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# AH! HOW NOBLE A CREATURE IS WOMAN

(By D. RAE, 67th, S/L Battery)

Ruskin has remarked: "To be without books of your own is the abyss of poverty—don't endure it."

Into this very abyss, however, were the personnel of a recently occupied Ack Ack position apparently cast. They had at their disposal one of the stately homes of Auckland set in ample grounds, and furnished (in an abandonment of luxury) with three spring beds, a Victorian sofa, a pedestal cupboard, and even a bamboo palmstand. But in all this lavish collection not a book was to be found.

After three book-less days, a close inspection of the house revealed a staircase cupboard which revealed in its turn (and in its darkest recesses) as unusual a pile of weighty volumes as could be desired.

They consisted mainly of bound periodicals published between 1850 and 1890—"Chamber's Journal," "The Windsor Magazine," the "Leisure Hour" (forerunner of AEWS pamphlets), and "Sunday at Home"—all well known names in every Victorian household. The remainder were a motley set ranging from "The Methodist Sunday School Hymnary" to the more exciting "Zenobia—or The Fall of Palmyra."

But the undoubted gem of this almost fossilized library was an unpretentious volume entitled "True Womanhood—the Memorials of Eliza Hessel," by Joshua Priestley. The author commences his preface with an excuse for writing about this model but otherwise obscure young lady.

"Miss Hessel's history," he says, "illustrates how a young woman with only ordinary advantages, may effect a self-improvement, and diffuse a joy-

ous and quickening influence in the social circle."

When Miss Hessel herself is directly quoted, her style is stilted and pedantic. Her long words and stately periods are reminiscent of Dr. Johnson and his many imitators.

She writes in her diary: "My reluctance to journalising, after the manner I have hitherto pursued, increases. My feelings are such an unsafe criteria of my real state of mind and heart that I ought to be very careful in recording them merely for my own reference. Much internal examination with view to record tends beyond a doubt to a morbid state of feeling."

Later, she quotes from Longfellow, rather to the discomfiture of the military reader:—

"Were half the power that fills the earth with terror,

Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts

Given to redeem the human mind from error,

There were no need of arsenals and forts."

Having completely routed the military gentlemen, she proceeds to attack what appears to be, in this city, at least, their favourite pastime—namely, gay parties.

She replies to a friend's letter:

"My views on this matter are very decided. What a solemn mockery to pray 'Lead us not into temptation' when we deliberately walk into it! Do you remember Mr. Jay's startling address to his young people on the subject of balls, gay parties, etc.? 'If I

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