

ASPASIA

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Aspasia by C. Holland

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C. HOLLAND

ASPASIA

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Handwritten initials

Handwritten flourish

BY

C. HOLLAND.

NY. 1898



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INTRODUCTION.

A PREFACE to my autobiography seems superfluous. It is not for glory that I give my readers a history of my life's experiences, and not that I am to be held up as an ensample in all that is good; but it is that I may, if possible, be instrumental in arousing the latent energies in the minds of some of my readers, that they may gain courage to meet and successfully overcome the trials that shall come upon them, and learn to count them as blessings in disguise, and thus be strengthened in daily duties, be prepared to cope with grim adversity, when it comes, for come it may. To obtain the sweets of real happiness from prosperity, learn to appreciate the society of the virtuous and refined; to discriminate between truth and error; to judge correctly of character, and thus be better fitted to mingle in society, and also understand the true philosophy of living, that will bring the highest degree of permanent happiness. If I shall be instrumental in thus leading even one into paths of virtue and happiness, then am I amply rewarded for my work.

THE AUTHOR.

CHICAGO, May, 1869.

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ASPASIA.

CHAPTER I.

IT was on a beautiful afternoon in June, toward the close of the day, as I was sauntering home from school. The golden rays of a summer's sun were glancing through the forests, and the luxuriant foliage by the wayside was ever and anon casting its heavy shades across my path. The thrush, hidden in the thick underbrush, was warbling its notes of praise; the beautiful red-crested robins, perched upon the high branches of the stately maples and elms that overhung the road, were exultingly singing their evening songs. The sprightly little red squirrel, as innocent, apparently, as though the whole earth were an Eden, would occasionally jump across my path, the lowing of the herd or the soft bleating of the flock could be heard across the meadows, and all nature around me seemed to be full of life, beauty, and love.

Who has not been a child?—although it is said there are no children nowadays, there were children when I was young;—and who has not, in the tender years of childhood, when the emotions of the soul were readily awakened, when love was ardent, when everything beautiful and lovely from without was readily photographed

upon the soul, and shown forth with peculiar brilliancy in the animated life,—who, of all such, has not experienced the holy and heavenly influences coming through nature from nature's God? And who does not love to be carried back in their recollections to the scenes of their childhood, when, in the early morning, while the dew was yet heavy on the grass about the door, a happy family were called to the breakfast-table, and, after having partaken of the plain but substantial fare, the honored head of the household would read a chapter from the old family Bible, and, all reverently bowing around the family altar, he would render devout thanksgiving for the tender watch-care of a kind, heavenly Father "during the dark and defenseless hours of the past night," and supplicate God's favors to rest upon them during the day,—"Give us this day our daily bread." Worship being ended, each would fly to the duties of the day; and, at the time at which I commence my history, mine was to school. Yes, away to school; across the meadow, by the small, beaten path, through the tall herds'-grass and beautiful waving red clover, across the rippling brook, "going on forever," in which the shy, spotted trout were now and then darting out from the deep-shaded water under a log, which lay close under the bank, overgrown with moss, over the hill and across the pasture, where the sprightly little lambs were taking their morning gambols, thus emerging into the road just this side of the "Big Bridge," and so on to the old red school-house which stood under the hill.

My father was a farmer. I have heard him say he had nothing to commence life with but a good common-school education, a well-trained mind, and an abiding faith in God; firmly believing that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." This was the legacy bequeathed to him

by his parents, to which he had a perfect title, the same having been inherited by them; and who would wish for a better?

I have heard my mother say she was also trained in the school of adversity; and, thus united, both my parents felt themselves continually overshadowed by the presence of God, and their everyday acts were squared by the rule of love. Their children were early dedicated to God, and, as they grew up to manhood and womanhood, they were continually, by example and precept, enjoined to "walk in wisdom's ways." My father was known among the neighbors as an upright, honest man; and how many times I have heard him say to "the boys," "In all your dealings be strictly honest."

I was the youngest of my father's family; there were three boys and two girls older than myself, and it was the very month and the very day that I was twelve years old, that I was returning from school, as before mentioned; and being only disturbed in my reflections by the beauty and loveliness of nature around me (and not greatly disturbed, either, for I was every day made familiar with these lovely scenes), I said to myself, "What am I, and what am I to be?"

The first I could easily answer:—I am a girl. Yes, a wild, rollicking girl. The second depended upon my resolve, and the strength of such resolutions; and I then and there resolved that I would be a woman in the broadest sense of the term.

I was conscious of possessing natural endowments which, if cultivated and fully developed, would fit me for usefulness and enable me to fulfill a mission of good.

My brothers and sisters had all enjoyed the advantages of the district school, and John and James, the two eldest, were already grown to manhood, and engaged in business,

John on a farm, and James as clerk in a store in a neighboring village. William, my youngest brother, was in his last term at the academy, and, upon graduating, he came home to remain on the farm with my father. Catherine (or Kate, good soul, as we familiarly called her), my eldest sister, was about to be married to the Rev. Mr. Shaw, a young minister, just licensed to preach, and installed over the church in our town. Elizabeth, my second sister, was in her second year at the Young Ladies' Seminary, in a town about twenty miles distant.

Thus I was the only girl—yes, the only child—then at home.

There was but one house within a half-mile of my father's: that was Deacon Jones's.

Just over the hill, and about half-way to Deacon Jones's, there was a strip of pine woods, and a beautiful brook ran through it and across the road, covered by a rickety old bridge. Here Isabella Jones (Bell, we called her) and myself often met, and, wading into the soft, rippling water, among the smooth stones of the brook, amused ourselves for hours catching the sprightly little minnows, which we accomplished by first scraping out a basin in the sand at the edge of the water, then walling it around with stones from the brook, and "chinking it in with sods," leaving a sort of gate-way or passage on the water-side, then each, with an alder bush in hand, would wade in and drive the little fish into the basin thus prepared, and, stopping the aperture, we would play with them awhile, then let them out, a few at a time, and watch them swiftly gliding down stream, as much as to say, Catch me again if you can.

Bell Jones was about my age, and she had a brother George, a little older than herself. George and my brother William frequently went fishing of a rainy day