The Emancipation of Women in the World of Literature.

Alice Elzinga

Virginia Woolf wrote in her "Profession for Women", (a paper read to the Women's Service League)"……my profession is literature, and in that profession there are fewer experiences for women than in any other, with the exception of the stage……fewer, I mean, that are peculiar to women, For the road was cut many years ago by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martinau, by Jane Austen, by George Eliot ……many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth and regulating my steps……".

Oliver Elton says that when Miss Austen appeared on the scene,"…… for the first time in England, women are nicely depicted by their own sex, sometimes with heart and sympathy, but oftener with that cool, intimate veracity which is so salutary, but which omits so much of the essence of women as men see them". (A survey of English Literature, Volume l, page 174)

To follow the changes of the status of women in the world of literature in detail, would produce mammoth volumes. In this short essay an attempt has been made, in outline form, to trace roughly the changes and attitudes which made "the path smoother" for women in the world of literature.

The discovery of America in 1492, enlarging the sphere of human imagination and teasing out the spirit of adventure; the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453; the consequent dissemination of fugitive knowledge from the libraries and studies of the Eastern capitol; The Reformation; the decay of the Great Secular Empire; the last breakdown of feudalism; great discoveries and inventions;…… what was the effect of all this upon the status of women?

The Renaissance did not emancipate women, but it did mean increased

esteem for women and increased interest. A sixteenth century English woman became more a companion to her menfolk than before. She was a co-partner in the revival of learning and of the art of living. But we must not suppose that the Renaissance was the beginning of a period of uninterrupted improvement in the status of women. The Elizabethan period was followed by a gradual decline until about 1750; women in England had reached a new low level hardly in advance of their position in the twelfth century. We may look back to the sixteenth century as to a cheerful and satisfactory period of women's history, but even then we must avoid exaggeration of the intellectual dignity enjoyed by them; it is a very different matter to be learned, from being *accepted* as a reasonable being; and the first precedes the second. When we read that the ladies of the court of Elizabeth were learned, we are not to suppose that they were treated as the intellectual equals of the gentlemen.

The Elizabethan age was followed by a period of real degradation. There were two causes for this degradation. First. Puritanism, and second, licentiousness. Puritanism, the force which was beginning to grow strong enough to colour or perhaps discolour social life, was convinced that a woman must either be a courtesan or be "homely", that she must be a temptation or a nonetity; and attention to physical beauty was nothing more than an invitation to license. And although Puritanism contributed to the ensuing degradation of women, we must not forget that though Puritans felt it wrong for women to obtain a place in the front lines, some believed it quite right for women to pursue education on an academical level. And we must not forget that the Puritans did produce a Lucy Hutchinson.

The fact that women could not obtain front line positions during that period, is supported by the following quotation:

> "while the daughters of the well-to-do were not yet divorced from the business of life, in the futile and languorous drawing-rooms to which Miss Austen's heroines were confined; on the other hand no professions of trades higher than manual were open to women, and scarcely any education was provided for them save that which each home could give. A very few clever women were classical scholars; a somewhat larger number were Puritan theologians, or students of English and even Italian

poetry." (Short History of Women, page 323)

Virginia Woolf, in her essay, "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown, writes:

> ".....consider the married life of the Carlyles and bewail the waste, the futility, for him and for her, of the horrible domestic tradition which made it seemly for a woman of genius to spend her time chasing beetles, scouring saucepans, instead of writing books.". (A letter to a young Poet and other essays, page 16)

By about 1750, we find a class of women at the lowest point of degradation which had been reached for centuries. History reveals the biting truth that women were uneducated, they were unnatural, their morality was false. Their modesty was false. And when the end of the eighteenth century approached, and a woman dared to claim for her sex full and equal rights with man, she had to assail a full fledged myth, which entirely obscured for most people the woman of flesh and blood with whom they had lived and died for countless ages.

There was, of course, no break in the continuity of women's history, but very gradually new elements did enter in and changed its course. What had gone before, the primitive taboo outlook, the Roman principle of law, the worship of fertility, all these and others constitute the race memory, the tradition, the emotion of men to women, the conservative doctrine, which were now to be re-shaped and re-grouped by radical forces and new knowledge.

Even when the century began to veer towards revolutionary changes in ideas and institutions, it was not women who first benefited, The great name which was in so many ways the morning star of the revolutionary epoch, Rousseau (1712-1778), had nothing to offer them.

Rousseau had not progressed very far from Milton's idea. Milton gave perhaps the strongest exposition of the view that woman was made for man and is his inferior. This is found in his poems and prose. Listen to these words of Milton:

> "Therefore God's universal law
> Gave to the man despotic power
> Over his female in due awe
> Nor from that right to part an hour
> Smile she or love",

Rousseau's doctrine that woman's duty is to please man fitted neatly, *not only with Rousseau's personal egotism, but also into the genteel the*ory respecting woman which was then spreading among the middle classes in England. In short form, this theory maintained that if woman would exercise the faculty of gratifying and deluding man, God or Providence would assure to her a good father, a protective husband, economic security and freedom from the responsibility of feeding herself in the struggle for existence, To attain this "fortunate" position woman needs only to practise the arts of apparent submission and actual cunning, and to refrain from challenging man by a resort to learning, to an aquisition of wordly knowledge and the use of reason. If she would fail to achieve the idea of irresponsible comfort so highly cherished in a bourgeoise society.

Hannah More, one of the great women in English prose, strongly criticized Rousseau's doctrine of this "female character and female behavior". To Hannah More religion and chastity were the essential basis of female character to an extent which well nigh made them secondary sexual characters in themselves.

It was not Hannah More however, it was Mary Wollstonecraft, the first woman who cared and dared to comment openly and in print on the general attitude towards woman in that country, and in that century. The degradation of women called forth Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Women". This cry, coming from a woman's heart, was somewhat neglected. This was to be expected, knowing the attitudes during that period. To Mary Wollstonecraft, woman must live to serve and know herself as well as God and man; and the ways of God must be as justified to her as to her husband. She, therefore, called for knowledge, and in such a way as to lead quite definitely to the putting of orthodoxy of religion, morals and politics in a second place, if necessary.

A very brief summary of the "Vindication" is found in "Modern woman", by Ferdinand Lundberg, page 144:

> "Women are identical with men, (that is, they are equal as *one is to one, and two is to two*). Women, therefore, should be subject to exactly the same social, political and personal treatment as man. Women should receive the same education as men. Women should be governed by the same moral stan-

dards. Women should have the same opportunities and the same work as men".

All this was quite contrary to the doctrines in that day in regard to the status of women. It was un-acceptable to the minds of the general public as well as to the living habits of the intellectuals.

It is interesting to note how the status of women changed through political turmoil and unrest. Political upheaval causes strong emotional repercussion. As woman is naturally more emotional than man, it may well be that the spirit of the emotional age attracted her and gave her the opportunity to express herself in literature. The French Revolution stirred all Europe to its depth, and during the following half century every great movement in literature, as in politics and religion, was characterized by strong emotions; which is all the more noticeable by contrast with the cold, formal satiric spirit of the early eighteenth century. It was during this period that woman assumed, for the first time, an important place in English literature. This interesting phenomenon lies in the fact that woman was for the first time given some slight change of education, of entering into the intellectual life of the race ; and, as is always the case when woman is given anything like a fair opportunity, she responded magnificently.

Let us now proceed by examining the effects of a few of the daring trailbreakers on behalf of the emanciaption of women in the world of literature.

Mary Wollstonecraft.

During 1790, Mary Wollstonecraft issued a volume which she called, "A Vindication of the rights of Men". Two years later, during 1792 ahe published her "A Vindication of the rights of Women".

The objects of her attention in the "Vindication of the rights of Women" were customs and opinions, not specific provisions of law affecting women, married and single. Her writing was more an *attack* without a real constructive proposal for a cure. She was dealing with mental and emotional attitudes. Due to her portrayal of the alleged social tyranny exercised by man over woman, she helped to vitalize the doctrine that married women were civilly dead, members of a subject sex in effect, nothing in history save perhaps, obsequious play things or fugitive intriguers trying to make their way out from in under man's domination.

Mary Wollstonecraft assailed Rousseau's doctrine, as mentioned in the introduction, in her "Vindication of the rights of Women". She appealed to reason, justice and virtue. She writes: "Woman is everywhere in chains but I propose to show her the road to freedom." (Woman as Force in History, page 97)..

In reality, however, Miss Wollstonecraft did not show women the road to freedom, she did not offer a positive remedy. The idea that woman was formed to please man and could govern him by the use of charms was according to her, the "philosophy of lascivousness, an offense against virtue, reason, and respectability, against everything that give dignity and value of human life." But this was nothing new and this offered no way towards "dignity and respectability." Criticism is excellent, but criticism *alone*, without showing a better way, can only be destructive.

The boldness of this writing was admirable, and attracted attention, friendly and adverse. A strong, critical reaction came from the pen of Hannah More, who had not only been critical towards Rousseau, but showed the same stern criticism towards Mary Wollstonecrafts' writings.

Although Hannah More devoted a lifetime to the cause of education for women, she could not appreciate the sharp boldness which Mary Wollstonecraft had put forth. Hannah More describes Miss Wollstonecraft's work as follows:

> " ..... this most destructive class in the whole wide range of modern corrupters, who affect the most desperate work of the passions, without so much as pretending to urge their violence in extenuation of the guilt of indulging them. They solicit the very indulgence with a sort of cold-blooded speculation, and invite the reader to the most unbounded gratification, with all the saturnine coolness of a geometrical calculation. The system is a dire infusion, compounded of bold impiety, brutish sensuality and exquisite folly, which, creeping fatally about the breast, checks the moral circulation and totally stops the pulse of goodness by extinction of the vital principle. Thus not only cloaking the system of actual virtue, but drying up the fountain of future remorse and remote independence. Not only novels and romances have been made the vehicles of vice and infidelity, but the same allurement has been

held out to the women of our own country which was employed by the first philosophist to the first sinner ..... knowledge. Listen to the precepts of the new enlighteners, and you need no longer remain in the situation in which providence has placed you! Follow their example and you shall be permitted to indulge in all those gratifications which custom, not religion has tolerated in the male sex." (Short History of Women, page 335)

Mary Wollstonecrafts' name entered the stream of consciousness. Yet one wonders how great, or small, her contribution has been! She really left her argument unfinished. She had given to women no program of legislation guaranteed to bring about their emanciapation. It did arouse a greater consciousness in regard to women's position of subjection. It was the task of women writers to keep alive this consciousness, but also to propose remedies. In this respect Mary Wollstonecraft had failed.

Virginia Woolf, (1882-1941) gives so true a picture of the whole situation during that period and what was expected of the women during this early middle age in "The Angel in the House from "The Great Tradition" by F. R. Leaves. Mrs Woolf writes:

"It was expected of women that she be: intensely sympathetic, immensely charming, utterly unselfish, excelled in the difficult arts of family life, sacrifice herself daily, not to have a mind of her own, or a wish of her own; she was above all expected to be pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty, her blushes her great grace ..... because you are a woman".

Killing this "angel in the house" was part of the occupation of a woman writer. The struggle was severe. It took time, much time. But it was a real experience; it was an experience prone to befall all women writers at that time and long after.

It was the intellectual distinction, the emotional quality and the strength of art, that made women break through the walls of prejudice and opinions that women should be confined to the area of a little daily embroidery.

Hannah More.

Already we have mentioned *Hannah More,* (1745-1833) It was Hannah More, who through her intellectual distinction contributed greatly to the

breaking down of the walls of prejudices and opinions of that day in regard to the status of women. She devoted her long, prosperous and honourable life to stimulate the thought of more education for women, by practical teaching and by writings which arrested the attention and demanded the admiration of the highest intellectual circles in Europe and in America. It gives one great joy and satisfaction to read the biographies on Hannah More. According to the writers on her life and ambitions, Hannah More did not display a deep bitternees which was so prevalent by other women writers, a bitternes which destroyed the effectiveness. Hannah More was instructive, intelligent, educational. She exercised a broad and deep influence on the public mind in the combined character of a woman of society, author, and philanthropist. Her virtues were not carried out to extremes of fanaticism. Embarking in great enterprizes, she never went outside the prescribed sphere of women. Masculine in the force and vigor of her understanding, she was familiar with the feminine in all her instincts.

It was as a literary woman—when literary women were not so numerous or ambitious as they are now……that Hannah More had the entree into the best society under the patronage of the greatest writers of the age, She attracted the attention of Sheridan by her verses when she was scarcely eighteen. Her "Search after Happiness" went through six editions before the year 1775. Her tragedy "Percy", was translated into French and German before she was thirty. Her, "The Fatal Falsehood" was also much admired, but did not meet with the same success. Her," Bas Bleu" was praised by Johnson in unmeasured terms. It was for her poetry that she was best known from 1775 to 1785, the period when she lived in the fashionable and literary world A brilliant and beautiful woman, whom everybody wished to know. Hannah More was a real trailbreaker towards the emancipation of women in the world of literature.

It was the intellectual distinction, the right emotional quality and the strength of art, that had to break down the walls of prejudices which existed so strongly and deeply in the hearts and minds of those who lived and worked in the world of literature, education and art. A bare attack would never be successful. Hannah More did not attack, but tactfully broke through the barriers with her keen insight and well-balanced emotions. She was a close friend to such men as Dr. Johnson, Garrick, Reynolds, John Newton and others, visiting them in their homes, discussing intellec-

tual subjects, sharing opinions. She was accepted by all as an equal.

After Hannah More had entered into, and was accepted by, the literary circles, she supported herself by her writings, which until 1785 were chiefly poems and drama. They were widely circulated and admired. She retired officially during 1785, but unofficially continued writing. She withdrew to Cowslip Green, a fashionable, quiet residential area.

In the seclusion of Cowslip Green, she wrote her treatise on "The Manners of the Great", the first of that series in which she rebuked the fashions and follies of the day. In 1799, her great work, "Structures and the Modern System of Female Education," appeared. This work made a deep impression upon the English mind. In Beacon Light of History, page 439, it is stated :

> "The fundamental principle which underlies her theories of education is the necessity of Christian instruction. She would not divorce education from religion. Women aswell as men owe their education entirely to Christianity, but es pecially so women. All sound education should prepare one for the duties in life, rather than for the enjoyment of its' pleasures—only".

We should take note of the fact that the principle emphasized by Hannah More is still very applicable for 1965. "All sound education should prepare one for the duties of life, rather than for the enjoyment of its pleasures only"

The best and greatest part of the life of Hannah More was devoted to the education and elevation of her sex. Her most valuable writings were educational and moral in character. Yet one thing must not escape our attention. Miss More insisted on using a conventional crutch. She was not married, yet she refused to be called Miss More. She insisted that she be addressed as Mrs. More, never Miss More. Was this a weakness in her or was it the attitude of time? It seems rather clear that her accomplishments and her high social position as well as the assurance of being "accepted" was not in need of this conventional crutch.

History moves on. Hannah More died during 1833. At that time a little girl, only 12 years old, Marian Evens, wandered through the country of Shakespeare. This little girl was to become one of the most outstanding personalities among women novelists which this age produced.

George Eliot.

Marian Evans, (*George Eliot*) was born in Warwickshire, about twenty miles from Stratford on Avon, during 1821. She came from humble ranks, but from conscientious and religious parents, who appreciated the advantages of education, Marian was allowed to make the best of her circumstances.

She lost her mother at sixteen when she needed maternal counsel. Marian lived alone with her father until 1841. Then they moved to Foleshill near Coventry. At Coventry she entered classes for classical languages. She mastered the Greek, Latin. Italian, French and German languages. Her mastering of these languages did not merely embrace the grammar or even the spoken use, but she was able to reach down into the very emotion, the very pulse-beat of the languages. These accomplishments gave such indication of talent, a talent which paved the way to enter literary circles. She was received as a friend and as a language genius in the house of Mr. Charles Bray of Coventry, a wealthy merchant. Through this contact she met many eminent literary men of the progressive school, among whom were James Anthony Froude and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

By the age of twenty-five, she had become a remarkably well-educated woman of great conversational powers, interesting because of her intelligence, brightness and sensibility, not for her personal beauty.

After her father's death in 1894, she travelled with the Bray's through many countries of Europe, studying their languages, manners and institutions. She returned to England during 1857 and soon after became sub-editor of the Westminster Review. She boarded by the editor John Chap man. There she met a large circle of literary and scientific men of the liberal-radical school, who looked upon themselves as the more advanced thinkers of the age, whose aim was to destroy belief in supernaturalism and inspiration. John Stuart Mill, Frances Newman, Herbert Spencer, James Anthony Froude, G.H. Lewis, John A. Roebuck, Harriet Martineau, these formed the inner circle of the liberal-radical school. Contact with this particular group had a lasting influence upon Marian Evans.

Also, alas, it was due to this contact with men of this literary and scientific world that brought too intimate a friendship with Mr. Lewis. Miss Evans and Mr. Lewis decided to live together even though Lewis's legal wife was still alive. This most unfortunate connection which saddened the whole subsequent life of Marian Evans, and tinged all her writings

with the gall of her soul, excluded her from that high conventional society which it had been the aim of most ambitious women to enter.

There seems to be a dreamy pessimism in her writings after she entered her life with Mr. Lewis. Throughout her later life she never seemed to be able to raise herself above this pessimism. We do not know in what manner she was affected by Lewis' gloomy materialism and superficial rationalism, but a certain dark shadow seems to have fallen over her life as well as over her writings after her connection with Lewis. This was a tragedy. She led a very quiet, studious, unobstrusive life with the man, she said she loved, always sympathetic towards congenial friends, and devoted to domestic duties.

During 1853, she severed her connections with the Westminster Review, and retired to Cambridge Terrace, Hyde Park. During 1854, she revisited the continent with Lewis, spending most of her time in Germany.

But Marian Evans was not dead and buried. Her great talent had not been buried either. She was still very much alive. And it was during 1857 that her first story of a series called: "Scenes of Clerical Life," saw the light of day in Blackwood's magazine. Mr. Blackwood recognized the literary quality and value of this work, even though he did not actually know the author. The first story of this series, "The sad fortune of Amos Barton," is an interesting tale, though somewhat gloomy in its tone. The hero of the story is Amos Barton, a church man, intensely evangelical, devoted to his humble duties and to his sick wife and large family. It is a vivid description of common life's problems, which causes sympathy with suffering and misfortune, and stimulating an interest in, and an appreciation for the commonplace people.

This story was a departure in fiction. It was a story without a love scene or happy marriage or a thrilling adventure, so common in that period, It reveals the suffering which Marian Evans had experienced herself. She suffered severely from the scoff and scorn of the people because of her union with Lewis.

Another story in this series of the "Scenes of Clerical life," was the "Adam Bede." Again the commonplace people occupied the center theme. "The Mill on the Floss" followed, in which the conflict of duty and passion is the underlying theme. Again, something of Marians own experiences seem to shine through.

Then we must not forget what is often called the *gem* of all Elliot's writing, Silas Marner. published during 1861. Though pathetic and sad, as all her novels are, this novel does not leave on the mind so mournful an impression, since in its outcome we see redemption. The principal character, the poor, neglected, forlorn weaver, emerges at length from the everlasting Nay into the everlasting Yea; and he emerges by the power of love, love for a little child whom he rescued from the snow, the storm, and death. Driven by injustice to a solitary life, to abject punery, to despair, to solitary misery, gloating over his gold pieces·····, which he saved by the hardest privation, and in which he trusts, finds himself robbed without redress of sympathy; but in the end he is consoled for his loss in the love he bestows on a helpless orphan, who returns it with the most noble disinterestedness, and lives to be his solace and his pride. Nothing more touching has ever been written by man or woman than this short story full of pathos.

Other writings we could mention; the philosophico-historical novel "Romola"; the social-political novel, "Felix Holt"; the long novel, "Middlemarch"; and then her poetry! Poetry, music, art, all this absorbed much of her attention.

But now, what affect did George Eliot's works have upon breaking the walls of prejudice against women, so prominent during that period of human history?

Eliot was a philosophical-radical, reverential in her turn of mind, and clung to poetical and consecrated sentiments, always laying more stress on women's *duties* than on the *rights* of women. She has undoubtedly contributied to the richness of English literature. She has undoubtedly, through her works taken away many bricks out of that wall of prejudices. Did we not mention earlier in this essay that it was not by attack that prejudices could be broken, but by intellectual distinction, a well-balanced emotional quality, and the strength of art, that the barriers could be broken! Certainly, George Eliot contributed towards that end. She has deeply interested and instructed her generation.

Jane Austen.

George Eliot was a great admirer of Jane Austen. *Jane Austen* (1775-1817) was one of the truly great writers and was a major factor in the background of other great writers.

Jane Austen provides an exceptionally illuminating study of the nature of originality and she exemplifies beautifully the relations of the individual talent to tradition. Jane Austen, in fact, is the inaugurator of the great tradition to English Novel and by "great tradition" we must understand the tradition to which what is great in English fiction belongs.

Oliver Elton makes note of the fact that, "Miss Austen is bent on portraying her own sex from within. There is a true vindication of the rights of women." (A Survey of English Literature, page 197, Volume 1).

This presentation by Miss Austen, "from within," was an emotional-well-balanced presentation, but at the same time there was the intellectual strength. Miss Austen never allowed herself to be swept away by bitter reactions. but leaned upon intellectual distinction and the strength of art.

Emily Brontë.

Doors were ajar, at last, for women in the world of literature. From 1818-1848 a very passionate soul, *Emily Brontë* lived at a parsonage in a small village, Haworth. A lonely village on the desolate moors of Yorkshire. After attending boarding schools, Emily became a governess. She returned to the depressing life at Haworth in 1842. Here began her illness which led to consumption.

In 1846, Emily and her two sisters published Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell—Pseudonyms, obviously, for Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Prejudices necessitated pseudonyms. In 1847, Charlotte published the now well-known Jane Eyre story; Emily brought to light Wuthering Heights. These two remarkable novels have achieved a permanent place in English fiction. Emily was a very passionate spirit. Her poems, often halting in technigue, are the outpourings of a soul, sincere, aloof, and courageous. How can we forget her, The Night is Darkness. A poem which is the expression of a last effort to live, a last fight against the powers of death.

"The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow

The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.
Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move ne:
I will not, cannot go. (from British Poetry and Prose)

During 1848, only thirty years old, Emily passed away and was buried in the little churchyard adjoining the house. But Emily still lives through her poems, and her sisters still live.

Virginia Woolf.

The door was ajar, only ajar. The tremendous struggle which had taken place to get the door just ajar is vividly portrayed by *Virginia Woolf* in her book, Orlando.

Orlando is a very strange story. When one does not realize that this book is a historical-biography, covering no less than three hundred years, yet dealing with the very same person all during those three hundred years, one may truly come to the conclusion that it is a very strange book, an "abnormal" book.

Just about everything under the sun is happening to Orlando. He is from a wealthy family; has entrance to the courts of the Queen of England; he becomes weary of all the high social surroundings and runs off with a Russian princess; he is sent away as an ambassador to Turkey; he lives with the gypsies; he turns from man to woman; returns to England; is rejected from the world of literature, while carrying a precious manuscript near her bosom (is woman now) all during the previous years; is accepted, at last, in high social circles of women; occasionally accompanied by the opposite sex. Marriage even enters in, and the birth of a son.

A short trip (disguised as a man) was made one evening to a harlots' den, and there she discovers the apparent irresistible power of the forces of nature of the inner man, for it is in the harlots' den that she hears the names of some great figures in the world of literature. A world which was supposed to be so elevated that she, from the low estate of womanhood could not enter with her precious manuscript.

But the climax comes to her when she is accepted, truly accepted as a poet. Her manuscript of "The Oak Tree," the manuscript which she had

so carefully preserved for three hundred years, is accepted for publication.- O glorious day, finally women are accepted into the "sacred" circle of writers. This happened during 1910·····1928.

There is no doubt that from the very outset, Virginia Woolf is portraying to her readers a very lonely personality who had been gifted with the rare gift of writing, but who struggled to find a way through the barriers set up by the philosophies of that day in regard to the place and duties of the so-called "weaker-sex".

But Orlando is determined in her pursuit. We read this exclamation: "Thank God that I'm a woman". During a moment of meditation on the subject of being a woman, we read: "If it meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, flittering her limbs, pursing her lips and restraining her tongue, then she would turn about with the ship and set sail once more for the gypsies·····".

A real note of victory is sounded on page 175. Orlando is deep in thoughts, standing before the window of her beautiful mansion, looking out into the garden, filled with the spirit to resist, cries out: "I will write·····".

What the future might bring to women, Heaven only knew. Change was incessant, and change would perhaps never cease. High battlements of thought, habits which seemed durable as stone went down like shadows at the touch of another mind. She did write, and in due time it was accepted.

One becomes deeply impressed with the tremendous struggles, the great odds that had to be conquered by women writers as late as the nineteenth century.

Virginia Woolf in her essay, Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown, and also in a paper read originally to the Heretics, Cambridge, on May 8, 1924, says,

> "·····in or about Dacember, 1910, human character changed. I am not saying that one went out, as one might into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg. The change was not sudden and definite like that. But a change there was, nevertheless".

She meant that a new age had come in. This curious and apparently arbitrary date seems to have reference to *two* things. First: it was

the beginning of the end of great many years of determined struggle. Women finally were free in the world of literature. Pseudonyms were no longer necessary.

Secondly: it was the beginning of the Georgian period and the end of the Edwardian. King Edward died in May, 1910. George's coronation was in June, 1911. The date which Mrs. Woolf gives is halfway between the two. Her point is, as her essay makes clear, that H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy are the Edwardians. They were the men still nurturing a skeptical attitude towards women writers. But E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Lytton Strachey, James Joyce and T. S Eliot are the Georgians, and they showed appreciation for the worth of literary art produced by women.

Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, The Bronte sisters, Christina Georgina Rossetti, Hannah More, George Eliot and many other gifted women had tasted the impact of that struggle, so vividly portrayed in Orlando. But they also felt a certain measure of joy in gaining ground against the philosophies of the times in which they lived.

Virginia Woolf has placed before her readers the intensity of the strain placed on women writers, but also a glimpse of the victory gained.

Summary:

There were great disadvantages which women had to encounter. These advantages can be classified into three categories.

1. *General experience was lacking.*

Men could travel abroad more freely than women. They became soldiers, teachers or lecturers, or captured other highlights in life. In general, women writers were forced through circumstances to become novelists, governesses, or were tied down with domestic duties. Virginia Woolf writes:

> A novel can be taken up or put down more easily than a play or a poem. George Eliot left her work to nurse her father. Charlotte put down her pen to pick the eyes out of the potatoes……Even in the nineteenth century a woman lived almost solely in her home and with her emotions. And those nineteenth century novels, remarkable as they were, were profoundly influenced by the fact that the women who wrote them were excluded by their sex from certain kinds

of experience. That experience has a great influence upon fiction is indisputable." (Granite and Rainbow, page 81).

2. *The emotional life.*

The emotional life of women was strictly regulated by law and custom. But *emotional life cannot* be regulated by law and custom. When this attempt is forced upon, the inevitable result will be rebellion. And women rebelled.

Male writers, especially the men with money and leisure time at their service, were able to live a free life and often had very unchecked behavior patterns. No doubt distasteful to the sensitive and pure mind. They were able to break laws, moral laws, yet with very little shame. But when George Eliot ventured to live with Mr. Lewis without being his wife, public opinion was against her and scandalized. Under that constant pressure she withdrew unto a suburban seclusion which had definite effects upon her work.

3. *The very fact that a woman was a woman.*

We may observe an element in woman's writing which is so entirely absent in man's. I am referring to a certain element of distortion and bitterness, someone resenting the attitude toward her own sex and pleading for rights, pleading for breathing space, pleading for an outlet. It is difficult to remain unperturbed by constant scorn, censure and neglect.

In the early nineteenth century women's novels were largely autobiographical. One of the motives that led them to write was the desire to expose their own suffering, to plead their own cause.

As the days and months and years passed by, history moved on. With history the disadvantages have also mowed on. Attitudes toward the place and responsibility of the woman in the human race has changed considerably. And as a result of this change, a change of attitude has slipped into women's writing.

The woman writer is no longer bitter. She is no longer fighting obstacles which seemed for a time unsurmountable. She is no longer faced with a disability which had been placed upon her by the philosophies of time. There is no necessity for pleadings and protestings. The woman writer can air herself freely and say: "I will write".

The time is fast approaching, in fact, it is here, that the woman

writer can focus the full measure of concentration upon her vision without any distraction, emotional or otherwise, from the outside. She writes. The Emancipation of Women in the world of Literature.

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