

**ESSAYS ON THE PURSUITS  
OF WOMEN;  
ALSO, A PAPER ON  
FEMALE EDUCATION**

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Essays on the Pursuits of Women; Also, a Paper on Female Education by Frances Power Cobbe

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**FRANCES POWER COBBE**

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ESSAYS  
ON THE  
PURSUITS OF WOMEN.

REPRINTED FROM  
FRASER'S AND MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINES.

ALSO  
A PAPER ON FEMALE EDUCATION,  
*Read before the Social Science Congress, at Guildhall.*

BY  
FRANCES POWER COBBE.



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1863.

TO MY THREE DEAR AND HONOURED FRIENDS,

THE AUTHORESS OF

"THE CONNECTION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES,"

THE FOUNDESS OF

THE FIRST FEMALE REFORMATORY,

AND

THE SCULPTRESS OF "ZENOBIA,"

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK,

ON THE PURSUITS OF WOMEN.

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

## PREFACE.

THREE Essays in this volume—the second, third, and fourth—constitute a connected series; the remainder are of a miscellaneous character, and were written at various times, and for different purposes more or less nearly allied to the general subject of the Pursuits of Women. No pretension is made in them to any adequate treatment of so large a theme, but only to the discussion of a few of the lines lately opened to women's interests and employments of the more intellectual kind. Especially do these little Essays apply to the pursuits of *Single* women—of those who, being debarred from the most natural

and blessed of human ties and duties, yet believe that the lives which it has pleased God to bestow on them should neither be aimless for themselves, nor valueless for His creatures.

CLIFTON,

*March, 1863.*



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## ESSAY I

### SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESSES, AND WOMEN'S PART IN THEM.

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*Reprinted from Macmillan's Magazine, December, 1861.*

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"CURE the world by *science!*" said an irate old gentleman to us this year in Dublin. "Don't talk to me of your *Social Science!* Make people read their Bibles, and teach their children, and keep their houses clean, and attend to their business instead of the alehouse; but don't talk balderdash about *Social Science!* *Science indeed!* *Social Science!* pshaw!"

Vain would it have been, no doubt, to try to persuade that excellent practical philanthropist that, like M. Jourdain, who had been "talking prose all his life without ever suspecting it," so he had been similarly studying *Social Science*; and that it even takes no small share of the same to teach people all the good things he desired. Equally hopeless would it be to argue with one who should question whether the evils of pauperism, crime, and vice were more likely to be cured by chance and isolated efforts, than by the intelligent method and co-operation of

persons devoted to the task, and studying, *as a science*, the solemn problems of human misery, and its possible relief. The late meeting in Dublin of the Association for the Promotion of Social Science may be counted so definitely a success, as to establish the right of such congresses to be ranked among the more prominent institutions of our times. We think ourselves accordingly fully justified in inviting our readers to a careful consideration of the various aspects of such meetings, and their probable bearings on our present condition and future prospects.

At the first blush, it is obvious that there are in them many points of unquestionable hopefulness and promise. We cannot engage to discuss the subject from the empyrean heights of wholly uninterested criticism. We feel, on the contrary, somewhat puzzled to conceive the mental state of the man who can do so; who witnesses without one glow of human sympathy so many persons assembled from every part of the kingdom, and even from distant countries, with the one recognised object of contributing what may lie in their power towards the common cause of "peace on earth, and good-will to man." Only in our age could such a purpose serve to collect such an assembly. *War*, indeed, has its councils, even among Caffres and Mohawks. The impenetrable mysteries of scholastic theology have called a thousand synods to determine the most recondite secrets of our great Maker's nature. Physical science, art, and literature