Masculinity under the Microscope, The Question of Gender in Natural History

Rosalind White, Royal Holloway University of London
‘I have always thought that the female sex are naturally more addicted to the study than the male. I mean that young girls have a greater fondness for wild flowers than boys; but I imagine the latter take more interest in entomology. Perhaps the lack of their dress causes them to be more successful in chasing a butterfly, and their headgear is more convenient for its capture.’
‘A naturalist may be anything, everything ’.

“We may begin where we please, we shall never come to an end; our curiosity will never slacken.” – George Henry Lewes
The first women lived in a Domestic Sphere.
PROPOSED WORK
ON THE
BRITISH SEA-ANEMONES.

Mr. Gosse has for some years been collecting materials for a complete History of our native Sea-Anemones, with illustrations of every species, drawn and coloured by himself, from living specimens.

In order to further this project, he respectfully invites the cooperation of his kind scientific friends at various parts of the British and Irish coasts, who may materially assist him by transmitting to him (free of expense) specimens of all species that are not common everywhere.

An Anemone of medium size may be safely sent by post, in a small tin-canister, without water, but with a small tuft of damp sea-weed to maintain a moist atmosphere around the animal. A piece of paper should be pasted round the canister, to secure it, and also to receive the address; and the whole would probably come within the weight covered by a two-penny or four-penny stamp.

38, Huntingdon Street, Islington.
SUFFRAGE FOR BOTH SEXES.

The law which allows every male fool, not absolutely idiotic or insane, to vote for Members of Parliament, and forbids the very cleverest and best educated woman, is clearly no specimen of the perfection of human reason. Probably Mrs. Fawcett had little trouble in demonstrating its unwise wisdom in her lecture delivered at the Brighton Town Hall, the other night, on the electoral disabilities of women. The removal of those disabilities has been objected to as likely to introduce discord into families; but, as Mrs. Fawcett observed:

"The political independence of women would have a similar effect to that produced by the recognition of the right of women to think for themselves on religious subjects—persons of similar politics would marry, and domestic harmony would be rather increased than lessened."

This is true; and mutual endeavours to ascertain political views would improve the conversation of partners in a waltz for example, and so tend to social advancement. The sphere of matrimonial advertising would be enlarged by female suffrage. We should have gentlemen inclined to matrimony notifying that they desire to meet ladies of congenial politics; or sometimes, even, of opposite. A Liberal gentleman, delighting in controversy, would perhaps announce that he wanted a Conservative wife, in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of discussion.

But if married women are to vote, the Ballot will be indispensable. The Russians accustomed to beat their wives are not incapacitated by their brutality from voting; and they would coerce them by intimidation. The ladies of the higher classes would, doubtless, many of them be bribed by their husbands in all manner of ways, and often in the most unblushing manner, unless we adopted the system of secret voting.

CORONATION IN FRANCE.

The Prince, who men expect to rule With autocratic nod, Must absolutely be a fool, He being not a god.

No thunder at Rebellion launch The mightiest Caesar can, Save whilst an army, strong and stanch, Obeys that mortal man.

Society must needs be saved: It feared the Spectre Red; And soldiers, who for glory craved, Had hopes they should be fed.

Then was the First Napoleon's name, To govern with, a spell. Imperial Caesar played his game, And, truly, played it well.

High-handed long was Caesar's reign; No question would be brook; The shortest way, by might and main, He with gainsayers took;

Somewhat the worse, meanwhile, for France, Who, being tramelled so, Did, save in riches, not advance As fast as she could go.

Beneath the tutelary yoke, She, who had passive lain, At last from lethargy awoke, And asked her own again.

On Caesar's legions, who had found Their glory-dream dispelled, No confidence could Caesar ground His people could be quelled.

Then Caesar took a spacious view; He granted their demands, And liberty, in season due, Restored with open hands.

For common sense o'er Caesar's acts Extensively presides; He goes where Logic, force of facts Inexorable, guides.

Long life to Caesar, who his throne Doth, as his saddle, sit To manage Frenchmen he alone As yet has had the wit, At last he does what he was bound, By plighted word, to do, And now the edifice is crowned, Perhaps he'll be so too.
'Let no one think that Natural History is a pursuit fitted only for effeminate or pedantic men. I should say rather, that the qualifications required for a perfect naturalist are as many and as lofty as were required, by old chivalrous writers, for the perfect knight-errant of the Middle Ages; ... our perfect naturalist should be strong in body; able to haul a dredge, climb a rock, turn a boulder, walk all day, uncertain where he shall eat or rest; ready to face sun and rain, wind and frost, and to eat or drink thankfully anything'.
Section 1.
ON THE CAPTURE OF INSECTS.

BEETLES.

Not without reason have many naturalists placed beetles at the head of the insect world, for they exhibit the greatest variety of form, and in the household of nature occupy all conceivable positions and callings. These insects are called in science Coleoptera (from Gr., κολεός, a sheath, and πτερόν, a wing), because the true membranous wings with which they fly are transversely folded, when in a state of repose, beneath another pair of protecting wings of a hard and horny texture, called elytra (Gr., ἐλυτρόν, a covering).

Beetles are the best known and most numerous of all the insect tribes. Their immense numbers, the ease with which they may be
Yes! But we are sure that if Ellen knew what A figure Frederick made of her by sprawling on the cliff just behind her, she wouldn't be so quiet.
‘What a rapid rage, at the present time, all sorts and conditions of men and women are bedridden with Botany! I am pestered to distraction with letters from the learned and the unlearned, the young and the old, the masculine, feminine, neuter, and epicene genders’.

Letter to the Rev. Thomas Archer, April 1834
Mrs. Professor Fogey’s Reading Party
‘Punch’s Pocket Book 1866
Necrobioneopalaeeonthydroc
hthonananthropopopopithekology
Suggestions welcome!

Twitter: @RosalindMWhite

Blog: TheCabinetOfCuriosity.net

Email: Rosalind.White.2011@rhul.ac.uk