James Sir Donaldson

Woman; Her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and Among the Early Christians

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PREFACE.

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The first three books of this work and a part of the fourth are a reprint of the following five articles from the *Contemporary Review*, and of a portion of the sixth, with the kind consent of the Editor.

1. The Position and Influence of Women in Ancient Greece.—*Contemporary Review*, July, 1878.
2. The Position and Influence of Women in Ancient Athens.—*Contemporary Review*, March, 1879.
3. The Position of Women in Ancient Rome.—*Contemporary Review*, May, 1888.
4. The Position of Women in Ancient Rome.—*Contemporary Review*, October, 1888.
5. The Position of Women among the Early Christians.—*Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.
6. The Characters of Plautus.—*Contemporary Review*, November, 1877.

All the articles have been carefully revised and various additions have been inserted in them. The fourth book contains discussions of some important questions bearing on the subject of the work, which are printed for the first time.

I am indebted to Mr. John Randall for the preparation of the Index.

BOOK I.
THE POSITION AND INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT GREECE.

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CHAPTER I.
PRELIMINARY.

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Everything that has life has a course within certain limits predetermined for it, through which it passes until it finally disappears. The seed of the oak gathers materials from earth and sky until it fashions itself into the majestic tree. It will not become a rose or an elm. So it is with the higher animals and man. The lines of their progress through life are distinctly marked off. But within the limits special to each class, there are different degrees of perfection. All the individuals seem to strive after an ideal which none attains, to which some come very close, and to which all more or less approximate. Man has also his ideal, but in addition to the instinctive power of soul which strives after the ideal, he has the faculty of being conscious of the ideal and of consciously striving after it. What is true of man, is true of woman. What is the ideal of woman? What could we call the complete development and full blossoming of woman’s life? I have no intention of answering this question, much agitated in the present day. I do not think that I could answer it satisfactorily, but it is requisite for the historian of woman in any age to put it to himself and his readers. A

true conception of woman’s ideal life can be reached only by the long experience of many ages. The very first and most essential element in the harmonious development of woman’s nature, as it is of man’s, is freedom, but this is the very last thing which she acquires. Impediments have arisen on every hand to hinder her from bringing her powers into full activity. Ignorance, prejudice, absurd modes of thought prevalent in particular ages, conventional restraints of an arbitrary nature, laws that have sought to attain special aims without regard to general culture and well-being—these and like causes have prevented us from seeing what woman might become if she were left unfettered by all influences but those that are benign and congenial. It is the part of the historian to take note of these obstacles, and to see what, notwithstanding these, woman can do and aims at doing.

The first condition, therefore, of a successful study of woman’s history is to come unbiassed to the task. We must for the time keep in abeyance our prevalent opinions. There is peculiar need for this in this subject, because, should we have false opinions, they are sure to be held with a tenacity which is great in proportion to their falsehood; and should we have true, we are likely to give them an exaggerated importance and power; for all opinions on women are apt to be intense. We have therefore to suspend our ordinary modes of thought, and enter into conceptions and feelings and a manner of life widely different from our own. Some of these differences I must explain before I enter on my history.

And first of all the Greeks looked at the relations between the sexes from a point of view utterly strange to us. Amongst us there exists a clear and definite doctrine which lays down rigidly what is right and what is wrong. The Greeks had no such doctrine. They had to interrogate nature and their own hearts for the mode of action to be pursued. They did not feel or think that one definite course of conduct was right, and the others wrong; but they had to judge in each case whether the action was becoming, whether it was in harmony with the nobler side of human nature, whether it was beautiful or useful. Utility, appropriateness, and the sense of the beautiful were the only guides which the Greeks could find to regulate them in the relations of the sexes to each other.

We have to add to this that their mode of conceiving nature was quite different from ours. To them everything was natural, or, if you like, supernatural. If wine gladdened or maddened the heart of man, the influence was equally that of a god. The Greek might be perplexed why a god should madden him, but he never doubted the fact. And so it was with love. The influence which the one sex exercises on the other is something strangely mysterious. Two persons of different sexes meet. If we look at them, we see nothing very remarkable in either. And if we continue our look for an hour or two, we might notice nothing remarkable going on. Yet a very extraordinary change has taken place. The hearts of both have begun to vibrate wildly. The commonplace man has had wings furnished to his mind, and he sees heaven opening before his eyes, and an infinite tenderness suffuses his soul. The girl, who could not utter a

word in her own behalf before, has had her lips unsealed, and wit and brightness and poetry sparkle in every sentence which she addresses to her companion. She too flings from her the ordinary routine of daily life, and sees before her a paradise of purest bliss and unending joy. Whence comes all this inspiration? Whence this temporary elevation of the mental powers? Whence this unsealing of mortal eyes, till they see the beatific vision? “From a divine power,” said the Greeks. And this divine power seemed to them the most irresistible of all. It swayed the gods themselves. If the gods themselves could not but yield to the magic power, how could it be expected that a mortal could resist? The religion of the Greeks could not with such a mode of conception strongly aid them in self-restraint. It could merely inculcate forbearance and compassion. And this we find to be the case. In a speech which Sophocles puts into the mouth of Dejanira, she expresses her conviction that a wife has no right to expect a husband to be always faithful to her, or to blame the woman with whom he falls in love. “Thou wilt not,” she says, “tell thy tale to an evil woman, nor to one who knows not the nature of man, that he does not naturally rejoice always in the same. For whosoever resists Love in a close hand-to-hand combat, like a boxer, is not wise. For he sways even the gods as he wishes, and me myself also; and how should he not sway another woman who is such as I am? So that if I find fault with my husband caught with this disease, or with this woman the cause along with him of nothing that is disgraceful, or to me an evil, I am unquestionably mad.”[1] Such religious forbearance is not found in poetry only. It is inculcated on wives as a strict part

of their duty by a female Pythagorean philosopher, Periktione, who wrote on the harmony of woman.[2] “For a wife,” she says, “ought to bear all the circumstances of her husband, whether he be unfortunate, or err in ignorance, or in disease, or in drunkenness, or have intercourse with other women, for this error is permitted to husbands, but no longer to wives, for punishment awaits them.” No doubt this indulgence conceded by Periktione is due partly to the idea, which does not belong to the earliest period of Greek life, that the wrong-doing of the wife introduced impurity into the breed of the citizen while the wrong-doing of the husband had generally no such effect. But there existed also the feeling expressed more generally in regard to human nature both of men and women by Dejanira. The sentiment disappears only before a philosophy such as that of Plato and Aristotle, which rose far above the common conceptions of the Divine Being. Both of these philosophers prescribe punishments for those who violate marriage, though their rules are not absolute but depend on circumstances. Plato says:[3] “And as to women, if any man has to do with any but those who come into his house duly married by sacred rites, whether they be bought or acquired in any other way, and he offends publicly in the face of all mankind, we shall be right in enacting that he be deprived of civic honours and privileges, and he be deemed to be, as he truly is, a stranger.” Aristotle[4] leaves a larger margin for the husband, but suggests that in certain circumstances of transgression the offending husband should be punished with loss of his rights as a citizen in proportion to the offence.

Throughout our estimate of women, it is also of great importance to remember the passionate love of beauty which animated the Greeks. A modern mind can form almost no idea of the strength and universality of this passion. The Greeks loved everything that was beautiful, but it was in the human body that they saw the noblest form of earthly beauty. They did not confine their admiration to the face. It was the perfect and harmonious development of every part that struck them with awe. It would occupy too much space to give a full account of this love of the beautiful, or to bring home the intensity of the Greek feeling. One instance will suffice. The orator Hyperides was defending the Hetaira Phryne before a court of justice. His arguments, he thought, fell on the ears of the judges without any effect. He began to regard his case as hopeless, when a happy idea struck him, and tearing open the garment of his client, he revealed to the judges a bosom perfectly marvellous in form. The judges at once acquitted her, and I have no doubt that the whole Greek sentiment agreed with their decision. But we should make an entire mistake if we were to suppose that the judges were actuated by any prurient motive. One of the writers who relate the circumstance gives the reason of the decision. The judges beheld in such an exquisite form not an ordinary mortal, but a priestess and prophetess of the divine Aphrodite. They were inspired with awe,[5] and would have deemed it sacrilege to mar or destroy such a perfect masterpiece of creative power. And though no doubt there were low-minded Greeks, as there are low-minded men everywhere, yet it may be affirmed with truth that the

Greeks did not consider beauty to be a mere devil's lure for the continuance of the race, as Schopenhauer represents it, but they saw in it the outshining of divine radiance, and the fleshly vehicle was but the means to lead on the soul to what is eternally and imperishably beautiful.

These are only some of the points in which the Greeks differed widely from us, and we must realize the difference before we can read the history aright. But this history has to face other difficulties. The influence of woman is often exercised most powerfully in such a quiet and unobtrusive manner that no historian can take note of it. Who, for instance, could narrate the action of beauty and of beautiful ways upon thousands of hearts? The influence is silent, but not the less potent. We have this additional difficulty in Greece, that almost all we know of women is derived from men. Now, men rarely write dispassionately of women. They either are in love with them, or hate them, or pretend to hate them. They have had sweet or bitter experience of them. And when they do write about them, they write according to that experience. But not only is the history of Greek women written by men, but it was written for men. This fact must be specially remembered when we have to deal with the utterances of the comic poets, for women did not act in the plays, nor is it probable that they were even present at the comedies during the best days of Athens. But men taking the parts of women are sure to act them with all the exaggeration and licence which are natural to such representations. No great stress must, therefore, be laid on the wild abuse of women which can be culled in large abundance from Greek writers. One early satirical poet[6]

(Simonides of Amorgos) divides women into ten classes, of which only one is good. And he proceeds with his invective very much as if woman did not exist.

> "Listen, O people," says Susarion, who may be called the inventor of comedy. "Susarion says this: Women are an evil, but nevertheless, O countrymen, it is not possible to have a household without evil, for to marry is an evil and not to marry is an evil."[7] (Stob. 69, 2).

A satiric poet (Hipponax)[8] gives it as his opinion that "a man has only two very pleasant days with his wife—one when he marries her, the other when he buries her." A comic poet (Philemon) says pithily, "Woman is an immortal necessary evil."[9] Euripides says:—

> "Terrible is the force of the waves of the sea, terrible the rush of river and the blasts of hot fire, terrible is poverty, and terrible are a thousand other things; but none is such a terrible evil as woman. No painter could adequately represent her: no language can describe her; but if she is the creation of any of the gods, let him know that he is a very great creator of evils and a foe to mortals." (Stob. 73, 1.)

Quotations like these could be made in hundreds, but they really tell us little. They could be matched by a large number of sayings from the same authors in which woman is praised to the skies. Euripides was specially blamed as a hater of women. The remark was made in the presence of Sophocles. "Yes," said he, "in his tragedies." And even in his

tragedies he has painted women of exquisite tenderness of heart, and capable of the grandest self-sacrifice and of the purest love.

CHAPTER II.
THE HOMERIC WOMEN.

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In treating of Greek women I can only select prominent periods. And the first that comes before us is the Homeric. [10] And here we require all the power of transporting ourselves into different times that we can command; for the phenomena are singular and unique. If we look at the external position of women, we must place the Homeric age exceedingly low in civilization. Women have almost no rights; they are entirely under the power of man, and they live in continual uncertainty as to what their destiny may be. The woman may be a princess, brought up in a wealthy and happy home; but she knows that strangers may come and carry her off, and that she may therefore at some time be a slave in another man’s house. This uncertainty seems to have produced a strong impression on their character. They are above all women meek. If the terrible destiny comes upon them, they submit to it with all but unrepining gentleness, and their gentle ways soon overcome the heart of their warrior tyrants, and they make them their companions and friends. But low though this position be, it has to be noted that it is the inevitable result of the character of the times. Might was right. The strong arm alone could assert a right. The warrior had to defend even what belonged to him against any new comer. He himself sacked the cities of others. His own city, too, might be sacked, and if his wife’s fate was to be carried off and to become the mistress of his conqueror, his own was to perish

mercilessly by the cold edge of the sword. Man and woman alike held their lives in their hands. Women were not warriors, and therefore they had to depend entirely on the protection of men, and were consequently subject to them.

Such was their external position. But when we look to the actual facts of the case, nowhere in the whole range of literature are women subjected to a sway so gentle, so respectful, so gracious. Indeed, it can scarcely be called a sway at all. The physical force which, no doubt, exists is entirely in the background. In the front we see nothing but affection, regard, and even deference. The men appear never to have found fault with the women. It was natural for a woman to love, and she might do what they would deem an eccentric or disproportionate action in consequence of this influence; but it was either a man or a god that was to blame. She was for the time mad. Even in the case of Helen, who brought so many disasters on Greeks and Trojans, the men find no fault. She reproaches herself bitterly, but the men think that it was Paris who was to blame, for he carried her off forcibly. How could she help it? And how could she prevent Paris falling in love with her? It was the business of woman to make any man happy whom destiny brought into her company, to diffuse light and joy through the hearts of men. Helen was surpassingly beautiful, knew all womanly works to perfection, was temperate and chaste, according to their ideas,[11] and had a mind of high culture. All these were gifts of the gods, and could not but attract. The Trojans themselves were not surprised that Paris should have fallen under the spell of her charms; for a being so beautiful was a worthy object of contest between Greeks and Trojans. But

she did nothing to excite Paris. She would have been happier with Menelaus. And when Paris was slain and Troy captured, Helen gladly returned to her former husband, and again occupied her early queenly position with dignity and grace, as if nothing had happened.

The only woman in regard to whom harsh words are used is Clytemnestra; but even in her case the man is much more censured than the woman, and if she had merely yielded to Ægisthus, under the strong temptations, or rather overpowering force, to which she was exposed, not much would have been said. Agamemnon would have wreaked his vengeance on the male culprit, and restored his wife to her former place. But at last she became the willing consort of Ægisthus, and his willing accomplice in the dreadful crime of murder. Yet even for this it is on Ægisthus that the poet lays the burden of the blame. For this mild judgment of women there were several causes. First, the Homeric Greeks were strongly impressed by the irresistible power of the gods and of fate, and the weakness of mortals; they thus found an easy excuse for any aberrations of men, but especially of helpless women; and their strong sense of the shortness of life and the dreariness of death led them to try to make the best of their allotted span.

Then their ideas of love and marriage tended to foster gentleness. In the Homeric poems there is no love-making; the idea of flirtation is absolutely and entirely unknown. They no doubt spoke sweet words to each other, but they kept what they said to themselves. And a man who wished to marry a girl proved the reality of his desire generally by offering the father a handsome gift for her, but sometimes

by undertaking a heavy task, or engaging in a dangerous contest. And when she left her father's home, she bent all her ways to please the man who had sought after her, and she succeeded. In the Homeric poems the man loves the woman, and the woman soon comes to love her husband, if she has not done so before marriage. The Homeric Greeks are, even at this early stage, out-and-out monogamists.[12] Monogamy is in the very heart of the Greek heroes. No one of them wishes for more than one woman.

There is a curious instance of the power of heroic affection in Achilles. A captive widow has become his partner before the walls of Troy. She is very fond of him, and he becomes very fond of her. But there is no proper marriage between them, and Achilles could not worthily celebrate his marriage in a camp far from his friends and home. Yet such is his love for her, and her alone, that she is to him a real wife.[13] And when Patroklos dies, Briseis, in her lament over him, states that he promised that he would make her the wedded wife of Achilles, and take her to Phthia, the native land of the hero, and celebrate the marriage feast among the Myrmidons.[14] Probably Achilles had often given her the same promise, though he knew that his father might assign him a wife, and there might thus be difficulties in the way, and Patroklos had offered to help him in carrying out his design. If there was such true love to a captive, we may expect this still more to be the case with wives of the same race and rank. And so it is.

Beautiful, indeed, is the picture of married life which Homer draws. "There is nothing," he says,[15] "better and nobler that when husband and wife, being of one mind, rule

a household.” And such households he portrays in the halls of Alcinous and Arete, and in the Trojan home of Hector and Andromache[16], but still more marked and beautiful is the constant love of Penelope and Ulysses.[17] Indeed, Homer always represents the married relation as happy and harmonious. In the households of earth there is peace. It is in the halls of Olympus that we find wife quarrelling with husband. But the love of these women to their husbands is the love of mortals to mortals. They do not swear eternal devotion to each other. They have no dream of loving only one, and that one for ever, in this life and the next. They do not look much beyond the present; and, therefore, if a husband or wife were to die, it would be incumbent on the survivor to look out for a successor. Even when a husband is long absent from his wife, it is not expected that he can endure the troubles of life without the company and comfort of one woman’s society. Thus Agamemnon takes to himself the captive Chryseis, and comes to love her better than his wife. Thus Achilles becomes so attached to Briseis as to weep bitterly when she is taken from him; but when she is taken from him, he consoles himself with the beautiful-cheeked Diomede. And Ulysses, though he loves his Penelope best, and longs for her, does not refuse the embraces of the goddesses with whom he is compelled to stay in the course of his wanderings. Homer’s insight into human nature is apparent in the circumstance that it is only in the heart of a true woman that he places resistance to the ordinary modes of thought. The peculiarity of Penelope’s affection is that it will not submit to prevalent ideas; she loves and admires her Ulysses, and she will love no other.

Contrary to all custom, she puts off the suitors year after year. The time has arrived when every one expects her to marry again. She has seen her son Telemachus grow to manhood. She has now no excuse. But she still refuses, waiting against hope for the return of him who, in her heart, she believes will return no more.[18]

After what I have stated I need scarcely say that the influence of woman was very great in the Homeric period. The two poems turn upon affection for women. The Trojan war had its origin in the resolution of the Greeks to recover Helen, and the central point in the Iliad is the wrath of Achilles because Agamemnon has taken away from him his captive Briseis. Ulysses and Penelope, as every one knows, are the subject of the 'Odyssey.' The husband consulted his wife in all important concerns, though it was her special work to look after the affairs of the house. Arete is a powerful peacemaker in the kingdom of her husband Alcinous, and it is to her that Nausicaa advises Ulysses to go if he wishes to obtain his return. All the people worship her as a god when she walks through the streets. Penelope and Clytemnestra are left practically in charge of the realms of their husbands during their absence at Troy, each with a wise man as counsellor and protector. And the very beautiful Chloris acted as queen in Pylos.[19] Fear also for the contempt of the women was one motive to bravery.[20] And Laertes, though he honoured Eurycleia as he honoured his dead wife, behaved in a seemly manner to her,[21] because he shunned the anger of his wife. Altogether the influence of Homeric women must be reckoned great and their condition happy.

For this result two special causes may be adduced—the freedom which the women enjoyed, and their healthiness, possibly also their scarceness.

The freedom was very great. They might go where they liked, and they might do what they liked. There was indeed one danger which threatened them continually. If they wandered far from the usual haunts of their fellow-citizens, strangers might fall upon them and carry them off into slavery. Such incidents were not uncommon. But apart from this danger, they might roam unrestricted. They were not confined to any particular chamber. They had their own rooms, just as the men had theirs; but they issued forth from these, and sat down in the common chamber, when there was anything worth seeing or hearing. Especially they gathered round the bard who related the deeds of famous heroes or the histories of famous women. They also frequented the wide dancing place which every town possessed, and with their brothers and friends, joined in the dance. Homer pictures the young men and the maidens pressing the vines together. They mingled together at marriage feasts and at religious festivals. They took part with the men in sacrificing,[22] or they went without the men to the temples and presented their offerings.[23] In fact, there was free and easy intercourse between the sexes. They thus came to know each other well, and as the daughters were greatly beloved by their fathers, we cannot doubt that their parents would consult them as to the men whom they might wish for husbands. Even after marriage they continued to have the same liberty. Helen appears on the battlements of Troy, watching the conflict, accompanied

only by female attendants. And Arete, as we have seen, mixed freely with all classes of Phæacians.

Along with this freedom, and partly in consequence of it, there appears to have been an exceedingly fine development of the body. The education of both boys and girls consisted in listening to their elders, in attending the chants of the bards, and in dancing at the public dancing place of the town. There was no great strain on their intellectual powers. There was no forcing. And they were continually in the open air. All the men learnt the art of war and of agriculture, and all the women to do household work. The women made all the clothes which their relatives wore, and were skilled in the art of embroidery. But they not merely made the clothes, but regularly washed them, and saw that their friends were always nicely and beautifully clad. These occupations did not fall to the lot of menials merely. The highest lady in the land had her share of them, and none was better at plying the loom and the distaff than the beautiful Helen.

We have in the sixth book of the ‘Odyssey’ a charming picture of a young princess, Nausicaa. Nowhere are portrayed more exquisitely the thoughts and feelings and ways of a young girl who is true to her own best nature, who is reserved when reserve is proper, and speaks when a true impulse moves her, who is guileless, graceful, leal-hearted, and tender. Happily I have not here to exhibit her character, for to do anything but quote the exact words of Homer would be inevitably to mar its beauty; but I have to adduce some of those traits which show how the Homeric girls grew. Nausicaa is approaching the time when she ought to be

married, and in preparation for this event would like to have all her clothes clean and in nice condition. She goes to her father, and tells him that she wishes to wash his clothes and the clothes of her brothers, that he may be well clad in the senate, and they may go neat to the dance. The father at once perceives what desire the daughter cherishes in her heart, and permission is granted, the mules are yoked to the car, the clothes are collected, and the princess mounts the seat, whip in hand, and drives off with a number of maid attendants. They reach the river where are the washing trenches. The clothes are handed out of the car, the mules are sent to feed on the grass, and princess and maids wash away at the clothes, treading them with their feet in the trenches. They then lay out the clothes to dry. While the clothes are drying, they first picnic by the side of the river, and then, to amuse themselves, engage in a game at ball, accompanied with singing. This is a day with Homeric girls. They can do everything that is necessary—drive, wash, spin, and sew. No domestic work comes amiss to one and all. And they are much in the open air. They thus all find active employment. Time never hangs heavy on their hands. And the strength and freshness of body produce a sweetness of temper and a soundness of mind which act like a charm on all the men who have to do with them. It seems to me that this explains to some extent the phenomena of the Homeric poems. There is no vicious woman in the ‘Iliad’ or ‘Odyssey.’ Some of them have committed glaring violations of the ordinary rules of life, but they are merely temporary aberrations or fits of madness. And there is no prostitution. This healthiness explains also another feature of the

Homeric women which deserves notice. There was an extraordinary number of very beautiful women.

The district of Thessaly, from which the whole of Greece ultimately derived its own name of Hellas, is characterized by the epithet the land of the beautiful women; and several other places are so characterized. But their type of beauty was not the type prevalent in modern times. Health was the first condition of beauty. The beautiful woman was well proportioned in every feature and limb. It was the grace and harmony of every part that constituted beauty. Hence, height was regarded as an essential requisite. Helen is taller than all her companions. The commanding stature impressed the Greeks as being a near approach to the august forms of the goddesses. As one might expect, the beauty of the women is not confined to the young girl between the ages of seventeen and twenty. A Homeric woman remained beautiful for a generation or two. Helen was, in the eye of the Greek, as beautiful at forty or fifty as she was at twenty, and probably as attractive, if not more so. The Homeric Greek admired the full-developed woman as much as the growing girl.

Such, then, were these Homeric Greek women. The Greek race was the finest race that ever existed in respect of physical development and intellectual power. Do we not see, in the account that Homer gives of the women, something like an explanation of the phenomenon? A race of healthy, finely formed women is the natural antecedent to a race of men possessed of a high physical and intellectual organization.

CHAPTER III.
THE SPARTAN WOMEN.

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When we pass from Homer, we enter a new region. We do not know how far Homer's characters are historical. We cannot doubt that the manners and ways of the men and women whom he describes were like those of the real men and women amongst whom he lived. He may have idealized a little, but even his idealizations are indicative of the current of his age. But we know little of the modes in which the various States of Greece were constituted, and of the relations which subsisted between them. We have to pass over a long period which is a practical blank, and then we come to historical Greece. In historical Greece we have no unity of the Greek nation. We have men of Greek blood, but these men did not dream of forming themselves into one nation, ruled by the same laws, and mutually helpful of each other. The Greek mind regarded the city as the greatest political organization possible, or at any rate compatible with the adequate discharge of the functions of a State. And accordingly if we could give a full account of woman in Greece, we should have to detail the arrangements made in each particular State. There are no materials for such an account if we wished to give it; but even if there had been, it is probable that we should not have learned much more than we learn from the histories of the two most prominent of those States, Sparta and Athens. It is to the position and influence of women in these States that we must turn our attention.

To form anything like a just conception of the Spartan State, we must keep clearly in view the notion which the ancients generally and the Spartans in particular had of a State. The ancients were strongly impressed with the decay and mortality of the individual man; but they felt equally strongly the perpetuity of the race through the succession of one generation after another. Accordingly, when a State was formed, the most prominent idea that pervaded all legislation was the permanence of the State, and the continuance of the worship of the gods. They paid little regard to individual wishes. They thought little of individual freedom. The individual was for the State, not the State for the individual, and accordingly all private and personal considerations must be sacrificed without hesitation to the strength and permanence of the State. A peculiar turn was given to this idea in Sparta.

From the circumstances in which the Spartans were placed, they had to make up their minds to be a race of soldiers. They had numerous slaves in their possession to do everything requisite for procuring the necessaries of life. They therefore had no call to labour. But if they were to retain their slaves and keep their property against all comers, they must be men of strong bodily configuration, hardy, daring, resolute. And as women were a necessary part of the State, they must contribute to this result. The regulations made for this purpose are assigned by the ancients to Lycurgus; but whether he was a real person, or how far our information in regard to him is to be trusted, is a matter of no consequence to us at present; for there can be no doubt that his laws were in force during the best period