

WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

MEN puzzle themselves very much in these days about one question that is surely not so complex as they would make it appear. This question is—to give it its usual odious and senseless title—the “rights of women.”

Strange to say, it appears on the whole to possess little interest for the supposed oppressed ones, unless when obtruded on their notice, and then the interest is mostly of an opposing character. It is met by some with silent indifference; by others—the weak and misguided, who wish to appear strong—with noisy and eager debate. But by yet more,—those who are the most truly strong, in that they know and even value their own weakness, recognising as their own best “right” the divine one of submission,—with a vexation that finds no words, or with expressions of disgust and contempt so strong as to lay themselves open to the imputation of being in the wrong and perverted sense of the word “strong-minded,” thus partly defeating their own ends. Such require only that those who are ordained to be in many things their guides, and in some sense, according to the old divine law, their rulers, should render themselves worthy of the respect and reverence they would fain bestow. The desire to yield this reverence is really (Desdemona-like) the deepest longing of the true woman’s heart, to which all else is in abeyance. All knowledge, all learning, all the subtleties of thought, all the beauties of art, are as nothing to her in comparison with this one great need,—to worship something higher and better than herself. And they who neither in heaven or in earth have found any satisfaction for this need, are the restless ones who are truly to be pitied, and who require to learn how to claim their womanly “rights.”

It is true that, with regard to the question of the mental education of women, there is a certain class who have cause to be profoundly grateful to those who are exerting themselves on their behalf; and all owe something of this gratitude to any

who are trying to dispel the foolish notion that woman’s mental education is at an end just at an age when it ought truly to be beginning. But even with those who in this matter are making a good and temperate movement in the right direction, there is surely a tendency to start with a false argument.

They are too apt to assert, or to allow their actions to assert, that the mental powers of women are in no way inferior to those of men; and because in some departments they have proved themselves their equals, they take it for granted they must be so in all.

Men and women having each their different duties to perform, it stands to reason that the same class of mind is not adapted to all. However closely the brains of each may physically correspond, the bodily frame of the woman is not formed to support with impunity the same amount of continuous mental labour as that of the man.

The feminine mind has more quickness and less depth than the masculine; more fancy and less imagination; more subtlety and less comprehensiveness.

It is this subtlety that sometimes gives the appearance of great breadth of intellect because of the way in which it enables its possessor to make fine and nice distinctions, and to discern the intricacies of light and shade, that escape the wider range of man’s vision. Possibly, too, it is partly owing to the subtle character of their intellects, that women, when they do reason, arrive sometimes at juster conclusions than do men. It is often maintained that women cannot argue; an utterly false assertion with regard to those who are at all above the average in intellect, perfectly true of those whose feelings and impulses are stronger than their mental powers.

It is probable that the mental inferiority of women to men is less seen in any department that requires quickness and even accuracy (though this is not generally supposed to be the case), than in one which necessitates a sustained flight of imagination.