LADY MORLEY'S LECTURE

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Lady Morley's lecture by William Smyth

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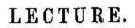
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WILLIAM SMYTH

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About the year 1814, the Lady Morley paid a passing visit to her particular friend, Mrs. Frere, at Downing-Lodge, Cambridge. Being a woman of fine talents, and with all the curiosity belonging to them, she made it her business to see overy thing in and about the University as completely as she could; and being pleased with every thing, she intimated to Mrs. Frere that she would come again in a fortnight, see and hear more fully what she had seen and heard so imperfectly; that she was pressed for time (as these fashionables always are) and that the Professors of the University were, on her return, all of them to appear at the Lodge, and exhibit, each, a specimen of his art before her.

The following Lecture was found among the papers of the late Professor Smyth, and must have been intended for this occasion. It is written on the backs of letters, and is probably as it first came from his pen. Some of the allusions cannot now be understood.

He was accustomed, as we have heard, to make passing references in ballads and light compositions like the present, to the whims and peculiarities of the people around him; as fur, at least, as was likely to be agreeable to them; but, 't is said, not further; for the tradition is, as far as any thing can now be known about him, that he was a good-natured man, and died regretted by his friends and acquaintance, more especially by Messrs. North and Hoare, his tea-dealers.

LECTURE,

1814.

In the infancy of the world (it is a rule always to begin at the beginning), in the infancy of the world, we are given to understand that Adam, or the first man, was placed in a garden, the very Paradise of the universe, surrounded by fruits and flowers, beautiful animals and melodious birds, where there was every thing to please him and nothing to offend—serenity in the sky, odour in the zephyr, and luxuriance in the landscape, and where he realised and enjoyed what Lady Teazle only wished for, spring all the year round, and roses growing under his feet.

We know little of the economy of his time, or the manner in which he spent his hours, but his life must have very much resembled the life of one of our senior Fellows in his College—dinner without any trouble of his own—prayers

morning and evening—no books—and as much sleep as he could possibly desire. How long he remained in this innocent state of simple and single blessedness we are no where told, but it was destined at last to end; however happy, he was still alone. This was thought not good, and a help-mate was therefore prepared for him; a being like himself, of similar texture, but of softer form, of corresponding mind, but of gentler nature; and whose voice, whose beauty, and whose smile might administer to his enchanted sense, whatever could yet be wanting in the bloom of the flower, the melody of the bird, or the radiance of heaven.

Such is the history of the creation of woman, and, as a Lecturer on History, I must observe to you, that of all events, whether in ancient or modern story, this event of the creation of woman is by far the most interesting and important, and that the revolutions of the Grecian or Roman empires, or the discoveries of Columbus, or any other revolution or discovery, cannot be compared with it for a moment, as the great Patriarch of the human race, were he now before us, would, I am confident, allow.

It is with no pleasure that I must next allude to the consequences that ensued. The introduction of woman into the world was soon followed by the introduction of the principle of evil. The great poem of Milton will tell you every thing about our first parents, that can now be known or imagined; and the two melancholy lines at the close, will tell you also the unhappy result of the whole—

"They hand in band, with wandering steps and slow, Through Eden took their solitary way."

The history of the world, as we see it, now begins, and the history of the world is the history of woman—

" In all the Drama, whether grave or not, Love rules the scene, and woman guides the plot."

The same may be said of the great drama of existence, through the shifting scenes of human affairs. I could wish, indeed, that the conduct of the piece did more credit to the fair inspirers of the performance; there is more of tragedy than of comedy in the representation, -so at least it seems to the eye of an historian; but it has been observed by Paley, that it is a happy world after all, and I am sure if it be, it is the ladies that make it so; and for their success in rendering life agreeable, when balls and banquets and routes and tea-tables are concerned, we must forgive them if they seem to fail, as too often they appear to do, on the larger scale of their influence; the management of states and empires; where the brutes they have to control, their husbands and