

PREFATORY, TO THE READER.

DEAR five hundred friends already mine, and five hundred hundred more, who will, as I fondly dream, become mine through these pages, let me disarm criticism beforehand by assuring you that nobody could point out a fault or a shortcoming in this little book, which I do not know all about and deplore most modestly beforehand. In fact I have my doubts as to calling it a book at all, that title implying a purpose, and deliberateness, and method, which are not of my circle, although regarded by me with respectful admiration. No, let us rather say, that this work of mine is a vehicle, through which, with feminine longing for sympathy, I convey to you my pleasures, annoyances, and experiences in the journey it narrates; or, if you like better, it is a casket, enshrining the memory of many a pleasant hour made bright and indelible by your companionship, your kindness, your attention and hospitality.

The world is so *exigant*, and Time the Effacer is so ruthless, that one loves sometimes to "materialize" those pleasant, or more than pleasant recollections, and so put them not only

beyond the risk of loss from one's own memory, but in such form that they can be communicated anew to those who originally shared them.

Take then my embodied recollections, dear friends, and each of you find among them the one memory distinctively your own, and believe that round that central point all the rest are constellated; and for you, O critics! if you will indeed attempt to bind a butterfly upon the wheel, or anatomize the vapory visions of a woman's memory, remember that in all courtesy you should deal gently and generously with a work proclaiming itself from the outset not so much a book as a long gossip letter to one's friends, and an amiable attempt to convey to the rest of the world some of the delight it commemorates, and if you do not find a great deal in it, dear critic, remember that to competently judge a woman's letter or a woman's book, one must have learned to read between the lines and find there the pith and meaning of the whole.

M. FLORENCE LESLIE.

NEW YORK, November, 1877.