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*Woman Question*

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EXTRACTS FROM ADDRESSES

OF

The Rt. Rev. WM. CROSWELL DOANE, D. D.,

BISHOP OF ALBANY,

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be between the *kind* of mind, of capacity, of character between the two sexes, there are no differences whatever in the degree. But it is the falsest kind of logic which argues, that, because the two sexes are equal in the sight of God, therefore, they are interchangeable. All that the man can do, the woman can not do. All that the woman can do, the man can not do. And, therefore, the talk to-day of "woman's rights," apart from the falseness of the application of the word,—for the rights of either man or woman are fewer and far less important than their duties,—has this inherent fallacy; that it presupposes that because their rights are *equal*, therefore they are the same. Surely, if one takes the other and the better word, it is plain to the blindest, that the duties of men and women are not the same; that the trend of their tastes and capabilities is different; and that if the women are to do the men's duties, their own duties must be left undone, or done by those who are unfitted for and incapable of their discharge. Nothing is wilder or stranger, than the misconceptions and the disproportionateness of all this theory. It is contradicted by the whole material world, in which we live; and in which, its own functions are given and its own duties assigned to every separate plant and tree and animal. Nor could a wilder confusion be produced than if, by some blind force, these unthinking and unreasoning things should set themselves to tasks, which have not been assigned them; and for which they are not intended by their creation. And *why*, the highest order of created things, to whom Almighty God has given not only the consciousness of their peculiar and different capacities, but the plain and evident ability of recognizing the fact and reasoning just *why* these lines of differences are drawn, should prove itself duller and more stupid than the inanimate creation, is difficult to see. Earnestly I beg that this lesson of the personal pronoun "I"—which never in any language changes sex because the equal individuality of both the sexes must be acknowledged as the fundamental principle of character,—may plant itself deeply in your conscience. You may turn into the feminine gender that great sentence, "I can do all that may become a *woman*; who dares do more is none." You can realize all this by the divinely implanted instincts of your nature, by the limitations or the enlargements of your capacity, by the opportunities and occasions of your providential place in life. And that will be the clue, which you may safely follow, as indicating the lines along which every faculty of your nature is to be set, with utmost intensity and directness of aim, to do "your duty in the state of life into which it shall please God to call you."

I am urging the recognition of such limitations as God has set, *first* in your sex, which are written in laws so plain and facts so irresistible that only the blindest can fail to read and see them. The utter misconception of equality of position, as though it meant sameness of duty, between men and women, is among the facile follies and the fatal fallacies of the age. Facing great evils, moved in some instances by high motives, women who used to be quiet and content to stand in their lot, are joining in the wretched unrest of the effort, which, until recently, was in the hands of wild and unwomanly fanatics, to unsex themselves and unsettle the peace of the household, and the prosperity of the world. I have a general dislike and distrust of the term *woman* in the abstract. And in the manner of its use it is most confusing. There are women *and* women, as there are men *and* men. And the fond imagination that the evils of unqualified suffrage given to men, which are the most dangerous element in our American political world to-day, can be cured by extending the

evil to *unqualified women*, is the strangest delusion that ever possessed the human mind. If it should be permitted, which God forefend, the abstract *woman* may rejoice, but it will be in the spirit of the maniac who has laid waste the homes and marred the happiness and murdered the hopes of *women*. Privilege, courtesy, chivalry, respect, deference, consideration, will have melted away. And there will come instead unseemly contests, selfishness, the bitterness of partisanship, the dregs of strife and corruption, incrimination and the demoralization of the deepest and highest and dearest relations of society: while in its political effect it will only multiply corrupt and irresponsible ballots, not to equal, but to outweigh the intelligent suffrage of reputable women. Nothing will be altered in results. Nothing will be gained in the issues. And the irreclaimable mischief will have left its blight and scar on our social life. Two-handed humanity (that is the figure of the man and the woman in the body politic) has a right hand and a left hand, each equal to the other, each needful to the other. But the hand that is nearest the heart, the woman, is not used, and is not meant to be used, to grasp the sword, the pen, the reins; nor to seize the rough difficulties, and wring out of them the stern successes, of the strife. They are both hands. They are equally hands. Each is imperfect without the other, but their functions are apart and different. Learn the divine, the human, the instinctive, the evident limitations of your sex. And when you have filled out with "all you *can*" the sphere of your allotted service, you will have no time, nor strength, nor desire to reach out for other work to do.



## FROM THE ADDRESS OF 1895.

One gets sick and tired of the way in which the talk of woman's vocation fills the air, not merely in the wild vagaries of its blatant assumptions, but in the parade and push of its claims for recognition of what are called "its rights." I have had occasion here, a year ago, to say what *wrong* to womanhood these women's *rights* would be. And I have no desire to recall a word, to shade down any statement, or to abate a jot 'of effort to protect the silent many from the noisy few. For the agitators are really in the minority. Numberless names on these modern "millenary petitions" mean only the thoughtless and good-natured yielding to persistent pursuit; just as legislative majority votes stand, in not a few instances, for a mistaken courtesy or an unmanly cowardice. I believe that God will yet save this State and Nation from the aggravated miseries of an enlarged, unqualified suffrage, which, in its universality of *male* voters, is our most threatening danger to-day. But if we are to be visited with this infliction, as a well-earned punishment for many national sins, then I believe that, when we have tasted its bitterness, we shall be brought back, perhaps through anarchy and revolution, to a democracy, which shall demand, for its existence, government by men, whom education and actual Americanism of vital interest in the Nation qualify to govern. Meanwhile, when a new Bible shall have been translated into a denial of the original record of creation—a really "reversed Scripture," as one once called "the revised version"—when Constitutions shall have been altered, to disturb the equipoise of the relation between man and woman; when motherhood shall be replaced by mannishness; when neglected homes shall furnish candidates for mismanaged offices; when money shall buy the votes of women, as it does now themselves; when the fires of political discord shall be lighted on the hearthstone of domestic peace; when the arrogant assertion of demanded rights shall have destroyed the instinctive chivalry of conceded courtesies; when "woman," as has been well said, "once the superior, has become the equal of man;" then the reaped whirlwind of some violent political reaction will be gathered "in tears," by those who are sowing the wind, in the mad "joy" of the Petroleuse of the French revolutions. The vocation of womanhood is the highest and the holiest in the world. Guard it, my dear children, in your own selves, from the desecration that would drag it into the publicity and prostitutions of political strife. Year by year, as the centuries have gone on since the great Partheno-Genesis of humanity, its highness and its holiness have been more and more made clear. Apart from, and in spite of, all the violence of agitation, the duties, the opportunities and the privileges of women have opened out before them: service to the State, in the training of boys and the moulding of men; in influencing great reforms; in organizing charity; in elevating education; in the protected ministries of mercy to the sick, the poor, the fallen; in the adorning and sanctifying of homes. But the shoulder that is unfitted for the musket, and the

hand that was not made to guide the plough mean, and mark off, by very physical distinctions, the vocation of women, from the rough and public stir and strife of men. If *equality* means *similarity* of rights and duties, then the harmony of nature and the balance of the world would be destroyed. The milch cow and the ploughing ox are not meant for the same service. The herb that ministers healing, and the flower that yields its fragrance to the summer air, have *equal* and yet most *different* duties to render to mankind, from the tall wheat which gives its life up for our sustenance, or the great tree which falls to float our commerce on the sea. There is no hive of bees, no field of growing things, no human household, no housing place of cattle, no machine of man's making, with its complex adaptation of each piece to its work, that does not cry out against the mad mistake of confusing and confounding, into likeness, the distinct and different functions, among which there is no un-equality that means inferiority. And never in any age of the world, nowhere in any land, and nowhere in America, so much as now in our own Empire State, was there such absolute unreason, for the clamour which seeks to distract women from the duties of "the vocation to which they are called," into the mad pursuit of the greatest wrong that can be done to their sex, their country and mankind. Forgive me if, all unwilling, I disturb the sacredness of this place and the sweetness of this scene, with such unwelcome thoughts. But the man who is set in public place to-day, to train *some* of the women of America for their vocation, may not, in times like these, withhold his voice of warning against the dangers and delusions of the hour.

It is what St. Paul calls a high calling; a calling upward, an *Ἄνω Κλησις*, my dear children, to which you are called by every inherent indication of your nature—physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual—to the womanhood of womanly service to God and man.



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