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WOMEN OF THE SPECIES

ANNESLEY BURROWS DEFENDS KIPLING'S BEEM.

He Analyses it, and Shows That it Contains No Insult to Woman—Kipling's Reference to the Suffragettes.

By Annesley Burrows, Detroit. It is a curious fact that most of the nonsense written about Mr. Kipling and his new poem emanates from men, while the most restrained utterances come from a woman, Mrs. Lagrange.

The male scribbles vic with each other, and the poet, and in reading things into the poem which are not there, in order to give themselves the happiness of contradiction. One inspired student of womankind, and an editor at that, refers to woman as "the begetter," which is certainly a new thought in physiology, and something which has not before been claimed for the sex by its most ardent partisans.

Another editor draws a fanciful picture of a modern clubwoman tearing the stronger sex with tooth and nail, stinging with snakelike ferocity and emulating the squaws of the Iroquois in practicing cruelty, and this he solemnly avers is what Mr. Kipling teaches in his much talked of verses.

It seems pitiful when a man of Kipling's genius produces a work which evidently reflects his real convictions, that it cannot be discussed in more reasonable fashion. Assuming that Mr. Kipling's deductions are not justified—they can better be disproved by calm argument than by adjectives and epithets. But this form of attack is not without its benefits. It attracts attention. It draws more readers. The poem will be studied with more critical discrimination; and in the end people will perceive what is fallacious and what is true, and thus be enabled to form a just opinion of the whole.

"The Woman of the Species," resembles in its effect upon the public the author's great poem written some years ago on the American national character. That work also aroused a storm of vituperation, but in time when it was understood opinions were modified, and to-day it does not offend the sensibilities of cultivated Americans.

It seems curious, too, that the critics who have pulled the poem to pieces so ruthlessly have failed to notice the power of logic—whether true or false—with which Mr. Kipling supports his contentions. Secretly, himself could not have put the case more skillfully. Listen to the premises.

When man meets the bear, and threatens him, the bear will run away. If it be a male bear, if it be a female, it will not run away, but will remain and eat up the man. Wherefore, argues Kipling, the female of that species is deadlier than the male. Observe, however, that he is speaking of female bears, not of modern women, as some of the editors would have us understand.

Again, Mr. Kipling tells us that the cobra di capella will wriggle away at the approach of man—if a male cobra, but the female cobra will stay and sting the intruder to death. Hence Mr. Kipling argues that the female of that species is more deadly than the male. Observe, however, that he is speaking about female cobras, and not of American women, as the able editors are telling us.

So far we do not blame the bear, or the cobra very much. We admire the bear, and excuse the snake, and we do not chide the poet for telling us of their qualities.

But now we come to the Huron and Choctaw squaws. Mr. Kipling would have been more correct had he used the squaws of the Iroquois as examples, and considering that "Iroquois" rhymes with squaws quite as well as "Choctaw," it is surprising that he didn't. He tells us that the Jesuit missionaries did not greatly fear the warriors of these tribes, but that they trembled before the vengeance and cruelty of the women. Hence he argues that the female Indian was more deadly than the male. But, observe, he speaks of the Indian women of two centuries ago and not of the white women of to-day. For his criticism of the squaws we do not blame Mr. Kipling. In fact he might have gone further and adduced the cruelty of the Parisian menads during the French revolution as further proof of his contentions.

The most violent critics of Mr. Kipling will hesitate to deny the truth of these premises, namely, that she-bears, she-snakes and she-squaws are more deadly than the males of their kind. That must be acknowledged.

But Mr. Kipling goes deeper. He wishes to know what great natural law affects bears, snakes and savage women, and which will cause them to act alike under certain like circumstances. He finds it in the great law of motherhood. The creature who faces the frightful peril of motherhood and its colossal responsibilities must be one of indomitable courage and of immense determination—one who cannot be swayed from her duty either by fear or temptation. She must not falter, or even reason. She must be like the soldier on the battle field.

Their not to reason why! Theirs but to do or die! Noble six hundred!

If the offspring needs food, the mother takes that food. If the offspring is attacked, the mother flies to its defense. She does not reason that the food is another's, or that the offspring is in the wrong. While she reasons, the offspring might perish, so she seizes the food, and strikes down the assailant of her young. This is the mother instinct, and when it becomes obliterated, argues Mr. Kipling, the species will have reached extinction. This is the mother instinct, and so necessary is it, so absolutely essential to the maintenance of species, that nature has made it the predominant instinct, greater even than the instinct of self-preservation. So great and powerful is this instinct that it pervades and governs the whole animal nature. Hence, under sudden circumstances, Mr. Kipling argues, the female acts quickly, without pity or fear and without reason. The female bear rends the intruder even when not attacked. The female cobra strikes the passer-by who is unconscious of her proximity, and the savage woman wreaks frightful, unrelenting vengeance on the man whom she thinks has injured her people, or who may threaten their well-being. This, Mr. Kipling says, must be so, and in saying

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if he imputes no reproach to womanhood. To serve that single issue lest the generations fail. The female of the species MUST be deadlier than the male.

So far, there can be no serious criticism of Mr. Kipling has libeled them. On the contrary, we respect the mother instinct in the female cobra, the female bear and the female savage.

But Mr. Kipling goes still further. He asks if this mother instinct does not exist in the woman of the present day and date, and he expresses the belief that it does, and that it still exerts an influence, if not a mastery, over her whole nature. But observe, he here refers to woman in the mass, and not to the individual whom he and doubtless considers as exceptions to the rule. He knows that a penniless mother in Whitechapel will steal to provide her children with sustenance. He is not horrified at the action of these several mothers. It does not occur to him that she should be walked into Bloomsbury and inform Mrs. Emery Bowkin that her beloved son was a liar or a loafer the mother would turn and rend him without the slightest thought as to the truth or falsity of his assertion.

He knows that should he visit Curzon street and tell Lady Fozzle that her son is a gambler and a cheat she would have him kicked away by the footman without considering for a single moment the evidence in the case.

Mr. Kipling knows these things, as all of us know them, and upon these and such as these he bases his belief that the mother instinct still exists in the sex. But in believing this, and expressing his belief, Mr. Kipling throws no discredit on modern womanhood. He excuses the woman of Whitechapel because of the love she bore her child. He knows that young Hawkins is both a liar and a loafer, but he admires the honest man who refuses to believe it. He knows that young Fozzle is a blackleg and a sharper, but he honors Lady Fozzle for refusing to believe in her boy's shame.

So far we have seen nothing in Mr. Kipling's poem which should be construed into an insult to the sex. But now we come to the kernel of the poem, the crux of the whole discussion. Mr. Kipling states in so many words, when a woman is without a husband and without children, and when she rallies forth in pursuit of "women's rights" and of the suffrage, that her convictions and contentions become to her as husband and children, and that she will fight for them with all the fury of mother-love aroused—and with as little regard to reason.

She is wedded to convictions—in default of grosser ties. Her contentions are her children. Heaven help him who denies! He will meet no cool discussion, but the instant, white-hot, wild Wakened female of the species, warring as for spouse and child.

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If there is any insult in the Kipling poem, the kernel of it is in this stanza, but observe, that it is not directed to womankind as a whole, or to any class of women, but is aimed solely and entirely at the suffragettes. It is not shown at the suffragette of America, for of them Mr. Kipling knows nothing. It is directed at the suffragettes of London and England, who seem to be very largely of the Carrie Nation type.

We read of the ladies of the English movement rioting in the street, attacking the police, mobbing ministers of the crown and actually forcing their way into the house of commons, vi et armis. I do not think that conduct of this character is approved by the ladies of the movement in America; but do they or do they not warrant the lines written in England, by an Englishman, concerning the suffrage movement in that country? "He will meet no cool discussion, but the instant, white-hot, wild, wakened female of the species warring as for spouse and child."

If Mr. Kipling's poem contains any insult at all, the militant members of the British suffragette party are the only ones touched by it and not even all of them. For Mr. Kipling in his poem does not refer to married women and mothers, but only to unmarried women.

And when Babe and Man are lacking And she strides, unclaimed, to claim Her rights as femme (and baron). Her equipment is the same. Womanhood outside the suffrage movement, and wives and mothers in it are not touched by Mr. Kipling's poem. They have no ground for offense.

But have even the suffragettes of England a reasonable cause for annoyance? The newspapers leave us in doubt as to the violence of their actions. We see pictures of them carried away by the police patrol wagons, arraigned in the criminal courts and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, or fined, as law-breakers and disturbers of the peace. But Mr. Kipling, seeking a reason for this, attributes it to their unwarranted impulse, but so the grand and great law of motherhood to which all of us owe all and everything that we are. If this is an insult, to paraphrase Patrick Henry, the suffragettes should make the most of it.

It is true that Mr. Kipling's verses contain a few quips which I have not mentioned, but these do not alter the main arguments of the poem, as here set forth. They are perhaps annoying to women, and Kipling, the poet, should not have uttered them, but, on the other hand, it is hard to deprive Kipling, the humorist, of his little joke. But while Kipling voices a jest or two at the expense of the ladies, there can be no denying the respect which permeates such lines as these:

To serve that single issue, lest the generations fail. The female of the species must be deadlier than the male.

She who faces death by torture, for each life beneath her breast May not deal with a husband, or mistress—must not swerve for fact or jest. She is purely male diversions—not in these her honor dwells.

In these lines the author pays his tribute to true motherhood which is not merely motherhood of the body, but motherhood of the mind and soul. In his less respectful stanzas he is expressing his opinions regarding the suffrage movement in his own country. There are, of course, many who will disagree with him, and perhaps not without justice. It will be argued that woman need not forever remain subject to her primal instincts, and without doubt this is true. In the passage of the ages we are told by science, elephants have been developed from protoplasm, and saurians have evolved into birds of paradise. If whales have turned their legs into flappers, and chickens have transformed their arms into wings, as science says they have, there seems no reason why modern woman should not educate herself away from her primal instincts, and this Mr. Kipling would be the first to admit. But when she has done so will the species as a whole be the better?

Or, as Mr. Kipling puts it, "will the generations fail?" We have a class of women who are educating themselves in this way. They are good women, brave women, honest women. Many of them are good mothers. But on the whole, among these, does generation wax or wane?

McGill and English Students. The decision of the Cheshire education committee to ask the authorities of the McGill University, Montreal, if they would accept Cheshire engineering scholarship holders in the concluding stages of their studies as transfers from the Manchester or Liverpool Universities indicates that engineering students in this country have to look beyond the borders of their own universities for a more promising field of activity. Dr. Hodgson admitted that difficulty is experienced in obtaining openings for engineering students upon the completion of their university work, and this frank confession will go far towards effecting improvement in the present machinery for dealing with young engineers who have reached the diploma stage of their careers, and who are anxious to press on towards gaining distinction and a living somewhere along the main line of their profession. It is frequently asserted that the engineering colleges of this country have a steady demand for the technical men they produce, and occasionally the statement is made that the demand for technical students is greater than the supply. The explanation is that a great many firms, only remotely associated with engineering work, can find employment for youths who have been trained in accurate thinking and concise methods of investigation. The lesson to be derived from the action of the Cheshire education committee, however, is that for students who are qualified to enter upon professional engineering work the case is entirely otherwise. The central idea, in regard to the disposal of such students should be to establish an imperial service corps of engineers, consisting of qualified men holding an engineering diploma from one or other of the universities within the empire.

A promise should not be kept too long. It was far better to fulfill it at once and thus be rid of it.

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