

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

"NERVOUS DISORDERS OF WOMEN."*

A companion volume to the "Nervous Disorders of Children," which has already been reviewed in these columns, and the "Nervous Disorders of Men," is the "Nervous Disorders of Women," by Dr. Bernard Hollander, which should be widely read.

In his introduction, Dr. Hollander throws a new light on the relative weight of the brains of men and women and the fact that the average female brain is about one inch smaller in circumference, and about five inches lighter than the average male brain. "There is," says Dr. Hollander, "no denying the fact, but as I shall show, we must not draw from it the conclusion that women are mentally inferior to men. . . ."

"Some investigators attribute the difference in the weight of the brain to the difference in the bulk of the body. It is true that the general physique of women is less robust than that of men and that their stature is less. The expectation that a smaller brain would be required might, therefore, seem reasonable. But we know that there is no such correspondence between the size of the brain and that of the body. Little men often have large brains and giants small ones. . . ."

"The fact is that the size of the entire brain is not a measure of intellectual capacity at all. It is a measure of capacity of all the energies taken together—that is, of the animal instincts and passions, the feelings as well as the intellect. The intellectual region, as we now know, is confined to the frontal lobes—the most anterior part of the brain. A man or woman may have a large head and yet be stupid, if the frontal region be small; and he or she may have a small head with great wisdom, if the greater mass of brain be in the anterior region.

"Most investigators have hitherto disregarded this distinction, and treated the brain as if it had only one function—the manifestation of intellect. Consequently, they argued that since the brain of woman weighs about five ounces less than that of man, therefore, on merely anatomical grounds, we might expect a marked inferiority of intellectual power in the female sex. Whereas, it is now shown that this difference in brain weight does not explain whether the deficiency lies in intellect, in strength of sentiment, or force of brute propensity. . . ."

"Much has been made of the fact that women have shown little creative and inventive power. This absence of inventive and artistic genius may be to some extent accounted for, firstly, by the fact that women do not come so much in contact with other minds as men do, or used not to, and do not receive the same amount of stimulus; and, secondly, by their emotional and domestic life

taking up too much of their time and energy. Man has said for ages that the 'helpmeet for him' shall do the drudgery of looking after him, or at any rate of seeing that it is done; he has dubbed himself the lord of creation, and has consistently paraded the subjugation of his partner. On occasions, he has found it convenient to delegate some of his functions to his hitherto submissive partner, and he is now beginning to be rather rudely awakened to the fact that the partner has equal rights.

"Woman's effort at self-emancipation, however misdirected and attended with absurdities is, primarily, instinctive resistance to her declared natural inferiority to man, and to the restriction of her capacities it imposes. The woman movement was not caused because there are fewer men inclined to marry, but, primarily, by woman's protest against the estimate of her as a woman that was rejected by the deeper instincts of her nature; and, secondarily, by the disappointing and often repelling experience of marriage; for the marriages where there has been no disillusion—though all too often on both sides it is true—are so few as to constitute exceptions to the rule. A smothered sense of injustice, increasing in strength with each generation as education covered wider fields of knowledge, broke forth finally in a "new woman" who, unwisely assertive at times, declared her right to fill, at her own option, any sphere for which she possessed capabilities instead of being limited to the only one allowed her on the basis of her natural inferiority.

"The 'new woman' is not averse to marriage, but objects to what marriage has been made by this idea of inferiority, whose logical consequence is her submission to superiority; an idea that has permitted and encouraged a double standard of morality. Neither above nor below, but side by side and shoulder to shoulder, is the attitude for marriage she defends as wise and necessary; so that both, dissimilar from the beginning, may prepare for their united office by filling first, most worthily, each their distinctive office. . . ."

"Woman's dependence has made her seek to attract man and to gain power over him by craft, if need be; but woman's awakened self-respect and self-reliance disdains the craft, and demands mutual recognition of equality with difference, mutual dependence and support, mutual aim and accomplishment—a nobler manhood and womanhood, better conditions for the coming generations, through the helpfulness of one for the other of which both are in need."

From this discriminating and illuminating introduction the reader will expect, and the expectation will not be disappointed, that the author will deal with the question of the "Nervous Disorders of Women" and the modern psychological conception of their causes, effects, and rational treatment with comprehending sympathy. To understand their disorders one must first understand woman. Dr. Hollander does both.

(To be concluded.)

*By Bernard Hollander, M.D. (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., Broadway House, 68-74, Carter Lane, E.C.). 3s. 6d. net.

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