

**IS POLITE SOCIETY
POLITE? AND
OTHER ESSAYS. [BOSTON
& NEW YORK-1895]**

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Is Polite Society Polite? And Other Essays. [Boston & New York-1895] by Mrs. Julia Ward Howe

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MRS. JULIA WARD HOWE

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Yours very cordially,
Julia Ward Howe.

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BOSTON & NEW YORK
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1895

Preface

I REMEMBER that, quite late in the fifties, I mentioned to Theodore Parker the desire which I began to feel to give living expression to my thoughts, and to lend to my written words the interpretation of my voice.

Parker, who had taken a friendly interest in the publication of my first volumes, "Passion Flowers" and "Words for the Hour," gave his approval also to this new project of mine. "The great desire of the age," he said, "is for vocal expression. People are scarcely satisfied with the printed page alone; they crave for their instruction the living voice and the living presence."

At the time of which I write, no names of women were found in the lists of lecture courses. Lucy Stone had graduated from Oberlin, and was beginning to be known as an advocate of temperance, and as an antislavery speaker. Lucretia Mott had carried her eloquent pleading outside the limits of her Quaker belonging. Antoinette Brown Blackwell occupied the pulpit of a Congregational church, while Abby Kelly Foster and the Grimké Sisters stood forth as strenuous pleaders for the abolition of slavery. Of these ladies I knew little at the time of which I speak, and my studies and endeavors occupied a field remote from that in which they fought the good fight of faith. My thoughts ran upon the importance of a helpful philosophy of life, and my heart's desire was to assist the efforts of those who sought for this philosophy.

Gradually these wishes took shape in some essays, which I read to companies of invited friends. Somewhat later, I entered the lecture field, and journeyed hither and yon, as I was invited.

The papers collected in the present volume have been heard in many parts of our vast country. As is evident, they have

been written for popular audiences, with a sense of the limitations which such audiences necessarily impose. With the burden of increasing years, the freedom of locomotion naturally tends to diminish, and I must be thankful to be read where I have in other days been heard. I shall be glad indeed if it may be granted to these pages to carry the message which I myself have been glad to bear, — the message of the good hope of humanity, despite the faults and limitations of individuals.

That hope casts its light over the efforts of years that are past, and gilds for me, with ineffaceable glow, the future of our race.

The lecture, "Is Polite Society Polite?" was written for a course of lectures given some years ago by the New England Women's Club of Boston. "Greece Revisited" was first read before the Town and Country Club of Newport, R. I. "Aristophanes" and "Dante and Beatrice" were written for the Summer School of Philosophy at Concord, Mass. "The Halfness of Nature" was first read before the Boston Radical Club. "The Salen in America" was written for the Contemporary Club in Philadelphia.

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