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The Mind of Woman.



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## The Mind of Woman.

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At the present time there is an issue which is gradually forcing itself into the minds of the people, not only of the American nation but of every civilized nation of the world. Slowly but surely it is finding expression in that great voice of the people, the literature of the day; the journals magazines and newspapers are taking up the question and such articles as, "Woman's Mission", "Woman's Position in Society", "The World's Half Citizens", "The Higher Education of Woman", appearing almost every day in some of the periodicals, all bear silent testimony of the ever growing popularity of the subject and the interest that broad minded men and women are exhibit-

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ing toward it. It is a question of vital importance, for the welfare of the nation depends upon the satisfactory solution of the problem; and even as we await the issue the situation is adjusting itself to the requirements of the time. Woman is working out to her own satisfaction, her mission and her place in the work of the world, while man is standing by, watching her progress with interest not un-mixed with wonder; it is not the mind of woman pitted against the mind of man, but it is the mind of woman reaching upward and seeking for the light of understanding without the aid of man and, it must be admitted, generally speaking, without his approbation.

Why woman should have accepted so unquestioningly the position of man's inferior and his slave, why she did not

realize her degraded condition and seek to remove the cause long ago is hard to understand; and yet when we consider her educational advantages or, more correctly speaking, her lack of educational advantages we can see why she has not sought relief from her condition until recent times. It is only for the comparatively very short period of about forty or fifty years that woman has been allowed the advantages of an education, and even today, in this highly civilized country of ours she is not allowed this in the free and unrestricted meaning of the term; she is hampered and held down by the claims of custom and of public opinion which has not yet entirely turned in her favor.

"Custom lies upon them with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

Woman is but slowly awakening from the stupor which settled upon her centuries ago when man first discovered that

the sexes had a sphere — "a pernicious political discovery which cost the world centuries of retrogression." Man has from the first been prone to judge others by that quality in which he himself excels; he judged woman from the standpoint of physical strength in which he judged himself, and finding her his inferior in this quality assumed without seeking proof, that she was his inferior in mental qualities as well. He then assigned to her a position beneath him in the social scale, a place she was forced to accept or suffer the results of his displeasure. She has not risen from this place without a struggle; she has had to pass through years of martyrdom, burning at the stake, death in all manner of forms and worst of all, she has had to bear thrusts from that cruellest of all instruments of torture, ridicule

She has had to battle against those two strongest of all institutions, the church and the state; from the first they have been averse to her development. — these two which should have been the means of lifting her to her true position have only sought to plunge her deeper into the mire. Yet all this has only confirmed her in the belief that she was doing right, and strong in that belief, her mind has risen triumphant. She has not yet reached the goal but it is now only a matter of time. The greatest has been accomplished yet she has much to do.

It has almost ceased to be the fashion to try to prove that woman's mind is inferior to man's. Still a few fanatics try to show that by a special arrangement of the cells of the brain or by a curious and extraordinary structure

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of the cells, peculiar only to woman's brain, it is of inferior workmanship and incapable of receiving and retaining impressions of any degree of complexity as does that of the other sex. To consider woman's brain inferior to man's or different than his, would be to accept the theory that woman does not inherit from her father or man from his mother a theory utterly without foundation and disclaimed by authorities.

In the study of the human brain there have been no differences found to exist between the two sexes other than those of size and weight, woman's being smaller as is natural since the average woman is smaller than the average man.

We know also that intelligence does not depend upon the size of the brain, for while in some of the lower races this



organ is much larger than that of the white race, which we know to be the most highly developed, yet in other of the primitive races, it is much smaller; then too there seems to be no superiority in brain weight in modern over ancient times.

Intelligence depends upon the rapidity and range of the acts of associative memory and this depends upon the complexity of neural processes. Psychologists seem to agree that woman's mind has as wide a range of associative memory, and to be as rapid in its operations as man's; then it would be entirely wrong to say that woman's mind is inferior to man's since they are alike not alone in structure but in manner of action. If a difference exists, it is not a

difference in the brain as an organ; it is rather in the character of the stimulations thrust upon it by society.

The "Original Sin" idea has been "harped upon" in past times till in the light of knowledge and good judgement of the present century it has not dared to show its face. Could we love a God who sentenced us to slavery because, as tradition has it, our first mother transgressed? Because she was a woman would he who stands for a model of justice, compel her daughters to become the slaves of her sons merely because her daughters were so unfortunate as to be born her daughters? Why not visit her punishment upon her sons as well as upon her daughters? Surely if we believe in a Divine Superintendant then

we need not linger longer in an attempt to prove the erroneousness and the absurdity of the "original sin" idea.

It is a significant fact that in the history of the world, those nations which granted to woman the greatest freedom were the nations that ranked highest in civilization. Too often this has been considered effect rather than cause; and yet when we consider that her restriction was followed more or less immediately by the retrogression and subsequent downfall of that nation, does it not seem probable that there is more of cause than effect involved?

In Ancient Greece woman enjoyed greater freedom than did woman of any other of the nations. She was allowed

privileges and had duties outside her home. She was held in respect by man and treated as his equal, and the effect on civilization made itself manifest in the work they accomplished. Then in later developments of greek civilization she became more restricted in her freedom and gradually lost her control over the minds of men. The sexes were beginning to believe that they each had a sphere and this led to a gradual drawing apart of the two. Man went forth to participate in the affairs of the state but like prerogatives were not conceded to woman and she was thrust more and more into the back ground and was at last forced to content herself with the narrowness of home duties, and she never again

attained to her high position though in the Dorian and Aeolian states, most notably Sparta she came more nearly regaining her old time independence. But as the care of the home was laid more and more upon her shoulders she became more of a household drudge and more and more at the mercy of her masters. And the effect upon Greece was again apparent.

In Ancient Egypt the high regard in which women were held is attested by the fact that woman was allowed to become ruler of that country. That she was capable of filling such a place of trust and honor is proven by the unusual success of such queens as Hatshepsut and Taiti. Cleopatra, while possessing remarkable ability as a diplomat yet was not graced with the

finer purer characteristics of woman kind, and lives only in history as a beautiful and skilled politician but thoroughly unprincipled woman.

The Roman woman was respected but she had no influence outside the home.

In the age of Cicero the girls of the higher classes were taught the Greek language but further their education did not extend. However, in the age of Antoninus,

138 to 168 A.D., much attention was paid to education not excluding girls. In

the year 842 A.D. Empress Theodora mounted the throne; she was the first woman claiming this honor and her reign was one of remarkable success.

In Persia and Babylonia the lot of woman was hard to bear. She was nothing less than a slave; as soon as she became of marriageable age she

was sold at public auction. Persia was the home of the harem system of domesticity. The Persian woman had no power whatever over her husband, though she may have exerted influence — and probably did.

Woman's place in ancient times was a more enviable position than the one she occupied during the mediæval period of history. This is the period of knight hood. The works of fiction of the past few years are in great part to blame for the mistaken ideas that exist concerning the place of woman in society at that time. Fiction has her a beautiful character, less being surrounded by courtiers all eager to take up arms in her behalf at the slightest suggestion of insult; but history tells us a different story. It was an

age of chivalry for the few but slavery and degradation was the lot of the many. Woman was merely an article of merchandise to be bought and sold, or in many cases, to be stolen. Hundreds of pure women were compelled to seek the shelter of the convent walls to shield themselves from the advances of those same knights who in fiction figure as the protectors of the honor and purity of woman.

The loathsome "Marquette Law" existed in France, Germany, Prussia, England & Scotland - in all those countries where feudalism existed; and this law was actually supported by the church; it was one of the causes of the jacquerie or peasant war of the fourteenth century. That such a law as this should have found existence in our own country as



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late as the fifteenth century is hardly credible, and yet it is true that the Edict of Marly securing the seignioral Tenure in Lower Canada transplanted that claim to America when Canada was under the control of the peasants.

In England for more than one thousand years woman was bought and sold as slaves. Not the least effort, with a very few exceptions in the cases of princesses and daughters of the very rich, was put forth to secure to them the advantages of an education. Not until the tenth century had a daughter the right to reject the husband selected for her by her father; in the same century the Christian wife acquired the high honor of eating at the same table with her husband. In the colonial period of the history of America the woman

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who was fearless enough to entertain ideas of her own and to give expression to them was regarded with suspicion and the chances were many that she be considered as practicing the "Black Art" of witchcraft and pay for her freedom of thought and speech with her life.

The history of the education of the mind of woman has, up to the last century, been slow in forming. We may excuse ourselves for this fact by saying that this was a new nation and that our industries must be built up, our credit with foreign nations be secured before ~~the~~ we have time to reflect on international reforms. But now that all these things have been accomplished we have no good excuse for further neglecting to solve the problem. During

the last fifty years the progress of the education of woman has been very rapid. It is only about thirty five years since the movement toward the higher education of woman commenced and it dates back to the beginning of the system of coeducation of the sexes.

There is a significant fact relating to coeducation which it is well to mention. This system was not the result of a preconceived idea of one person or of a class of persons but was accidental — or providential. It was due to the fact that the country, being sparsely settled, made the organization of common schools a difficult matter because there were not enough boys in the rural districts to warrant the establishment of a school; ~~so~~ the girls were sent to

school to make up the number, likewise the admission of women as teachers of the public schools was accidental. At the time of the civil war and immediately following, the male citizens of the community were either away fighting or were busy building up the fallen industries so that it became necessary because of the lack of teachers, to allow women to enter that profession and they have been so successful and have filled that position so much better than men that they have gradually forced the men from such places. At first public sentiment was strongly against women acting in this capacity; the same old cry was raised that has been set up whenever woman has taken a decisive

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step in her progress, the horror that she would "unsex" herself by occupying such places.

The first college in which the system of coeducation was from the first maintained was Oberlin College opened in 1833 and chartered in 1850. Antioch followed in 1853 and from this time on, as the state universities opened, women were admitted.

A great deal has been said in the past few years and is still being said regarding woman's suffrage and though this is not a woman's suffrage plea yet the character of the paper demands a word or two on the subject. Woman's suffrage and equal rights is inevitable. Already several of the states have granted to women

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the same rights as those enjoyed by man and in a very few more years there will not be a state in the union in which woman is not allowed the right to vote and hold office under the state and nation, if they choose to do so.

Longfellow said: "Woman's suffrage is undoubtedly coming, and I for one expect a great deal of good to come from it". Lincoln said: "I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens, by no means excluding women". That woman should have the privileges of sharing in the government and helping make the laws under which she must live seems only fair and just. That she is capable of doing so seems no longer to be doubted but the

haunting fear that has possessed us for so many ages that woman will "unsex" herself by taking an active interest in the affairs of state and nation, still remains.

Dr. Gregg has said on the subject: "sex is God's manufacture; it is dyed in the wool and it will take care of itself. I have an idea that those who use the phrase which is so awful because of its unknown quantity, mean that women unsex themselves when they usurp the place and work and functions of man in the political sphere.

But here is the difficulty; whatever functions woman is able to exercise, whatever places woman is able to fill, whatever work woman is able to do and do with efficiency, are here and that by the indisputable right of adaptability. Adaptability is the ordination of God,

and the ordination of God a finality" volumes could be written, and in fact have been written on this subject alone but in this place there is only room for a word more. Alexander Dumas spoke facts when he said: "Woman's suffrage will at first make a sensation, then it will become fashionable, after that a habit then an experience, then a duty and at last, a pleasure"

And now for a look at what the mind of woman has accomplished in all these years. There is scarcely any branch of learning, any science, any art, any work of the world into which woman has not ventured and which she has not honored and graced by her presence there. As sovereigns, queens Elizabeth and Victoria stand forth as



examples ; as artist, Rosa Bonheur ; as scientist, Mrs Somerville ; as novelist and poetess we have George Eliot, Mrs Browning and many other names too numerous to mention ; this was one of the first occupations or vocations open to woman and consequently has many more representatives than any other.

Of course there are not nearly as many women of fame as men because of the recent date of their admittance into the world's work, but during the few years they have participated in this work they have helped fill up the ranks of noted personages to a surprising degree and they will continue to do so in the years to come.

Woman has done much for herself

in the past ~~and~~ she will do much for the world in the future. It is a perilous period in her history but if left unchecked she will work out the problem satisfactorily. She is just and true, she will usurp no place not her own, she will seek her level, she will find her place and will fill it capably and well. We need not worry about her usurping man's place. If she can fill the place he occupies better than he can, then it is a proof that it is her place and not his. We need not fear that she will seek a career rather than the comforts of a domestic life. Not every woman was designed in this great Plan of Plans, to become a wife and mother and not all are capable of becoming either.

Wifehood and motherhood are woman's divine privileges but these are not the purpose of her existence and if God designed that a woman become a homemaker he planted in her that desire, which will exceed every other ambition or hope she may entertain. On the other hand if she was not planned for a domestic life she was surely intended for some other purpose and she should be given an opportunity to cultivate her talent whatever it may be. Woman was intended to be the classmate of man in this school of life and in order to be his classmate, her interests must be the same. She should walk hand in hand with her brother, not follow him and her mind and his should travel to-

gether into the fields of knowledge.

When this comes to pass societies will have reached its normal state and the work of the world will be accomplished with redoubled vigor for two minds will work for the fulfillment of Gods purpose where before one mind groped in the darkness and sought to solve the great problem of living. Then there will be complete knowledge of the capacities and limitations, each of the other, and from this knowledge shall proceed strength.