Sir Almroth Wright (1861 – 1947) was an English medical researcher credited with developing the first typhoid fever vaccine. He was a major proponent of the development of vaccines and for proper use of antiseptics. He also was one of the earliest scientists to express concern that bacteria would develop resistance to antibiotics.

Chapter II

WOMAN'S DISABILITY IN THE MATTER OF INTELLECT

Characteristics of the Feminine Mind--Suffragist Illusions with Regard to the Equality of Man and Woman as Workers--Prospect for the Intellectual Future of Woman--Has Woman Advanced?

The woman voter would be pernicious to the State not only because she could not back her vote by physical force, but also by reason of her intellectual defects.

Woman's mind attends in appraising a statement primarily to the mental images which it evokes, and only secondarily--and sometimes not at all--to what is predicated in the statement. It is over-influenced by individual instances; arrives at conclusions on incomplete evidence; has a very imperfect sense of proportion; accepts the congenial as true, and rejects the uncongenial as false; takes the imaginary which is desired for reality, and treats the undesired reality which is out of sight as non-existent--building up for itself in this way, when biased by predilections and aversions, a very unreal picture of the external world.

The explanation of this is to be found in all the physiological attachments of woman's mind: in the fact that mental images are in her over-intimately linked up with emotional reflex responses; that yielding to such reflex responses gives gratification; that intellectual analysis and suspense of judgment involve an inhibition of reflex responses which is felt as neural distress; that precipitate judgment brings relief from this physiological strain; and that woman looks upon her mind not as an implement for the pursuit of truth, but as an instrument for providing her with creature comforts in the form of agreeable mental images.

In order to satisfy the physical yearning for such comforts, a considerable section of intelligent and virtuous women insist on picturing to themselves that the reign of physical force is over, or as good as over; that distinctions based upon physical and intellectual force may be reckoned as non-existent; that male supremacy as resting upon these is a thing of the past; and that Justice means Egalitarian Equity—means equating the weaklings with the strong and the incapable with the capable.

All this because these particular ideas are congenial to the woman of refinement, and because it is to her, when she is a suffragist, uncongenial that there should exist another principle of justice which demands from the physically and intellectually capable that they shall retain the reins of
government in their own hands; and specially unconvivial that in all man-governed States the ideas of justice of the more forceful should have worked out so much to the advantage of women, that a large majority of these are indifferent or actively hostile to the Woman's Suffrage Movement.

In further illustration of what has been said above, it may be pointed out that woman, even intelligent woman, nurses all sorts of misconceptions about herself. She, for instance, is constantly picturing to herself that she can as a worker lay claim to the same all-round efficiency as a man—forgetting that woman is notoriously unadapted to tasks in which severe physical hardships have to be confronted; and that hardly anyone would, if other alternative offered, employ a woman in any work which imposed upon her a combined physical and mental strain, or in any work where emergencies might have to be faced.

In like manner the suffragist is fond of picturing to herself that woman is for all ordinary purposes the intellectual equal, and that the intelligent woman is the superior of the ordinary man.

These results are arrived at by fixing the attention upon the fact that an ordinary man and an ordinary woman are, from the point of view of memory and apprehension, very much on a level; and that a highly intelligent woman has a quicker memory and a more rapid power of apprehension than the ordinary man; and further, by leaving out of regard that it is not so much a quick memory or a rapid power of apprehension which is required for effective intellectual work, as originality, or at any rate independence of thought, a faculty of felicitous generalisations and diacritical judgment, long-sustained intellectual effort, an unselective mirroring of the world in the mind, and that relative immunity to fallacy which goes together with a stable and comparatively unresponsive nervous system.

When we consider that the intellect of the quite ungifted man works with this last-mentioned physiological advantage, we can see that the male intellect must be, and—_pace [with the permission of]_ the woman suffragist—it in point of fact is, within its range, a better instrument for dealing with the practical affairs of life than that of the intelligent woman.

How far off we are in the case of woman from an unselective mirroring of the world in the mind is shown by the fact that large and important factors of life may be represented in woman's mind by lacunae [gaps] of which she is totally unconscious.

Thus, for instance, that not very unusual type of spinster who is in a condition of retarded development (and you will find this kind of woman even on County Council's), is completely unconscious of the sexual element in herself and in human nature generally. Nay, though one went from the dead, he could not bring it home to her that unsatisfied sexuality is an intellectual disability.

Sufficient illustration will now have been given of woman's incapacity to take a complete or objective view of any matter in which she has a personal, or any kind of emotional interest; and this would now be the place to discuss those other aspects of her mind which are relevant to her claim to the suffrage. I refer to her logical endowment and her political sagacity.
All that I might have been required to say here on these issues has, however, already been said by me in dealing with the arguments of the suffragist. I have there carefully written it in between the lines.

One thing only remains over.--We must, before we pass on, consider whether woman has really, as she tells us, given earnest for the future weeding out of these her secondary sexual characters, by making quite phenomenal advances within the lifetime of the present generation; and, above all, whether there is any basis for woman's confident assurance that, when for a few generations she shall have enjoyed educational advantages, she will at any rate pull up level with man.

The vision of the future may first engage our attention; for only this roseate prospect makes of any man a feminist.

Now the basis that all this hope rests upon is the belief that it is a law of heredity that acquired characteristics are handed down; and, let it be observed, that whereas this theory found, not many decades ago, under the influence of Darwin, thousands of adherents among scientific men, it finds to-day only here and there an adherent.

But let that pass, for we have to consider here, not only whether acquired characteristics are handed down, but further whether, "if we held that doctrine true," it would furnish scientific basis for the belief that educational advantages carried on from generation to generation would level up woman's intellect to man's; and whether, as the suffragist also believes, the narrow education of past generations of women can be held responsible for their present intellectual shortcomings.

A moment's consideration will show--for we may here fix our eyes only on the future--that woman could not hope to advance relatively to man except upon the condition that the acquired characteristics of woman, instead of being handed down equally to her male and female descendants, were accumulated upon her daughters.

Now if that be a law of heredity, it is a law which is as yet unheard of outside the sphere of the woman suffrage societies. Moreover, one is accustomed to hear women, when they are not arguing on the suffrage, allege that clever mothers make clever sons.

It must, as it will have come home to us, be clear to every thoughtful mind that woman's belief that she will, through education and the cumulation of its effects upon her through generations, become a more glorious being, rests, not upon any rational basis, but only on the physiological fact that what is congenial to woman impresses itself upon her as true. All that sober science in the form of history and physiology would seem to entitle us to hope from the future of woman is that she will develop *pari passu* [step by step] with man; and that education will teach her not to retard him overmuch by her lagging in the rear.

In view of this larger issue, the question as to whether woman has, in any real sense of the word, been making progress in the course of the present generation, loses much of interest.
If to move about more freely, to read more freely, to speak out her mind more freely, and to have emancipated herself from traditionary beliefs--and, I would add, traditionary ethics--is to have advanced, woman has indubitably advanced.

But the educated native too has advanced in all these respects; and he also tells us that he is pulling up level with the white man.

Let us at any rate, when the suffragist is congratulating herself on her own progress, meditate also upon that dictum of Nietzsche, "Progress is writ large on all woman's banners and bannerets; but one can actually see her going back."

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