Appendix A

Considerations for Women in 19th Century United States

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center celebrates a number of notable 19th century women throughout our exhibits and online resources. We champion their stories to educate and inspire. But to truly understand the significant contributions of these women, we must understand the society they lived in. Their accomplishments become even more remarkable when you consider their social and legal parameters.

Social Groups

In 19th century United States, women had different experiences depending on what social groups they were part of. Race was a major factor. Economic status mattered as well. Additionally, state law rather than federal law governed most women's rights. A a woman's legal circumstances depended upon the state and region in which she lived.

Figure 1: Godey's Lady's Book 1855-1859.

White women, especially middle and upper-class white women, had the most privileges. After the Revolution, Black women gained rights in the North where states abolished slavery. On paper at least, their rights were identical to those of white women. Even in the slaveholding South, freed Black women theoretically held the same privileges under the law as white women. However, in the South and North, social and political racism prevented Black women from exercising all of their rights and privileges. In the 19th century, white supremacy controlled gender roles and

Figure 2: African American woman standing holding fan in close fitting buttoned shirtwaist and gathered skirt. c.1890

expectations for all women.

In 1861, there were almost 4 million enslaved persons in the U.S. Women and men of African descent who were enslaved under state laws were considered property and had no legal rights. The institution of slavery, and the institutionalized anti-Blacknessthat supported it, significantly impacted 19th century America.

Native American women and Indigenous peoples also were impacted by white supremacy. In many Native American traditions, women had major roles in making decisions for their nations. White supremacy believed

Native practices to be “uncivilized.” Consequently, the U.S. government tried to eliminate Indigenous practices of kinship and community. Unfortunately, an emphasis on white culture today means Native women often are overlooked and their stories are not told.

Figure 3: Carte-de-visit (CDV) of a young woman dressed in Wabanaki beadwork and wearing a Wabanaki beaded bag. From the 1860s. Photographer: M. G. Trask, Bangor, Maine.

Gender Roles and Republican Motherhood

After the Revolutionary War through the early 1800s, white (European) ideas about gender dictated separate spheres for white men and women. It was expected that men operate in the public sphere - conducting business, trade, and running the government. At the same time, it was expected that women operate in the domestic sphere, including running the home and raising children. Each sphere was important, and women were recognized as vital members of society. However, despite the expectation that women prepare boys for future leadership and civic participation women were not viewed as equal citizens capable of civic participation. It was understood that white women were superior to non-white women and that their racial and gender privilege necessitated protection by white men.

A popular ideology of the time was called Republican Motherhood. With Republican Motherhood, middle and upper-class white women were expected to educate their young to be good citizens of the new country: meaning these women were essential to a stable republic. Women were considered virtuous and responsible for upholding the morality of their husbands and children. Thus, society encouraged middle and upper-class white women to receive enough education to properly raise their sons to become future leaders of industry and government, and their daughters to become wives and mothers who could continue the ideology of Republican Motherhood.

Figure 4: Godey’s Lady’s Book 1855-1859.

Education

To fulfill the expectations of motherhood, women gained access to education, even higher education. In the first half of the 19th century, most higher-education institutions were closed to women. In the coming decades, higher education dramatically opened to women. In 1862, the federal government made a major investment in higher education, granting federal land to each state for the purpose of creating public colleges. This expansion of public education also dispossessed Native Americans from their land, deeping settler colonialism. The decision to accept women at new public institutions was driven by a range of practical concerns. For one thing, sparsely settled western states found it more cost-effective to found co-ed schools than sex-segregated institutions. For another, the spread of public primary and secondary schools across the country required a lot of of teachers, and the nation had turned to women to fill that role. These white women, in turn, needed the education and training to teach high school.

Figure 5: The first women to matriculate at the University of Pennsylvania, working in the chemistry laboratory, in 1878. Left to right: Gertrude K. Peirce, Anna L. Flanigen, and Mary T. Lewis. Image courtesy of the University Archives & Record Center, University.

Women also trained in the medical field. All women's medical schools began to appear in the mid-19th century, and women physicians and nurses contributed significantly to the country's health. Regardless of the reasons, by 1880 one-third of all American students enrolled in higher education were white women.

The accessibility of higher-education institutions for women not only helped train teachers, but also facilitated changes in gender roles. Early female college graduates did not have many career paths open to them; indeed, the majority went on to become homemakers, but their time in college fostered a commitment to public life that encouraged them to take up voluntary activism in their communities. These new graduates invented new public roles for themselves. Young, college-educated women founded settlement houses that offered educational services in urban immigrant communities and early public-health projects.

In the years following the Civil War, the desire to educate women to be teachers also created new opportunities for Black women. Out of necessity, Black women who graduated from college were much more likely to hold paying jobs than their white counterparts. While white women privileged enough to attend college were likely to marry men who could support them, Black women were more likely to have to contribute to their families' income because of the economic discrimination their husbands faced. Even with these extra demands on their time, they too went on to found and foster movements for equality

Legal Status and Marriage

The Revolutionary War ushered in important changes in women's legal status. The new United States did away with some of the English laws and expectations limiting women's rights. Inheritance laws changed. Every state abolished traditional inheritance customs that favored the eldest son. Instead, equal inheritance for all children, including daughters, became the rule. Additionally, in the U.S. unmarried women could work and support themselves. They could also enter contracts, buy and sell real estate, and accumulate personal possessions and wealth. As long as they remained unmarried, women could sue and be sued, write wills, serve as guardians, and act as executors of estates. Marriage dramatically changed a woman's legal status. When women married, as most did, they entered coverture. Coverture was the legal status where a married woman was considered under her husband's protection and authority. A wife essentially became dependent upon her husband. As William Blackstone explained it:

> *By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in the law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything.*

Under coverture, all the wealth and possessions a woman brought to her marriage or earned during marriage, became her husband's. At the same time, White married women could own enslaved people and often were executors of their "property."

In the United States, married women did have some significant legal status. A married woman had the right to be maintained in a manner appropriate with her husband's social status. This rule was meant to prevent men from neglecting their wives. However, the courts could not stop husbands from gambling or making bad investments. But wives had some financial protection from this as well.

By the beginning of the 19th century, property rights

Figure 6: Heritage Images and Getty Images

for women were starting to gain legal traction. By 1900, every state had given married women substantial control over their property. A husband could not sell or mortgage the real estate (land or buildings) his wife brought to their marriage without the wife's consent. He could use it, but he could not sell it, because a woman's real estate, generally inherited from her father, was meant to stay in the family and descend through her to her children. A wife also had important rights to her husband's real estate. He could not sell or mortgage it unless she signed a statement giving her free consent.

In the early 19th century, one of the most important rights of a married woman was dower. A dower provided her with support during widowhood. It consisted of a life estate in one-third of the husband's property if there were children, and one half if there were not. The purpose was to provide for the wife as her husband would have done.

Native American women had a different experience under U.S. law. While Euro-American, white women gained rights in the new United States, Native American women lost their rights. Through boarding schools and assimilation laws, the U.S. government took measures to force Native Americans to become U.S. citizens. Alice Fletcher, an ethnographer studying Native American cultures and a suffragist, addressed the 1888 International Council of Women and noted:

> *As I have tried to explain our statutes to Indian women, I have met with but one response. They have said: 'As an Indian woman I was free. I owned my home, my person, the work of my own hands, and my children could never forget me. I was better as an Indian woman than under white law.'*

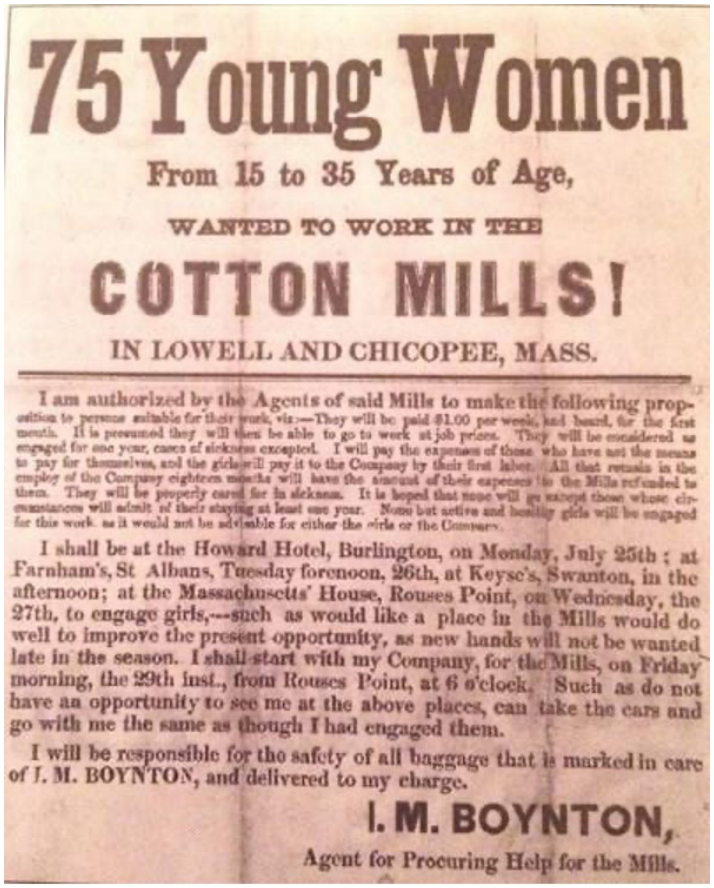
Changing Economy

As you may have noticed, legal protections for married women relied heavily upon land ownership and the value of real estate. These protections worked reasonably well in an economic system based on real estate and owning land, where families stayed in one place for generations. However, times changed. The U.S. quickly expanded and industrialized in the 19th-century. In this new economic system, people frequently bought and sold land and accumulated wealth outside of real estate. As a result, married women were losing the legal safety net of land ownership.

So, old laws no longer protected women and, at the same time, denied them the ability to protect their own interests. Recognizing this, states began to pass married women's property acts. These acts gave wives the same legal rights as single women regarding their estates and wages. This did not mean that wives were suddenly deemed equal to husbands, or women equal to men. In fact, many men, including lawmakers, would have preferred to keep women dependent upon their fathers or husbands and rooted within the family unit.

Women at Work

Industrialization brought many changes to women in the 19th century, including opportunities to join the workforce. One major change was the sewing machine, introduced into factories in the 1830s. Before that, most sewing was done by hand at home or in small businesses. With the introduction of machines for weaving and sewing fabric, young women, especially in farm families, began to spend a few years before marriage working in the new industrial mills. Between 1830 and 1860, women remained a key labor force for this growing industry. Recruiters circulated through northern New England



75 Young Women

From 15 to 35 Years of Age,

WANTED TO WORK IN THE

COTTON MILLS!

IN LOWELL AND CHICOPEE, MASS.

I am authorized by the Agents of said Mills to make the following proposition to persons suitable for their work, viz:—They will be paid $1.00 per week, and board, for the first month. It is presumed they will then be able to go to work at job prices. They will be considered as engaged for one year, cases of sickness excepted. I will pay the expenses of those who have not the means to pay for themselves, and the girls will pay it to the Company by their first labor. All that remain in the employ of the Company eighteen months will have the amount of their expenses to the Mills refunded to them. They will be properly cared for in sickness. It is hoped that none will go except those whose circumstances will admit of their staying at least one year. None but active and healthy girls will be engaged for this work, as it would not be advisable for either the girls or the Company.

I shall be at the Howard Hotel, Burlington, on Monday, July 25th; at Farnham's, St Albans, Tuesday forenoon, 26th, at Keyse's, Swanton, in the afternoon; at the Massachusetts' House, Rouses Point, on Wednesday, the 27th, to engage girls,—such as would like a place in the Mills would do well to improve the present opportunity, as new hands will not be wanted late in the season. I shall start with my Company, for the Mills, on Friday morning, the 29th inst., from Rouses Point, at 6 o'clock. Such as do not have an opportunity to see me at the above places, can take the cars and go with me the same as though I had engaged them.

I will be responsible for the safety of all baggage that is marked in care of I. M. BOYNTON, and delivered to my charge.

I. M. BOYNTON,

Agent for Procuring Help for the Mills.

Figure 7: A recruitment poster for mill workers

to bring suitable young women to work in the mills. While half that of a man's, the wages, typically $3.00 to $3.50 per week, were much higher than anything farm daughters could earn in their hometowns.

Of the young women who worked in the mills, some gave their wages to their families, but others kept their earnings and found certain financial freedoms. Working conditions were loud and hazardous. Most textile workers toiled for 12 to 14 hours a day and half a day on Saturdays. However, Outside of working hours young women still found opportunities to socialize with each other and discuss their lives and the world around them. Rural farm women found new opportunities in urban life, and many married men from the city and did not return to the farm. In urban settings, women were exposed to new ideas and learned about social reform efforts. Factory workers could attend lectures and participate in public events. Women led the charge for improved working conditions in the mills, and many became involved in anti-slavery and women's rights activism.

Figure 8: A weaver stands at a loom on a factory floor

Voting Rights

Compared to colonial times, 19th century women did have more rights and privileges. At the same time, many men, including lawmakers, continued to deny women access to the public sphere, including holding public office and suffrage (the right to vote). After the Revolutionary War, men who owned land had the right to vote, but a woman, no matter how much land she owned, did not. In part, this discrimination was rooted in the belief that a wife was subservient to her husband. It was argued that married women would share their husband's beliefs. Afterall, under coverture and the perspectives of the time, a wife served her husband and would share his beliefs. So, if a wife voted, it meant her husband cast two ballots. Yet single women were also denied suffrage, so there was obviously more to this issue.

Arguably, men didn't want to share their political power with daughters, mothers, and wives, just as they didn't want to share it with free Black men, Native Americans, or immigrants. Take for example, New Jersey, the one state where women who owned land were allowed to vote after the Revolution. In 1807 legislators took this right away—not only from women but from Black men and immigrants as well.

Although the ideology of the time placed women outside of the public sphere, women found ways to participate in public life. Some women used their access to the public to fight for their rights.

Women Writers and Social Reformers

One area of public life assumed by women was the role of a writer. Sometimes women would write under male pseudonyms, but women published novels, informational books, poetry, and news articles. In many cases, women writers published anti-slavery pieces. Women also became speakers on the anti-slavery circuit. Free Black women and formerly enslaved women were among those who wrote and spoke out against slavery. A number of these women, white and black, also wrote and spoke in favor of women's rights. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center promotes the stories of such women in our museum and through our website. Visit us in person or online to learn more.

Figure 9: Five women officers of the Women's League in Newport, Rhode Island, c. 1899

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Appendix B

“The Two Offers” by Frances Watkins Harper (1859)

Source: literaryladiesguide.com/full-texts-of-classic-works/the-two-offers-by-frances-watkins-harper

“What is the matter with you, Laura, this morning? I have been watching you this hour, and in that time you have commenced a half dozen letters and torn them all up. What matter of such grave moment is puzzling your dear little head, that you do not know how to decide?”

“Well, it is an important matter: I have two offers for marriage, and I do not know which to choose.”

“I should accept neither, or to say the least, not at present.”

“Why not?”

“Because I think a woman who is undecided between two offers, has not love enough for either to make a choice; and in that very hesitation, indecision, she has a reason to pause and seriously reflect, lest her marriage, instead of being an affinity of souls or a union of hearts, should only be a mere matter of bargain and sale, or an affair of convenience and selfish interest.”

“But I consider them both very good offers, just such as many a girl would gladly receive. But to tell you the truth, I do not think that I regard either as a woman should the man she chooses for her husband. But then if I refuse, there is the risk of being an old maid, and that is not to be thought of.”

“Well, suppose there is, is that the most dreadful fate that can befall a woman? Is there not more intense wretchedness in an ill-assorted marriage—more utter loneliness in a loveless home, than in the lot of the old maid who accepts her earthly mission as a gift from God, and strives to walk the path of life with earnest and unfaltering steps?”

“Oh! what a little preacher you are. I really believe that you were cut out for an old maid; that when nature formed you, she put in a double portion of intellect to make up for a deficiency of love; and yet you are kind and affectionate. But I do not think that you know anything of the grand, over-mastering passion, or the deep necessity of woman’s heart for loving.”

“Do you think so?” resumed the first speaker; and bending over her work she quietly applied herself to the knitting that had lain neglected by her side, during this brief conversation; but as she did so, a shadow flitted over her pale and intellectual brow, a mist gathered in her eyes, and a slight quivering of the lips, revealed a depth of feeling to which her companion was a stranger.

But before I proceed with my story, let me give you a slight history of the speakers. They were cousins, who had met life under different auspices. Laura Lagrange, was the only daughter of rich and indulgent parents, who had spared no pains to make her an accomplished lady.

Her cousin, Janette Alston, was the child of parents, rich only in goodness and affection. Her father had been unfortunate in business, and dying before he could retrieve his fortunes, left his business in an embarrassed state.

His widow was unacquainted with his business affairs, and when the estate was settled, hungry creditors had brought their claims and the lawyers had received their fees, she found herself homeless and almost penniless, and she who had been sheltered in the warm clasp of loving arms, found them too powerless to shield her from the pitiless pelting storms of adversity.

Year after year she struggled with poverty and wrestled with want, till her toil-worn hands became too feeble to hold the shattered chords of existence, and her tear-dimmed eyes grew heavy with the slumber of death.

Her daughter had watched over her with untiring devotion, had closed her eyes in death, and gone out into the busy, restless world, missing a precious tone from the voices of earth, a beloved step from the paths of life.

Too self reliant to depend on the charity of relations, she endeavored to support herself by her own exertions, and she had succeeded. Her path for a while was marked with struggle and trial, but instead of uselessly repining, she met them bravely, and her life became not a thing of ease and indulgence, but of conquest, victory, and accomplishments.

At the time when this conversation took place, the deep trials of her life had passed away. The achievements of her genius had won her a position in the literary world, where she shone as one of its bright particular stars. And with her fame came a competence of worldly means, which gave her leisure for improvement, and the riper development of her rare talents.

And she, that pale intellectual woman, whose genius gave life and vivacity to the social circle, and whose presence threw a halo of beauty and grace around the charmed atmosphere in which she moved, had at one period of her life, known the mystic and solemn strength of an all-absorbing love. Years faded into the misty past, had seen the kindling of her eye, the quick flushing of her cheek, and the wild throbbing of her heart, at tones of a voice long since hushed to the stillness of death.

Deeply, wildly, passionately, she had loved. Her whole life seemed like the pouring out of rich, warm and gushing affections. This love quickened her talents, inspired her genius, and threw over her life a tender and spiritual earnestness. And then came a fearful shock, a mournful waking from that “dream of beauty and delight.”

A shadow fell around her path; it came between her and the object of her heart’s worship; first a few cold words, estrangement, and then a painful separation; the old story of woman’s pride—digging the sepulchre of her happiness, and then a new-made grave, and her path over it to the spirit world; and thus faded out from that young heart her bright, brief and saddened dream of life.

Faint and spirit-broken, she turned from the scenes associated with the memory of the loved and lost. She tried to break the chain of sad associations that bound her to the mournful past; and so, pressing back the bitter sobs from her almost breaking heart, like the dying dolphin, whose beauty is born of its death anguish, her genius gathered strength from suffering and wondrous power and brilliancy from the agony she hid within the desolate chambers of her soul.

Men hailed her as one of earth’s strangely gifted children, and wreathed the garlands of fame for her brow, when it was throbbing with a wild and fearful unrest. They breathed her name with applause, when through the lonely halls of her stricken spirit, was an earnest cry for peace, a deep yearning for sympathy and heart-support.

But life, with its stern realities, met her; its solemn responsibilities confronted her, and turning, with an earnest and shattered spirit, to life’s duties and trials, she found a calmness and strength that she had only imagined in her dreams of poetry and song.

We will now pass over a period of ten years, and the cousins have met again. In that calm and lovely woman, in whose eyes is a depth of tenderness, tempering the flashes of her genius, whose looks and tones are full of sympathy and love, we recognize the once smitten and stricken Janette Alston.

The bloom of her girlhood had given way to a higher type of spiritual beauty, as if some unseen hand had been polishing and refining the temple in which her lovely spirit found its habitation; and this had been the fact. Her inner life had grown beautiful, and it was this that was constantly developing the outer.

Never, in the early flush of womanhood, when an absorbing love had lit up her eyes and glowed in her life, had she appeared so interesting as when, with a countenance which seemed overshadowed with a spiritual light, she bent over the death-bed of a young woman, just lingering at the shadowy gates of the unseen land.

“Has he come?” faintly but eagerly exclaimed the dying woman. “Oh! how I have longed for his coming, and even in death he forgets me.”

“Oh, do not say so, dear Laura, some accident may have detained him,” said Janette to her cousin; for on that bed, from whence she will never rise, lies the once-beautiful and lighthearted Laura Lagrange, the brightness of whose eyes has long since been dimmed with tears, and whose voice had become like a harp whose every chord is turned to sadness—whose faintest thrill and loudest vibrations are but the variations of agony.

A heavy hand was laid upon her once warm and bounding heart, and a voice came whispering through her soul, that she must die. But, to her, the tidings was a message of deliverance—a voice, hushing her wild sorrows to the calmness of resignation and hope. Life had grown so weary upon her head— the future looked so hopeless—she had no wish to tread again the track where thorns had pierced her feet, and clouds overcast her sky; and she hailed the coming of death's angel as the footsteps of a welcome friend.

And yet, earth had one object so very dear to her weary heart. It was her absent and 4 recreant husband; for, since that conversation, she had accepted one of her offers, and become a wife. But, before she married, she learned that great lesson of human experience and woman's life, to love the man who bowed at her shrine, a willing worshipper.

He had a pleasing address, raven hair, flashing eyes, a voice of thrilling sweetness, and lips of persuasive eloquence; and being well versed in the ways of the world, he won his way to her heart, and she became his bride, and he was proud of his prize.

Vain and superficial in his character, he looked upon marriage not as a divine sacrament for the soul's development and human progression, but as the title-deed that gave him possession of the woman he thought he loved.

But alas for her, the laxity of his principles had rendered him unworthy of the deep and undying devotion of a pure-hearted woman; but, for awhile, he hid from her his true character, and she blindly loved him, and for a short period was happy in the consciousness of being beloved; though sometimes a vague unrest would fill her soul, when, overflowing with a sense of the good, the beautiful, and the true, she would turn to him, but find no response to the deep yearnings of her soul—no appreciation of life's highest realities—its solemn grandeur and significant importance.

Their souls never met, and soon she found a void in her bosom, that his earth-born love could not fill. He did not satisfy the wants of her mental and moral nature—between him and her there was no affinity of minds, no intercommunion of souls.

Talk as you will of woman's deep capacity for loving, of the strength of her affectional nature. I do not deny it; but will the mere possession of any human love, fully satisfy all the demands of her whole being? You may paint her in poetry or fiction, as a frail vine, clinging to her brother man for support, and dying when deprived of it; and all this may sound well enough to please the imaginations of school-girls, or love-lorn maidens.

But woman—the true woman—if you would render her happy, it needs more than the mere development of her affectional nature. Her conscience should be enlightened, her faith in the true and right established, scope given to her Heaven-endowed and God-given faculties.

The true aim of female education should be not a development of one or two, but all the faculties of the human soul, because no perfect womanhood is developed by imperfect culture. Intense love is often akin to intense suffering, and to trust the whole wealth of a woman's nature on the frail bark of human love, may often be like trusting a cargo of gold and precious gems, to a bark that has never battled with the storm, or buffeted the waves.

Is it any wonder, then, that so many life-barks go down, paving the ocean of time with precious hearts and wasted hopes? that so many float around us, shattered and dismasted wrecks? that so many are stranded on the shoals of existence, mournful beacons and solemn warnings for the thoughtless, to whom marriage is a careless and hasty rushing together of the affections?

Alas that an institution so fraught with good for humanity should be so perverted, and that state of life, which should be filled with happiness, become so replete with misery.

And this was the fate of Laura Lagrange. For a brief period after her marriage her life seemed like a bright and beautiful dream, full of hope and radiant with joy. And then there came a change—he found other attractions that lay beyond the pale of home influences.

The gambling saloon had power to win him from her side, he had lived in an element of unhealthy and unhallowed excitements, and the society of a loving wife, the pleasures of a well-regulated home, were enjoyments too tame for one who had vitiated his

tastes by the pleasures of sin.

There were charmed houses of vice, built upon dead men's loves, where, amid the flow of song, laughter, wine, and careless mirth, he would spend hour after hour, forgetting the cheek that was paling through his neglect, heedless of the tear-dimmed eyes, peering anxiously into the darkness, waiting, or watching his return.

The influence of old associations was upon him. In early life, home had been to him a place of ceilings and walls, not a true home, built upon goodness, love and truth. It was a place where velvet carpets hushed its tread, where images of loveliness and beauty invoked into being by painter's art and sculptor's skill, pleased the eye and gratified the taste, where magnificence surrounded his way and costly clothing adorned his person; but it was not the place for the true culture and right development of his soul.

His father had been too much engrossed in making money, and his mother in spending it, in striving to maintain a fashionable position in society, and shining in the eyes of the world, to give the proper direction to the character of their wayward and impulsive son. His mother put beautiful robes upon his body, but left ugly scars upon his soul; she pampered his appetite, but starved his spirit.

Every mother should be a true artist, who knows how to weave into her child's life images of grace and beauty, the true poet capable of writing on the soul of childhood the harmony of love and truth, and teaching it how to produce the grandest of all poems—the poetry of a true and noble life.

But in his home, a love for the good, the true and right, had been sacrificed at the shrine of frivolity and fashion. That parental authority which should have been preserved as a string of precious pearls, unbroken and unscattered, was simply the administration of chance.

At one time obedience was enforced by authority, at another time by flattery and promises, and just as often it was not enforced at all. His early associations were formed as chance directed, and from his want of home-training, his character received a bias, his life a shade, which ran through every avenue of his existence, and darkened all his future hours.

Oh, if we would trace the history of all the crimes that have o'ershadowed this sin-shrouded and sorrow-darkened world of ours, how many might be seen arising from the wrong home influences, or the weakening of the home ties.

Home should always be the best school for the affections, the birthplace of high resolves, and the altar upon which lofty aspirations are kindled, from whence the soul may go forth strengthened, to act its part aright in the great drama of life with conscience enlightened, affections cultivated, and reason and judgment dominant.

But alas for the young wife. Her husband had not been blessed with such a home. When he entered the arena of life, the voices from home did not linger around his path as angels of guidance about his steps; they were not like so many messages to invite him to deeds of high and holy worth.

The memory of no sainted mother arose between him and deeds of darkness; the earnest prayers of no father arrested him in his downward course: and before a year of his married life had waned, his young wife had learned to wait and mourn his frequent and uncalled-for absence.

More than once had she seen him come home from his midnight haunts, the bright intelligence of his eye displaced by the drunkard's stare, and his manly gait changed to the inebriate's stagger; and she was beginning to know the bitter agony that is compressed in the mournful words, a drunkard's wife.

And then there came a bright but brief episode in her experience; the angel of life gave to her existence a deeper meaning and loftier significance; she sheltered in the warm clasp of her loving arms, a dear babe, a precious child, whose love filled every chamber of her heart, and felt the fount of maternal love gushing so new within her soul. That child was hers.

How overshadowing was the love with which she bent over its helplessness, how much it helped to fill the void and chasms in her soul. How many lonely hours were beguiled by its winsome ways, its answering smiles and fond caresses. How exquisite and solemn was the feeling that thrilled her heart when she clasped the tiny hands together and taught her dear child to call God "Our Father."

What a blessing was that child. The father paused in

his headlong career, awed by the strange beauty and precocious intellect of his child; and the mother's life had a better expression through her ministrations of love. And then there came hours of bitter anguish, shading the sunlight of her home and hushing the music of her heart.

The angel of death bent over the couch of her child and beaconed it away. Closer and closer the mother strained her child to her wildly heaving breast, and struggled with the heavy hand that lay upon its heart. Love and agony contended with death, and the language of the mother's heart was,

"Oh, Death, away! that innocent is mine;
I cannot spare him from my arms
To lay him, Death, in thine.
I am a mother, Death; I gave that darling birth
I could not bear his lifeless limbs
Should moulder in the earth."

But death was stronger than love and mightier than agony and won the child for the land of crystal founts and deathless flowers, and the poor, stricken mother sat down beneath the shadow of her mighty grief, feeling as if a great light had gone out from her soul, and that the sunshine had suddenly faded around her path. She turned in her deep anguish to the father of her child, the loved and cherished dead.

For awhile his words were kind and tender, his heart seemed subdued, and his tenderness fell upon her worn and weary heart like rain on perishing flowers, or cooling waters to lips all parched with thirst and scorched with fever; but the change was evanescent, the influence of unhallowed associations and evil habits had vitiated and poisoned the springs of his existence.

They had bound him in their meshes, and he lacked the moral strength to break his fetters, and stand erect in all the strength and dignity of a true manhood, making life's highest excellence his ideal, and striving to gain it.

And yet moments of deep contrition would sweep over him, when he would resolve to abandon the wine-cup forever, when he was ready to forswear the handling of another card, and he would try to break away from the associations that he felt were working his ruin; but when the hour of temptation came his strength was weakness, his earnest purposes were cobwebs, his well meant resolutions ropes of sand, and thus passed year after year of the married life of Laura Lagrange.

She tried to hide her agony from the public gaze, to smile when her heart was almost breaking. But year after year her voice grew fainter and sadder, her once light and bounding step grew slower and faltering. Year after year she wrestled with agony, and strove with despair, till the quick eyes of her brother read, in the paling of her cheek and the dimming eye, the secret anguish of her worn and weary spirit. On that wan, sad face, he saw the death-tokens, and he knew the dark wing of the mystic angel swept coldly around her path.

"Laura," said her brother to her one day, "you are not well, and I think you need our mother's tender care and nursing. You are daily losing strength, and if you will go I will accompany you." At first, she hesitated, she shrank almost instinctively from presenting that pale sad face to the loved ones at home. That face was such a telltale; it told of heart-sickness, of hope deferred, and the mournful story of unrequited love.

But then a deep yearning for home sympathy woke within her a passionate longing for love's kind words, for tenderness and heart support, and she resolved to seek the home of her childhood and lay her weary head upon her mother's bosom, to be folded again in her loving arms, to lay that poor, bruised and aching heart where it might beat and throb closely to the loved ones at home.

A kind welcome awaited her. All that love and tenderness could devise was done to bring the bloom to her cheek and the light to her eye; but it was all in vain; her's was a disease that no medicine could cure, no earthly balm would heal. It was a slow wasting of the vital forces, the sickness of the soul. The unkindness and neglect of her husband, lay like a leaden weight upon her heart, and slowly oozed way its life-drops.

And where was he that had won her love, and then cast it aside as a useless thing, who rifled her heart of its wealth and spread bitter ashes upon its broken altars? He was lingering away from her when the death-damps were gathering on her brow, when his name was trembling on her lips! lingering away! when she was watching his coming, though the death films were gathering before her eyes, and earthly things

were fading from her vision.

“I think I hear him now,” said the dying woman, “surely that is his step;” but the sound died away in the distance. Again she started from an uneasy slumber, “that is his voice! I am so glad he has come.”

Tears gathered in the eyes of the sad watchers by that dying bed, for they knew that she was deceived. He had not returned. For her sake they wished his coming. Slowly the hours waned away, and then came the sad, soul-sickening thought that she was forgotten, forgotten in the last hour of human need, forgotten when the spirit, about to be dissolved, paused for the last time on the threshold of existence, a weary watcher at the gates of death.

“He has forgotten me,” again she faintly murmured, and the last tears she would ever shed on earth sprung to her mournful eyes, and clasping her hands together in silent anguish, a few broken sentences issued from her pale and quivering lips. They were prayers for strength and earnest pleading for him who had desolated her young life, by turning its sunshine to shadows, its smiles to tears.

“He has forgotten me,” she murmured again, “but I can bear it, the bitterness of death is passed, and soon I hope to exchange the shadows of death for the brightness of eternity, the rugged paths of life for the golden streets of glory, and the care and turmoils of earth for the peace and rest of heaven.”

Her voice grew fainter and fainter, they saw the shadows that never deceive flit over her pale and faded face, and knew that the death angel waited to soothe their weary one to rest, to calm the throbbing of her bosom and cool the fever of her brain.

And amid the silent hush of their grief the freed spirit, refined through suffering, and brought into divine harmony through the spirit of the living Christ, passed over the dark waters of death as on a bridge of light, over whose radiant arches hovering angels bent. They parted the dark locks from her marble brow, closed the waxen lids over the once bright and laughing eye, and left her to the dreamless slumber of the grave.

Her cousin turned from that death-bed a sadder and wiser woman. She resolved more earnestly than ever to make the world better by her example, gladder by her presence, and to kindle the fires of her genius on the altars of universal love and truth. She had a higher and better object in all her writings than the mere acquisition of gold, or acquirement of fame.

She felt that she had a high and holy mission on the battle-field of existence, that life was not given her to be frittered away in nonsense, or wasted away in trifling pursuits. She would willingly espouse an unpopular cause but not an unrighteous one. In her the down-trodden slave found an earnest advocate; the flying fugitive remembered her kindness as he stepped cautiously through our Republic, to gain his freedom in a monarchial land, having broken the chains on which the rust of centuries had gathered.

Little children learned to name her with affection, the poor called her blessed, as she broke her bread to the pale lips of hunger. Her life was like a beautiful story, only it was clothed with the dignity of reality and invested with the sublimity of truth. True, she was an old maid.

No husband brightened her life with his love, or shaded it with his neglect. No children nestling lovingly in her arms called her mother. No one appended Mrs. to her name; she was indeed an old maid, not vainly striving to keep up an appearance of girlishness, when departed was written on her youth.

Not vainly pining at her loneliness and isolation: the world was full of warm, loving hearts, and her own beat in unison with them. Neither was she always sentimentally sighing for something to love, objects of affection were all around her, and the world was not so wealthy in love that it had no use for her’s; in blessing others she made a life and benediction, and as old age descended peacefully and gently upon her, she had learned one of life’s most precious lessons, that true happiness consists not so much in the fruition of our wishes as in the regulation of desires and the full development and right culture of our whole statures.