

After dinner the baby began to cry and make itself unpleasant: the maid was hurting it on purpose to cause a disturbance, as I heard afterwards, for the fellow was in the house. I told my wife to go and give it the breast to stop it crying, but at first she would not go: she pretended that she was so delighted to see me after my long absence. Finally, when I began to get angry and bade her be off, 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'you want to stay here and make love to the parlourmaid; I caught you pulling her about the other day when you were drunk.' At that I smiled, and she got up and went away, pulling the door to in pretended jest, and taking away the key. I did not think anything of it, nor had I any suspicions: indeed, I soon fell asleep, for I had just come from the country and was glad to get rest. It was getting on for day-break when she returned and opened the door. I asked her then why the doors had been banging in the night, and she pretended that the child's lamp had blown out, and she had gone next door to get a light. I said nothing and believed her tale. I did, however, notice that her face was covered with powder—although her brother had not been dead a month—but still I said nothing about her conduct. I went out and left the house in silence.

(White cheeks were highly esteemed at Athens, and when a lady wished to be especially attractive, she procured them artificially. In this case the husband is distracted by a double feeling: gratification at his wife's apparent desire to please him, and disgust at her obvious disrespect for a male relative.)

Some time elapsed after these events, gentlemen, and I had no inkling of my misfortune, when one day an

old person came up to me. She was sent, as I heard afterwards, by another woman that fellow had seduced and then abandoned, who, in her rage and indignation had spied on him until she found out the reason of his desertion. Well, the old lady came to me near my house, where she was watching, and 'Euphiletus,' said she, 'don't think that I have come in any spirit of officious interference: the man who is wronging you and your wife, as it happens, is an enemy of mine. If you take the maid who goes to market and does your errands, and torture her, you will find out everything. The man is Eratosthenes, of Oea: he is responsible for this; he has seduced your wife and many other women besides: that is his trade.

So the warning comes, and then events move quickly. The husband takes the servant, and by a mixture of promises and threats compels her not only to confess, but to betray her mistress. When next the lover comes to the house—it is alleged by the prosecution that he is beguiled there by the husband, and although this is denied, it is regarded as a quite legitimate plot—the maid informs her master; witnesses are hastily summoned; the door, left unfastened by the girl, is pushed open and the guilty pair are discovered together. Eratosthenes is struck down, his arms are pinioned, and then in the name of the law and in cold blood he is killed. The scene is like the last act of *Scheherazade* without its barbaric magnificence. Of the woman nothing is said, and the speaker concludes by reminding his

judges that his cause is theirs, and that the only way to prevent illicit love is to take summary vengeance on the lover.

The point of view, it will be noticed, as regards the marriage relationship, is very different from that expressed by Plato or Aristotle. Plato regards marriage as a temporary connection dictated by mutual interest and dissolvable at will. Aristotle says (*Politics*, 7, 16) :

As to adultery, let it be held disgraceful for any man or woman to be unfaithful when they are man and wife. If during the time of bearing children anything of the sort occur, let the guilty person be punished with a loss of privileges in proportion to the offence.

The philosophers see that marital fidelity is important chiefly in relation to children and the State, and they attach the same stigma to either of the parties who break the contract. Lysias, as a lawyer, suiting his arguments to a male audience, takes much lower ground. The husband smiles at his own infidelities, but claims the right to commit murder when his wife retaliates.

The *Eratosthenes* is, perhaps, the most vivid picture we have of home-life in Athens, but the general impression given by all the orators is much the same. Women are either cowed into hopeless submission or else they are shamelessly profligate. The occasional exceptions, such as we find in Lysias'

speech 'Against Diogiton,' where a widow defends her children's interests with skill and vigour, show that the fault was due to the marriage system rather than to woman's nature. Most of the women, however, are incapable of energy: their prison life has deprived them of the power and will to act. In Lysias' speech 'Against Simon,' for example, the speaker, a bachelor living in an abominable relationship, has his sister and nieces as inmates of his house, and he says: 'These ladies' life has been so decent and orderly that they are ashamed even for the men of their own household to set eyes upon them.' In Demosthenes' speech 'Against Conon,' his unfortunate client, again a bachelor, has his mother keeping house for him. When, after his encounter with the 'Fighting Cocks' Club' he is carried home, his cloak stolen, his lip split, and both eyes closed, the ladies of his establishment, his mother and his female attendants, begin to weep and wail over his sad condition—but they do nothing else. His male acquaintances carry him off to the public bath, there fetch a doctor, and finally remove him to the house of a friend. Even as ministering angels the Athenian women seem to have been ineffective. Only in the case of the imprisonment or the death of their male relatives do they come actively forward, and the business of mourning and funeral lamentation was by convention left almost entirely in their hands.

Most of the Athenian women then, as we see them in the writings of the orators, are mere passive animals; a few, and by no means the least successful, are open in their profligacy. Such an one is the mother of Æschines, as we have her described by Demosthenes in the speech 'On the Crown'; such also the abominable pair, mother and daughter, who are the chief characters in the speech 'Against Neæra,' which is attributed to Demosthenes. Here the mother, Neæra, a woman of notoriously bad character, succeeds in marrying an Athenian citizen, and her daughter Phanô, a person as vicious as herself, by one of those strange turns of fortune only possible in a real democracy, becomes the wife of the King-Archon, the head of the State religion, as we might say, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such another, finally, is the fair Antigona in Hyperides' speech 'Against Athenogenas,' a lady who combined the professions of broker and courtesan, and was equally successful in both.

Of women who were both virtuous and capable the orators tell us singularly little, and the probable reason is that such women in Athens had almost ceased to exist. Demosthenes and his contemporaries represent the last stage, when their country was already on the brink of political extinction, and the men of Athens had no ideals or examples of

womanly virtue to encourage them in their vain struggle against the great military power of the North. The lack of good women was a fatal disaster, but it was a disaster which the Athenians had brought upon themselves, and it led them straight to ruin.

XIII. ARISTOTLE

As the political life of Athens ends with Demosthenes, so the creative force of the Greek genius ceases with Aristotle. There are some brilliant and many charming writers after his time, but they rely for all the originality of their thought on their great predecessors. Aristotle is the last of the creators: '*tout le reste, c'est littérature.*'

Hence his unique importance in the history of human thought: not merely is he, perhaps, the greatest mind that Greece produced, but he has the advantage of coming last in the long line of thinkers on whom nearly all our intellectual life even now depends. In every department of civilised existence the influence of Aristotle must still be taken into account, and his judgment of women's position in society—a view sincerely held and on the whole most temperately expressed—has had far more effect on the world than have the idealist theories of Plato. His statement of the moral disabilities of women is to be found best in the *Ethics*; of their social disabilities in the treatise *On Generation*. The following quotations are from the English trans-

lations of those works by Welldon, Jowett, and Platt.

To begin with the moral situation in the *Ethics*. Aristotle several times repeats the statement, common enough in ancient literature, though it seems now open to serious objection, that women are less temperate and continent in their desires than men. He does not blame them, but rather regards them with pity, 'for a woman is naturally in such matters weaker than a man: a man's love is passionate and open; women feel desire and are cunning.*' A line from *The Beguiling of Zeus* is quoted to support this view by the authority of Homer, and the philosopher himself agrees with the common Greek view that for a woman to wish to keep her husband to herself was a proof that she was both unreasonable and lascivious. So, in discussing certain morbid habits, such as the practice of biting one's nails or eating cinders, Aristotle has the significant remark: 'Now whenever nature is the cause of these habits nobody would call people who give way to them incontinent, any more than we should call women incontinent from being not males but females.†' It is, perhaps, this belief in the natural incapacity of women for virtue that is the cause of the depreciatory remarks concerning the essential excellence of an Athenian woman, 'bashful modesty.'

* *Ethics*, vii. 7.

† *Ibid.* vii. 6.

It would not be right to speak of a sense of shame as a virtue, for it is more like an emotion than a moral state: at least it may be defined as a kind of fear of ignominy, and in its effects it is analogous to the fear of dangers, for people blush when they are ashamed and turn pale when they are afraid of death. It is clear, then, that both affections are in a sense corporeal, and this seems to be the mark of an emotion rather than a moral state.*

Other slighter defects in the female character, as conceived by Aristotle, are hinted at in the remark: 'It is only exceedingly slavish people who eat and drink beyond the point of surfeit'; and in the well-known description of the 'Magnanimous Man,' Aristotle's ideal, who, unlike the shrill-voiced woman, will have a deep voice and a sedate manner of speaking and be slow in his movements: he will not be in a hurry or emphatic in speech, for there are not many things he cares for, nor does he regard anything as very important, and these are the causes which make people speak in shrill tones and use rapid movements.†

These are some of the deficiencies in women: we have to go to the *Rhetoric* to get Aristotle's idea of their merits. The passage is significant:

θηλειῶν δὲ ἀρετὴ σώματος μὲν κάλλος καὶ μέγεθος, ψυχῆς δὲ σωφροσύνη καὶ φιλεργία ἄνευ ἀνελευθερίας.‡

The excellence of females is (a) physical, a large and beautiful body; (b) mental, virtuous moderation and a love—but not a sordid love—of work.

* *Ethics*, iv. 15 † *Ibid.* iv. 9. ‡ *Rhet.* A. v. 6.

First, it will be seen, comes physical attractiveness. The excellent woman must be good-looking, and by 'good-looking' we mean tall and stout, for ethereal grace does not suit the harem-master's taste. Secondly, she will be temperate in her desires: the word 'Sophrosyne,' 'virtuous moderation,' is the chief virtue in a woman: it is the faculty of 'doing without'—love, food, pleasure, consideration, etc.—and the Greeks, unlike the Romans, really did admire this passive merit even in men. Thirdly comes industry, with the restriction that a woman must not be a slave to work: she has other even more important duties—her master's pleasure, for example—and work must not be allowed to interfere unduly. In his conception of female virtue Aristotle has advanced somewhat from Pericles' negative ideal, but he has not got very far.

The most instructive passages, however, in the *Ethics* are in the Eighth Book, where friendship is considered.

There is another kind of friendship or love depending upon superiority, the friendship or love of a father for a son, of a husband for a wife, of a ruler for a subject. These friendships are of different sorts: the love of a husband for a wife is not the same as that of wife for a husband. There is a different virtue in each, a different function, and different motives. It follows that the services rendered by each party to the other are not the same, nor is it right to expect they should be. In all such friendships as depend upon the principle of

superiority, the affection should be proportionate to the superiority; *i.e.*, the better or the more useful party, or whoever may be the superior, should receive more affection than he gives.

This may sound to us humorous, but Aristotle is quite serious: it is part of his great doctrine of 'proportional equality'; and his only doubt is as to which adjective is most appropriate to man, 'better,' or 'more useful,' or simply 'superior.'* Friendship leads to a discussion of domestic associations, and while the *rule* of a slave-master seems a *right* form of despotism, the association of husband and wife is judged to be 'aristocratical,' for the husband's rule depends upon merit and is confined to its proper sphere. He assigns to the wife all that suitably belongs to her. If the husband is lord of *everything*, he changes the association to an 'oligarchy'; for then he acts unfairly and not in virtue of his superior merit. 'Sometimes the wife rules as being an heiress, but such rule is not based upon merit.' †

Last comes the question of children; and here, at least, we need make no criticisms:

It is evident why mothers love their children more than fathers. The procreation of children is the universal function of animals. In the case of other animals, this is the limit of their association; but men and

* *Ethics*, viii. 8.

† *Ibid*, viii. 12.

women unite not only for the procreation of children but for the purposes of life. As soon as they unite, a distribution of functions takes place. Some are proper to the husband and others to the wife; hence they supply one another's needs, each contributing to the common stock. Utility and pleasure seem alike to be found in the marriage relationship, but its basis will be virtue, too. Children are a bond of union, and such marriages as are childless are dissolved with comparatively little difficulty.*

The *Politics* begin with a discussion of slavery, and, by an association of ideas natural in Greek society, for Aristotle never attempts to rise above the conditions of life about him, slaves and women are treated together :

He who can foresee with his mind is by nature intended to be lord and master; and he who can work with his body is a subject, and by nature a slave: hence, master and slave have the same interest. Nature, however, has distinguished between the female and the slave. For she is not niggardly; she makes each thing for a single use, and every instrument is best made when intended for one and not for many uses. But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves.

It should be noticed here that the essential quality of the master is not physical strength, but mental capacity; it is the mind and not the body that makes the 'natural' slave, the 'live tool,' as Aristotle defines him. Man and woman, master and slave,

* *Ethics*, viii. 8.

these are the foundations of the family. As Hesiod says: 'First a house, then a woman, and then an ox for the plough'; and Aristotle has no difficulty in finding the arrangement right. He puts the question:

Is there any one intended by nature to be a slave, so that for him the condition of slavery is expedient and right; or, rather, is not all slavery a violation of nature?

And gives the immediate reply:

There is no difficulty in answering this question on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary but expedient; from the hour of their birth some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.

The law, he thinks, holds through all nature:

Tame animals have a better nature than wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by men, for then they are preserved. The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind. Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves; but this does not hold universally.

So the string of assertions goes on, and the discussion closes:

It is clear, *therefore*, that some men are by nature free and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.

Having thus justified slavery to his own satisfaction, Aristotle proceeds to deal with household management, which he subdivides into three parts : the rule of a master over slaves, of a father, and of a husband :

A husband and a father rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs : over his children it is a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For, although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature.

To illustrate his point, Aristotle quotes the saying of Amasis and his foot-pan, a good story, although it does not exactly strengthen the philosopher's position. Amasis was a commoner, who became King of Egypt ; to prove to his subjects the essential equality of all matter, he had his metal bath melted down and re-cast as a statue, to which all the people made humble obeisance, although they had treated the foot-pan with contempt. Then Amasis drew his moral : the substance of both bath and statue is the same ; there is merely a difference in outward form. ' Of this kind,' says Aristotle, ' is the relation between male and female ; but there *the inequality is permanent.*'

It is the business of household management to ensure excellence, and we are faced at once by a

difficulty: can a slave possess virtue? If he has virtue, in what will he differ from a freeman? A similar question may be raised about women and children: ought a woman to be called temperate, brave, and just? Aristotle solves the difficulty thus:

Women and slaves have a sort of virtue, the virtue of the irrational part of the soul. The slave has no deliberate faculty at all; the woman has it, but with her it is inconclusive. The ruler must have moral virtue in perfection; the subject requires only that measure of virtue which is proper to him. Virtue will be common to man and woman, but it will not be the same virtue: *e.g.*, the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying.

These are hard sayings, and they bring Aristotle into direct conflict with Plato, who, in the *Meno*, discusses the question whether the virtue of a man and a woman is the same or different, and comes to the conclusion that it is the same. But Aristotle never hesitates to criticise his former teacher, and it is a curious point how far his low estimate of women is not the result of the pupil's unconscious reaction against a master's enthusiasm. A great part of the *Politics* is, in fact, a criticism of the *Republic*, and the discussion on slavery, which occupies most of the first book, is followed by a close consideration of Plato's communistic State. The objections raised are of a severely practical nature, *e.g.*:

If the women are shared in common, and private property is retained, the men will see to the fields; but who will see to the house?

And again:

Two virtues are destroyed in the communistic State; first, temperance towards women (for it is an honourable action to abstain from another man's wife for temperance's sake); secondly, liberality in the matter of property. The legislation of such a State may have a specious appearance of benevolence, but such evils as there are in property are due to a cause that laws cannot eradicate: the wickedness of human nature. Indeed, we see that there is much more quarrelling among those who have all things in common, though there are not many of them, than there is among the vast majority of men who keep to private property.

The criticism, however, although acute on points of detail, does not touch the essentials of feminism, and, in the *Politics*, Aristotle often reveals himself unconsciously as Plato's former disciple. His remarks on education are based very largely, although he makes no acknowledgment, on his master's teaching and scarcely harmonise with his own views on women. The concluding sentences of the first book, for example, are distinctly Platonic in their tone:

The relations of husband and wife, parent and child, their several virtues, what in their intercourse with one another is good and what is evil, and how we may pursue the good and escape the evil, will have to be discussed when we speak of the different forms of

government. For inasmuch as every family is a part of a State, and these relationships are the parts of a family, the virtue of the part must have regard to the virtue of the whole. And therefore women and children must be trained by education with an eye to the State, if the virtues of either of them are supposed to make any difference in the virtues of the State. And they must make a difference; for the children grow up to be citizens, and half the free persons in a State are women.

So in discussing the Spartan constitution he says :

A husband and a wife being each a part of every family, the State may be considered as about equally divided into men and women : and, therefore, in those States where the condition of the women is bad, half the city may be regarded as having no laws*—

a sentiment taken, with a slight difference of application, directly from Plato himself, and the Platonic influence is plainly seen in all the chapters which treat of marriage and education :

Since the legislator should begin by considering how the frames of the children whom he is rearing may be as good as possible, his first care will be about marriage, at what age should his citizens marry, and who are fit to marry.

So the discussion starts reasonably enough, but the conclusion hardly agrees with modern ideas of eugenics :

Women should marry when they are about eighteen years of age, and men at seven-and-thirty ; then they

* *Politics*, 2, 9.

are in the prime of life, and the decline in the powers of both will coincide. Furthermore, the children, if their birth takes place at the time that may reasonably be expected, will succeed in their prime, when the fathers are already in the decline of life and have nearly reached their term of three-scores years and ten.

Aristotle here seems to be following not any ideal system, but the actual practice of his time, a practice which Euripides (fr. 319) had already condemned. The gap in age between husband and wife is far too great for any real physical or moral companionship. The husband, moreover, remaining unmarried until the age of thirty-seven, can hardly be supposed to have escaped from the illicit connections which were allowed and encouraged by Athenian custom: to say that such an one is in his prime is surely to mis-state the case. The art of being a grandfather also under this system tends to disappear, for a man could hardly hope to see grandchildren of his own, if neither he nor his sons married till they were thirty-seven: his daughters, of course, as Euripides again tells us (fr. 320), on marriage passed altogether out of their father's life. The whole arrangement is obviously wrong, but it suited the conditions of Athenian domestic life, where a young wife could be more easily kept in subjection and large families were neither desired nor customary; and because it existed, therefore to Aristotle it seemed right.

The female, found to be inferior in a moral and political sense, is also considered by Aristotle to be physically inferior to the male, and in the treatise *On Generation* he deals with this question frequently and at some length :

Male and female differ in their essence by each having a separate ability or faculty, and anatomically by certain parts ; essentially the male is that which is able to generate in another, the female is that which is able to generate in itself and out of which comes into being the offspring previously existing in the parent.*

The distinction of sex is a first principle :

An animal is not male or female in virtue of an isolated part or an isolated faculty : when that which distinguishes male and female suffers change many other changes accompany it, as would be the case if a first principle is changed.†

The treatise is concerned chiefly with the phenomena of reproduction :

For the business of most animals is, you may say, nothing else than to produce young, as the business of a plant is to produce seed and fruit.‡

Sex-characteristics accordingly are described mainly in accordance with their reproductive functions.

As regards the origin of sex and the causes of male

* *De Generatione*, 716, a, 18. † *Ibid.* 716, b, 10.

‡ *Ibid.* 717, a, 20.

and female, Aristotle is a curious mixture of prejudice and insight. He begins thus :

To suppose that heat and cold are the causes of male and female, or that the different sexes come from the right and left, is not altogether unreasonable in itself, for the right of the body is hotter than the left.

With him it is an unquestioning belief that the right is, in nature, superior to the left, the upper to the lower, the front to the back ; and nature, when no more important purpose stands in the way, places the more honourable part in the more honourable position. So it is that the heart, which is the nobler organ, is in the upper part of the body, while the stomach is in the lower. As he is equally sure that the male is superior to the female, the male elements in reproduction will come from the right or noble part of the body.

But the part taken by the male and female elements in the process of generation is, according to Aristotle, absolutely different. The child is not formed from a mixture of both, but the female contributes the material, the male is the active agent. The analogy used is that of a bed : the female is the wood, the male the carpenter, who, from the wood, makes the bed. The female is passive, the male is active :

It is through a certain incapacity that the female is female : females are weaker and colder in nature

than males, and we must look upon the female character as being a sort of natural deficiency.*

Women, in Aristotle's view, are rather plants than animals ; for the animal differs from the plant, chiefly in having sense-perception. If the sensitive soul is not present, the body is no better than a corpse, and this sensitive soul is supplied only by the male. The female provides the material, the male fashions it ; the body is from the female, the soul from the male, who can stand outside the body just as the artist stands outside his creation. It certainly seems that female children progress more quickly than male, but that is merely a proof of their inferiority ; for all inferior things come sooner to their perfection or end, and as this is true of works of art so it is true of what is formed by nature.

These quotations will illustrate that curious depreciation of the female element in nature and especially in man which is one of the weaker points in the treatise. It is continually recurring ; for example, in describing the hair of animals these are the reasons given for baldness :

The front part of the head goes bald because the brain is there and man is the only animal to go bald, because his brain is much the largest and moistest. *Women do not go bald.*†

* *De Generatione*, 728 a.

† *Ibid*, 784, a.

So in the discussion of voice we read :

The voice of the female is higher than that of the male in all animals, and in man this is especially noticeable. A deep note is *better* than a high pitched : depth belongs to the nobler nature, and depth of tone shows a sort of superiority.*

Nor is this view of the physical, and consequently the mental, inferiority of the female confined to the *De Generatione* : it permeates the *History of Animals*, and finds its clearest expression there in a passage which perhaps gives the ultimate reason of Aristotle's error :

In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental characteristics of the two sexes. This differentiation is the most obvious in the case of human-kind and in that of the larger animals and the viviparous quadrupeds. In the case of these latter the female is softer in character, is the sooner tamed, admits more readily of caressing, and is more apt in the way of learning. With all animals, except the bear and the leopard, the female is softer in disposition than the male, is more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive, and more attentive to the nurture of the young. The traces of these differentiated characteristics are more or less visible in every species, but they are especially visible where character is the more developed, and most of all in man. The fact is, the nature of man is the most rounded off and complete, and consequently in man the qualities above referred to are found in

* *De Generatione*, 787, a.

their perfection. Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action, and requires a smaller quantity of nutriment.*

The Athenian women of the fourth century were the women that Aristotle knew best, and, given Aristotle's character and scientific method, it is not surprising that he should judge Woman in the abstract to be an inferior animal. If he had been a little more of a poet and idealist—in other words, if he had not been Aristotle—he might have taken another view; but considering the facts of Athenian life in his day, and Aristotle's disposition to cling to facts, we need not wonder at his estimate. The real mischief—and Aristotle's influence in this matter has been an enormous hindrance to human progress—was done not by the philosopher himself, for in his time the position of women could hardly have been altered for the worse, but by his blind followers in later ages when his slightest word was regarded almost as inspired truth. Aristotle himself is never dogmatic (he leaves that to weaker men), and does not profess to give anything but the some-

* *Hist. An.*, 608, b (trans. Thompson).

what casual expression of his own personal knowledge and opinions.

It is hardly right to blame him : women in his time undoubtedly were the inferior sex, and Aristotle is always the prophet of things as they are. The *protégé* of the absolute monarchy which had overthrown the city-states, he has no belief in abstract freedom or in social reform. For him, what is right. 'Women and slaves are inferior,' he says to himself, 'by the conditions of existence as I see them : *therefore* they are inferior by the laws of nature,' and although he knows that this inferiority was the result of the conditions of their life, his business is only with facts.

But he generalises from insufficient data : Woman for him means the women of his time, and although he points out the influence of environment, he fails to distinguish between innate and accidental characteristics. And so again, in treating of the female sex in nature, he is too inclined to confine himself to the higher mammals. He emphasises the case of the herbivorous animals, those that go in herds, and are polygamous in their habits : deer, for example, where the male has a distinct advantage in size and strength ; while he says little of the carnivora, who hunt in pairs and are monogamous, where the female tends to be equal in every respect to the male. Insects he almost disregards, and the micro-

scope, in the hands of a naturalist of genius like M. Fabre, has opened up for us a world from which Aristotle was debarred by the material limitations of his instruments.

We see now that Nature, at least, has no favoured sex, and that Euripides' words are as true in a zoological as they are in a sociological sense: 'All that can be said of the male can be said equally well of the female, and *vice versa*.' The male that in some species is the stronger and more active, in others is the weaker and plays a passive rôle. The female mantis that devours her feeble mate is the reverse side of Nature's picture. So again, all the fascinating problems of parthenogenesis, whereby the female may produce for several births without the intervention of the male, have received a new light from the close study of the hive. Aristotle's chapter on bees suffers materially from lack of first-hand knowledge, and, as Professor Platt says, although it is greatly to his credit for hard thinking, it reveals the fact that he knew next to nothing about the subject. Of course, the whole method of bee-generation is totally at variance with Aristotle's theory of male superiority, and if he had possessed our knowledge his theory might have been modified. In the world of insects, at least, feminism reigns; the male is weak and subservient, the female is the ruler. Often the male is an accident;

the female would have sufficed. So true is this that a modern essayist, M. Remy de Gourmont, writing under the influence of Fabre's discoveries, can vary Aristotle's analogy and compare the female to the clock and the male to the necessary key that winds up the mechanism.

But although Aristotle can scarcely be said to understand all the mysteries of sex, he anticipates some of the most fruitful investigations of modern research, and in all questions of pure science, within the limits of his own experience, he is almost infallible. It is unfortunate that his experience of women was misleading, and that the problems of feminism do not always fall within the confines of science. That he was wrong in this matter is chiefly the fault of his times and their social conditions, and those who live in other days and amid other surroundings should remember his own significant words, spoken indeed about bees, but equally applicable to other social animals :

Such appears to me to be the truth, judging from theory and what I believe to be the facts. But up to the present the facts have not been sufficiently comprehended ; if ever they are, then credit must be given to observation rather than to theories, and to theories only if what they affirm agrees with observed facts.

And with that quotation we may well leave him :
Amicus Aristoteles ; magis amica veritas. If the

facts of modern existence show women to be the inferior sex, then, and then only, are we moderns justified in holding that opinion. But every man should judge for himself on the evidence that his own observation gives, and not be influenced by the theories of other men or by the literature of the past.

In Aristotle's time, for reasons which this brief survey of Greek literature has, perhaps, made plain, the facts of women's nature were certainly not sufficiently comprehended. Euripides and Plato are almost the only authors who show any true appreciation of a woman's real qualities, and to Euripides and Plato, Aristotle, by the whole trend of his prejudices, was opposed. His mistake was that he failed to realise the moral aspects of feminism. A nation that degrades its women will inevitably suffer degradation itself. Aristotle lent the weight of his name to a profound error, and helped to perpetuate the malady which had already been the chief cause of the destruction of Greece.

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