

THE NEW BOOKS

WOMAN IN SCIENCE¹

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Dr. Mozans is not only an erudite student versed in scientific and what would formerly have been called "humanistic" studies, but an explorer and traveler of note. Moreover, he is a man to whom nothing human is alien, who loves the life of the past and the life of the present, and whose sympathies are keen for every good cause.

The present book is emphatically timely, dealing as it does with the right of woman to the opportunity to develop her life precisely as the man has the right to develop his. The movement to give to woman this right has strengthened until now in the countries of advanced civilization it is on the point of victory. This book is a storehouse of facts and arguments for all who in this struggle take the side of reason and justice. It deals with woman's long struggle for the things of the mind, and in chapter after chapter discusses what women have already accomplished in scientific pursuits, in mathematics, medicine and surgery, in the natural sciences—in short, in every department of that laborious intellectual activity for which it has been the foolish fashion to insist on woman's special unfitness.

Most of the so-called arguments against giving woman the chance which is given to the lowest men are in essence identical with the arguments formerly used by the favored classes among men against giving equality of opportunity to the majority of male mankind who were below them. Unfortunately the enfranchised man usually takes some time before he realizes that the woman, his helpmate, cannot justly be denied the rights which it were injustice for him not to receive.

The opponents of giving to woman her rights of course vary widely in nature. Some of them are made opponents chiefly by the excesses of foolish or immoral advocates of the movement among the women themselves. Every such movement, every democratic movement or movement for social or industrial reform, must have its leaders and its martyrs, and unfortunately every such movement also develops a few fools and a few knaves, who give an alloy of base metal to the pure gold of the leadership and the martyr-

dom. There are foolish women and women who are worse than foolish who in advocating justice to woman seek to release her from her physical obligations to humanity and her moral obligations to society. Advocates of this type who demand that woman shall cease doing her prime duty as wife and mother, as the bearer and rearer of children, are not only foolish but wicked. They stand on an exact level with the criminal demagogue who in the name of democracy and of the rights of labor preaches murder and demands for mankind freedom from the stern law which insists that the race can rise only through the individuals who do not shirk hard work or slip backward from the laws of morality. The first type of wickedness and folly is akin to the second; the woman who preaches the first type of doctrine is no worse and no better than the man who preaches the second; each is an unworthy champion of the cause, each furnishes arguments for the opponents of the cause.

But neither is really important, save as showing that when people have been oppressed and are given their freedom there is always some danger of the freedom being abused, and this without regard to whether they are men or women. When the reforms have been accomplished and the period of excitement has passed, there is no more reason for believing that woman will shirk her duties because she has acquired rights than for believing that the average man in a democracy will be less dutiful than the average man in a despotism. The argument both from theory and experience is identical in the two cases.

It is impossible to give even an abstract of the mass of interesting facts accumulated by Dr. Mozans. There is hardly a famous name among the women of scientific learning upon which he does not touch with sympathetic understanding. He understands them all, from Hypatia, the beloved friend of that wonderful old Christian bishop and Neoplatonist philosopher Synesius of Libya, to the women of our own time who have done such varied work in archaeology, in natural science, as inventors, and in medicine and surgery. Incidentally he points out that one of the most noted physicists of the eighteenth century, a friend of Voltaire, a professor in the University of Bologna, Laura Bassi, was the mother of twelve children. She never per-

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mitted her extraordinary scientific and literary work to conflict with her domestic duties, or to detract in the least from the deep affection which united her to her husband and children. The same lesson is taught by her contemporary of a very different type, the Empress Maria Theresa. She was an exemplary wife and the mother of many children. These were born and brought up during the very years when their Empress-mother rescued Austria from destruction and faced trials greater than any of her contemporary sovereigns save only her great antagonist Frederick.

It is worth while mentioning, by the way, that the only eighteenth-century sovereign who approached the great Frederick in masterful ability was also a woman, Catharine of Russia. Even crusted conservatives speak of Catharine and Maria Theresa as great sovereigns, just as they all admit that among the sovereigns born to the throne of England during the last four centuries the greatest was the woman Elizabeth. They not merely admit, but insist, that Elizabeth and Catharine and Maria Theresa bore the greatest state burdens as well as any man could have borne them. Yet they see nothing incongruous in taking the position that if these women had happened to stand two or three degrees lower in the social hierarchy they would have been wholly unfit to sit beside some hard-drinking, sodden predecessor of Squire Weston in the British Parliament, or rank with some dull Hungarian or Russian magnate whose whole worth to his country depended upon the alacrity with which he obeyed the orders of the imperious woman who was his sovereign.

The progress of woman, or, in other words, the progress of man in helping himself by doing justice to the woman who labors beside him, has been more rapid in some countries than in others, and at some times than at others. Italy has borne an honorable distinction in the advance, standing far above France, England, and Germany, and, for the matter of that, beyond the United States until very recent times. Five centuries ago that very remarkable woman Christine de Pizan (whose learning was so wide that it included the ability to write a standard military text-book) spoke as follows:

I say to thee again, and doubt never the contrary, that if it were the custom to put the little maidens to the school, and they were made to learn the sciences as they do to the men-children,

that they should learn as perfectly, and they should be as well entered into the subtleties of all the arts and sciences as men be. And peradventure, there should be more of them, for I have taught heretofore that by how much women have the body more soft than the men have, and less able to do divers things, by so much they have the understanding more sharp there as they apply it.

In the Italy of the Middle Ages there were great schools of medicine for women at Salerno and Bologna. Yet the University of Paris persecuted women during those very centuries because they dared to try to serve their fellow-women in their hours of sorest need! And but a generation ago the University of London, with blind selfishness and obscurantism, declined to allow women to study surgery or medicine. Vassar, the pioneer college for women, is not fifty years old.

Dr. Mozans is a great lover of Dante, and on the title-page he quotes from Dante's line asking what can be better in a woman than wisdom—the knowledge which comes from training no less than from natural ability. Nowadays few men of the first rank, few men indeed aside from cheap dealers in paradoxes, deny woman's right to as good an education as any man can obtain. We marvel that our predecessors a century or even half a century ago should have failed to see this. Half a century or a century hence our successors will marvel as greatly that we failed to see the indefensibility of denying to woman the other rights necessary to put her on a footing of complete equality with man.

They will marvel no less at the folly and wickedness of the women who have believed that the acquirement of rights will absolve them from the performance of duties. But this is only to say that they will feel as we do, we democrats of the school of Hampden and Washington and Lincoln, when we turn with contemptuous abhorrence from the misdeeds committed by the Robespierres and Marats in the name of democracy. Neither woman nor man can shirk duties under penalty of eventually losing rights, for the possession of the right should be conditioned upon the performance of the duty. Moreover, equality of right does not mean identity of function. In any healthy community the prime duty of the woman will ever be that of the wife and mother, just as the prime duty of the man will be to provide the home for wife and children; and this prime duty

need interfere no more in one case than in the other with the opportunity to lead, in whatever direction the woman chooses, a life of full and varied interest, which of necessity means a life in which work worth doing is well done.

A few years ago a book making a similar plea to Dr. Mozans's appeared in Paris—"Préjugé et Problème des Sexes" by Jean

Finot. There is in this a sentence which finely and tersely puts the truth which both writers champion. It runs as follows: "Humanity will be the happier in proportion as it becomes juster, and man will be more content with his lot from the moment when his wife or his sister, admitted to the banquet of life, shares with him the full right to both its bitterness and its joy."