

# W O M A N

Not INFERIOR to

# M A N:

OR,

A short and modest Vindication of the natural  
Right of the F A I R - S E X to a perfect Equality  
of Power, Dignity, and Esteem, with the Men.

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By *S O P H I A*,

A P E R S O N of Q U A L I T Y.

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*How hard is the Condition of our Sex,  
Thro' ev'ry State of Life the Slaves of Man!*

.....  
*Wherefore are we  
Born with high Souls, but to assert ourselves,  
Shake off this wild Obedience they exact,  
And claim an equal Empire o'er the World.*

R O W E S Fair Penitent.

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# WOMAN not Inferior to MAN

## CHAP. I

### The INTRODUCTION.

If a celebrated Author had not already told us, that *there is nothing in Nature so much to be wondered at as THAT WE CAN WONDER AT ALL*; it must appear to every one, who has but a degree of understanding above the idiot, a matter of the greatest surprise, to observe the universal prevalence of prejudice and custom in the minds of the *Men*. One might naturally expect to see those lordly creatures, as they modestly style themselves, everywhere jealous of superiority, and watchful to maintain it. Instead of which, if we except the tyrannical usurpation of authority they exert over us *Women*, we shall find them industrious in nothing but courting the meanest servitude. Was their ambition laudable and just, it would be consistent in itself, and this consistency would render them alike imperious in every circumstance, where authority is requisite and justifiable: And if their brutal strength of body entitled them to lord it over our nicer frame, the superiority of reason to passion, might suffice to make them blush to submit that reason to passion, prejudice, and groundless custom. If this haughty sex would have us believe they have a natural right of superiority over us, why do not they prove their charter from Nature, by making use of reason to subdue themselves. We know we have reason, and are sensible that it is the only prerogative Nature has bestowed upon us, to lift us above the sphere of sensitive animals: And the same reason, which points us out our superiority of *Men* over us, if we could discover in them the least degree of sense above what we ourselves possess. But it will be impossible for us, without forfeiting that reason, ever to acknowledge ourselves inferior to creatures, who make no other use of the sense they boast of, than basely to subject it to the passions they have in common with brutes. Were we to see the *Men* every where, and at all times, masters of themselves, and their animal appetites in a perfect subordination to their rational faculties; we should have some colour to think that Nature designed them for masters to us, who cannot perhaps always boast of so complete a command over ourselves. But how is it possible for us to give-in to such a notion, while we see those very men, whose ambition of ascendancy over us, nothing less than absolute dominion can satiate, court the most abject slavery, by prostituting reason to their groveling passions, suffering sense to be led away captive by prejudice, and sacrificing justice, truth, and honour, to inconsiderate custom?

How many things do these mighty wise creatures hold for undoubted truths, without being able to assign a reason for any one of their opinions! The cause of which is, that they suffer themselves to be hurried away by appearances. With them, what seems true, must be so; because the light in which they eye things stands them in the stead of conviction. Where they want evidence in the principles, fallacy helps them to fill up the vacancy with seemings in their inference. In a word, as they suppose without reason, so they discourse without grounds; and therefore would have as strongly maintained the negative of what they assert, if custom, and the impression of the senses had determined them to it after the same manner.

But a few ages ago, the belief of the *Antipodes* was a heresy in philosophy. Ignorance, dignified with the prerogative of custom, and supported by the seemings of reason, justified the contrary opinion; and the gravest philosophers were, or affected to be, so well convinced of it, that it was an argument of the utmost arrogance to attempt to set them right. And yet the matter has been since so unquestionably proved, that nothing but the height of madness, or the depth of ignorance can now countenance a doubt of it.

The constant revolution of days and years, determined the wiseacres of old to assert that all the celestial orbs move round the earth: And custom, ever prevailing custom, drags the major part of our contemporary bookworms to follow their opinion. Whereas the very same phases, if we maturely consider, may equally incline us to think, that the earth itself is a planet, and moves with the rest of the planets round the sun. What mighty superiority of reason then have these overgrown boys over lesser children? Both argue alike from appearances: The former see, from the diversified positions of the earth and sun, that there is motion in one of them; and because they feel not the agitation in the earth they stand upon, therefore precipitately conclude that it is the sun moves round them, and not they round the sun. The latter insensible of the motion of a coach, fancy, when in one, that the houses pass by them, and not they by the houses. Are not both led in their judgments by like principles? Yet with this difference still, that these are less obstinate in error, and more ready to be set right, than they.

In like manner the wild savages in the Indies, (who, by the bye, are nevertheless of the same species with our domestic ones at home) for want of knowing the mechanism of a clock, are apt to attribute its movements to invisible spirits within it; while your blind followers of Descartes are not ashamed to take upon religious trust from him, that the whole animal creation are but different kinds of automata, or self-moving clockwork; notwithstanding its being pretty well known, that their master himself had too much sense to believe his own system, having invented it only to amuse and impose upon fools.

The *men*, who have taken care to engross the affairs of religion, as well as others, to their own management, are no more guided in that than in anything else by the dictates of reason. The religion they were bred up in, they blindly prefer to all others, without being able to give any stronger proof of its being the best, than that it was the Faith of their forefathers. Upon the strength of this prejudice, they adhere to it as the only true one, and without ever examining into it, or comparing it with others; they condemn all beside it as erroneous. Is not this the case with most of the *men*, our clergy not excepted? No country pleases a man so well as his own; nay, so far is he apt to carry prejudice, that he can seldom be induced to do justice to any other nation, even where truth is on its side, if the honour and interest of his own is at stake: And this is a foible the very best *men* are equally subject to. Nay, such is the imbecility of *that sex*, as well as ours, that even professions are a matter of prejudice. And a fool, of our own, is often more acceptable in company than a wise-man of another calling. The very inequality of stations, which constraint, and confusion have introduced among *men*, has deceived multitudes of them into a notion that the same inequality is in *men* themselves.

If we allow ourselves but time to trace this diversity of vulgar errors up to the fountain-head, shall we be able to find them any other source than *interest* and *custom*? And yet such is the prevalency which custom, ever so wrongly introduced, has over the minds of the *men*, that it requires much less difficulty to wean them from sentiments, which they themselves have built on the most convincing evidences of *reason* and *truth*, than to draw them from the prejudices which custom has instilled into them.

I should never have done, was I to reckon up the many absurd notions the *men* are led into by *custom*: Tho' there is none more absurd, than that of the great *difference* they make between their own sex and ours. Yet it must be own'd that there is not any vulgar error more ancient or universal. For the learned and illiterate alike are prepossessed with the opinion that *men* are really superior to *women*, and that the dependence we now are in, is the very state which Nature pointed out for us. So that to advance the contrary doctrine, after so long a prepossession, must appear as great a paradox, as it did some years ago to assert, that on the nether surface of the globe, there were men who walked with their heads downwards to us; and whether the one be not as agreeable to truth as the other, will best be found on a fair trial. But what judge shall we have recourse to, or what evidence can be admitted in an affair of so delicate a nature as this; on which depends the right of one half the creation, which ever side may prevail?

All the witness we desire to be allowed, is plain, *undisguised truth*; and if the *men* have but generosity enough left to admit this evidence, we shall have no room to fear any they can bring. We are willing, at least for charity's sake to hope, that, however they may be disposed, they will at least blush to make any exceptions against so unquestionably impartial a witness.

But who shall the matter be tried by? We ourselves are too nearly concerned in the decision, to be admitted even as witnesses in the trial, much less then as judges; and the same consideration equally excludes *men* from acting in it in either capacity. And yet so far are we from having anything to apprehend from the defect of justice in our cause, that if the *men* were ever so little more just and less corrupted in their judgments than they really are, we would readily subscribe to their own sentence. But as the case now stands, we must appeal to a more impartial judge.

Hitherto the *difference* between the sexes has been but very slightly touched upon. Nevertheless, the *men*, biased by custom, prejudice, and interest, have presumed boldly to pronounce sentence in their own favour, because possession empowered them to make violence take place of justice. And the *men* of our times, without trial or examination, have taken the same liberty from the report of other *men*. Whereas to judge soundly, whether their sex has received from Nature any real super-eminence beyond ours; they should entirely divest themselves of all *interest* and *partiality*, and suffer no bare reports to fill the place of argument, especially if the reporter be a party immediately concerned.

If a *man* could thus divest the partiality attached to this self, and put on for a minute a state of neutrality, he would be able to see, and forced to acknowledge, that *prejudice* and *precipitance* are the chief causes of setting less value upon *women* than *men*, and giving so much greater excellence and nobility to the latter than to the former. In a word, were the *men philosophers* in the strict sense of the term, they would be able to see that Nature invincibly proves a perfect *equality* in our sex with their own.

But as there are extremely *few* among them capable of such an abstracted way of thinking, they have no more right to act the judges in this matter than ourselves; and therefore, we must be obliged to appeal to a more *impartial judge*, one incapable of siding with any party, and consequently unsuspected on both sides. *This* I apprehend to be *rectified reason*, as it is a pure intellectual faculty elevated above the consideration of any sex, and equally concerned in the welfare of the whole rational species in general, and in particular. *To this Judge* we leave our cause, by the decision of this we are prepared to stand or fall; and if, upon the evidence of *truth*, *reason* should declare us inferior to *men*, we will cheerfully acquiesce to the sentence. But what if we obtain a decree in our favour, upon impartial examination? Why then all the authority, which the *men* have exerted over us hitherto, will appear an unjust usurpation on their side; for which nothing can make a tolerable atonement, but their restoring us to the state of equality *Nature* first placed us in. And till they do that, the fancy'd wrongs they charge upon our whole sex, tho' but applicable (*if at all*) to a very small number among us, whom I don't however pretend to justify, can only be looked upon as very moderate reprisals upon theirs.

To set this whole matter then in as clear a light as possible, it will be necessary to clear our ideas from all that is muddled and confused, by separating the fictitious from the real, the obscure from the evident, the false from the true, supposition from matter of fact, seemings from entities, practice from principle, belief from knowledge, doubt from certainty, *interest* and *prejudice* from *justice* and *sound judgment*. To this end therefore we must examine, in order, what are the *general notions* which the *men* entertain of *our sex*; on what grounds they build their opinions; and what are the effects to us and to themselves of the treatment we receive from them, in consequence of their present opinion. In the course of this little treatise I shall also occasionally examine, whether there be any *essential difference between* the sexes which can authorize the *superiority* the *men* claim over the *women*; and what are the causes of, and who are accountable for, the seeming difference which makes the sum of their plea. And if, upon mature consideration, it appears that there is no other difference between *men* and *us* than what their tyranny has created, it will then appear how unjust they are in excluding us from that power and dignity we have a right to share with them; how ungenerous in denying us the equality of esteem, which is our due; and how little reason they have to triumph in the base possession of an authority, which unnatural violence, and lawless usurpation, put into their hands. Then let them justify, if they can, the little meannesses, not to mention the grosser barbarities, which they daily practise towards that part of the creation, whose happiness is so inseparably linked with their own.

## CHAP. II

*In what esteem the Women are held by the Men, and how justly.*

Was every individual *man* to divulge his thoughts of our sex, they would all be found unanimous in thinking, that we are made only for their use, that we are fit only to breed and nurse children in their tender years, to mind household affairs, and to obey, serve, and please our masters, that is, themselves forsooth. All this is very fine, and, amidst a seraglio of slaves, could not but sound mighty big from a Muslim's mouth. Yet I cannot help thinking it of a stamp with all those fantastical expressions which are more easily advanced than proved.

*Men* seem to conclude, that all other creatures were made for them, because they themselves were not created till all were in readiness for them. How far this reasoning will hold good I will not take upon me to say. But if it has any weight at all, I am sure it must equally prove, that the *men* were made for our use rather than we for their's. That the province of breeding children belongs to us is as certain, as that the office of getting them is wholly their's. And if the latter entitles them to any degree of public esteem and respect, surely the former entitles us to an equal share of both, since the immediate concurrence of both is so essentially necessary for the propagation of human nature, that either without the other would be entirely useless. Where then is the reason for under-rating us, or claiming a superiority over us, for an office in life, in which they bear so equal a proportion with us? It is too well known to be dissembled, that the office of nursing children is held by the *men* in a despicable light, as something low and degrading. Whereas had they Nature for their guide, they would not need to be told, that there is no employment in a Commonwealth which deserves more honour, or greater thanks and rewards. Let it but be considered, what are the advantages accruing to mankind from it, and its merit must stand immediately confessed. Nay, I know not whether it may not appear to render *women* deserving the first places in civil society.

Why, or to what end, do the individuals of human species associate together, but for the better preservation of life, and the peaceable enjoyment of everything conducive to that purpose? Do not such then as contribute the most to this public advantage deserve the greatest share of public esteem? And who are these but the *women*, in the generous disinterested employ of nursing the *men* in their infancy.

It is from this principle that princes are considered as the chief persons in the state, and in quality of such receive the first honours of it, because they are at least supposed to have the greatest share of toil, care, and foresight, for the prosperity of the public weal: so in proportion we pay more or less of that respect to such as are under him at a lesser or greater distance from him, because the nearer or farther off they are from sharing with him in the fatigues of serving the public, the more or less useful to society they must be considered. For the same reason we are apt to prefer soldiers to grown-men; because they are supposed to stand as a bulwark between us and our enemies. And all mankind give to persons such a degree of respect, as they suppose them to merit by being useful. And since this is the case throughout life, are not the *women*, by the very same rule, entitled to the greatest share in public esteem, who are incomparably the greatest contributors to the public good? *Men* can absolutely dispense with princes, merchants, soldiers, lawyers, etc, as they did in the beginning of time, and as savages do still. But can they in their infancy do without nurses? And since they themselves are too awkward for that important office, are not *women* indispensably wanted? In a peaceful, orderly state, the major part of *men* are useless in their office, with all their authority. But *women* will never cease to be useful, while there are *men*, and those *men* have children. Of what other use are judges, magistrates, and their dependent officers in the execution of justice, any more than to secure their property to persons, who, if they were not forbidden, would perhaps be able to do themselves justice in a more exact and expeditious manner? But *women*, more truly useful, are employed in preserving their lives to enjoy that property. Soldiers are esteemed and rewarded because engaged in defending full-grown *men*, who are equally and often more capable of defending themselves. How much more then is our sex worthy of their esteem and gratitude, who labour in their defence, when as yet they know not what they are, are unable to distinguish between friends and foes, and are naked of every defence but that of tears! If their princes and statesmen sometimes exert themselves in the service of the public, ambition is their motive, and power, riches, or splendor, the point in view. But our more generous souls are biased only by the good we do to the children we breed and nurse: daily experience reminding us, that all the return we can hope for from the unnatural creatures, for the almost infinite pains, anxieties, care and assiduities to which we expose ourselves on their account, and which cannot be matched in any other state of civil society, is ungrateful treatment of ourselves, and the basest contempt of our sex in general. Such the generous offices we do them: such the ungenerous use they make of them.

Surely then nothing but a corrupt imagination can make *men* look upon an office of such high importance to them as mean and contemptible, or as less valuable than it really is. How largely are they rewarded who succeed in taming a tiger, an elephant, or such like animals, and shall *women* be neglected for spending years in the taming that *fiercer animal* MAN? If the source of this unjust partiality be examined into we shall find, that the only true cause, why

these important services, done by our sex, have so little value set upon them, is their being so frequent, and usual.

However, as the pleasure which the generosity of our sex makes us take in that office, is sufficient to make us discharge ourselves of it with the utmost tenderness, without any view of reward; I do not here mean to complain of our receiving none. I would only beg leave to say, that our being so much more capable than the male kind to execute that office well, no ways proves us unqualified to execute any other. Indeed, the *men* themselves seem tacitly agreed to acknowledge as much: but then, according to their wonted disinterestedness, they are still for confining all our other talents to the pleasant limits of obeying, serving, and pleasing our masters. That they are our masters, they take it for granted; but by what title they are so, not one of them is able to make out. And yet so universally received is this notion among them, that it everywhere prevails, from the prince to the peasant. Nay, I myself was accidentally witness to the diverting scene of a journeyman taylor's beating his wife about the ears with a neck of mutton, to make her know, as he said, her *sovereign lord* and *master*. And yet this, perhaps, is as strong an argument as the best of their sex is able to produce, though conveyed in a greasy light.

But be this as it may, whether nature designed them for our masters or not, if their injunctions were the sober dictates of sound reason, we should find the yoke of obedience an agreeable weight: since obeying them we should but submit our will to *reason*, and act like those intelligent beings we know ourselves to be. And that, generally speaking, the *women* are more inclined so to do than the *men*, where every circumstance is parallel, is too well known to admit of a doubt. But then it would be putting ourselves upon the level with brutes, to descend to a compliance with the generality of their commands, since that alone would suffice to degrade us, and render us as despicable as the upright unfeathered animals who lay them upon us.

Masters then, or not masters, they have but one of these two means to choose in exerting their pretended authority: either let them, as usual, suit their commands to their *passions*, in opposition to *reason*; and then none but *women*, as irrational as themselves, will obey them, a pre-eminence which no *woman* of sense will envy them: or let *reason* speak in their orders, and all *women* of *sense* will listen to it; though the *men* should tickle themselves with the notion, that our obedience is paid to them.

Were the *men* to make a choice of the *latter*, we would indulge them the innocent liberty of fancying themselves masters, while we, pleased with feeling all the authority placed in *reason*, where it should be, must know that each sex would have the privilege of conveying its influences to the other in their turns; and if *man* had steadiness enough to conform all his injunctions to *woman*, to the dictates of *reason*, the same steadiness would induce him to yield to those dictates when *woman* was the means of conveying them. No matter by what

mouth *reason* speaks: If *men* were strictly attached to it; whether we or themselves were the vehicles of its influence, we should on both sides be equally determined by it. But the case is at present quite otherwise. The *men* who cannot deny us to be rational creatures, would have us justify their irrational opinion and treatment of us, by descending to a mean compliance with their irrational expectations. But I hope, while *women* have any spirit left, they will exert it all, in showing how worthy they are of better usage, not by submitting tamely to such misplaced arrogance.

To stoop to some regard for the strutting things is not enough; to humour them more than we could children, with any tolerable decency, is too little; they must be served forsooth. Pretty creatures indeed! How worthy do they appear of this boasted pre-eminence: To exact a servitude they want the courage themselves to submit to, from those whom their vanity stigmatizes with the character of weaker vessels; and to require *us* to be their drudges, whom they are forced to court and decoy into their power by the most pitiful cringes? Upon what title do they build their claim to our services, greater than we can show to theirs? Have they half so plausible a plea over *us*, as over those hapless savages, whose unsuspecting innocence has robbed them of the power of guarding against their unnatural violence and injustice? And yet are not the generality of our sex, when weak enough to yield ourselves, in pity to their fawning, affected despair, a prey to their dissemination, made the dupes of our credulous good-nature and innocence? Where is there a *woman*, who having generously trusted her liberty with a husband, does not immediately find the *spaniel* metamorphosed into a *tiger*, or has not reason to envy the lesser misery of a bond-slave to a merciless tyrant?

If brutal strength, in which we acknowledge their pre-eminence, is a sufficient plea, for their trampling upon us, the lion has a much better title over the whole creation. But that is a more generous kind of brute than those we are speaking of, though not quite so fierce and ungovernable. And therefore, he scorns to exert his strength, where he finds too great a disproportion in even an adversary.

I allow indeed, we ought to make it part of our business to please the poor things, if the attempt were likely to succeed. It would be quite barbarous to let a child cry, if a rattle would keep it quiet. But the misfortune is, that it is a study for life to find out a means of pleasing these greater, more stubborn brats. I have heard, it is a vulgar proverb, that *the Devil is good-humoured when he is pleased*, and if this proverb, like others, be founded on experience, it is a proof, the Devil can be pleased sometimes. I with as good an argument could be brought to prove that the *men* can ever be pleased. But such is the fantastical composition of their nature, that the more pains is taken in endeavouring to please them, the less, generally speaking, is the labour likely to prove successful; and if ever it does succeed, the reward never pays the expense. And

surely the *women* were created by Heaven for some better end, than to labour in vain their whole life long.

I foresee it may be urged, that we cannot be said to spend our lives in vain, while we are answering the end of our creation: And as we were created for no other end than for the *men's* use, our only business is to be subject to, and please them: Neither shall we be answerable for neglecting everything else, because God has not given us a capacity for more. But this must appear, from what I have already said, and shall hereafter show, begging the question; and supposing what should, but cannot be proved.

There are some however more condescending, and gracious enough to confess, that many *women* have wit and conduct; but yet they are of opinion, that even such of us as are most remarkable for either or both, still betray something which speaks the imbecility of our sex. Stale, thread-bare notions, which long since sunk with their own weight; and the extreme weakness of which seemed to condemn to perpetual oblivion; till an ingenious writer, for want of something better to employ his pen about, was pleased lately to revive them in one of the weekly papers, lest this age should be ignorant what fools there have been among his sex in former ones.

To give us a sample then of the wisdom of his sex, he tells us, that it was always the opinion of the wisest among them, that *women* are never to be indulged the sweets of liberty; but ought to pass their whole lives in a state of subordination to the *men*, and in an absolute dependance upon them. And the reason assigned for so extravagant an assertion, is our not having a sufficient capacity to govern ourselves. It must be observed, that so bold a tenet ought to have better proofs to support it, than the bare word of the persons who advanced it; as their being *parties* so immediately concerned, must render all they say of this kind highly suspect. However, since we are as suspect on that account as they are, it must be to as little purpose for us to deny it, unless it be put to them upon the proof. And doubtless, creatures of such profound wisdom as these *men* are, if we take their own word, would never attempt to assert anything so positively, without being able to back it with the best of proofs. Let us see then upon what grounds they build these extravagant notions of our sex, and how far they will stand the test of *truth* and *reason*; that we may give-in to their opinion or reject it.

### CHAP. III.

*Whether Women are inferior to Men in their intellectual capacity, or not.*

In the first place then, according to them, "the greatest part of our sex have but short, lucid intervals; - but sudden flashes of reason which vanish in a minute; - we have a resemblance of that planet, which is dark of itself, and only shines by borrowed light; - our wit has but a false lustre, more fit to surprize admiration than deserve it; - we are enemies to reflection; - the majority of us only reason at hazard, think by sallies, and discourse by rote."

A heavy charge this, to be laid against the majority of *women*. But granting it, for argument's sake, to be literally true, is it not as undeniably true, that the very same charge may be equally resorted on the majority of *men*? And yet would they not triumphantly alledge it as a proof of our weak sense, were we wisely to conclude, in their way, that therefore all the *men* ought to be perpetually under guardianship to us? A little experience is sufficient to demonstrate how much fitter we are to be guardians over them, than they are to be such over us. Every young *maiden* is qualified to be the mistress and manager of a family, at an age when the *men* are scarce susceptible of the precepts of the matter. And the only sure expedient to reclaim a young fellow from his excesses, and to render him useful to society, is to give him for *guardian a wife*, who may reform him by her example, moderate his passions by her prudence, and win him from his debaucheries by her engaging behaviour.

So far then are the *men* from proving their principle by practice, when their interest is concerned. When their own profound wisdom is too weak to curb the more unruly among them, they have no other recourse than to shelter them under our tutelage: Thus contradicting in fact, what they advance in words. But it is the fear of making us too proud of ourselves, which makes them contend, that we have neither solidity nor constancy, much less that depth of judgment which they very humbly ascribe to themselves. Wherefore they as wisely conclude, that it must absolutely have been a joint effect of divine providence, and their own sovereign sense, which debarred us of *sciences, government, and public offices*.

Whether there be any solidity in this, will best appear upon an unprejudiced examination. To know then, whether the *women* are less capable of the sciences than the *men* or not, we must consider what is the *principle* by which *sciences* are attained; and if *that* be wanting in *women*, or less perfect, there

will be no more required to demonstrate that the *men* are in the right. But if that *principle* should appear to be as perfect in the *one* as it is in the *other*, then there will be great reason to suspect the *men* of *jealousy*; and it cannot be rash to say, that their only reason for locking up from us all the avenues of knowledge, is the fear of our excelling them in it.

It is a known truth, that the difference of sexes regards only the body, and that merely as it relates to the propagation of human nature. But the soul concurring to it only by consent, actuates all after the same manner, so that in *that* there is *no sex* at all. There is no more difference to be discerned between the souls of a dunce, and a man of wit, or of an illiterate and an experienced one, than between a boy of four, and a man of forty years of age. And since there is not at most any greater difference between the souls of *women* and *men*, there can be no real diversity contracted from the body: All the diversity then must come from *education*, *exercise*, and the *impressions* of those external objects which surround us in different circumstances.

The same Creator, by the same laws, unites the souls of *women* and *men* to their respective bodies. The same sentiments, passions, and propensions, cement that union in both. And the soul operating in the same manner in the one and the other, is capable of the very same functions in both.

To render this still more evident, we need only consider the texture of the head, the seat of the sciences, and the part where the soul exerts itself most. All the researches of Anatomy, have not yet been able to show us the least difference in this part between *men* and *women*. Our brain is perfectly like theirs, we receive the impressions of sense as they do, we martial and preserve ideas for imagination and memory as they do, and we have all the organs they have, and apply them to the same purposes as they do. We hear with ears, see with eyes, and taste with a tongue as well as they. Nor can there be any difference pointed out between any of our organs and theirs, but that ours are more delicate, and consequently fitter to answer the ends they were made for, than theirs.

Even among the *men* it is universally observed, that the more gross and lumpish are commonly stupid; and the more delicate, are on the other hand, ever the most sprightly. The reason is plain: The soul, while confined to the body, is dependent on its organs in all its operations; and therefore the more free or clogged those organs are, the more or less must the soul be at liberty to exert itself. Now it is too well known to need any support, that the organs in our sex are of a much finer, and more delicate temperature than in theirs; and therefore, had we the same advantages of study allowed us which the *men* have, there is no room to doubt but we should at least keep pace with them in the *sciences*, and every useful knowledge.

It can only then be a mean dastardly jealousy in them to exclude us from those advantages, in which we have so natural a right to emulate them. Their pretext

for so doing, that study and learning would make *women* proud and vicious, is pitiful, capricious, and a piece with their practice. No: false knowledge, and superficial learning only can produce so bad an effect. For true knowledge, and solid learning must, cannot but, make *women*, as well as *men*, both more humble, and more virtuous. And it must be owned, that if a little superficial knowledge has rendered some of our sex vain, it equally renders many of theirs insupportable. But that is no reason why solid learning should be denied, or not instilled into, either; rather ought the greater pains to be taken to improve, in both, every disposition to the sciences, into a true relish for, and a deep knowledge of, them; according to the advice of one of their brightest writers, as applicable to any science as to poetry:

*A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:  
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
And drinking largely sobers us again.*

It is a common received notion that mankind need not be knowing to be virtuous: Which proceeds from this, that we see many persons who are reputed men of sense, of very immoral characters: And therefore is it falsely concluded, that knowledge is not only unprofitable in itself to virtue, but even frequently destructive to it: Whereas it would be no arduous task to prove, that the knowledge of ourselves and many other things, is highly requisite to corroborate our persuasion of our moral obligations. Since the chief reason which is to be assigned for so many persons falling into vice and folly so precipitately, or practicing virtue so faintly, is their being ignorant of themselves, and the objects which strike them: And how shall they remove this ignorance but by *science* and *study*?

If there have been some of our sex so affected with their learning as to become assuming; their fault carries its excuse with it. Either they have been such as had not drank deep enough to learn to be humble: Or the uncommonness of this advantage in our sex, and the difficulties they must have surmounted who have attained to it, will apologize for the little vanity they may have shown. As a person of low rank, whose merit and industry has raised him to an unusual eminence, may be excused, if, feeling himself advanced above the sphere of his equals, he should be seized with some degree of giddiness. Besides that, if it be a fault, as its wanting an apology proves to be, it is a fault which the *men* themselves daily fall into. And yet neither in the *men* nor in the *women* ought it to be imputed, as a blemish, to the *sciences* they may possess. The real cause of it is, that they who are versed in any science, look upon themselves as possessed of something, which is a mystery to the generality of the world. But let the matter be how it will, it is more than probable, that, since the vanity of the learned *men* greatly surpasses that of the learned of our sex, as appears from the frothy titles the former arrogate to themselves: If *women* were admitted to

an equal share of the sciences, and the advantages leading to, and flowing from, them; they would be much less subject to the vanity, they are apt to occasion.

It is a very great absurdity, to argue that learning is useless to *women*, because forsooth they have not a share in public offices, which is the end for which *men* apply themselves to it. *Virtue* and *Felicity* are equally requisite in a private, as well as in a public station, and *learning* is a necessary means to both. It is by that, we acquire an exactness of thought, a propriety of speech, and a justness of actions: Without that we can never have a right knowledge of ourselves: It is that which enables us to distinguish between right and wrong, true and false: And finally, that alone can give us skill to regulate our passions by teaching us, that true happiness and virtue consist not so much in enlarging our possessions as in contracting our desires.

Besides let it be observed, what a wretched circle this poor way of reasoning among the *men* draws them insensibly into. Why is *learning* useless to us? Because we have no share in public offices. And why have we no share in public offices? Because we have no *learning*. They are sensible of the injustice they do us, and therefore are reduced to the mean shift of cloaking it at the expense of their own reason. But let truth speak for once: Why are they so industrious to debar us that learning we have an equal right to with themselves, but for fear of our sharing with, and outshining them in, those public offices they fill so miserably? The same sordid selfishness which urged them to engross all power and dignity to themselves, prompted them to shut up from us that knowledge which would have made us their competitors.

As nature seems to have designed the *men* for our drudges, I could easily forgive them the usurpation by which they first took the trouble of public employments off our hands, if their injustice were content with stopping there. But as one abyss calls on another, and vices seldom go single, they are not satisfied with engrossing all authority into their own hands, but are confident enough to assert that they possess it by right, because we were formed by nature to be under perpetual subjection to them, for want of abilities to share with them in *government* and *public offices*. To confute this *mannish* extravagance, it will be necessary to sap it from the foundation on which it is built.

## CHAP. IV.

### *Whether the Men are better qualified to govern than Women, or not.*

If you are dotting enough to hold upon trust what the *men* themselves say, you are to take it for granted, that *women* are such senseless mortals by nature, as to be absolutely incapable of taking the least care of themselves. "It is therefore," say they, "a cruel tenderness, a false complaisance, to abandon the fair-sex to their own conduct. The more they are made to please and charm, the more it imports them to fly from those dangers, to which they are exposed by being so." A plain proof of their speaking from their hearts, is their imagining us weak enough to be wheedled out of our liberty and property, by such jingling, empty stuff. But where have they proved that we are not as capable of guarding ourselves from dangers, as they are of guarding us; had we the same power and advantages allowed us, which they have? Again, are we safer under their conduct than our own? Is it not manifestly launching from *Scyllaa* to *Charybdis*, to fly to their protection from danger? There is scarce an instance in a million among *women*, of *one woman* of middling capacity, who does not, or would not, govern herself better than most *men* in parallel circumstances, if the circumvention, treachery, and baseness of that sex did not interfere. Whereas for *one woman*, who is bettered in understanding or morality under their tuition, many millions are betrayed into inevitable ruin. As this is undeniable matter of fact, it needs no proofs to support it. Neither will it bear retorting upon us. For granting some few *men* to have suffered by petticoat-government, the number is extremely small in proportion. And were it equal, the *women's* conduct, in this case, is to be charged wholly to the *men's* account, for having robbed them of those advantages of education, which would have enabled them to act better, which they were susceptible of, and which they had a natural right to. The same apology cannot be made for the men's misconduct in governing us: They have all the advantages requisite to qualify them; and, if, spite of all, we are worse under their government than under our own; the consequence speaks itself, that either they have a natural want of capacity, or want of honesty. They are at liberty to choose which imputation pleases them best: Though without judging rashly, I might venture to say, they have a right to both. If they imagine they can elude the force of this truth, by saying that the *men*, whom this accusation regards, have not made use of the advantages which their sex in general has, and therefore might as well have been without them; that no ways lessens the truth of what I have advanced; that most *women* are ruined, instead of being improved in heart or mind under the conduct of the *men*. And therefore, since we are at most in no greater safety under their

government than our own, there can be no solid reason assigned why we should be subject to it.

But it seems we are already condemned to it by a judge of their own erecting, a blubbering dotard, too conceited of his own sense, to be improved by that of his wife; *Cato*, the *wise Cato*, who grown obstinate in wrong by age and humoured prejudice, chose rather to die a fool of his own making, than live a man of sense by a wife's advice; this *Cato* has pronounced sentence against us. And so disinterested a judge, we cannot surely except against. Let us hear then what his oracle says:

"Let us treat *women* as our equals, and they will immediately want to become our mistresses." 'Tis *Cato* says it, and therefore there needs no proof. Besides, to oblige men to prove all they advance by reason, would be imposing silence upon them; a grievance to which they are perhaps full as unequal as they pretend we are. But granting *Cato* to be infallible in his assertions, what then? Have not *women* as much right to be mistresses, as the *men* have to be masters? No, says *Cato*. But why? *Because they have not*. Such convincing arguments must make us fond of hearing him farther. If we make the *women* our *equals*, "they will demand that tomorrow as a tribute, which receive today as a grace." But where is the grace in granting us a share in what we have an equal right to? Have not the *women* an equal claim to power and dignity with the *men*? If we have, the wise *Cato* nods: if we have not; *Cato* would have been wise indeed, to convince us of it. But supposing it to be a favour, a grace, what he is pleased to call it; would not the *men* reap the chief benefit of it? The reserve peculiar to our sex, proves, that knowing how to curb ourselves, we are qualified to govern them, and the meekness and tenderness which make part of our characteristic, are sufficient to persuade them that our yoke would not be heavy. But no, says *Cato*, "we may thank ourselves for that sweetness and reserve which they show in our presence. - This shadow of virtue is owing to the necessity we impose upon them of dissembling." Then *Cato* is forced at last to own that the subjection we are kept under by that arrogant sex, is the effect of violence and imposition? This he does to compliment his own sex, with attributing all our merit to them. A sorry compliment, considering the ungrateful truth it extorts from him. And yet how against his grain is it to own any merit in us. No, we have but the shadow of virtue, and all their impositions and violence can only induce us to dissemble. Is not this calling all his own sex fools? For surely nothing can be a greater proof of folly in the *men* than to use violence and imposition, and to take perpetual pains to support both, only to make us act with affectation, when much less labour would make us show ourselves in a more natural light: Especially since it is impossible ever to govern subjects rightly, without knowing as well what they really are as what they only seem; which the *men* can never be supposed to do, while they labour to force *women* to live in constant masquerade. So that either all the *men* are downright changelings, by *Cato's* own confession, or this mighty oracle himself is a driveler, and to be heeded by none but such.

I should not myself have thought him worth so much notice as I have here taken of him; but that the *men* are weak enough in general, to suffer their sense to be led away captive, by such half-thinking retailers of sentences. Among whom, this in particular, was he worth the pains, might be easily proved to have been often grossly in the wrong in other matters as well as in the present case; and therefore, when he happens to be in the right, the merit of it is more to be imputed to blind chance than to his wisdom: Since the greatest fools, when active, may blunder into the right sometimes: And great talkers among many absurdities, must here and there drop a good saying, when they least design it. Of this stamp, are the generality of evidence brought against us. Men averse to the labour of thinking; who found reason a drudgery, and therefore, rather chose to prostitute than wed it; who have gained all their reputation by a pretty gimness of expressions, which would no more bear examination than their heads, their hearts, or their faces; and who (to mimic this sage) would rather see *common-sense* in confusion, than *a word* misplaced in one of their *sentences*. Yet these are sages among the *men*, and their sentences are so many divine oracles; whereas perhaps, had we lived in their own times, to have heard the many more foolish things they said than sensible ones, we should have found them as oafish as the dupes who rever them. And though perhaps we might have been more surprized to hear such dotards talk sometimes rationally, than we are now, to read their sayings; we should have had reason still to think them more fit to extort our admiration than deserve it. Care has been taken to hand down to us the best of their sentences, many of which nevertheless are weak enough: But had the same care been taken to register all their absurdities, how great a share of their present applause would they have lost! As the infidel observed to the priest of *Neptune*, when proving the god's divinity from the trophies in his temple.

*'Tis true their pictures who escaped you keep,  
But where are they who perished in the deep?*

But we have a more formidable set of enemies than these laconic gentlemen; *men* who pretend to build their assertions upon very good grounds, and who would scorn, say they, to exclude us from power, dignity, and public offices, if they could not show us the best of reasons. It will be proper therefore to hear their reasons, before we undertake to say they are in the wrong.

## CHAP. V.

### *Whether the Women are fit for public Offices, or not.*

It is enough for the *men* to find a thing established to make them believe it well grounded. In all countries we are seen in subjection and absolute dependence on the *men*, without being admitted to the advantages of sciences, or the opportunity of exerting our capacity in a public station. Hence the *men*, according to their usual talent of arguing from seemings, conclude that we ought to be so. But supposing it to be true, that *women* had ever been excluded from *public offices*, is it therefore necessarily true that they ought to be so? God has always been more or less resisted by ungrateful man, a fine conclusion it would be then to infer, that therefore he ought to be so.

But why do the *men* persuade themselves that we are less fit for public employments than they are? Can they give any better reason than custom and prejudice formed in them by external appearances, for want of a closer examination? If they did but give themselves the leisure to trace things back to their fountain-head, and judge of the sentiments and practices of *men* in former ages, from what they discover in their own times, they would not be so open as they are to errors and absurdities in all their opinions. And particularly with regard to *women*, they would be able to see that, if we have been subjected to their authority, it has been by no other law than that of the stronger: And that we have not been excluded from a share in the power and privileges which lift their sex above ours, for want of natural capacity, or merit, but for want of an equal spirit of violence, shameless injustice, and lawless oppression, with theirs.

Nevertheless, so weak are their intellectuals, and so untuned are their organs to the voice of reason, that custom makes more absolute slaves of their senses than they can make of us. They are so accustomed to see things as they now are, that they cannot represent to themselves how they can be otherwise. It would be extremely odd they think to see a *woman* at the head of an army giving battle, or at the helm of a nation giving laws; pleading causes in quality of counsel; administering justice in a court of judicature; preceded in the street with a sword, mace, and other ensigns of authority; as magistrates; or teaching rhetoric, medicine, philosophy, and divinity, in quality of university professors.

If by oddity they understand something in its nature opposite to the genuine, unbiased rules of good sense; I believe the *men* will find it a difficult task, to prove any oddity in such a fight, or any real inconsistency in it with *rectified*

*reason*. For if *women* are but considered as rational creatures, abstracted from the disadvantages imposed upon them by the unjust usurpation and tyranny of the *men*, they will be found, to the full, as capable as the *men*, of filling these offices.

I must own indeed in this age, to see a *woman*, however well qualified, exert herself in any of these employments, could not but as greatly surprize us as to see a man or woman dressed in the garb in vogue at the time of Queen *Bess*. And yet our wonder in either case would be the sole effect of novelty, or of the revival of an obsolete custom new to us. If from immemorable time, the *men* had been so little envious, and so very impartial, as to do justice to our talents, by admitting us to our right of sharing with them in public action; they would have been as accustomed to see us filling public offices, as we are to see them disgrace them; and to see a lady at a bar, or on a bench, would have been no more strange than it is now, to see a grave judge whimpering at his maid's knees; or, a lord embroidering his wife's petticoat: A *Schurman*, with a thesis in her hand, displaying nature in its most innocent useful lights, would have been as familiar a sight, as a physician in his chariot, conning *Ovid's Art of Love*: And an *Amazon*, with a helmet on her head, animating her embattled troops, would have been no more a matter of surprize than a milliner behind a counter with a thimble on her finger; or than a peer of *Great-Britain* playing with his *garter*. Not reason then, but error and ignorance cased in custom, makes these superficial creatures think it an unnatural fight.

There are few nations, beside our own, which think *women* capable of holding the scepter; but *England* has learned by repeated experience, how much happier a kingdom is, when under the protection and rule of a *woman*, than it can hope to be under the government of a *man*. Matter of fact then plainly points out the absurdity of the contrary prejudice. How many ladies have there been, and still are, who deserve place among the learned; and who are more capable of *teaching* the *sciences* than those who now fill most of the *university chairs*? The age we live in has produced as many, as any heretofore; though their modesty prevents their making any public show of it. And as our sex, when it applies to learning, may be said at least to keep pace with the *men*, so are they more to be esteemed for their learning than the latter: Since they are under a necessity of surmounting the softness they were educated in; of renouncing the pleasure and indolence to which cruel custom seemed to condemn them; to overcome the external impediments in their way to study; and to conquer the disadvantageous notions, which the vulgar of both sexes entertain of learning in *women*. And whether it be that these difficulties add any keenness to a female understanding, or that nature has given *women*, a quicker, more penetrating genius, than to *men*; it is self-evident, that many of our sex have far outstripped the *men*. Why then are we not as fit to learn and teach the sciences, at least to our own sex, as they fancy themselves to be?

## CHAP. VI.

*Whether the Women are naturally capable of teaching Sciences, or not.*

Of *Rhetoric*, we must be allowed to be by nature designed mistresses and models. *Eloquence* is a talent so natural and peculiar to *woman*, that no one can dispute it her. *Women* can persuade what they please; and can dictate, defend, or distinguish between right and wrong, without the help of laws. There are few judges, who have not proved them the most prevalent counsel; and few pleaders, who have not experienced them to be the most clear-headed, equitable judges. When *women* speak on a subject, they handle it with so delicate a touch, that the *men* are forced to own they feel what the former say. All the oratory of the schools is not able to give the *men* that eloquence and ease of speech, which costs us nothing. And that, which their mean envy calls loquacity in us, is only a readiness of ideas, and an ease of delivery, which they in vain labour, for years, to attain to.

With what hesitation, confusion, and drudgery, do not the *men* labour to bring forth their thoughts? And when they do utter something tolerable, with what insipid gestures, distortions, and grimaces, do they murder the few good things they say? Whereas, when a *women* speaks, her air is generally noble and preventing, her gesture free, and full of dignity, her action is decent, her words are easy and insinuating, her style is pathetic and winning, and her voice melodious, and tuned to her subject. She can soar to a level with the highest intellect without bombast, and with a complacency natural to the delicacy of her frame, descend to the meanest capacity without meanness. What is there we are unfit to reason upon, which does not offend against decency? When we discourse of good or evil, it is well known we are capable of winning to the one, and weaning from the other, the most obstinate *men*, if they have but minds susceptible of reason and argument: And that character of integrity, which is imprinted on our countenances while we speak, renders our power of persuasion more prevalent. Sure then, if we are endowed with a more communicative eloquence than they are, we must be at least as well qualified as they to *teach the sciences*; and if we are not seen in *university chairs*, it cannot be attributed to our want of capacity to fill them, but to that violence with which the *men* support their unjust intrusion into our places; or, if not, at least to our greater modesty and less degree of ambition.

If we were to apply to the *law*, we should succeed in it at least as well as the *men*. The natural talent we have undisputed, of explaining and unraveling the most knotty intricacies, of stating our own and other people's pretensions, of

discovering the grounds of a dispute, with the means to set it right, and of setting engines to work to do ourselves justice, is sufficient to prove that, were we to fill the offices of *counsel, judges, and magistrates*, we should show a capacity in business which very few *men* can boast of. But peace and justice is our study, and our pride is to make up those breaches which the corruption of that sex makes them but industrious to widen.

Our sex seems born to teach and practise physic; to restore health to the sick, and preserve it to the well. Neatness, handyness, and compliance are one half of a patient's cure; and in this the *men* must yield to us. Indeed in our turns we must yield to them in the art of inventing hard names, and puzzling a cure with the number, as well as adding to a patient's grievance with the costliness of remedies. But we can invent, and have invented, without the help of *Galen, or Hippocrates*, an infinity of reliefs for the sick, which they and their blind adherents could neither improve nor disapprove. And an *old woman's receipt*, as it is termed, has often been known to remove an inveterate distemper which has baffled the researches of a college of graduates. In a word, the observations made by *women* in their practice, have been so exact, and built upon such solid reason, as to show more than once the useless pedantry of the major part of school systems.

I hardly believe our sex would spend so many years to so little purpose as those *men* do, who call themselves *philosophers*; were we to apply to the *study of nature*. But I believe we could point out a much shorter road to the desired end. We should scarcely do like some *men* who waste whole years (not to mention many of them who dwell for life) on mere *Entia Rationis*, fictitious trifles, no where to be found but in their own noddles. We should find more useful employments for our inquiries, than idly plodding to find out whether beyond the utmost circumference of the universe there be any imaginary space, and whether that infant of our own dream be infinite or finite: whether an atom be splittable into infinite parts, or how a column of air upon a man's head, reaching to the sky, shall feel less heavy than a hob-nail.

Were we to express our conceptions of God, it would never enter into the head of any one of us to describe him as a venerable old man. No, we have a more noble idea of him, than to compare him to any thing created. We conceive that there must be a God, because we are sensible that neither we nor the objects which surrounds us can be the works of chance, or of self-production. And as we daily see that the success, which attends our undertakings, is scarce ever the natural effect of the means we make use of to attain to it, we are convinced that the conduct of our affairs is not the consequence of our own prudence; and therefore conclude that it must be the effect of a superior, general, providence. We should never take it into our heads to run divisions upon our own chimerical *hypotheses*, and to fill a volume to answer an impossible: as *whether, if Man had not sinned, the Son of God would have died: or whether by supernatural power a stone could be lifted to the beatific vision*. And yet we

might without vanity aspire to being as able *philosophers* or *divines* as the *men*, perhaps better: If I understand rightly the sense of those words. And surely *philosophers* and *divines*, according to the acceptation of the words, are such as are perfectly versed in the secrets of nature and mysteries of religion. If so, as we know that the chief fruit of all learning is a just discernment of true from false, and of evidence from obscurity, we are equally capable of both. And were we to aim at being both, we should make it our business to form as just ideas of the divinity and its revelations as the weakness of human nature would permit, and to trace nature up to its true source in all its effects. And as we are sensible that the knowledge of ourselves, and the objects about us, are absolutely necessary to render the aforementioned knowledges useful; we should, instead of losing time in the trifles, which engross the studies of the generality of *male philosophers*, apply ourselves to the observation of ourselves and the different objects which environ us, in order to find out in what they relate to, or differ from, us; and by what applications they may be beneficial or obnoxious to us, and to the end they were given us for. Might we not then by this means be both as learned *philosophers* and as able *divines* as the *men*, as capable of being taught, and as successful in *teaching*, at least, as they are?

Practice sufficiently speaks us no less *Christian* than the *men*; We receive the gospel with reverence and humility, and submit to its doctrines and precepts in a more exemplary manner than the generality of them. I own, some of our sex have carried their *worship* to *superstitious* lengths; but have not many of the *men* done so too? And yet the *latter* are the most culpable: Since the ignorance in which the *former* have been bred reflects all the reproach on the *men* themselves, for not giving them the means to avoid *superstition*. Wherefore if their zeal has been indiscreet, their intention has been good: And we may venture to affirm, from the eagerness they showed in embracing religion and cleaving so close to it under all the disadvantages it appeared to them in, they would have as firmly adhered to true piety had they obtained a clearer light of it.

What should hinder us from regulating our minds by the faith and discipline of Christ and his church? If we layed the foundation of *philosophy* and *scholastic divinity*; should we not be as able as the *men*, in the progress of our studies, to understand, compare, and interpret the holy scriptures, the writings of the fathers and the sacred canons? Might we not qualify our minds and hearts to compose religious works, to preach, to confute novelties, to regulate ourselves and others, to remove their scruples, and to resolve cases of conscience, as well as the most learned casuists living?

Thus far I insist, there is no *science or public office* in a state, which *women* are not as much qualified for by nature as the ablest of *men*. With regard however to divinity, our natural capacity has been restrained by a positive law of God; and therefore we know better than to lay claim to what we could not practice without sacrilegious intrusion. Though, by the bye, let it be observed that the

bar which our *Divine Saviour* has put to our exercising any religious functions, neither bars us from any other public offices, nor proves us unworthy or naturally incapable of exercising even them. That he forbid us those functions proves us naturally apt for them. But why he forbid us, it would be presumptuous to enquire. However if it is lawful to reason at all upon the divine precepts; we may assign a reason, which carries its own probability with it, and rather redounds to the honour than disrepute of our sex. God undoubtedly knew the general tendency of the *men* to *impiety* and *irreligion*; and therefore why might he not confine the functions of *religion* to that sex, to attract some of them at least to those duties they have such a general apathy for? Especially since the natural propensity of our sex to *virtue* and *religion*, made it unnecessary to add any of those external helps to his divine grace, in order to win us to what our hearts lead us to.

If then we set custom and prejudice aside, where would the oddity be to see us dictating *sciences* from a *university chair*; since to name but one of a thousand, that foreign young lady, whose extraordinary merit and capacity but a few years ago forced a *university* in *Italy* to break through the rules of *partiality*, *custom*, and *prejudice*, in her favour, to confer on her a DOCTOR'S DEGREE, is a living proof that we are as capable, as any of the *men*, of the highest eminences in the sphere of learning, if we had justice done us.

It is not so much to do justice to my own sex, that I quote this instance, as to favour the *men*, by showing that it is not absolutely impossible for them to be sometimes just, without a miracle. Indeed it might require, in all probability, the labours of a wandering Jew, to produce a few more instances of the like equity towards us in that jealous, ungenerous sex. But to find many ladies nothing inferior in merit to the last mentioned, we need neither the pains of running back to antiquity, nor the expense of a voyage to foreign climes. Our own age and country may boast of more than one *Sappho*, numbers of *Cornelias*, and no scarcity of *Schurmans* and *Daciers*. If I chose to unite the several excellences of all these illustrious names in one, I might quote an *Eliza* not more to be envied, for the towering superiority of her genius and judgment, than honoured for the use she makes of them. Her early advances in ancient and modern learning in general, having raised her above the imitation of the *men*, as the many excellent virtues added to her extensive knowledge, have secured her the esteem of the *women*; it is no wonder that, while the former are forced to admire her in spite of prejudice, we are at liberty to do justice to her merit without fearing the suspicion of partiality towards her. However, as her own excellence has extorted her just praise from the mouth of prejudice itself, I shall forbear to characterise her; content to see the work already done to my hand, by that sex itself: and therefore refer my readers for a farther account of this true *woman* to what the *Reverend* Mr *Birch* says of her in the *History of the Works of the Learned*: which is so much the more to be relied on as it comes from a *man*; one of that sex which seems to pique itself with no other degree of equity, than that of never praising any of ours beyond their deserve. If the

comparison, this candid gentleman there makes between the talents of our sex and his own, should prove too galling for their innate jealousy; let the men excuse him at least, and pacify themselves with the reflection on the thanks they all owe him for giving us this fresh instance, in his own person, of the possibility of finding a *man* who can throw off passion and prejudice, for the sake of truth and honesty.

We may easily conclude then, that, if our sex, as it hitherto appears, have all the talents requisite to *learn* and *teach* those *sciences*, which qualify *men* for *power* and *dignity*; they are equally capable of applying their knowledge to practice, in *exercising* that power and dignity. And since, as we have said, this nation has seen many glorious instances of *women*, severally qualified to have all public authority centered in them: why may they not be as qualified at least for the subordinate offices of ministers of state, vice-queens, governesses, secretaries, privy-counsellors, and treasurers? Or why may they not, without oddity, be even generals of armies, and admirals of fleets? But this will be more proper to consider separately.

## CHAP. VII

### *Whether Women are naturally qualified for military offices, or not.*

I must confess, I cannot find how the oddity would be greater, to see a lady with a truncheon in her hand, than with a crown on her head; or why it should create more surprise, to see her preside in a council of war, than in a council of state. Why may she not be as capable of heading an army as a parliament; or of commanding at sea as of reigning at land? What should hinder her from holding the helm of a fleet with the same safety and steadiness as that of a nation? And why may she not exercise her soldiers, draw up her troops in battle array, and divide her forces into battalions at land, squadrons at sea, etc, with the same pleasure she would have in seeing or ordering it to be done? The military art has no mystery in it beyond others, which *women* cannot attain to. A *woman* is as capable as a *man* of making herself, by means of a map, acquainted with the good and bad ways, the dangerous and safe passes, or the proper situations for encampment. And what should hinder her from making herself mistress of all the stratagems of war, of charging, retreating, surprising, laying ambushes, counterfeiting marches, feigning flights, giving false attacks, supporting real ones, animating the soldiery, and adding example to eloquence by being the first to mount a breach. Persuasion, heat, and example are the soul of victory: And *women* can show as much eloquence, intrepidity, and warmth, where their honour is at stake, as is requisite to attack or defend a town.

There can be no real difference pointed out between the inward or outward constitution of *men* and *women*, excepting what merely tends to giving birth to posterity. And the differences thence arising are no ways sufficient to argue more natural strength in the one than in the other, to qualify them more for military labours. Are not the *women* of different degrees of strength, like the *men*? Are there not strong and weak of both sexes? *Men* educated in sloth and softness are weaker than *women*; and *women*, become hardened by necessity, are often more robust than *men*. We need go not farther than *Chelsey* for a proof that *woman* may be enured to all the hardships of a campaign, and to meet all the terrors of it, as well as the bravest of the opposite sex.

What has greatly helped to confirm the *men* in the prejudiced notion of *women's* natural weakness, is the common manner of expression which this very vulgar error gave birth to. When they mean to stigmatise a *man* with want of courage they call him *effeminate*, and when they would praise a *woman* for her courage they call her *manly*. But as these, and such like expressions, are merely arbitrary and but a fulsome compliment which the *men* pass on themselves, they establish no truth. The real truth is, that humanity and

integrity, the characteristics of our sex, make us abhor unjust slaughter, and prefer honourable peace to unjust war. And therefore to use these expressions with propriety, when a *man* is possessed of our virtues he should be called *effeminate* by way of the highest praise of his good nature and justice; and a *woman* who should depart from our sex by espousing the injustice and cruelty of the *men's* nature, should be called a *man*: that is, one whom no sacred ties can bind to the observation of just treaties, and whom no bloodshed can deter from the most cruel violence.

But be this as it may, certain it is, that bare strength entitles the *men* to no superiority above *us*, as I have already remarked. Otherwise brutes would deserve the pre-eminence of them. And among themselves, the strongest man ought to be the chief in power. Whereas we plainly see that, generally speaking, the strongest are only fit to make drudges to the rest; and particularly in armies, they who have most of brutal vigour are often useful only for fascines to men much weaker than themselves to mount a breach. On the other hand men who have less strength have very often the most brains. The wisest *philosophers*, the ablest *poets*, and the greatest *princes* have not always had the best constitutions. *Henry* was no match in strength with Sir *John Falstaff*. And a *Marlborough* perhaps might have routed an army with more ease than he could have wrestled with the meanest of his soldiers.

It is quite idle then to insist so much on bodily strength, as a necessary qualification to military employments. And it is full as idle to imagine that *women* are not naturally as capable of *courage* and *resolution* as the *men*. We are indeed charged, without any exception, with being timorous, and incapable of defence; frightened at our own shadows; alarmed at the cry of an infant, the bark of a dog, the whistling of the wind, or a tale of hob-goblins. But is this universally true? Are there not *men* as void of courage as the most heartless of our sex? And yet it is known that the most timorous *women* often make a virtue of necessity and sacrifice their own fears for the safety of a husband, a son, or a brother. Fearful and weak as they are, they often behave more courageously than the *men* under pains, sickness, want, and the terrors of death itself.

Fear is almost an inseparable attendant on virtue. The virtuous are ever timid more or less; their own inoffensive disposition and the knowledge they have how much vice abounds among *men*, are sufficient to incline them to fear on every appearance of danger. 'Tis a passion natural to all: Princes fear the rebellion of their subjects; generals the surprise of an enemy; and the very man who draws his sword to resent an injury, fears the shame of it, fears his adversary, and fears the law.

But fear is ever the greatest in those who know themselves incapable of resisting what they fear; and is only blameable in such as have the power to repel the evil which threatens them. A lawyer, who has spent his whole life in

poring over *Coke* upon *Littleton*, can no more, with reason, be accused of want of courage for refusing a challenge from an officer of the Army, than a soldier can be called a coward for refusing to stake his fortune against a lady at *quadrille*. The manner *women* are bred in, gives them room to apprehend everything. They are admitted to no share of the exercises which would qualify them to attack or defend. They see themselves helplessly exposed to the outrages of a sex enslaved to the most brutal transports; and find themselves victims of contempt to wretches, whose prevalent strength is often exerted against them, with more fury and cruelty than beasts practise towards one another. Can our fear then be imputed to want of courage? Is it a defect? Or ought it not rather to be alledged as a proof of our sense: Since it would be rather fool-hardiness than courage to withstand brutes, who want the sense to be overcome by reason, and whom we want vigour to repel by force of arms?

And yet it is far from being true that all *women* want courage, strength, or conduct to lead an army to triumph; any more than it is that all *men* are endowed with them. There are many of our sex as intrepid as the *men*; and I myself could, with more ease and less repugnance, dare the frowns and fury of an already victorious army, which I had forces to resist, than I could stoop to court the smiles of a corrupt minister, whom I had reason to despise.

Need I bring *Amazons* from *Scythia* to prove the courage of *women*? Need I run to *Italy* for a *Camilla* to show an instance of warlike courage? Would the wife of *Petus*, who stabbed herself first, to encourage her disponding husband to do the like, have been afraid to mount a breach? Would not she, who could snatch the knife from her bleeding breast, and with an unconcerned countenance, gave it to *Thraseas*, adding, *strike Petus it does not smart*: Would not she, I say, have been equally capable of animating with persuasion and example an army in the defence of her country? Let *France* boast its *maid of Orleans*; and other nations glory in their numberless stole of warlike *women*. We need not go out of *England* to seek heroines, while we have annals to preserve their illustrious names. To whom did *England* owe its deliverance from the tyrannic yoke of the *Danes*? But to pass over the many instances of warlike bravery in our sex, let it suffice to name a *Boadicea*, who made the most glorious stand against the *Romans* in the defence of her country, that ever that great empire was witness to; and if her endeavours did not meet with the success of an *Alexander*, a *Caesar*, or a *Charles of Sweden*, in his fortunate days, her courage and conduct were such, as render her worthy to be considered equal, if not superior, to them all, in bravery and wisdom; not to mention the nicer justice of her intentions.

Thus far I think it evidently appears, that there is no *science*, *office*, or *dignity*, which *women* have not an equal right to share in with the *men*: Since there can be no superiority, but that of brutal strength, shown in the *latter*, to entitle them to engross all *power* and *prerogative* to themselves: nor any incapacity proved in the *former*, to disqualify them of their right, but what is owing to the unjust

oppression of the *men*, and might be easily removed. With regard however to warlike employments, it seems to be a disposition of *Providence* that custom has exempted us from them. As sailors in a storm throw overboard their more useless lumber, so it is but fit that the *men* should be exposed to the dangers and hardships of war, while we remain in safety at home. They are, generally speaking, good for little else but to be our bulwarks: and our smiles are the most noble rewards which the bravest of them all ought to desire, or can deserve, for all the hazards they encounter, and for all the labours they go through for our defence, in the most tedious campaign.

## CHAP. VIII.

### Conclusion

What I have hitherto said, has not been with an intention to stir up any of my own sex to revolt against the *men*, or to invert the present order of things, with regard to *government* and *authority*. No, let them stand as they are: I only mean to show my sex, that they are not so despicable as the *men* would have them believe themselves, and that we are capable of as much greatness of soul as the best of that haughty sex. And I am fully convinced, it would be to the joint interest of both to think so.

This is plain, from the ill consequences attending the opposite error. *Men*, by thinking us incapable of improving our intellects, have entirely thrown us out of all the advantages of education; and thereby contributed as much as possible to make us the senseless creatures they imagine us. so that for want of *education*, we are rendered subject to all the follies they dislike in us, and are loaded with their ill treatment for faults of their own creating in us, and which, we are denied the helps necessary to avoid. And what is the consequence of this tyrannic treatment of us? Why, it finally reverts on themselves: The same want of *learning* and *education*, which hurries *women* into what displeases the *men*, debars them of the virtues requisite to support them under the ill treatment they are loaded with by the *men*, in consequence of their indiscretions: And for want of those virtues they often run very unjustifiable lengths to be revenged on their tyrants. Thus does it arrive generally speaking that both *men* and *women* hold one another in sovereign contempt, and therefore vie with each other, which shall treat the other the worst. Whereas how happy might they be, would both sexes but resolve *each* to give the *other* that just esteem which is their due.

However, if truth may be spoken, it is undeniable that the blame lies chiefly and originally in the *men*. Since if they would but allow *women* the advantages of education and learning; they would learn to despise those follies and trifles, for which they are at present unjustly despised. They would be enabled to give the *men*, a better opinion of their capacity of head and disposition of heart: And the *men*, in proportion to the increase of their esteem for us, would lessen, and by degrees reform, their ill-treatment of us. The *women* would make it their study to improve their parts, and with increase of knowledge they must grow good. Their pleasure and study would be to entertain the *men* with sense, and to add solidity to their charms. By which means *both sexes* would be happy, and *neither* have cause to blame the *other*. But while they lock up from

us all the avenues to knowledge, they cannot without reproach to themselves blame us for any misconduct which ignorance may be mother of: And we cannot but accuse them of the most cruel injustice in disesteeming and ill using us for faults they put out of our power to correct.

It would be needless to say any more on this subject, if it was not in answer to some weak people, who are vainly persuaded, that there is a real difference between *us* and the *men* with regard to *virtue*: Whereas nothing can be more absurd. It is undoubtedly true, that there have been, and are, many very good, and as many very bad, people of both sexes. And though it should be supposed, that some *women* have been more flagitious than any *men*; that will no ways redound to the dishonour of our sex in general. *The corruption of the best is ever the worst*: And should we grant that in quality of vices some of our sex have exceeded the *men*; It must be owned that their numbers would at least balance the account. I believe no one will deny but that at least, upon the most moderate computation, there are a thousand *bad men* to one *bad woman*. But to know whether either be naturally more vicious than the other, we must observe that there is nothing but the soul capable of virtue, which consists in a firm resolution of doing that, which we judge the best, according to the dictates of *reason* and *religion* compared with the different occurrences we meet with in life. Now the mind is no less capable in *women* than in *men* of that firm resolution, which makes up virtue, or of knowing the occasions of putting it in practice.

Weak as the generality reckon us *women*, we can regulate our passions as well as the *men*, and are no more inclined to vice than to virtue. We might even make the scale turn in our own favour in this particular, without doing violence to truth or justice. However, upon the whole, if there be equal occasion of finding fault in both sexes, then that which accuses the other offends against natural equity. If there be more evil in the *men* than in us, and they are too stupefied to see it, then they are guilty of rashness in finding fault with our sex: and if they do see them, and maliciously conceal their greater faults; is it not base in them to blame us who have less? If there be more good in *women* than in *men*, ought not the *men* to be accused of ignorance or envy in not acknowledging it? When a *woman* has more virtue than vice, should not the one atone for the other? This is especially true when our defects are insurmountable, and when we are deprived of means to rid ourselves of them; which is generally the case with most of the faulty of our sex, and ought to merit them compassion rather than contempt. Lastly, when our failings are only seemingly such, or at most but trivial in themselves, it is imprudent, malicious, and pitiful to insist on them. And yet it is easy to prove, that such are the generality of the faults we are charged with, which can any way affect us all.

Thus then does it hitherto fully appear, how falsely we are deemed, by the *men*, wanting in that solidity of sense which they so vainly value themselves upon.

Our right is the same with theirs to all *public employments*; we are endowed, by nature, with geniuses at least as capable of filling them as theirs can be; and our hearts are as susceptible of *virtue* as our heads are of the *sciences*. We neither want *spirit, strength, nor courage, to defend* a country, nor *prudence to rule* it. Our *souls* are as *perfect* as theirs, and the *organs* they depend on are generally more *refined*. However, if the bodies be compared to decide the right of excellence in either sex; we need not contend: The *men* themselves I presume will give it up. They cannot deny but that we have the advantage of them in the internal mechanism of our frames: Since in us is produced the most beautiful and wonderful of all creatures: And how much have we not the advantage of them in outside? What beauty, comeliness, and graces, has not heaven attached to our sex above theirs? I should blush with scorn to mention this, if I did not think it an indication of our souls being also in a state of greater delicacy: For I cannot help thinking that the wise author of nature suited our frames to the souls he gave us. And surely then the acuteness of our minds, with what passes in the inside of our heads, ought to render us at least EQUALS to *men*, since the outside seldom fails to make us their absolute mistresses.

And yet I would have none of my sex build their authority barely on so slight a foundation. No: Good sense will outlast a handsome face: And the dominion gained over hearts by reason is lasting. I would therefore exhort all my sex to throw aside idle amusements, and to betake themselves to the improvement of their minds, that we may be able to act with that becoming dignity our nature has fitted us to; and, without claiming or valuing it, show ourselves worthy something from them, as much above their bare esteem, as they conceit themselves above us. In a word, let us show them, by what little we do without aid of education, the much we might do if they did us justice; that we may force a blush from them, if possible, and compel them to confess their own baseness to us, and that the worst of us deserve much better treatment than the best of us receive.

FINIS

