

**GIRLHOOD AND  
WOMANHOOD: OR,  
SKETCHES OF  
MY SCHOOLMATES**

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Girlhood and womanhood: or, Sketches of my schoolmates by Mrs. A. J. Graves

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**MRS. A. J. GRAVES**

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On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,  
Musing in Solitude, I oft perceive  
Faint trains of imagery before me rise,  
Accompanied by feelings of delight  
Pure, and with no unpleasing sadness mixed;  
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts  
And dear remembrances whose presence soothes  
Or elevates the Mind, intent to reach  
The goal or evil of our mortal state.      WORDSWORTH.

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BY MRS. A. J. GRAVES,  
AUTHOR OF WOMAN IN AMERICA.

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PREFACE.

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To one given to imaginative musing, there is no sight more interesting than a band of happy schoolmates. And as we look on them sporting in merriment, unconscious and unthinking of what is to befall them, how prone are we to sketch out their destiny by casting a visionary glance into futurity. We draw the coloring from our own experience, and our own joys or sorrows brighten or darken the picture of their coming histories. If we be hopeful in our nature and prosperous in life, we follow each little boy or girl through the successive scenes of their career, until one stands on a proud height of fame or fortune, and the other takes her place as a happy wife and mother, surrounded by all the blessings that a husband's love can procure. But if we have learned to look in saddened earnestness on all human destiny, through the medium of stern adversity and our own blighted hopes, then we will sigh deeply as we look on them and wish that they could always remain as they are, and never know what it is to live on to manhood and womanhood, to sustain the heavy burden of their multiplied cares and sorrows.

This tendency of the human mind to shadow forth what lies hidden in the dim obscurity of the future, is not without its uses if it be rightly and usefully applied. But if we have no better foundation for it, than our own imagination, it is at best but idle dreaming, and we will be the first to laugh at our own romantic visions when reality convinces us of their falsity. The school-boy who was to have a proud pre-eminence over his fellow-men, and fill the world with his name as a genius, a statesman or a warrior, becomes a plain, plodding citizen, buried amidst ledgers and piles of merchandise, without a thought beyond the walls of his counting house, or his annual investments in bank stock, and the fair, delicate girl who was to droop and die in early

womanhood, under the blight of wounded affections, becomes a heartless coquette; sells herself to some old man for a splendid establishment, and is found, at the age of forty, a fat, buxom widow, ready for another speculation in the marriage lottery. But if we thus have occasion to acknowledge ourselves mistaken in our prophecies, and are disposed to make merry over our delusive fancies, yet the fault was our own.

If we have looked on the little group as strangers, and suffered our imaginations to dream improbabilities, merely because some boy might have had dark, flashing eyes, and a noble bearing, or the soft, blue eyes of some little girl may have been seen suffused in tears, then we need not wonder that our predictions were fallacious. But if each individual child among them had been known to us, if we had studied every opening character as it became unfolded beneath our watchful observation, carefully marked every indication of mental power, or mental weakness, rejoicing in the first rays of rising genius, or sadly brooding over the leaden clouds of dullness, then our vain fancies might have given place to a prophetic glance. When truth and a sound judgment are our basis, then we may venture to predict what will be, from what is. Although we cannot pretend to foretell the external condition of each to any degree of certainty, yet we have a guide even here. For the philosophic Butler justly remarks, "there is a correspondence between our nature and external condition," and again, "that every species of creatures is designed for a particular way of life to which the nature, capacities, temper and qualifications are as necessary as their external circumstances." When we see the fledging bird in its nest, we know from its anatomical structure that it is destined to wing its way through the free air as its native element, when we examine the mollusca ere the shell has been fully formed, we see that its life must be sustained in a different mode, and therefore the element on which it is to move, must be entirely different; so it is with the human character as it is revealed in



the process of expansion. The marked differences that exist in individual minds and temperaments, prove that each one will naturally seek that external condition that corresponds with its peculiar organization. The boy that faints at the sight of blood, or trembles in nervous agitation on hearing the heavy firing of artillery, will never seek his fortune amidst the horrors or dangers of war, if he be left to follow the tendencies of his nature—or the little girl that steals away to some quiet solitude, that she may indulge her fondness for books, or fill her imagination with visions of future intellectual eminence, excited by a mysterious consciousness of mental power, will never be found striving with restless vanity for the admiration of fashionable triflers, amidst the frivolities of the ball room, unless a violence has been done to her inclinations by the force of a contrary training.

This instinctive tendency in each individual to avoid all that is un congenial and to seek its own element, belongs to man in his moral and intellectual nature, as well as to the other portion of creation in their physical condition. But the analogy cannot be pursued to its full extent, without going beyond the limits of truth. The bird and the shell-fish cannot by any mode of training be made different from what they are, nor can their instincts be so far violated as to confine the former to the waters, or the latter to the air, without destroying their vitality. But our nature is such that human creatures are "capable of becoming qualified for states of life for which they were once unqualified." The germs of mind and character are susceptible of being so far modified in their full development, as to place the future to a certain degree in the hands of those whose duty it is to train them aright. And it is here that our insight into human nature, and our foresight into the future can be usefully applied to the benefit of those unconscious little creatures over whose destiny we often so idly dream.

This work is not intended to show the effects of a right training upon the *future* character or destiny, for its pictures are

drawn from human nature as it is found, and not from any ideal representation of what it may become. And in the following serial sketches, nothing higher has been attempted than to exhibit different varieties of female character as seen in girlhood, and to follow them to their full development in womanhood, to prove the natural connection that exists between these two important periods. As the girl is, the woman will be, unless some powerful counteraction has intervened. In drawing my portraits from the inmates of a boarding school, instead of taking them from the members of a family around the domestic hearth, it was easier to find the requisite varieties, and to study human nature as it usually presents itself unchecked in its tendencies in youth, and consequently seeking its own element amidst surrounding circumstances in maturity. And by exhibiting a boarding school under the most favorable conditions in which it is possible to place one, and where more was attempted than is usually done, towards the formation and modification of character, it may be seen how little power can be exercised even by the best of teachers, in counteracting evil tendencies, or in establishing a firm foundation of moral principle. The great responsibility of making man or woman what they should be, rests not upon teachers, upon whom God has not laid it, but upon parents, and upon them alone. It is in their hands that the present life and future destiny of each child are chiefly placed, and for which they alone will be called on, to render in an account at the last Great Day of reckoning.

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