the most complex metres, and the profoundest religious rites, had on her hands quite too much work to have been exclusively a troubadour, a savante, or a sinner. Professor Felton says, "she has shared the fortunes of others of her sex, endowed like her with God's richest gifts of intellect and heart, who have been the victims of remorseless calumny for asserting the prerogatives of genius and daring to compete with men in the struggle for fame and glory."

That a high intellectual standard prevailed in this academy of Sappho's may be inferred from a fragment of her verse, in which she utters her disappointment over an uncultivated woman, whom she had, perhaps, tried in vain to influence. This imaginary epitaph warns the pupil that she is in danger of being forgotten through forgetfulness of those Pierian roses which are the Muses' symbol:

"Dying she reposes;
Oblivion grasps her now;
Since never Pierian roses
Were wreathed round her empty brow;
She goeth unwept and lonely
To Hades' dusky homes,
And bodiless shadows only
Bid her welcome as she comes."

For sincerity, depth of feeling, and exquisite grace of form her lyrics stand alone among the masterpieces of antiquity. Her poems were divided into nine books, according to their metres. Of the single complete poem that remains to us, it is safe to say that there is not a lyric in Greek literature, nor in any other, which has by its artistic structure, inspired more enthusiasm than the "Hymn to Aphrodite." The German critics, true to their national instincts, hint that she may have written some of her verses, as exercises in different kinds of metre. It is as if Milton had written L'allegro in his character of pedagogue only to show where the rhymes came in!

Let us then, in fancy, call around her, at her abode in Mitylene—either in some garden of orange and myrtle, such as once skirted the city, or in that marble house which she called the dwelling of the Muses—the maidens who have come from different parts of Greece to learn of her. They have come from Miletus, from Salamius, from Pamphylia and from the isle of Telos, Erima and Damophyla study together the complex Sapphic meters; Atthis learns how to strike the harp with the plectrum, Sappho's invention: Mnasidica embroiders a sacred robe for the temple. The teacher meanwhile corrects the measures of one, the notes of another, the stitches of a third, then summons all from their work to rehearse together some sacred chorus or temple ritual; then stops to read a verse of her own, or—must I say it—to denounce a rival preceptress. For if the too fascinating Andromeda has beguiled away some favorite pupil to one of those rival feminine academies, then Sappho may at least wish to remark that Andromeda does not know how to dress herself. "And what woman ever charmed thy mind" she says to the vacillating pupil "who wore a vulgar and tasteless dress, or did not know how to draw her garments close about her ankles?"

The most interesting intellectual fact in Sappho's life was doubtless her relation to her great townsman Alcaeus. These two will always be united in fame as the joint founders of the lyric poetry of Greece and therefore of the world. The name of Alcaeus is well preserved to Anglo-Saxons through an imitation of a fragment of one of his works by Sir William Jones,—the noble poem "What constitutes a state?" It is worth while to remember that we owe these fine lines to the lover of Sappho. His life was much spent amid political convulsions, in which he was prominent, and in spite of his fine verses it is suspected, from the evidence remaining, that he was a good deal of a fop and not much of a soldier; and it is as well perhaps that the lady did not smile upon him even in verse.

Their loves rest after all rather on tradition than on direct evidence; for there remain to us only two verses that Alcaeus addressed to Sappho. The one is a compliment, the other is an apology. The compliment is found in one graceful line, which is perhaps her best description:

"Violet-crowned, pure, sweetly smiling Sappho."

The freshness of those violets, the charm of that smile, the assurance of that purity all rest upon this one line and rest securely. If every lover having thus said in three epithets the whole story about his mistress, would be content to retire in oblivion and add no more, what a comfort it would be! Alcaeus, unfortunately went one phrase further, and therefore goes down to future ages not only as an ardent lover but also as an unsuccessful one. For he addresses Sappho agains as follows:

"I wish to speak, but shame restrains my tongue."

Now this apology may have had the simplest possible occasion. Alcaeus may have breakfasted in the garden, with her and her maidens, and may have spilled some honey from Hymettus on a crimson-bordered veil from Eresus. But it is recorded that the violet-crowned thus answered: "If thy wishes were fair and noble, and thy tongue designed not to utter what is base, shame would not cloud thine eyes, but thou wouldst freely speak thy just desires." Never was reproof more exquisitely uttered. But if the occasion was indeed but trifling, it is rather refreshing to find these gifted lovers in the very morning of civilization, simply rehearsing just the dialogue that goes on between every village school-girl and her awkward swain, when he falters and "fears to speak," and says finally the wrong thing, and she blushingly answers "you ought to be ashamed."

But whether the admiration of Alcaeus was more or less ardent, it certainly was not peculiar to him. There were hardly any limits to the enthusiasm habitually expressed in ancient times for the poetry of Sappho. In respect to the abundance of laurels, she stands unapproached among women, lawgiver, Solon, that he expressed the wish that he might not die till he had learnt it by heart. Grammarians lectured on her poems and wrote essays even to the present day. One of her poems is said to have so affected the on her metres, and her image appeared on at least six different coins of her native land. And it has generally been admitted by modern critics that "the loss of her poems is the greatest over which we have to mourn in the whole range of Greek literature.

It is odd that the most direct report left to us of Sappho's familiar conversation should have enrolled her among those enemies of the human race, who give out conundrums. Or rather it is in this case a riddle of the old Greek fashion, such as the Sphinx set the example of propounding to men, before devouring them in any other way. It has been rendered thus:

SAPPHO'S RIDDLE.

There is a feminine creature, who bears in her bosom a voiceless brood; yet they send forth a clear voice over sea and land, to whatsoever mortals they will; the absent hear it, so do the deaf.

It appears that somebody tried to guess it. The feminine creature, he thought, was the state. The brood must be the orators, to be sure, whose voices reached beyond the seas as far as Asia and Thrace, and brought back thence something to their own advantage; while the community sat deaf and dumb amid their railings. This seemed plausible but somebody else objected to the solution, for whoever heard of an orator being silent until he was put down by force? All of which seems quite modern. But he gave it up at last and appealed to Sappho, who thus replied:—

A letter is a thing essentially feminine in its character. It bears a brood in its bosom, named the alphabet. They are voiceless, yet speak to whom they will; and if any man stand next to him who reads, will he not hear?

It is not an exciting species of wit. Yet this kind of riddle was in immense demand in Greek society and "if you make believe very hard its quite nice." While this memorial of Sappho remains, her solemn hymns and Epithalamia or marriage-songs, which were almost the first effort toward dramatic poetry, are lost forever. In none of the fragments of her work is mentioned the name of Phaon, who is represented by Ovid as having been her lover, and modern critics deny his existence.

But to lose her fabled leap from the Leucadian promontory would doubtless be a greater sacrifice; it formed so much more effective a termination for her life than any novelist could have contrived. It is certain that the leap itself as a Greek practice was no fable; sometimes it was a form of suicide, sometimes a religious incantation, and sometimes again an expiation of crime. But it is certainly hard to believe that the most lovelorn lady, residing on an island whose every shore was a precipice, and where her lover was at hand to feel the anguish of her fate, would take ship and sail for weary days over five hundred miles of water to seek a more sensational rock. One German writer on Sappho thinks it is as if a lover should travel from the Rhine to Niagara to drown himself.

But whether by the way of the Leucadian cliff or otherwise, Sappho is gone with her music and songs, her pupils and the very city where she dwelt, and all but the island she loved. It is something, however, to be able to record that twenty-five centuries ago in that remote nook among the Grecian Isles, a woman's genius could play such a part in moulding the great literature that has moulded the world.

FEW DO IT.

The People Who Rejoice in Adversity Are Very Scarce.

There is still existing a manuscript letter written by Sir Thomas More to his wife, Alyce, when the news came to him that his great mansion at Chelsea, with its offices and huge granaries, had been almost destroyed by fire.

Instead of lamenting over his loss, he bids her first "find out if any poor neighbors had stored their corn in the granaries," and if so, to recompense them. Secondly, to discharge no servant until he have another abiding-place; and lastly, to "be of good cheere, and take all the howsold with you to church, and there thank God for what Hee hath given us, and what Hee hath left us."

He urges her, "I pray you, Alyce, with my children, to be merry in God."

Most of us, if we had lost property and home in a night, would think we did well if we were patient under God's will; but to be cheerful, and even "merry" in Him, is an almost forgotten grace.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in a prayer written for his family on the night before his death, asked that when the day returned it should find them strong to endure if it brought sorrow, and eager to be happy if happiness were their portion.

"Why," asked a Hindu sage, "why are the Christians melancholy men? If I believed as they say, that the great God was my father and that His Son was my Elder Brother, I should not groan though I lost a few bushels of wheat, or even an eye. I should be of all men most happy and gay. They do not believe what they say."

David, whose life was full of struggles and griefs and sins, taught the world its hymns, full of a mighty, joyous thanksgiving.

Paul in prison, knowing that death in its most painful shape might be near, could exhort his friends not only to be patient, but to "rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say," he adds, urgently, "Rejoice."

Most men will laugh when they are well-fed and their lives are comfortable, but it is a different thing to sing in prison, or when one's home is burning to find time to be kind to the poor and "merry in God," like old Sir Thomas More.

TRICKY TREE CRAB.

How the Native Africans Stop His Depredations.

In Africa there exists a certain member of the crab genus commonly known as the great tree crab. This peculiar shellfish has a trick of crawling up the cocoanut tree, biting off the cocoanuts, and then creeping down again backwards. The theory is that the nuts are shattered by the fall, and the great tree crab is thus enabled to enjoy a hearty meal.

The natives who inhabit the regions infested by this ill-conditioned crab are well aware that the lower portion of the crab's anatomy is soft and sensitive, and they believe that the crustacean was thus constructed in order that he might know when he reached the ground, and when, consequently, he might with safety release his grasp of the trunk.

So what they do in order to stop his depredations, which often ruin the cocoanut crops, is this: While the crab is engaged in nipping off the cocoanuts they climb half-way up the trees and drive a row of long nails right around the tree, allowing an inch or so of the nails to project.

The crab has no knowledge of disaster, nor yet of the fitness of things. As he descends, the sensitive part of his body touches the nails. Thinking he has reached the ground he naturally lets go. Instantly he falls backwards and cracks his own shell on the ground.

IS THE GREAT MOA EXTINCT?

Travellers Say That the Bird May Still Exist in New Zealand.

Every one who has read the wonderful adventures of Sinbad the Sailor, as narrated in the "Arabian Nights," remembers the great white roc, the gigantic bird which enabled Sinbad to make his escape from the valley which was paved with diamonds. But how many know that within the present generation there has been seen a huge feathered creature, twelve to sixteen feet high, and in comparison with which the ostrich is a pigmy?

The bird referred to is the great moa, and it is not at all positive that it is extinct to-day. As late as 1882 Prof. Owen expressed the opinion that the bird could be found in some of the remote districts of New Zealand. When Rev. W. Colenso was travelling in New Zealand, the natives told him of a strange, uncanny creature that they had lately seen on Mount Whakapunki.

They said its body was like that of a gigantic rooster and that it had a face like a man's. They said that it lived on air and was constantly guarded by two huge Tuataras. The natives did not dare go near the home of the creature, expressing the fear that they would be trampled to death.

According to the Bishop of Waiapu, in the year 1872 an Englishman heard that a moa had been seen in the vicinity of Cloudy Bay, Cook's Straits. In company with another Englishman he started in search of it. Arriving in the neighborhood where it had been seen they caught sight of the bird, which they declared was fourteen or sixteen feet high. So startled were they by its enormous size and terrifying aspect that they made no effort to capture it, and it disappeared among the trees.

In 1863 a party of miners crossed the hitherto impassabe lmountain range which runs the whole length of Middle Island. There they discovered traces of an enormous bird, and while sitting around the camp one evening they saw the creature on a knoll a short distance away. The bird seemed fascinated by the glare of the camp fire, and remained motionless for a considerable time, but finally stalked away.

It had a long, flat head, which it carried inclined forward and not erect like birds of the ostrich kind. They judged that its height was nine feet. The footprints showed three claws about twelve inches apart, with a pad and a spur about the same distance in the rear.

Walker Mantell found a gigantic egg in the volcanic sand in New Zealand, the diameter of which was as great as his hat. Bones of the moa have been found in New Zealand in great quantities, many of them so large as to justify the description given by the Englishmen as narrated above.

THE LETTERS "J" AND "W."

They Are Comparatively Modern Additions to the Alphabet.

It is a fact, not so well known, but that it may be said to be curious, that the letters j and w are modern additions to our alphabet. The letter j only came into general use during the time of the commonwealth, say between 1649 and 1658. From 1630 to 1646 its use is exceedingly rare, and I have never yet seen a book printed prior to 1652 in which it appeared, says a writer in the New York Mercury.

In the century immediately preceding the seventeenth it became the fashion to tail the last i when Roman numerals were used, as in this example: viij., for 8 or xij. in place of 12. This fashion still lingers, but only in physicians' prescriptions, I believe. Where the French use j it has the power of s as we use it in the word "vision." What nation was the first to use it as a new letter is an interesting, but perhaps an unanswerable query.

In a like manner, the printers and language makers of the latter part of the sixteenth century began to recognize the fact that there was a sound in spoken English which was without a representative in the shape of an alphabetical sign or character, as the first sound in the word "wet."

Prior to that time it had always been spelled as "vet," the v having the long sound of u or of two u's together. In order to convey an idea of the new sound they began to spell such words as "wet," "weather," 'web,' etc., with two u's, and as the u of that date was a typical v the three words above looked like this: "Vvet," "vveather," "vveb."

After a while the type founders recognized the fact that the double u had come to stay, so they joined the two u's together and made the character now so well known as the w. I have one book in which three forms of the w are given. The first in an old double v (vv), the next is one in which the last stroke of the first v crossed the first stroke of the second, and the third is the common w we use to-day.

SUMMARY PUNISHMENT.

Sir Frederick Carrington, now in charge of the military operations in Matabeleland, had a summary method of maintaining discipline among his unruly followers. When an offender was brought up before him, he would sit solemnly in Court-martial, and the charge was recited. "Did you do it?" he would say. "Yes, sir," was the reply. It was not much good to say "No." "Oh, you did, did you?" Then take that." Wherwith Carrington would rise in his might and thrash the culprit until he considered him sufficiently punished.

CASEY AT LEISURE.

Burke—I heard yez are on a shtrike, Casey?

Casey—I am. I shtruck fer shorter hours.

Burke—An' did yez git thim?

Casey—I did. Shure I'm not wur-rk-in at all now.

FAMOUS MEN AND WOMEN

ABOUT WRITERS, KINGS, SOLDIERS AND NOTED PEOPLE.

An Aged Bicyclist—The German Kaiser's Luck—The Late Shah's Cruelty—The Largest Royal Family—Cause of Baron Hirsch's Death, &c., &c.

Prince Bismarck is said to earn about $175,000 a year from the various industrial undertakings in which he is a participant.

Count Tolstoi, who went among the bicyclists last year, aged sixty-seven recently applied in Moscow for the permit which wheelmen need who wish to ride within the city limits.

"You, young men," said the Bishop of Derry to a congregation of undergraduates in St. Mary's church, Oxford "are very proud to call yourselves agnostics. It's a Greek word, I don't think you are equally fond of its Latin equivalent, 'ignoramus.'"

It is said that President Kruger, of the Transvaal Republic, has confined his reading to the Bible, and "Pilgrim's Progress" until recently, when somebody gave him one of Mark Twain's books. The humour of the American joker happened to hit the slow-going Boer in the right place, and he has purchased a full set of Mr. Clemen's books.

Armond and Raymond Forest, the two foster children of Baron and Baroness de Hirsch, are respectively eighteen and sixteen years old. They are both Protestants, and were not legally adopted, it is said, owing to some technical difficulty, but the Baron and Baroness regarded them as their own children. They will, of course, inherit a large amount of money.

The German Kaiser's luck in lotteries is phenomenal. The annual ballot for pictures has just taken place in the society known as the "Kunst-Freunde," and among seventy prizes and some thousands of blanks no fewer than eight fine pictures fell to the lot of His Majesty, while the Kaiserin won one fine engraving. Every year the Kaiser's luck excites the same respectful envy from people who never win anything.

Viscount de Santa Thyrso, the new Minister from Portugal to the United States, is only thirty-two years old, a young man to occupy so prominent a place. He belongs to a wealthy and aristocratic family, and was created a viscount a few years ago because of services in connection with his diplomatic work. He was for a time Secretary of Legation at London. The Viscountess was Miss Gabrietta Jervis d'Althongina Ferreira Pinto, daughter of the Portugese Consul-General in London. She was educated in part in England and speaks English fluently.

There is a curious coincidence about the place where the late Shah met his death. On that very spot some years ago a number of soldiers presented him with a petition asking for arrears of pay. The Shah was furious at their temerity, and ordered that they be tortured where they had addressed him. Some were strangled and others had their ears cut off. His Majesty's much-talked-of reforms consisted of introducing electric light into his palace and establishing a bank.

The Golden Rose which the Pope bestows every year upon some Catholic princess, will this year be given to the Princess of Bulgaria, who, after her desperate opposition to the orthodox christening of her little son, Prince Boris, has become "persona gratissima" at the Vatican. The Golden Rose, or the Rose of Virtue, was established to mark the highest type of character, and the practice of presenting it dates from the thirteenth century. It is a rose-tree formed of wrought gold and blessed with much solemnity by the Pope in person on the fourth Sunday in Lent, which is called, from the first word in the service for the festival, "Laetare Sunday." Henry VIII, of England, had the Golden Rose bestowed on him three times. Other recipients have been Maria Theresa, Napoleon III. and the present Queen of the Belgians.

Queen Victoria has the distinction of having the largest royal family circle in Europe. Her Majesty's family numbers fifty living descendants, including sons, daughters, grandsons and grandaughters, great-grandsons and great-granddaughters., Besides these she has four sons-in-law and four daughters-in-law. The Queen has lost one son and one daughter, five grandsons, one granddaughter, one great-grandson and one son-in-law. If these were living her family circle would number seventy-four. There are now seventeen members of the royal family who are possible successors to the throne. The next largest royal family is that of Denmark. King Christian has six children and twenty grandchildren. The oldest royal house in Europe is that of the ducal house of Mecklenburg, which traces its descent from Guiseric, who sacked Rome A. D. 455.

M. de Pazmandy, the celebrated Hungarian member of Parliament and an intimate friend of the late Baron Hirsch, asserts that the death of the latter was caused by a violent fit of rage into which he fell on finding how he had been cheated and deceived in the purchase of the estate upon which his chateau, O'Gyakei, was being built and which had already cost $160,000. He had sold his beautiful and extensive property of St. Jean, situated on the banks of the river March, because it was so damp, and had given orders that in buying another site one should be chosen with a sandy soil, it being his intention later on to turn his new acquisition into a hospital for children. He was first informed by M. de Pazmandy to the extent his orders had been disobeyed, that the new property was damper than St. Jean and absolutely unfit for the hospital project. Upon hearing this the Baron started immediately for O'Gyakei, where, on verifying the truth of his friend's report, he gave way to such anger and indignation that it terminated fatally