Women and Industry.

II

Before taking up a discussion of the natural bent of women there must be some survey of the natural, physical and intellectual capacity and limitations. The capacity is greater on both sides and the limitations less than is generally supposed. If the woman is physically the weaker sex, that is to the sense that she cannot lift as much, throw as far, she makes up for it, perhaps more than makes up for it, by her amazing resistance and endurance. What the woman who bears and rears a family endures in the active life before fifty, would kill most men. She is built for resistance and the capacity for resistance seems to increase with the burdens put upon her. The average women going through her life and arriving at fifty, is generally a more enduring person than the man at fifty. She has been through her physical phases. He still has a couple to go through and an astonishing number of active men break entirely in the sixties, while woman, is, generally speaking, still full of wear. This of course is the general supported by observation. However sufficient statistics are not available on comparative longevity and condition of health.

The inability to life and carry, which claim has been the industrial handicap for women was greatly overcome in the War and in the years since. The steady progress of labor which has

See Women and Industry, p. 399 et seq

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

has been going on over twenty years or more in this country was accelerated in the War by the necessity of using women in the factory and if they were used, of providing machinery suitable for them. (See English Experiences.) The result is that man's work has been made easier because of the necessity in the war to find machinery adapted to woman's need. Another industrial handicap of the woman's comes from the periods of monthly depression which she must endure. This, generally speaking, handicaps them, though not always. The General health of the girl decides the time that she is handicapped. Here again the industry, in the need of woman's labor, is providing more and more extensively for her health in case of sudden illness, the need of hours of rest. Probably when industry is well organized and intelligently organized, and that is to its advantage, provisions will be made for a day of rest every month, at least for the girl who needs it. In the case of the maried woman, bearing a child, there is a real handicap. She should not be in the factory for at least two or three weeks before and after the child comes. How is this period to be taken care of. Is she to lose her position permanently because she brings a child into the World. The experience in France and in Italy, were children seem to be more welcome than they

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

are in the United States, is very interesting but there are being regular provisions (factory practices in this country). That is, while inevitably the woman, because of her nature, physique, because of the obligation of child bearing upon her, is handicapped to a degree, there is no point at which she cannot be satisfactorily utilized if there is sufficient brains in the management. One great difficulty is that generally speaking they are more careless in the rank and file of women, about the care of themselves than there is in the rank and file of men. The matter of health in the body of industrial women is serious. She begins with lack of training at home and in school and even a curious feminine defiance of the laws of health, particularly among the young. At the dictates of fashion women will expose herself. One wonders that great masses of them do not die of pneumonia or bring upon themselves lifelong weaknesses. All winter long they are careless in so primary a matter as keeping their feet dry, ankles warm, is almost beyond belief. It is nothing but youth and hardiness that carries them through. If there could be general knowledge and wisdom about the care of health in the industrial Army, their position would be improved by the increased stability that it would give them.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Whether or not a woman has a natural intellectual handicap is a permanent subject. The supposed infericrty of the woman's brain to that of man however having been taken for granted at different periods is still a lively subject of debate. The scientist tells you that there is no difference in the physical structure of the brain of man and woman, that you are not able to distinguish them, lying side by side, if they have not been tagged. From this general belief that woman is intellectually inferior because she does less or almost nothing of certain things. I am not sure that the question of the bent should come before the discussion of the comparative quality of intelligence. That is, if the intelligence is to be judged by what woman do and do not do that men do, it is not a fair basis of comparison. Her bent is not towards creation of new things, but rather conservation of existing things. She is far less interested in invention than he. She is less interested in theories in ideas. Here the bent comes in, the native instinctive occupation that woman have, the personal thing. Her occupation is carrying on the life of the world and who shall say that that is work that calls for less intelligence when you couple it with the period that must follow of rearing what she has bred, than the work of making a statue or writing a piece of music.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

A sense both by nature and by the quality of her task in the work, the woman has got to have an intuitive wisdom about things that far surpasses what men have taken in the large. It has been one of her great powers in society.(Sir James Barrie,account in "What every Woman Knows.") In the general working out of the social scheme this wisdon is of immense value. The difficulty seems to be that it has no advertising value like the work of man. What he does with his work and brains you see, hear - largely because of the deviced that he has invented for presenting his achievements. They are concerned with the exterior world largely. She, carrying on the race,to preserving society giving a reason for civilization, a use and channel for his work, is a less spectacular factory, although without her there would be no reason or incentive for most that he does.

. . . . . .

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.