WOMAN NOT INFERIOR.

A CAREFUL STUDY OF A TOPIC FORCED UPON STUDENTS OF LIFE.

MAN AND WOMAN. A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters. By Havelock Ellis. Illustrated. Pp. xiv., 409. Charles Scribner's Sons.

In the light of recent achievements of women in the universities and in unusual occupations, this book has more than a scientific interest. There will be wonder in coming times at the grave disputes of the present day and of the past over the inferiority of women, not so much at the doubt as at the arguments by which it has been maintained. Mr. Ellis dwells upon one point which was considered important until recently. The frontal division of the brain was said to be larger in man than in woman. This was supposed to be in accordance with the requirement of nature that most intellectual work belonged to this part of the brain. The results of direct observation were cast aside if they conflicted with theory in this matter. No assumption of science ever contained a greater number of errors. Careful investigations have shown that the frontal part of the brain is relatively larger in civilized woman than in civilized man. But man would apparently have clung to his error if he had not discovered that in the brains of apes the frontal portion is if anything better developed than the rest. This led him to review the whole question, and he has now satisfied himself that this part of the brain has no exclusive importance in intellectual labor. In spite of its position in front and at the very summit of the human figure, and in spite of all the prejudices which favored the former error, that error has been given up, and Mr. Ellis contends that the whole brain is employed in all mental operations. But the man who should attempt to revenge himself for the loss of a supposed advantage by comparing women and apes could immediately be taken down by some fair girl graduate who might show him that even in this region of the brain simian characteristics are distributed, man taking one class of them and woman the rest. Another case in which a prepossession against women made it difficult for a long time to get at the facts, is shown in the studies of comparative height and weight. Just because it seemed the proper thing that man should always be heavier and stronger and taller than women, it was maintained that the case must be the same with growing girls and boys. And there were beautiful tables of figures which showed that the facts agreed with the theory. But subsequent investigation on a more extensive scale and in a large number of countries has shown that during certain years of development girls are distinctly heavier and taller than boys.

Preconceptions of this sort have affected learning in the most unexpected ways. It was known that for ages women among the civilized races had as a rule refrained from war. In times of battle and conflict these non-combatants were really a source of weakness. But even among civilized races there is no proof that the difference between men and women is founded upon anything more solid than custom. Nevertheless, it modified the speculations of anthropologists in the most significant way. Savage woman, it was said in books which are still authoritative, was troublesome when her tribe was at war because she could not fight and had to be protected. This was supposed to account for the cruelty with which she was treated. Closer examination of savage life shows that as a rule woman is not treated more cruelly than man, and that she can fight and does fight for her tribe with as much bravery and skill as is shown by the warriors. If she is made a mere slave and beast of burden, it is found to be owing to the hard life of the people; for wherever savage life is comfortable, there woman enjoys all its pleasures. The division of labor among savages is one that adopts itself to their necessities. Apparently women took upon themselves the drudgery, for it is not until men are free to some extent from the task of hunting, and subsistence becomes less a matter of chance, that industries begin to be separated from each other. It is man, not woman, who seeks relief from an incessant round of tasks. Apparently the savage habit due to the alterations of forced activity and idleness has remained with the race through all the vicissitudes of civilization. Domestic economy to this day is far from being specialized like that wider region of life in which man is most active. But there is one savage example which may be commended to the women of civilization who are looking for some new field to conquer from the tyrant man. It is said of the Haidas in the Queen Charlotte Islands that "the women are the great diplomats and generally contrive to have their own way." And among certain tribes of Australia "the women act as ambassadors to arrange treaties, and invariably succeed in their missions." Among civilized peoples, women are said to be skillful diplomats. But their merits have rarely, if ever, been formally recognized.

The inferences from savage life leave little room for the belief that woman is by nature much weaker than man. It is possible that the difference is the result of habits carried on from generation to generation. But there is no reason to suspect that culture alone is responsible for the fact that girls are more precocious than boys, that in them development is arrested earlier and that as a result the female figure retains a likeness to that of children. "This greater youthfulness of physical type in woman is a very radical characteristic," says Mr. Ellis, "and its influence vibrates to the most remote psychic recesses." This peculiarity of woman is particularly marked in the head. Woman approximates the infantile type, while man approaches the savage, the simian and the senile. The difference between man and woman here is so significant that Mr. Ellis anticipates a quarrel over it, and even goes so far as to hint what man and woman are likely to say to each other on the subject. It may be an error in him to go so far; at least it has been said with authority that no man on earth could predict before a woman opened her mouth what she was going to say. The controversy in the past has been even more vexatious over the contents of the skull than over its shape. But after all the disputation the problem seems to be not yet solved, and it looks as if the solution when it does come will favor women. There is, indeed, no question but that man among European races has a brain absolutely larger than woman possesses. But when these sizes are considered relatively to some ratio of height or weight, the case begins to look different. Like small men and children, woman has a head out of proportion to her size judged by the measurement of an average man. Nevertheless, taking height as a standard, it is shown that the brains of men are usually about an ounce larger relatively than those of women. It shows what even a scientist will do when hard pressed, that a distinguished brain anatomist on this apparently trifling difference based the statement that "the difference in the size and weight of the brain is obviously a fundamental sexual distinction." But Mr. Ellis shows that the use of height as the sole standard is unfair to women. "Men are not only taller than women, they are larger. That additional ounce is fully needed merely to place men on a fair equality with women." The obvious inaccuracy of the criterion taken from stature, led many scientific men to consider brain weight relative to weight of body. And judged by this standard, woman was the winner. She either "tied" the record or surpassed man by a trifle. "Bischoff, in his important and accurate work on the brain, shows that while woman's brain weight is to man's as ninety to one hundred, woman's body weight is to man's as only eighty-three to one hundred." The trouble is that while in large averages this relation is satisfactory enough, it is defective when applied to individual cases or to different classes of the population. The well-to-do, well-nourished and comparatively lazy classes weigh much more than the underfed and overworked classes. Not only do individuals differ, but the weight of a single individual may fluctuate greatly, while the weight of the brain remains practically the same. In cases where ninety-seven per cent of the fat in the body was absorbed under the strain of starvation, the nervous system only lost three and two-tenths per cent. As woman has a greater tendency to fat than man, it is evident that the standard of weight is unfair to her. This was so plain that Manouvrier, estimating as closely as possible, fixed the proportion of the active organic mass in woman and man at 70 to 100. Compared with 90 to 100 the ratio of brain weight, the figures of Manouvrier are startling. They signify that woman's brain relatively to man's is as not less than 113 to 100.

It would be impossible to follow Mr. Ellis through the vast array of facts which he has gathered into this compact volume. There are points in which woman recalls more minutely than man the traits of a simian ancestry, but these are balanced by others in which man displays anthropoidal peculiarities. Woman has less sensitiveness and more sense-irritability than man. She is almost never subject to man's defect of color blindness. She is not so easily overcome by pain and wounds heal with her much more rapidly than with men. Though Mr. Ellis discusses the effect of stimulants, he does not allude at this point to the effect of alcohol, which is said to retard the process of healing in wounds. That woman is comparatively free from intemperance may be the cause of what is called her "disvulnerability." In general, it may be said that Mr. Ellis makes out an enviable case for woman from first to last. She is different from man, but that she is his inferior remains to be proved by the tests which modern life is gradually offering to her in increasing numbers.

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