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QUEEN STREET AUCKLAND



WOMAN AND HER CRITICS

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half of the world to the purely physical, Mr. Mencken pays an exaggerated respect to the woman in the rôle of wife and mother. I say exaggerated, because he has no real respect for a woman if she fails to perform this dual function. "A woman who has not had a child," he informs us, "remains incomplete, ill at ease, and more than a little ridiculous." In short, a woman justifies her existence, as the late Marriott Watson once said, only in so far as she performs these purely physical functions. But why? Surely a woman is more than a wife and mother? She is a human being.

Mr. Ludovici's argument is like unto Mr. Mencken's—only more so. Mr. Ludovici's quarrel with the universe is more bitter and emphatic. It has produced this race of office hermits which he despises, and life, he says, in what seems to be a moment of real insight, "is not an office or a factory." If that moment could have been somehow prolonged he might also have come to see that neither is life a colossal nursery.

Masculine Estimates

MR. LUDOVICI accepts all the old masculine estimates of femininity from his dead and gone masters. He has been an apt and docile pupil. He really believes that all women are liars, imitative animals with a mental life that is no more than a pale reflection of their emotional exercises; that they are unscrupulous by nature, fundamentally lacking in taste, inherently vulgar and with an undying thirst for petty power. But do not imagine that Mr. Ludovici dislikes us for these things. This is where he goes one better than his masters. He sees clearly that these things are but the defects of our qualities—tricks, all of them, of Nature's, the better to serve her own ends.

All would be enormously well if men had not deteriorated into this race of office hermits no longer able to keep us under proper control. Man is a negative creature who plays cricket and tennis, babbles of freedom and companionship between the sexes and can actually be left alone with a young woman in safety. The spectacle revolts our critic to the point of a passionate appeal for a return to the "medieval system of respectable and honourable se-

questration of old maids," and a demand that women in general shall be placed under the domination of their men folk.

Her "Proper" Sphere

MOST of the men of my acquaintance would regard this as a fearful bore, and will be relieved to hear that Mr. Ludovici does not intend to ask them to undertake the impossible task. He will wait for the coming of the Complete Man, the super-man who will be capable of "wisely directing and ordering his womenfolk at every juncture of their lives," and with which magnificent creature women could not dare to try to compete. Automatically she would return to her "proper" sphere and the world's problems would be at an end.

Mr. Mencken and Mr. Ludovici are not without support in this last effort to hold the fort of the world for men. They have a goodly company of followers, not all of them sufficiently courageous, however, to put their signatures to their opinions. But they all worship at the same shrine. They all believe that women have no lives at all apart from men—which is such a very humourless thing to believe. They have only one contribution to give to life—their sex. They depend upon men for moral support. At all times and in all circumstances they are predominantly sexual. They cannot create, and when they write it is but a form of hysteria. All their energies in whatsoever direction, have a physical cause. They are sex-ridden, sex-driven.

I feel a little sorry for these gentlemen because they were so obviously born too late. They would have been much happier—and much more comfortable—in, say, the Middle Ages. And there is really no hope for them at all, because more and more are women refusing to be regarded merely as sex-creatures or to be trained for sex purposes only. Motherhood no more than fatherhood is the whole of life; life is something more than a "consecration of relationships." Women have been wives and mothers since the beginning of time, but they are only just beginning to realise that that has not always made them very satisfactory human beings. Women want their place in the sun.

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