

ERNEST BAX

THE FRAUD OF
FEMINISM

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Ernest Belfort Bax

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PREFACE

The present volume aims at furnishing a succinct exposure of the pretensions of the Modern Feminist Movement. It aims at presenting the case against it with an especial view to tracking down and gibbetting the infamous falsehoods, the conventional statements, which are not merely perversions of the truth, but which are directly and categorically contrary to the truth, but which pass muster by sheer force of uncontradicted repetition. It is by this kind of bluff that the claims of Feminism are sustained. The following is a fair example of the statements of Feminist writers: – “As for accusing the world at large of fatuous indulgence for womanhood in general, the idea is too preposterous for words. The true ‘legends of the Old Bailey’ tell, not of women absurdly acquitted, but of miserable girls sent to the gallows for murders committed in half delirious dread of the ruthlessness of hypocritical Society.” Now it is this sort of legend that it is one of the chief objects of the following pages to explode. Of course the “fatuous indulgence” for “womanhood in general,” practised by the “world at large,” is precisely one of the most conspicuous features of our time, and the person who denies it, if he is not

deliberately prevaricating, must be a veritable Rip van Winkle awakening out of a sleep lasting at least two generations. Similarly the story of the "miserable girls sent to the gallows," etc., is, as far as living memory is concerned, a pure legend. It is well known that in the cases referred to of the murder of their new-born children by girls, at the very outside a year or two's light imprisonment is the only penalty actually inflicted. The acquittal of women on the most serious charges, especially where the victims are men, in the teeth of the strongest evidence, is, on the other hand, an everyday occurrence. Now it is statements like the above on which, as already said, the Feminist Movement thrives; its most powerful argumentative weapon with the man in the street is the legend that woman is oppressed by man. It is rarely that anyone takes the trouble to refute the legend in general, or any specific case adduced as an illustration of it. When, however, the bluff is exposed, when the real facts of the case are laid bare to public notice, and woman is shown, not only as not oppressed but as privileged, up to the top of her bent, then the apostles of Feminism, male and female, being unable to make even a plausible case out in reply, with one consent resort to the boycott, and, by ignoring what they cannot answer, seek to stop the spread of the unpleasant truth so dangerous to their cause. The pressure put upon publishers and editors by the influential Feminist sisterhood is well known.

For the rest, it must not be supposed that this little book makes any claim to exhaust the subject or to be a scientific treatise. It is, and is meant to be, a popular refutation of the current arguments

in favour of Feminism, and a brief statement of the case against Feminism. Sir Almroth Wright's short treatise, "The Unexpurgated Case against Woman's Suffrage," which deals with the question from a somewhat different standpoint, may be consulted with advantage by the reader.

An acknowledgment should be made to the editor of The New Age for the plucky stand made by that journal in the attempt to dam the onrush of sentimental slush set free by the self-constituted champions of womanhood. I have also to thank two eminent medical authorities for reading the proofs of my second chapter.

INTRODUCTION

In the following pages it is not intended to furnish a treatise on the evolution of woman generally or of her place in society, but simply to offer a criticism on the theory and practice of what is known as Modern Feminism.

By Modern Feminism I understand a certain attitude of mind towards the female sex. This attitude of mind is often self-contradictory and illogical. While on the one hand it will claim, on the ground of the intellectual and moral equality of women with men, the concession of female suffrage, and commonly, in addition thereto, the admission of women to all professions, offices and functions of public life; on the other it will strenuously champion the preservation and intensification of the privileges and immunities before the law, criminal and civil, in favour of women, which have grown up in the course of the nineteenth century.

The above attitude, with all its inconsistencies, has at its back a strong sex-conscious party, or sex union, as we may term it, among women, and a floating mass of inconsequent, slushy sentiment among men. There is more than one popular prejudice which obscures the meaning and significance of Modern Feminism with many people. There is a common theory, for instance, based upon what really obtained to some extent before the prevalence of Modern Feminism, that in any case of

antagonism between the two sexes, women always take the man's side against the woman. Now this theory, if it ever represented the true state of the case, has long ceased to do so.

The powerful female sex union spoken of, in the present day, exercises such a strong pressure in the formation of public opinion among women, that it is rapidly becoming next to impossible, even in the most flagrant cases, where man is the victim, to get any woman to acknowledge that another woman has committed a wrong. On the other hand it may be noted, that the entire absence of any consciousness of sex antagonism in the attitude of men towards women, combined with an intensification of the old-world chivalry prescribed by tradition towards the so-called weaker sex, exercises, if anything, an increasing sway over male public opinion. Hence the terrific force Feminism has obtained in the world of the early twentieth century.

It is again often supposed, and this is also a mistake, that in individual cases of dispute between the sexes, the verdict, let us say of a jury of men, in favour of the female prisoner or the female litigant is solely or even mainly determined by the fact of the latter's good looks. This may indeed play a part; but it is easy to show from records of cases that it is a subordinate one – that, whatever her looks or her age may be, the verdict is given her not so much because she is a *pretty* woman as because she is a *woman*. Here again the question of attractiveness may have played a more potent part in determining male verdicts in the

days before Feminist sentiment and Feminist views had reached their present dominance. But now the question of sex alone, of being a woman, is sufficient to determine judgment in her favour.

There is a trick with which votaries of Feminism seek to prejudice the public mind against its critics, and that is the “fake” that any man who ventures to criticise the pretensions of Feminism, is actuated by motives of personal rancour against the female sex, owing to real or imaginary wrongs suffered by him at the hands of some member or members of the sex. I suppose it may be possible that there are persons, not precisely microcephalous idiots, who could be made to believe such stuff as this in disparagement of him who ventures an independent judgment on these questions; otherwise the conduct of Feminists in adopting this line of argument would be incomprehensible. But we would fain believe that the number of these feeble-minded persons, who believe there is any connection between a man having independent judgment enough to refuse to bend the knee to Modern Feminist dogma, and his having quarrelled with any or all of his female friends or relations, cannot be very numerous. As a matter of fact there is not one single prominent exponent of views hostile to the pretensions of what is called the “Woman’s Movement” of the present day, respecting whom there is a tittle of evidence of his not having lived all his life on the best of terms with his womankind. There is only one case known of indirectly by the present writer, and that not of a prominent writer or speaker on the subject, that

would afford any plausible excuse whatever for alleging anti-Feminist views to have been influenced by personal motives of this kind. I am aware, of course, that Feminists, with their usual mendacity, have made lying statements to this effect respecting well-nigh every prominent writer on the anti-Feminist side, in the hope of influencing the aforesaid feeble-minded members of the public against their opponents. But a very little investigation suffices to show in every case the impudent baselessness of their allegations. The contemptible silliness of this method of controversy should render it unworthy of serious remark, and my only excuse for alluding to it is the significant sidelight it casts upon the intellectual calibre of those who resort to it, and of the confidence or want of confidence they have in the inherent justice of their cause and the logical strength of their case.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL

The position of women in social life was for a long time a matter of course. It did not arise as a question, because it was taken for granted. The dominance of men seemed to derive so obviously from natural causes, from the possession of faculties physical, moral and intellectual, in men, which were wanting in women, that no one thought of questioning the situation. At the same time, the inferiority of woman was never conceived as so great as to diminish seriously, much less to eliminate altogether, her responsibility for crimes she might commit. There were cases, of course, such as that of offences committed by women under coverture, in which a diminution of responsibility was recognised and was given effect to in condonation of the offence and in mitigation of the punishment. But there was no sentiment in general in favour of a female more than of a male criminal. It entered into the head of no one to weep tears of pity over the murderess of a lover or husband rather than over the murderer of a sweetheart or wife. Similarly, minor offenders, a female blackmailer, a female thief, a female perpetrator of an assault, was not deemed less guilty or worthy of more lenient treatment than a male offender in like cases. The law, it was assumed, and the assumption was acted upon, was the same for both sexes.

The sexes were equal before the law. The laws were harsher in some respects than now, although not perhaps in all. But there was no special line of demarcation as regards the punishment of offences as between men and women. The penalty ordained by the law for crime or misdemeanour was the same for both and in general applied equally to both. Likewise in civil suits, proceedings were not specially weighted against the man and in favour of the woman. There was, as a general rule, no very noticeable sex partiality in the administration of the law.

This state of affairs continued in England till well into the nineteenth century. Thenceforward a change began to take place. Modern Feminism rose slowly above the horizon. Modern Feminism has two distinct sides to it: (1) an articulate political and economic side embracing demands for so-called rights; and (2) a sentimental side which insists in an accentuation of the privileges and immunities which have grown up, not articulately or as the result of definite demands, but as the consequence of sentimental pleading in particular cases. In this way, however, a public opinion became established, finding expression in a sex favouritism in the law and even still more in its administration, in favour of women as against men.

These two sides of Modern Feminism are not necessarily combined in the same person. One may, for example, find opponents of female suffrage who are strong advocates of sentimental favouritism towards women in matters of law and its administration. On the other hand you may find, though this

is more rare, strong advocates of political and other rights for the female sex, who sincerely deprecate the present inequality of the law in favour of women. As a rule, however, the two sides go together, the vast bulk of the advocates of “Women’s Rights” being equally keen on the retention and extension of women’s privileges. Indeed, it would seem as though the main object of the bulk of the advocates of the “Woman’s Movement” was to convert the female sex into the position of a dominant *sexe noblesse*. The two sides of Feminism have advanced hand in hand for the last two generations, though it was the purely sentimental side that first appeared as a factor in public opinion.

The attempt to paint women in a different light to the traditional one of physical, intellectual and moral inferiority to men, probably received its first literary expression in a treatise published in 1532 by Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim entitled *De Nobilitate et Praecellentia Feminei Sexus* and dedicated to Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, whose favour Agrippa was at that time desirous of courting. The ancient world has nothing to offer in the shape of literary forerunners of Modern Feminism, although that industrious collector of historical odds and ends, Valerius Maximus, relates the story of one Afrania who, with some of her friends, created disturbances in the Law Courts of ancient Rome in her attempt to make women’s voices heard before the tribunals. As regards more recent ages, after Agrippa, we have to wait till the early years of the eighteenth century for another instance of Feminism before its time, in an essay on the

subject of woman by Daniel Defoe. But it was not till the closing years of the eighteenth century that any considerable expression of opinion in favour of changing the relative positions of the sexes, by upsetting the view of their respective values, founded on the general experience of mankind, made itself noticeable.

The names of Mary Wollstonecraft in English literature and of Condorcet in French, will hardly fail to occur to the reader in this connection. During the French Revolution the crazy Olympe de Gouges achieved ephemeral notoriety by her claim for the intellectual equality of women with men.

Up to this time (the close of the eighteenth century) no advance whatever had been made by legislation in recognising the modern theory of sex equality. The claims of women and their apologists for entering upon the functions of men, political, social or otherwise, although put forward from time to time by isolated individuals, received little countenance from public opinion, and still less from the law. What I have called, however, the sentimental aspect of Modern Feminism undoubtedly did make some headway in public opinion by the end of the eighteenth century, and grew in volume during the early years of the nineteenth century. It effectuated in the Act passed in 1820 by the English Parliament abolishing the punishment of flogging for female criminals. This was the first beginning of the differentiation of the sexes in the matter of the criminal law. The parliamentary debate on the Bill in question shows clearly

enough the power that Sentimental¹ Feminism had acquired in public opinion in the course of a generation, for no proposal was made at the same time to abolish the punishment of flogging so far as men were concerned. Up to this time the criminal law of England, as of other countries, made no distinction whatever between the sexes in the matter of crime and punishment, or at least no distinction based on the principle or sentiment of sex privilege. (A slight exception might be made, perhaps, in the crime of “petty treason,” which distinguished the murder of a husband by his wife from other cases of homicide.) But from this time forward, legislation and administration have diverged farther and farther from the principle of sex equality in this connection in favour of female immunity, the result being that at the present day, assuming the punishment meted out to the woman for a given crime to represent a normal penalty, the man receives an additional increment over and above that accorded

¹ I should explain that I attach a distinct meaning to the word *sentimental*; as used by me it does not signify, as it does with most people, an excess of sentiment over and above what I feel myself, but a sentiment unequally distributed. As used in this sense, the repulsion to the flogging of women while no repulsion is felt to the flogging of men is *sentimentalism* pure and simple. On the other hand the objection to flogging altogether as punishment for men or women could not be described as sentimentalism, whatever else it might be. In the same way the anti-vivisectionist's aversion to “physiological” experiments on animals, if confined to household pets and not extended to other animals, might be justly described as sentimentalism; but one who objected to such experiments on all animals, no matter whether one agreed with his point of view or not, could not be justly charged with sentimentalism (or at least, not unless, while objecting to vivisection, he or she were prepared to condone other acts involving an equal amount of cruelty to animals).

to the crime, *for the offence of having been born a man and not a woman.*

The Original Divorce Law of 1857 in its provisions respecting costs and alimony, constitutes another landmark in the matter of female privilege before the law. Other measures of unilateral sex legislation followed in the years ensuing until the present state of things, by which the whole power of the State is practically at the disposal of woman to coerce and oppress men. But this side of the question we propose to deal with later on.

The present actual movement of Feminism in political and social life may be deemed to have begun in the early sixties, in the agitation which preceded the motion of John Stuart Mill in 1867, on the question of conferring the parliamentary franchise upon women. This was coincident with an agitation for the opening of various careers to women, notably the medical faculty. We are speaking, of course, here of Great Britain, which was first in the field in Europe, alike in the theory and practice of Modern Feminism. But the publication by the great protagonist of the movement, John Stuart Mill, of his book, "The Subjection of Women," in 1868, endowed the cause with a literary gospel which was soon translated into the chief languages of the Continent, and corresponding movements started in other countries. Strangely enough, it made considerable headway in Russia, the awakening of Russia to Western ideas having recently begun to make itself felt at the time of which we are speaking. The movement henceforth took its place as a permanent factor

in the political and social life of this and other countries. Bills for female suffrage were introduced every year into the British House of Commons with, on the whole, yearly diminishing majorities against these measures, till a few years back the scale turned on the other side, and the Women's Enfranchisement Bill passed every year its second reading until 1912, when for the first time for many years it was rejected by a small majority. Meanwhile both sides of the Feminist movement, apart from the question of the franchise, had been gaining in influence. Municipal franchise "on the same terms as for men" had been conceded. Women have voted for and sat on School Boards, Boards of Guardians, and other public bodies. Their claim to exercise the medical profession has been not merely admitted in law but recognised in public opinion for long past. All the advantages of an academic career have been opened to them, with the solitary exception of the actual conferment of degrees at Oxford and Cambridge. Such has been the growth of the articulate and political side of the theory of Modern Feminism.

The sentimental side of Feminism, with its practical result of the overweighting of justice in the interests of women in the courts, civil as well as criminal, and their practical immunity from the operation of the criminal law when in the dock, has advanced correspondingly; while at the same time the sword of that same criminal law is sharpened to a razor edge against the man even accused, let alone convicted, of any offence against the sacrosanct majesty of "Womanhood." Such is the present

position of the Woman question in this country, which we take as typical, in the sense that in Great Britain, to which we may also add the United States of America and the British Colonies, where – if possible, the movement is stronger than in the mother country itself – we see the logical outcome of Feminist theory and sentiment. It remains to consider the existing facts more in detail, and the psychological bearings of that large number of persons who have been in the recent past, and are being at the present time, influenced to accept the dogmas of Modern Feminism and the statements of alleged facts made by its votaries. Before doing so it behoves us to examine the credibility of the dogmas themselves, and the nature of the arguments used to support them and also the accuracy of the alleged facts employed by the Feminists to stimulate the indignation of the popular mind against the pretended wrongs of women.

CHAPTER II

THE MAIN DOGMA OF MODERN FEMINISM

We have pointed out in the last chapter that Modern Feminism has two sides, the positive, definite, and articulate side, which ostensibly claims equality between the sexes, the chief concern of which is the conferring of all the rights and duties of men upon women, and the opening up of all careers to them. The justification of these demands is based upon the dogma, that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, women are endowed by nature with the same capacity intellectually and morally as men. We have further pointed out that there is another side in Modern Feminism which in a vague way claims for women immunity from criminal law and special privileges on the ground of sex in civil law. The basis of this side of Feminism is a sentimentalism —*i. e.* an unequally distributed sentiment in favour of women, traditional and acquired. It is seldom even attempted to base this sentimental claim for women on argument at all. The utmost attempts in this direction amount to vague references to physical weakness, and to the claim for special consideration deriving from the old theory of the mental and moral weakness of the female sex, so strenuously combated as out of date, when the first side of Modern Feminism is being

contended for. The more or less inchoate assumptions of the second or sentimental side of the modern "Woman's Movement" amounts practically, as already stated, to a claim for women to be allowed to commit crimes without incurring the penalties imposed by the law for similar crimes when committed by men. It should be noted that in practice the most strenuous advocates of the positive and articulate side of Feminism are also the sincerest upholders of the unsubstantial and inarticulate assumptions of the sentimental side of the same creed. This is noticeable whenever a woman is found guilty of a particularly atrocious crime. It is somewhat rare for women to be convicted of such crimes at all, since the influence of sentimental Feminism with judges and juries is sufficient to procure an acquittal, no matter how conclusive the evidence to the contrary. Even if women are found guilty it is usual for a virtually nominal sentence to be passed. Should, however, a woman by any chance be convicted of a heinous crime, such as murder or maiming, under specially aggravated circumstances, and a sentence be passed such as would be unanimously sanctioned by public opinion in the case of a man, then we find the whole Feminist world up in arms. The outcry is led by self-styled upholders of equality between the sexes, the apostles of the positive side of Feminism, who *bien entendu* claim the eradication of sex boundaries in political and social life on the ground of women being of equal capacity with men, but who, when moral responsibility is in question, conveniently fall back on a sentiment, the only

conceivable ground for which is to be found in the time-honoured theory of the mental and moral weakness of the female sex. As illustrations of the truth of the foregoing, the reader may be referred to the cases of Florence Doughty in 1906, who shot at and wounded a solicitor with whom she had relations, together with his son; to Daisy Lord in 1908, for the murder of her newborn child; to the case of the Italian murderess, Napolitano in Canada, convicted of the cold-blooded butchery of her husband in his sleep in 1911, for whose reprieve a successful agitation was got up by the suffrage societies!

Let us first of all consider the dogma at the basis of the positive side of Modern Feminism, which claims rational grounds of fact and reason for itself, and professes to be able to make good its case by virtue of such grounds. This dogma consists in the assertion of equality in intellectual capacity, in spite of appearances to the contrary, of women with men. I think it will be admitted that the articulate objects of Modern Feminism, taking them one with another, rest on this dogma, and on this dogma alone. I know it has been argued as regards the question of suffrage, that the demand does not rest solely upon the admission of equality of capacity, since men of a notoriously inferior mental order are not excluded from voting upon that ground, but the fallacy of this last argument is obvious. In all these matters we have to deal with averages. Public opinion has hitherto recognised the average of women as being intellectually below the voting standard, and the average man as not. This,

if admitted, is enough to establish the anti-suffrage thesis. The latter is not affected by the fact that it is possible to find certain individual men of inferior intelligence and therefore less intrinsically qualified to form a political judgment than certain specially gifted women. The pretended absurdity of "George Eliot having no vote, and of her gardener having one" is really no absurdity at all. In the first place, given the economic advantages which conferred education upon the novelist, and not upon the gardener, there is not sufficient evidence available that his judgment in public affairs might not have been even superior to that of George Eliot herself. Moreover, the possession of exceptionally strong imaginative faculty, expressing itself as literary genius or talent in works of fiction, does not necessarily imply exceptional power of political judgment. But, be this as it may, where averages are in question, exceptions obviously do not count.

The underlying assumption of the suffrage movement may therefore be taken to be the average equality of the sexes as regards intellectual value.²

An initial difficulty exists in proving theoretically the intellectual inferiority of women to men, or even their relative unsuitability for fulfilling functions involving a special order of judgment. There are such things as matters of fact which are

² I believe there are some Feminist fanatics who pretend to maintain the superiority of the female mind, but I doubt whether this thesis is taken seriously even by those who put it forward. In any case there are limits to the patent absurditie which it is worth while to refute by argument.

open to common observation and which none think of denying or calling in question unless they have some special reason for doing so. Now it is always possible to deny a fact, however evident it may be to ordinary perception, and it is equally impossible to prove that the person calling in question the aforesaid evident fact is either lying (or shall we say is “prevaricating”), or even that he is a person hopelessly abnormal in his organs of sense-perception.

At the time of writing, the normal person who has no axe to grind in maintaining the contrary, declares the sun to be shining brightly, but should it answer the purpose of anyone to deny this obvious fact, and declare that the day is gloomy and overcast, there is no power of argument by which I can prove that I am right and he is wrong. I may point to the sun, but if he chooses to affirm that he doesn't see it I can't prove that he does. This is, of course, an extreme case, scarcely likely to occur in actual life. But it is in essence similar to those cases of persons (and they are not seldom met with) who, when they find facts hopelessly destructive of a certain theoretical position adopted by them, do not hesitate to cut the knot of controversy in their own favour by boldly denying the inconvenient facts. One often has experience of this trick of controversy in discussing the question of the notorious characteristics of the female sex. The Feminist driven into a corner endeavours to save his face by flatly denying matters open to common observation and admitted as obvious by all who are not Feminists. Such facts are the pathological mental

condition peculiar to the female sex, commonly connoted by the term hysteria; the absence, or at best the extremely imperfect development of the logical faculty in most women; the inability of the average woman in her judgment of things to rise above personal considerations; and, what is largely a consequence of this, the lack of a sense of abstract justice and fair play among women in general. The aforesaid peculiarities of women, as women, are, I contend, matters of common observation and are only disputed by those persons – to wit Feminists – to whose theoretical views and practical demands their admission would be inconvenient if not fatal. Of course these characterisations refer to averages, and they do not exclude partial or even occasionally striking exceptions. It is possible, therefore, although perhaps not very probable, that individual experience may in the case of certain individuals play a part in falsifying their general outlook; it is possible – although, as I before said not perhaps very probable – that any given man's experience of the other sex has been limited to a few quite exceptional women and that hence his particular experience contradicts that of the general run of mankind. In this case, of course, his refusal to admit what to others are self-evident facts would be perfectly *bona fide*. The above highly improbable contingency is the only refuge for those who would contend for sincerity in the Feminist's denials. In this matter I only deal with the male Feminist. The female Feminist is usually too biased a witness in this particular question.

Now let us consider the whole of the differentiations of

the mental character between man and woman in the light of a further generalisation which is sufficiently obvious in itself and which has been formulated with special clearness by the late Otto Weininger in his remarkable book, "Geschlecht und Charakter" (Sex and Character). I refer to the observations contained in Section II., Chaps. 2 and 3. The point has been, of course, previously noted, and the present writer, among others, has on various occasions called special attention to it. But its formulation and elaboration by Weininger is the most complete I know. The truth in question consists in the fact, undeniable to all those not rendered impervious to facts by preconceived dogma, that, as I have elsewhere put it, while man *has* a sex, woman *is* a sex. Let us hear Weininger on this point. "Woman is *only* sexual, man is *also* sexual. Alike in time and space this difference may be traced in man, parts of his body susceptible to sexual excitement are small in number and strictly localised. In woman sexuality is diffused over the whole body, every contact on whatever part excites her sexually." Weininger points out that while the sexual element in man, owing to the physiological character of the sexual organs, may be at times more violent than that in woman, yet that it is spasmodic and occurs in crises separated by intervals of quiescence. In woman, on the other hand, while less spasmodic, it is continuous. The sexual instinct with man being, as he styles it, "an appendix" and no more, he can raise himself mentally entirely outside of it. "He is conscious of it as of something which he possesses but which is not inseparable

from the rest of his nature. He can view it objectively. With woman this is not the case; the sex element is part of her whole nature. Hence, it is not as with man, clearly recognisable in local manifestations, but subtly affects the whole life of the organism. For this reason the man is conscious of the sexual element within him as such, whereas the woman is unconscious of it as such. It is not for nothing that in common parlance woman is spoken of as 'the sex.' In this sexual differentiation of the whole life-nature of woman from man, deducible as it is from physiological and anatomical distinctions, lies the ground of those differentiations of function which culminate in the fact that while mankind in its intellectual, moral and technical development is represented in the main by Man, Woman has continued to find her chief function in the direct procreation of the race." A variety of causes, notably modern economic development, in their effect on family life, also the illegitimate application of the modern democratic notion of the equality of classes and races, to that of sex, has contributed to the modern revolt against natural sex limitations.

Assuming the substantial accuracy of the above statement of fact, the absurdity and cheapness of the clap-trap of the modern "social purity" monger, as to having one and the same sexual morality for both sexes will be readily seen. The recognition of the necessity of admitting greater latitude in this respect to men than to women is based clearly on physiology and common-sense. With men sexual instinct manifests itself locally, and at

intervals its satisfaction is an urgent and pressing need. With woman this is not so. Hence the recognised distinction between the sexes in this respect is, as far as it goes, a thoroughly sound one. Not that I am championing the severity of the restrictions of the current sexual code as regards women. On the contrary, I think it ought to be and will be, in a reasonable society of the future, considerably relaxed. I am only pointing out that the urgency is not so great in the one case as in the other. And this fact it is which has led to the toleration of a stringency, originally arising mainly from economic causes (questions of inheritance and the like), in the case of women, which would not have been tolerated in that of men, even had similar reasons for its adoption in their case obtained. Any successful attempt of social purity mongers to run counter to physiology in enforcing either by legislation or public opinion the same stringency on men in this respect as on women could but have the most disastrous consequences to the health and well-being of the community.

It was a saying of the late Dr Henry Maudsley: "*Sex lies deeper than culture.*" By this we may understand to be meant that sex differences are organic. All authorities on the physiological question are agreed that woman is less well-organised, less well-developed, than man. Dr de Varigny asserts that this fact is traceable throughout the whole female organism, throughout all its tissues, and all its functions. For instance, the stature of the human female is less than that of the man in all races. As regards weight there is a corresponding difference. The adult woman

weighs, on the average, rather more than 11 lbs. less than the man; moreover as a rule a woman completes her growth some years earlier than a man. The bones are lighter in the woman than in the man; not absolutely but in proportion to the weight of the body. They are, it is stated, not merely thinner but more fragile. The difference may be traced even to their chemical composition. The whole muscular development is inferior in woman to that in man by about one-third. The heart in woman is smaller and lighter than in man – being about 10½ oz. in man as against slightly over 8 oz. in woman. In the woman the respiratory organs show less chest and lung capacity. Again, the blood contains a considerably less proportion of red to white corpuscles. Finally, we come to the question of the size and constitution of the brain. (It should be observed that all these distinctions of sex show themselves more or less from birth onwards.)

Specialists are agreed that at all ages the size of the brain of woman is less than that of man. The difference in relative size is greater in proportion according to the degree of civilisation. This is noteworthy, as it would seem as though the brain of man grew with the progress of civilisation, whereas that of woman remains nearly stationary. The average proportion as regards size of skull between the woman and man of to-day is as 85 to 100. The weight of brain in woman varies from 38½ oz. to 45½ oz.; in man, from 42 oz. to 49 oz. This represents the absolute difference in weight, but, according to Dr de Varigny, the relative weight

—*i. e.* the weight in proportion to that of the whole body – is even more striking in its indication of inferiority. The weight of the brain in woman is but one-forty-fourth of the weight of the body, while in man it is one-fortieth. This difference accentuates itself with age. It is only 7 per cent. in favour of man between twenty and thirty years; it is 11 per cent. between thirty and forty years. As regards the substance of the brain itself and its convolutions, the enormous majority of physiologists are practically unanimous in declaring that the female brain is simpler and smoother, its convolutions fewer and more superficial than those of the male brain, that the frontal lobes, generally associated with the intellectual faculties, are less developed than the occipital lobes, which are universally connected with the lower psychological functions. The grey substance is poorer and less abundant in woman than in man, while the blood vessels of the occipital region are correspondingly fuller than those supplying the frontal lobes. In man the case is exactly the reverse. It cannot be denied by any sane person familiar with the barest elements of physiology that the whole female organism is subservient to the functions of child-bearing and lactation, which explains the inferior development of those organs and faculties which are not specially connected with this supreme end of Woman.

It is the fashion of Feminists, ignoring these fundamental physiological sex differences, to affirm that the actual inferiority of women, where they have the honesty to admit such an obvious fact, is accountable by the centuries of oppression in which

Woman has been held by wicked and evil-minded Man. The absurdity of this contention has been more than once pointed out. Assuming its foundation in fact, what does it imply? Clearly that the girls inherit only through their mothers and boys only through their fathers, an hypothesis plainly at variance with the known facts of heredity. Yet those who maintain that distinction of intelligence, etc., between the sexes are traceable to external conditions affecting one sex only and inherited through that sex alone, cannot evade the above assumption. Those, therefore, who regard it as an article of their faith that Woman would show herself not inferior in mental power to man, if only she had the chance of exercising that power, must find a surer foundation for their opinion than this theory of the centuries of oppression, under which, as they allege, the female sex has laboured.

We now come to the important question of morbid and pathological mental conditions to which the female sex is liable and which are usually connected with those constitutional disturbances of the nervous system which pass under the name of *hysteria*. The word is, as everyone knows, derived from *hystera—the womb*, and was uniformly regarded by the ancients as directly due to disease of the *uterus*, this view maintaining itself in modern medicine up till well-nigh the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus Dr J. Mason Good (in his “Study of Medicine,” 1822, vol. iii., p. 528, an important medical text-book during the earlier half of the nineteenth century) says: “With a morbid condition of this organ, hysteria is in many

instances very closely connected, though it is going too far to say that it is always dependent upon such condition, for we meet with instances, occasionally, in which no possible connexion can be traced between the disease and the organ," etc. This is perhaps the first appearance, certainly in English medicine, of doubts being thrown on the uterine origin of the various symptoms grouped under the general term, *hysteria*. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century the prevalent view tended more and more to dissociate hysteria from uterine trouble. Lately, however, some eminent pathologists have shown a tendency to qualify the terms of the latter view. Thus Dr Thomas Stevenson in 1902 admits that "it [hysteria] frequently accompanies a morbid state of the uterus," especially where inflammation and congestion are present, and it is not an uncommon thing for surgeons at the present time to remove the ovaries in obstinate cases of hysteria. On the other hand Dr Thomas Buzzard, in an article on the subject in Quain's *Dictionary of Medicine*, 1902, states that hysteria is only exceptionally found in women suffering from diseases of the genital organs, and its relation to uterine and ovarian disturbances is probably neither more nor less than that which pertains to the other affections of the nervous system which may occur without any obvious material cause. Dr Thomas Luff ("Text-Book on Forensic Medicine," 1895) shows that the derangements of the reproductive functions are undoubtedly the cause of various attacks of insanity in the female. Dr Savage, in his book "On Neuroses," says that

acute mania in women occurs most frequently at the period of adult and mature life, and may occasionally take place at either extreme age. Acute mania sometimes occurs at the suppression of the *menses*. The same is true of melancholia and other pathological mental symptoms. Dr Luff states that acute mania may replace hysteria; that this happens at periods such as puberty, change of life and menstruation. These patients in the intervals of their attacks are often morbidly irritable or excitable, but as time goes on their energies become diminished and their emotions blunted (“Forensic Medicine,” ii. 307). Such patients are often seized with a desire to commit violence; they are often very mischievous, tearing up clothes, breaking windows, etc. In this mental disorder the patient is driven by a morbid and uncontrollable impulse to such acts. It is not accompanied by delusions, and frequently no change will have been noticed in the individual prior to the commission of the act, and consequently, says Dr Luff, “there is much difference of opinion as to the responsibility of the individual” (ii. 297). Among the acts spoken of Dr Luff mentions a propensity to set fire to furniture, houses, etc. All this, though written in 1895, might serve as a commentary on the Suffragette agitation of recent years. The renowned French professor, Dr Paul Janet (“Les Hysteriques,” 1894) thus defined hysteria: “Hysteria is a mental affection belonging to the large group of diseases due to cerebral weakness and debility. Its physical symptoms are somewhat indefinite, consisting chiefly in a

general diminution of nutrition. It is largely characterised by moral symptoms, chief of which is an impairment of the faculty of psychological synthesis, an abolition and a contraction of the field of consciousness. This manifests itself in a peculiar manner and by a certain number of elementary phenomena. Thus sensations and images are no longer perceived, and appear to be blotted out from the individual perception, a tendency which results in their persistent and complete separation from the personality in some cases and in the formation of many independent groups. This series of psychological facts alternate the one with the other or co-exist. Finally this synthetic defect favours the formation of certain independent ideas, which develop complete in themselves, and unattached from the control of the consciousness of the personality. These ideas show themselves in affections possessing very various and unique characteristics." According to Mr A. S. Millar, F.R.C.S.E. (*Encyclopædia Medica*, vol. v.), "Hysteria is that.. condition in which there is imagination, imitation, or exaggeration... It occurs mostly in females and persons of nervous temperament, and is due to some nervous derangement, which may or may not be pathological." Sir James Paget ("Clinical Lectures on Mimicry") says also that hysterical patients are mostly females of nervous temperament. "They think of themselves constantly, are fond of telling everyone of their troubles and thus court sympathy, for which they have a morbid craving. Will power is deficient in one direction, though some have it very strongly where their interests

are concerned.” He thinks the term “hysteria” in the sense now employed incorrect, and would substitute “mimicry.” “The will should be controlled by the intellect,” observes Dr G. F. Still of King’s College Hospital, “rather than by the emotions and the lack of this control appears to be at the root of some, at least, of the manifestations of hysteria.”

Dr Thomas Buzzard, above mentioned, thus summarises the mental symptoms: “The intelligence may be apparently of good quality, the patient evincing sometimes remarkable quickness of apprehension; but carefully tested it is found to be wanting in the essentials of the highest class of mental power. The memory may be good, but the judgment is weak and the ability to concentrate the attention for any length of time upon a subject is absent. So also regard for accuracy, and the energy necessary to ensure it in any work that is undertaken, is deficient. The emotions are excited with undue readiness and when aroused are incapable of control. Tears are occasioned not only by pathetic ideas but by ridiculous subjects and peals of laughter may incongruously greet some tragic announcement, or the converse may take place. The ordinary signs of emotion may be absent and replaced by an attack of syncope, convulsion, pain or paralysis. Perhaps more constant than any other phenomenon in hysteria is a pronounced desire for the sympathy and interest of others. This is evidently only one of the most characteristic qualities of femininity, uncontrolled by the action of the higher nervous centres which in a healthy state keep it in subjection. There is very frequently not

only a deficient regard for truthfulness, but a proneness to active deception and dishonesty. So common is this, that the various phases of hysteria are often assumed to be simple examples of voluntary simulation and the title of disease refused to the condition. But it seems more reasonable to refer the symptoms to impairment of the highly complex nervous processes which form the physiological side of the moral faculties” (Quain’s *Dictionary of Medicine*, 1902).

“It is not uncommon to find hysteria in females accompanied by an utter indifference and insensibility to sexual relations. Premature cessation of ovulation is a frequent determining cause. In cases where the ovaries are absent the change from girl to woman, which normally takes place at puberty, does not occur. The girl grows but does not develop, a masculine appearance supervenes, the voice becomes manly and harsh, sexual passion is absent, the health remains good. The most violent instances of hysteria are in young women of the most robust and masculine constitution” (John Mason Good, M.D., “Study of Medicine,” 1822). Other determining causes are given, as painful impressions, long fasting, strong emotions, imitation, luxury, ill-directed education and unhappy surroundings, celibacy, where not of choice but enforced by circumstances, unfortunate marriages, long-continued trouble, fright, worry, overwork, disappointment and such like nervous perturbations, all which causes predispose to hysteria. “It attacks childless women more frequently than mothers and particularly young widows,” and,

says Dr J. Mason Good, “more especially still those who are constitutionally inclined to that morbid salacity which has often been called nymphomania.. the surest remedy is a happy marriage” (“Study of Medicine,” 1822, iii. 531). Hysteria is, in common with other nervous disorders, essentially a hereditary malady, and Briquet (“Traité de l’hysterie,” 1899) gives statistics to show that in nine cases out of ten hysterical parents have hysterical children. Dr Paul Sainton of the Faculty of Medicine, Paris, says: “The appearance of a symptom of hysteria generally proves that the malady has already existed for some time though latent. The name of a provocative agent of hysteria is given to any circumstance which suddenly reveals the malady but the real cause of the disorder is a hereditary disposition. If the real cause is unique, the provocative agents are numberless. The moral emotions, grief, fright, anger and other psychic disturbances are the most frequent causes of hysterical affections and in every walk of life subjects are equally liable to attacks.”

Hysteria may appear at any age. It is common with children, especially during the five or six years preceding puberty. Of thirty-three cases under twelve years which came under Dr Still’s notice, twenty-three were in children over eight years. Hysteria in women is most frequent between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and most frequently of all between fifteen and twenty. As a rule there is a tendency to cessation after the “change.” It frequently happens, however, that the disease is continued into an advanced period of life.

“There is a constant change,” says Professor Albert Moll (“Das nervöse Weib,” p. 165), “from a cheerful to a depressed mood. From being free and merry the woman in a short time becomes sulky and sad. While a moment before she was capable of entertaining a whole company without pause, talking to each member about that which interested him, shortly afterwards she does not speak a word more. I may mention the well-worn example of the refusal of a new hat as being capable of converting the most lively mood into its opposite. The weakness of will shows itself here in that the nervous woman [by “nervous” Dr Moll means what is commonly termed “hysterical”] cannot, like the normal one, command the expression of her emotions. She can laugh uninterruptedly over the most indifferent matter until she falls into veritable laughing fits. The crying fits which we sometimes observe belong to the same category. When the nervous woman is excited about anything she exhibits outbreaks of fury wanting all the characteristics of womanhood, and she is not able to prevent these emotional outbursts. In the same way just as the emotions weaken the will and the woman cannot suppress this or that action, it is noticeable in many nervous women that quite independently of these emotions there is a tendency to continuous alterations in their way of acting. It has been noticed as characteristic of many nervous persons that their only consistency lies in their inconsistency. But this must in no way be applied to all nervous persons. On this disposition, discoverable in the nature of so many nervous women, rests the

craving for change as manifested in the continual search for new pleasures, theatres, concerts, parties, tours, and other things (p. 147). Things that to the normal woman are indifferent or to which she has, in a sense, accustomed herself, are to the nervous woman a source of constant worry. Although she may perfectly well know that the circumstances of herself and her husband are the most brilliant and that it is unnecessary for her to trouble herself in the least about her material position as regards the future, nevertheless the idea of financial ruin constantly troubles her. Thus if she is a millionaire's wife she never escapes from constant worry. Similarly the nervous woman creates troubles out of things that are unavoidable. If in the course of years she gets more wrinkles, and her attraction for man diminishes, this may easily become a source of lasting sorrow for the nervous woman."

We now have to consider a point which is being continually urged by Feminists in the present day when confronted with the pathological mental symptoms so commonly observed in women which are usually regarded as having their origin in hysteria. We often hear it said by Feminists in answer to arguments based on the above fact: "Oh, but men can also suffer from hysteria!" "In England," says Dr Buzzard, "hysteria is comparatively rarely met with in males, the female sex being much more prone to the affection." The proportion of males to females in hysteria is, according to Dr Pitrè ("Clinical Essay on Hysteria," 1891), 1 to 3; according to Bodensheim, 1 to 10; and according to Briquet, 1 to 20. The author of the article on Hysteria in *The*

Encyclopædia Britannica (11th edition, 1911) also gives 1 to 20 as the numerical proportion between male and female cases. Dr Pitrè, in the work above cited, gives 82 per cent. of cases of convulsions in women as against 22 in men. But in all this, under the concept hysteria are included, and indeed chiefly referred to, various physical symptoms of a convulsive and epileptic character which are quite distinct from the mental conditions rightly or wrongly connected, or even identified, with hysteria in the popular mind, and by many medical authorities. But even as regards hysteria in the former sense of the word, a sharp line of distinction based on a diagnosis of cases was long ago drawn by medical men between *hysteria masculina* and *hysteria fœminina*, and in the present day eminent authorities —*e. g.* Dr Bernard Holländer — would deny that the symptoms occasionally diagnosed as hysteria in men are identical with or due to the same causes as the somewhat similar conditions known in women under the name.

After all, this whole question in its broader bearings is more a question of common-sense observation than one for medical experts.

What we are here chiefly concerned with as “hysteria” (in accordance with popular usage of the term) are certain pathological mental symptoms in women open to everybody’s observation, and denied by no one unprejudiced by Feminist views. Every impartial person has only to cast his eye round his female acquaintance, and to recall the various women, of

all classes, conditions and nationalities, that he may have come in contact with in the course of his life, to recognise those symptoms of mental instability commonly called hysterical, as obtaining in at least a proportion of one to every four or five women he has known, in a marked and unmistakable degree. The proportion given is, in fact, stated in an official report to the Prussian Government issued some ten years back as that noticeable among female clerks, post office servants and other women employed in the Prussian Civil Service. Certainly as regards women in general, the observation of the present writer, and others whom he has questioned on the subject, would seem to indicate that the proportions given in the Prussian Civil Service report as regards the number of women afflicted in this way are rather under than over stated.³ There are many medical men who aver that no woman is entirely free from such symptoms at least immediately before and during the menstrual period. The head surgeon at a well-known London hospital informed a friend of mine that he could always tell when this period was on or approaching with his nurses, by the mental change which came over them.

Now these pathological symptoms noticeable in a slight and more or less unimportant degree in the vast majority, if not indeed in all women, and in a marked pathological degree in a

³ The insanities mentioned above are the extremes. There are mental disturbances of less severity constantly occurring which are connected with the regular menstrual period as well as with disordered menstruation, with pregnancy, with parturition, with lactation, and especially with the change of life.

large proportion of women, it is scarcely too much to say do not occur at all in men. I have indeed known, I think, two men, and only two, in the course of my life, exhibiting mental symptoms analogous to those commonly called "hysterical" in women. On the other hand my own experience, and it is not alone, is that very few women with whom I have come into more or less frequent contact, socially or otherwise, have not at times shown the symptoms referred to in a marked degree. If, therefore, we are to admit the bare possibility of men being afflicted in a similar way it must be conceded that such cases represent such *raræ aves* as to be negligible for practical purposes.

A curious thing in pronounced examples of this mental instability in women is that the symptoms are often so very similar in women of quite different birth, surroundings and nationality. I can recall at the present moment three cases, each different as regards birth, class, and in one case nationality, and yet who are liable to develop the same symptoms under the influence of quite similar *idées fixes*.

But it seems hardly necessary to labour the point in question at greater length. The whole experience of mankind since the dawn of written records confirmed by, as above said, that of every living person not specially committed to the theories of Modern Feminism, bears witness alike to the prevalence of what we may term the hysterical mind in woman and to her general mental frailty. It is not for nothing that women and children have always been classed together. This view, based as it is on the unanimous

experience of mankind and confirmed by the observation of all independent persons, has, I repeat, not been challenged before the appearance of the present Feminist Movement and hardly by anyone outside the ranks of that movement.

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