Is Woman’s Executive Power Growing?

Martha McClellan Brown
"Is Woman's Executive power growing?" Yes, by so much as her responsibility is enlarged and her opportunity extended. All growth comes of attrition with the elements of power. Mind grows only by attrition with mind; knowledge, by its apprehension of truth; skill, by its practice; judgement, by its exercise, and all the powers by their use. Without opportunity none of these things exist or grow.

All-round mental development being the result of attrition and opportunity, the men of the world had a monopoly in these things until our own country developed a truer democracy, and how women have grown too, by the mere attrition with conditions.

The opportunity for mental culture could be no longer "cornered" and women have not been slow to respond to the acute electrical touch of mental power.

Why should they? Do they not feel the flashing thrill of patriotism? Do they not see the corruptions of society? Do they not suffer the stings of wrong? Do they not sacrifice to the Moloch of quasi politics? Do they not scorn the breath of ignorant criticism which puffs its vile smoke in their face? Do they not awake to the impressment of progress? Do they not respond to every pulse-beat of Anglo-Saxon birth-right? Do they not keep better homes, bring up better children, accomplish more charity-work, support more churches, and earn bread for more men than ever before in the world's history?

"A future in Business?" Certainly. Women have ever been the financiers of civilization, "making the ends meet" between income and expenditure for the family's best possible comfort, where men fail utterly. And this is the true test of financial ability, because it is the test of the masses. The fact that a very few men have been able to amass vast fortunes does not prove that men are the natural financiers. It proves that a few men, and also a few women, have had the skill to use their superior opportunities for securing wealth, while vast numbers of women without opportunity and with very limited incomes, have kept their families, above utter demoralization, above the suspicion of want, or difficulty in the upward push to better manhood and womanhood. This is the highest mark of business skill— it is the highest known skill in the Republic. And this skill increases with better education and better opportunities; hence the ever-increasing betterment of American homes,—the finest average homes in the world.
In the exercise of these native powers of finance, why therefore exclude woman from any field of usefulness, whether commercial, technical, or professional?—while so many thousands of women have no husbands, or brothers to support them; and while other thousands—at least fifty thousand in this country—are obliged to support their husbands and children? Is not fair-play a genuine Saxon principle?

"In politics?" Why not? Democracy is a balancing of duties and rights in such way that the common weal is always in the ascendant. My duties are your rights and your duties are my rights in all respects. The co-ordination of rights and duties is the especial function of Constitutional government. The balancing conflict is always in the individual heart, where each must make concession of personal relation and responsibility to other constituents of state. There is a responsibility attached to every privilege, and a right co-ordinate with every obligation which enlarges the power of personality, whether of man or woman.

In the last analysis all power is in the soul of the citizen. He deputizes this power in form of a ballot expressing his opinion. If a man votes a woman's opinion he loses his own, if he votes his own, the woman's is lost in the sum of results. This is undemocratic. The exclusion of women's opinion is unjust, an unrighteous pretense at the expression of the people's will, or opinion. It is a perpetual loss to the state of the truest financial skill, the truest home interest, the truest moral worth, the truest character-building element of the whole people. The country cannot afford this loss,—this wholesale forfeiture of right-making power in a loyal citizenship.

The advancement of womanhood as a personal power in the world is not a reform. It is a formative epoch in Christian progress. The principle underlying does not involve the question of sex. The problem of sex is a simple accident of physical life which has been seized upon by the corrupting principle that "might makes right," and has set up conventional and sentimental customs about sex which the Divine Master's teachings have been unable to break down in nineteen centuries.

The fundamental ground of progress is the power of personality. Every normal person is a power, no matter which sex. Every normal person is a spirit plus a body,—a spirit endowed with attributes that are the basis of character,—a body gifted with powers and faculties that are readily trained to execute the attributes of the spirit in life. The spirit is the entity in person, the body its habitat. The spirit is the breath of God in human and mortal form...
for the building of a great Humanity. There is no distinction of powers for
general work of progress. God can take a man and use him in a woman's place-
that is in the conventional place of woman. And He can take a woman and use
her in man's (conventional) place. And repeatedly He has done this in the world's
history. The condition of equipped personality alone dictates the field for use-
fulness to humanity. "God is no respecter of persons" of men above women. The
progress of living Christianity brings about the crossing lines of what has been
regarded an old belief in a work-distinction, a superstition which
is yielding before the Christ-enlightenment.

With each new exercise of personality higher motif is developed in women,
as in men, and the future will as certainly be richer in the strong characteristics
of free personality in womanhood as the closing century has been enriched by the
finest manhood of history,—because free in the great facilities of growth.

There are a million of God's noblemen in this country today who concur with
their more eminent countrymen, George William Curtis, Geo. W. Cable, Benj. K. Wade, H. W.
Beecher, James Freeman Clarke, Joseph Cook, Philip Brooks, Wendell Phillips, Chief
Justice Chase, James Garfield, William H. Seward, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln
that woman's civil recognition in equal status with men is essential to the purity
progress, perpetuity and perfection of our Republican government. There will
probably come a crisis in the progress of events which will necessitate a con-
census of the opinion of the truest personality. Space forbids the state-
ment of facts pointing toward such epoch. It is well known that in appeal for
human cause, the people are as the needle to the pole. The felt need of higher
personal power will force men to call women to the rescue. The more persons,
the greater power to eliminate the rubbish from the body politic.
As the healthy human body throws off effete matter and disease from all its por-
do the solid thought and judgement of the people throw off anachronism. And
this is the index of a glorious personality in multitudinous units of power.

Our splendid eagle has long struggled with one wing clipped, to bear us for-
ward to high destiny. His struggles have been majestic, with his tail feathers
often mired. He yearns for the sky, but the mud holds him. "How long, Oh, Lord,
how long?

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