

tile to the public good, or contradictory to former declarations. But the term *republican* or *commonwealth's-man*, has a fixed and determinate meaning; and may, without hesitation, be avowed by all who hold that government was instituted for the good of the whole; and that this good is best consulted by placing the supreme power in more hands than one.

J. A.

THE ENQUIRER. No. III.

QUESTION: *Are Literary and Scientific Pursuits suited to the Female Character?*

Ἐπὶν δὲ τῇ κἀγὼ πόλλα φίλτρα δίχα τῆς ἀρ-
ώρας. ἡ γὰρ πρὸς γράμματα καλῶς ἡσκηθῆ, ἡ
πρὸς λυραὶν, ἡ γεωμετρίαν, καὶ λόγων φιλοσόφων
ἔστιτο χρησίμως ἀκούειν. PLUTARCH.

THERE WERE IN THIS LADY [CORNELIA] MANY CHARMS BESIDES HER BEAUTY; FOR SHE WAS FINELY ACCOMPLISHED IN LITERATURE, IN MUSIC, AND IN GEOMETRY, AND SHE USED TO ATTEND TO PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSES WITH GREAT ADVANTAGE.

See Knox on Education, Sect. 27.

THE Enquirer, who, if not a philosopher in the arrogant meaning annexed to the appellation in modern times, ventures to assume the title in the modest sense, in which it was understood by the ancients, as denoting a lover of wisdom, has observed, with much satisfaction, the firm and dignified tone, with which the female sex, in the person of its able and eloquent advocate, Mrs. Wollstoncraft, has asserted its intellectual rights. Although he is too jealous of the rights of man, to concede to woman so unjust a monopoly, as that of being at once the most lovely and the wisest part of the human species, he has no wish to share in the barbarism of excluding her from a free participation of the pleasures and honours of science. The tree of knowledge, planted by the hand of nature, in an open plain, invites every passenger to partake of its bounty; and man, instead of rudely hedging it round with thorns, to deter the approach of woman, ought to assist her in plucking the fruit from those branches which may happen to hang above her reach.

Strongly impressed with these sentiments concerning the right of women to knowledge, and to all the means of attaining it; but at the same time perceiving some obstacles in the way of their intellectual progress, arising from cir-

cumstances peculiar to the female character; it has appeared to the Enquirer, a question, highly interesting to one half of the human species directly, and indirectly to the other, how far it is of advantage to females to assert their claim, and engage in literary and scientific pursuits? In attempting to settle this point, he has, however, met with difficulties, which had almost disheartened him, when a fortunate incident relieved him from his embarrassments. Conversing on this subject with an elderly lady of his acquaintance, who not having been encumbered with domestic cares, has had much leisure for improving her understanding, and who has been an attentive and judicious observer of the female world; this lady, who shall be known to the reader by the name of Margaretta, communicated to him the particulars of a conversation on female accomplishments, which had, a few days before, passed with her and two of her nieces, of different families; Sophia, a young lady educated in the fashionable style, and fond of dissipation; and Eliza, a studious lady, habituated to domestic retirement, and more sollicitous to cultivate her mind, than to display the charms of her person. The conversation was, in substance, as follows:

Sophia. So, my grave coz, they tell me, you are a serious admirer of this rhodomontade work, that has of late turned the heads of so many females, Mrs. Wollstoncraft's Rights of Women?

Eliza. Why, yes, my lively coz, if I am to understand this smart attack seriously, I plead guilty to the charge. I own I do admire the rational sentiments and liberal spirit of the work; and, at the hazard, perhaps, of being thought a little deranged in my intellects, I will confess to you, that I should myself think it no discredit to be called one of Mrs. Wollstoncraft's female philosophers. Indeed, I think it scarcely possible for any woman of sense to resist the united force of her reasoning and eloquence; and I wonder how it has happened, that you, Sophia, in reading the work, escaped having had your head turned too?

Sophia. O, that matter is very easily explained. I have never given myself a chance of becoming one of Mrs. Wollstoncraft's disciples. Curiosity, 'tis true, enticed me to take up a book that every body was talking about; but, carelessly dipping into it, before I sat down to the serious business of reading a large
octavo

octavo volume, I happened to fall upon a passage, which taught me, that philosophy is of no sex; and hinted that the creatures, hitherto called men and women, ought to wear a common dress. I was soon sick of such absurdities—threw aside the book, perhaps a little peevishly, and made a solemn vow, from that moment, that I would never be a philosopher.

Eliza. In good truth, piously vowed! but pardon me, my dear Sophia, if I conjecture, that it may have happened in this case, as it has in many others, that ignorance has been the mother of devotion. As, by your own confession, you have not read the work; and as you have done me the honour to class me among the female philosophers; will you have patience with me, if I give you my ideas on the subject, under the correction of our good aunt, who, I know, though she has not joined in the conversation, has not been inattentive to what has passed.

Sophia. As to patience, my dear, I cannot promise you so much in that way; but as I suppose you do not mean to preach a sermon, I am all attention.

Margaretta. The subject, niece, deserves attention: I believe few people have very accurate notions upon it: I shall be glad to hear my niece Eliza's opinion.

Eliza. My opinion, if I am to give it in form, is, that women, in common with the men, are rational beings, and have an equal right with them to all the pleasures of intellect; and that it should be a woman's first object, as a human being, to cultivate her understanding. I never could read, with patience, the insolent observation of the Spectator, that "all that a woman has to do in this world, is contained within the duties of a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother." If these Lords of the creation would give us fair play, we would soon convince them, that we are capable of rivalling them in any thing, except bodily strength; and I know no better object of ambition, than to rival them in knowledge.

Sophia. What! not that of subduing the tyrants, and bringing them as slaves to your feet? Your's, my dear Eliza, must be a strange unnatural system, that would teach you to find more pleasure in refusing an argument, than in conquering a heart.

Margaretta. A truce, Sophia, with your railery! and for once, if you can, be serious.

Sophia. I protest, my dear aunt, I never was more serious in all my life. I

know not what should make one serious, if not an attempt to rob us young women of the pleasure of *flirtation*. Now do, my beloved *cox*, tell me honestly—none of the male creatures are by—does it not go a little against the grain, even with your wife gravity, to shut yourself up with your Lockes and your Newtons, and to be "commencing with the skies," when you might be footing it on the floor of a public room, among a crowd of admirers? Or can you in your conscience say, that you had rather hold a learned conversation with philosophers of no sex, on liberty and necessity, or on the origin of evil, than enjoy the delight of a little rattle about nothing with the fellows in a side-box?

Eliza. As to the dear delight you talk of, Sophia, I must tell you honestly, that philosophy has already made me too wise, or if you like it better, too stupid, to relish it. I could never persuade myself that nonsense, in falling from the lips of a pretty fellow, was converted into sense. Nor have I ever felt what, I own, my reason instructs me to call the culpable vanity of making numerous conquests. Of the conquest of one worthy heart, no woman needs be ashamed: but a coquet, with a train of dangles, has always appeared to me a despicable feeble character.

Sophia. Your wisdom, my dear, makes you, methinks, a little too severe. If I am to speak plainly in my turn, I must say, I have no patience with that freezing philosophy, which would nip every pleasure in the bud, and convert every melting heart into stone. I am afraid, Eliza, your system, in banishing that lively nonsense, that drops from the lips without the trouble of thinking, would convert our gay circles into silent meetings. If I were to grow so very wise, as I am sure your philosophy would make me, I am persuaded, I should lose more than half my charms.

Eliza. Still, Sophia, harping upon the same string! How happy should I think myself, my dear girl, could I teach you at least so much philosophy, as to convince you, that a woman has higher objects to pursue, than to gratify her own vanity, or to please the men. By devoting themselves to these objects, and by entertaining the silly notion that their weaknesses and defects render them amiable, women have hitherto kept themselves in a state of inferiority, for which nature never designed them. It has never yet been proved, that woman's understanding,

derstanding, like her stature, is lower than that of the men. I do not know whether it might not be proved, that woman has *more mind* than man. If mind be an effect of organization, as the system at present adopted by our most enlightened philosophers, leads them to conclude, it seems probable, that the female, whose organic structure is certainly more delicate than that of the male, is capable of higher refinement of intellect.

Sophia. Eliza, I don't perfectly comprehend you.

Eliza. Very likely, Sophia; these speculations are at first a little abstruse: but I beg pardon for troubling you with a theory, which was not necessary to my argument. Without any metaphysical investigation, we have a right to conclude, from the brilliant examples of women eminent for genius, learning, and philosophy, which the history of our sex affords, that if we enjoyed equal advantages with the men, we should be at least capable of equal attainments. If, in the depressed state in which female intellect has hitherto been kept, the ancient world had its Aspasia, Cornelias, and Hypatias; and modern times can boast of their Carters and Macaulays, their Barbauds and Wollstoncrafts, what may not be expected in a new order of things, in which rational beings, of both sexes, shall meet together, to prosecute, without any frivolous interruptions, or childish restraints, the noble object of intellectual improvement? Your good sense, Sophia, must, I am sure, convince you, that conversation, conducted upon this rational plan, would be far preferable to the idle chat you every day hear, upon fashionable dress, public amusements, and domestic anecdotes.

Sophia. Conversation goes on very pleasantly, as it is managed at present.

Eliza. Would it not be as well, if it were also a little improving? Besides, Sophia, how can a young woman better employ her leisure hours, of which she commonly has, or may have, abundance, than in calling forth the energies of her mind, and exercising her reason on subjects interesting to every human being? Is the study of natural history, and natural philosophy, of civil history, or of the principles of policy, morals, and religion, an employment at all inconsistent with the female character? Would a woman be the less qualified for discharging the duties of a wife, or mother, because she understands the nature and ra-

tional grounds of these duties? Would she be the less capable of educating her children properly, because she is acquainted with many of the subjects in which they are to be instructed? Or would she be the less agreeable companion, either in domestic retirement, or in the larger circles of friendly society, for possessing a stock of well arranged ideas, and knowing how to communicate them with advantage? If personal charms are to be brought into the question, is the woman the less lovely for having her countenance animated with intelligence? Believe me, Sophia, philosophy is no enemy to the graces; and a cultivated mind may dwell in a charming form.

Sophia. Well now, Eliza, if I could be quite assured of that, I almost think your fine speech would convert me to your system. But—no—it cannot be; at least, at present. I am certain, I am not grave enough for a philosopher: so, my dear coz,

“Hail to pleasure's frolic train!
 “Hail to fancy's golden reign;
 “Festive mirth, and laughter wild,
 “Free and sportive as the child;
 “Hope, with eager sparkling eyes,
 “And easy faith, and fond surprise!
 “Let these, in fairy colours dress'd,
 “For ever share my carelefs breast:
 “Then, though wise I may not be,
 “The wise themselves shall envy me *.”

Margaretta. Charming lines, Sophia! and smartly introduced. But if you meant them in refutation of Eliza's arguments in favour of female philosophy, you shot a little wide of the mark. The elegant writer, whose lines you have quoted, is herself a philosopher, and I am sure never meant to discourage, in either sex, the pursuit of wisdom. You, appear to me, my dear niece, through this whole conversation, to have treated the subject with too much levity. You, I am sure, wish to be an accomplished woman: and, allow me to say, no woman can be so without knowledge. Eliza's sentiments on the subject are, I am convinced, in the main, right. I have seen, in my time, a very happy change taking place in the female world, in consequence of the increasing attention which has been paid to interior, as well as exterior, accomplishments, in the education of young women. In this business, there yet remains, it is true, much room for correction and improvement. But know-

* Mrs. Barbauld's Poem: To Wisdom.

edge is certainly more valued, and more pains are taken to diffuse it, than formerly. Young women, in the present age, ought to know and value the peculiar advantage with which, in this respect, they enter into life. Instead of considering science, either with superstitious reverence, as above their reach, or with ignorant contempt, as beneath their notice, they should pursue it with ardour, as the foundation of the most useful and ornamental attainments. But, I ought to ask pardon for thus unnecessarily trying your patience.

Eliza. Your good lessons, kind aunt, are always welcome! It is, I am sure, our united request, that you would go on to explain to us how far you think scientific pursuits are suited to the female character?

Margaretta. I certainly would not advise a young woman to aim at universal knowledge: I should, perhaps, advise, ordinarily, a narrower field of learning, than would satisfy the inquisitive mind of Eliza. With suitable opportunities and advantages, I see no reason why minds of a particular cast, among women as well as men, may not contribute essentially to the advancement of knowledge. But it seems, in common, most eligible that the objects of study should be regulated by utility. Those studies which are adapted to fit a woman for acting her part well in her personal, domestic, and social capacity, and to qualify her for conversation in the circles in which she is likely to be thrown, appear to have the first claim to her attention. In a plan of female study, I should comprehend, what Eliza has entirely overlooked, pursuits properly literary. The formation of a taste for polite literature constitutes, in my judgment, an essential part of female education. When a peculiarly favourable opportunity offers for acquiring classical learning to such a degree of perfection, as to enable the scholar to read the writings of the ancients with facility, it should not be neglected. But, without a learned education, it is possible for young women to acquire a very correct taste in polite literature and the fine arts: and the elegant pursuits of taste, I own, I consider, as peculiarly suited to the female character. They furnish an endless variety of amusement; and they have a happy tendency to cherish that delicate sensibility, which, how fashionable so ever it may be, to despise it, must always form an essential part of female excellence. Without intending the slightest insinuation

to the disadvantage of my scientific niece, I must remark to you the natural tendency which philosophical pursuits have to damp the ardour of affection. Women do not always become more amiable exactly in proportion as they improve in knowledge. This I do not impute to philosophy; for I conceive its genuine effect to be, to refine every power, and meliorate every passion of the human mind: I impute the defect, in part, to the almost exclusive attention which those who philosophize pay to subjects which solely occupy the understanding; and in part to a prejudice not unusually connected with a fondness for speculation, against sensibility, as at best only an amiable weakness. Though sensibility is sometimes affected, and is sometimes in reality indulged to such excess as to become a morbid habit of mind, it is as natural to man as intellect; and, while it is regulated by reason, is not to be despised as a weakness, but to be cherished as a source of the purest pleasures; and to be admired as the last finishing, and highest polish of the female character. Philosophers—especially female philosophers—if they wish to be loved, as well as respected, should cultivate the imagination and affections, together with the understanding; and should be careful that, in improving the head, they do not neglect the heart. But, it is high time, nieces, that I release you from this tedious lecture.

LETTER OF JOHN BULL.

[The following *jeu d'esprit* was written two or three years ago, at a time when every body thought it necessary to prove their loyalty, by associations, and the most extravagant declarations of attachment to the constitution.]

I HAVE long had the happiness of being married, as I have often said and sworn, to the best of all possible wives; but as this best of all possible wives has a few fancies, which I should be glad she were cured of, I have taken the liberty to lay my case before you.

My wife, sir, has been much admired in her time, and still is, in my eye, a very desirable woman; but you well know, sir, that let wives wear as well as you can suppose, they will be the worse for wear; and so it is with my dame; and if I were to say, that I can see in her neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, I should belie my own eye-sight. I like her, however, altogether, better than any woman I know; and