Noticeable Articles.

The August number of the Fortnightly contains a paper on the Higher Education of Woman, by Mrs. E. Lynn Lynton, the novelist, which has given great offense to some of the advocates of woman’s rights, who accuse the writer of taking a mere mercenary dollars-and-cents view of the higher education. It does not seem to me that this is quite just to Mrs. Lynton’s paper, taken as a whole, and that she does in it raise a much-needed note of warning against the effects of the feverish excitement, which is one feature, of the present phase of the woman’s education movement, and against many of the crude and false views on the subject which are prevalent now. That the feverish excitement is doing harm, there can be no doubt; instances come to the observation of every one at all acquainted with the subject; and it would seem as if the danger must be greater in England, where the chief and almost the only educational motive-power is the competitive-examination system,—a system against which the most eminent scholars and men of science seem to protest in vain. But that bad methods of education do harm, is as true of boys as of girls, and is no argument against giving girls any more than against giving boys the best possible education. Now, it would seem as if the very best test to be applied to distinguish good from bad education, is the principle that the former cannot possibly be harmful to the bodily health. A higher education, therefore, that breaks down the health of girls, is to be condemned, not because it is higher, but because it is bad. Either this is the alternative, or we must conclude with the Mahometans that women really have no minds to be educated,—a view which nature herself has established. Against this Mrs. Lynton and all sensible women ought to protest. But it will be time to determine what women are good for when girls shall have equal opportunity with their brothers to develop what capacities are in them. The way in which the higher opportunities for study have been, heretofore, monopolized by the stronger sex will be looked back upon, hereafter, as an illustration of the semi-barbarism of the age that tolerated it. That nervous and excitable girls may be injured by over-study is very true; but it is equally true that a little, and indeed not a little, but a good deal, healthy, intellectual stimulus would do the semi-dead dolls of society a world of good. When the mistakes, incident to every new experiment, have all been made, it will be found that the highest and best possible education is as good for one sex as for the other.

In the same number there is a good paper on Hawthorne’s Romances, by W. L. Courtney, from which I will extract a single passage: “It is the gift of the higher forms of literature to possess a distinct atmosphere of their own, the influence of which we instinctively recognize as we read. There is the atmosphere, for instance, which surrounds Mr. Morris’s Earthly Paradise,—the heavy, sensuous air of some island of the Sirens, where reigns the indolent and delicious passivity of an eternity of the lotus-flower. Or there is the eager and nipping air which surrounds much of the work of Carlyle,—an air which bites shrewdly, and which can only be inhaled in gasps. Or there is the quiet, summer-like, peaceful atmosphere which Emerson distills,—the air of a complacent optimism, when we feel that it is good to have been born, and that ‘all things work together for good to those who love God.’ Far otherwise is the atmosphere which surrounds the work of Hawthorne; and no one who has once breathed it can forget its peculiar quality. In whatever time, place, or circumstances his tales are perused, instantly there rises the suggestion of a chilly and spectral air,—the air of some gleaming moonlight, when all the shadows seem to have gathered an added intensity, where ordinary flesh and blood has lost color, and to eye and ear are borne, ever and anon, the visions of flying wraiths and the echoes of a supernatural melody. The touch of the artist here is incommunicable and indescribable, and is the unique possession of his singular genius. The machinery by which the effect is worked differs, but the result is the same.”

W. P. A.

Not Dead Yet, but nevertheless, after “Life.”

A fair damozelle Imogene
Once tried to construct a machene
To capture the heart;
And, succeeding in part,
With fright scared the young men quite green.