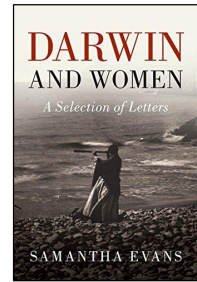


Caroline Kennard*
Correspondance avec Charles Darwin

dans Samantha Evans, ed.

[*Darwin and Women. A Selection of Letters*](#), 2017, pp. 225-7



Caroline Kennard to Charles Darwin, December 26, 1881

Mr. Darwin Dear Sir.

In a paper recently read before a company of women in Boston, ground was taken of the inferiority of women; past, present and future; based upon scientific principles: as concisely reported in the newspaper extract enclosed.

In reply to opposing arguments in the discussion following the paper, the Author stated her scientific Authority to be Mr. Darwin, in his "Origin of Species".

As a believer in continued scientific discoveries and revelations answering and modifying, ultimately, all material questions; and as an admirer of your cautious and candid methods of conveying great results of learning and investigations to the world, I take the liberty to inquire whether the Author of the paper rightly inferred her arguments from your work: or if so, whether you are of the same mind now, as to possibilities for women, judging from her organization &c

If a mistake has been made the great weight of your opinion and authority should be righted: to which, I take it for granted, you would not object.

Excuse the liberty I take of addressing you and the hope of a reply in enclosed envelope.

I am yours with expressions of great esteem

Caroline A. Kennard.

Brookline | Dec. 26. 1881.

* Caroline Augusta Kennard was the wife of a businessman in Boston, Massachusetts; she was a member of the New England Woman's Club and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and participated in meetings of the Association for the Advancement of Women. At one of these meetings, she read a paper, 'Housekeeping a profession', which argued that housekeeping should be measured in economic terms like any other profession. Her courteous yet forceful engagement with Darwin makes a fitting close to this book.

Charles Darwin to Caroline Kennard, January 9, 1882

*Down, | Beckenham, Kent. | (Railway Station | Orpington. S.E.R.)
Jan. 9th. 1882*

Dear Madam

The question to which you refer is a very difficult one. I have discussed it briefly in my "Descent of Man". I certainly think that women though generally superior to men to moral qualities are

inferior intellectually; & there seems to me to be a great difficulty from the laws of inheritance, (*if I understand these laws rightly*) in their becoming the intellectual equals of man. On the other hand there is some reason to believe that aboriginally (& to the present day in the case of Savages) men & women were equal in this

respect, & this wd. greatly favour their recovering this equality. But to do this, as I believe, women must become as regular "bread-winners" as are men; & we may suspect that the early education of our children, not to mention the happiness of our homes, would in this case greatly suffer.

I have written this letter without any care of style, as it is intended only for your private use.—

Dear Madam | Yours faithfully | Ch. Darwin

Caroline Kennard to Charles Darwin, January 28, 1882

Mr. Darwin Dear Sir,

Brookline Mass. U.S.A

Jan. 28- 1882- I thank you for your very kind reply to my letter of inquiry as to your opinion of the comparative intellectual abilities of the sexes—

I believe you are supported in your ideas of the greater moral qualities of woman— Before quite deciding as to her condition intellectually will you excuse me if I remind you that recent results from efforts for her higher education, in your own country and in this, are very flattering and encouraging; and are opening for women avenues for individual improvement and for the general enlightenment of her sex— and therefore, of necessity (according to the laws of heredity) for the advancement of the human race intellectually. Her enlightened intellect, united with her wholesome moral nature, can then with the aid of man (for in nature the male & female must work in sympathy together, you have taught us)—ordain, in a manner hitherto unthought of or practised upon, for the propagation of the best and the survival of the fittest in the human species.

The laws of heredity have been closely watched in the lower animals, and tendencies toward improvement encouraged and toward deterioration guarded against; while in marriages and the begetting of offspring, the perpetuation of the best physical, intellectual and moral tendencies in the human race have been mostly unheeded and neglected—

In reply to your argument that "women must become as regular 'bread-winners' as are men"; have they not been and are they not largely, bread-winners; though unrecognized generally as such?

Partners in business—share money profits and why should not partners in marriage—where the wife, by her labor and economy does her full part toward husbanding for the future? In the unceasing demand upon the head of a household, for executive ability, fixedness of purpose, and courage of execution, are not women possessed of the same kind of qualities which would grow with the using into as *apparent* & grand results as are accorded to men of business, government officials, & army officers and statesmen who all expect compensation for services rendered?

And why be anxious for the “education of our children” and “the happiness of our homes”, if women become breadwinners? when in this country five sixths of the *educators* are women and acknowledged ‘breadwinners’, beside improving the condition of their homes and adding happiness thereto—

Which of the partners in a family is the breadwinner where the husband works a certain number of hours in the week and brings home a pittance of his earnings (the rest going for drinks & supply of pipe) to his wife; who, early & late, with no end of self sacrifice in scrimping for her loved ones, toils to make each penny tell for the best economy and besides, to these pennies she may add by labor outside or taken in?

Dr. Walker, once president of Harvard College said that, of the young men who had been by personal effort, assisted through that college, three fourths had been, by efforts of women. And we know it has been the custom for Mothers & sisters to help their sons & brothers, by every possible effort, to an education (Whoever heard of a brother assisting a sister through college while he drugged & toiled? One young woman I know who receives pay for nursing the sick and gives the half of it to a brother who is learning to engrave. Is she less a breadwinner than he—or less than the other brother who, though younger than herself, by aid of the Father & herself received an education which she longed for and that enabled him to rank with our most prominent clergymen?

The family must be *righteously* maintained. Let the ‘environment’ of women be similar to that of men and with his opportunities, before she be fairly judged, intellectually his inferior, please.—

Excuse this great liberty and I am your obliged

Caroline A Kennard