

WOMAN AND THE HOME.

It is the fixed conviction of the newspaper man that no woman can write editorially for any appreciable length of time without inquiring anxiously of her readers: "Whither are we drifting?" Lest the feminine character of this department should be called in question, it may be best to submit the question without further delay. We ask then, with alarm: "Whither are we drifting?" And in making this inquiry we refer to the American woman.

She is the most petted, flattered, and indulged of creatures, taking her as a class. Max O'Rell used to say that, could he choose his role, it would be that of an American woman. He considered that she gave less and received more than any human being on the face of the earth. No doubt he suspected her of happiness. But he saw only superficially. As a matter of fact, no women in the world are so restless, so dissatisfied with their relations to the world, and so impatient of their responsibilities—where those responsibilities are of a domestic character—as American women. The contented wife is an anomaly. The reason appears to be that the American woman has not the right degree of liberty. She has too much—and too little. She accepts her position as a non-producer in the household, expects her housework and her sewing to be done for her, is given liberty to go where she pleases and to do what she pleases, and then is annoyed if now and then the hard worked husband, irritated at this situation, for which he himself is largely responsible, vents upon her, unjustly, his dissatisfaction with the unbalanced state of affairs. Meantime the woman, college bred, a buyer of books, a club woman, a musician, goes from knowledge to knowledge, refines and cultivates her mind and her taste till she discovers herself to be lonely in such a rarified atmosphere, and makes bitter complaint because her husband has not followed her to these pleasing heights.

A man is considered puellanimous who looks down upon the wife of his youth because by some chance she has not grown intellectually, as he has; and if he leaves her, pleading uncongeniality, she is much commiserated and he is held in contempt. But unfortunately society is foolishly sentimental over the woman who, outgrowing her husband in refinement and mental grasp, finds herself with an unresponsive companion and seeks other society than his.

Is not this signally unfair? If the husband is so regarded, is not the wife in honor bound to cling to the man to whom she has made her marriage vows, even though he may not be intellectually sympathetic? America, having passed its first stage of civilization and subdued the wild, is now on its knees before culture. It has apotheosized education. It makes the serious mistake of estimating individuals by their book-learning. It is well to remember that there may be many points of congeniality between persons who are far apart in their bookish knowledge and in their fineness of their taste. Marriage is a sacrament, not a lyceum for the debating of abstract questions. The relationship is one suggested by instinct,—one which ought to be sustained and endured from a sense of duty. This duty is not alone to the persons involved in the contract. It is to the state—to society. Even where emotional distress might impel one to be false to marriage, inherent dignity constrains one to remain a good citizen. This point of view is, of course, one which would be entertained only by educated women,—women who understand political as well as domestic economy. But since it is the women of this class who now show that uncontrollable restlessness which is dis-

turbing the whole nation, and which is, in truth, indirectly responsible for many new ventures upon the part of the United States, it is proper to address these remarks to them.

The American woman has grown very wifely, very extravagant, intensely aspiring individually, and exceedingly vain. Her vivacity, her beauty and capability, her bravado and her ingenuity, make her indeed powerful. She is mistress in this country. But does she rule wisely? Does she give full credit and appreciation to her hard-driving slave, the man,—the hardest-working men in all the world, the most prodigal and generous? Is not her attitude toward them becoming supercilious, and this in spite of the fact that she refuses to perform her fundamental duty as a woman? For it is remarkable that in spite of all her newly acquired knowledge of philosophy and the glad manner in which she voices it, the American woman among the upper classes refuses to recognize the primordial law of her being,—will not admit what her prime function is or in what manner she is most useful to the state.

In short, she refuses to bear children. She has theories about the child born under perfect conditions, and she never attains these conditions. (Her theories it may be suggested, are wrong, for the human soul is always and ultimately a mystery, and some of the finest of human creatures have been born under conditions that hygiene and religion, philosophy and common sense would pronounce unfortunate.)

Now a man and woman may be distinctly uncongenial, and yet find an exhaustless source of happiness and an endless fund of conversation in their children. Though they have natures with a divergent trend, yet they will unite in working for the children; though they have different ideas of amusement, yet they will each find delight in giving pleasure to the children. They will forget themselves and become absorbed in their little ones. Personal psychology will no longer be of absorbing interest; they will prefer the foolish wisdom of the boys and girls. These adorable inanities will entertain them more than the drama or than poetry or music. Selfishness in the parent attains so fine a quality that it becomes a virtue. Nor is the feeling of the man the same toward the mother of his children that it was toward his bride. She appears to him sanctified by her sufferings and her ceaseless self-denial. He overlooks her faults. He can even forgive her for not being beautiful. A strong pride of a primordial sort comes to him, and the light vanity of the lover is supplanted by the much deeper passion, pride of family, involving, as this does, a wealth of idealism.

We need not fear to assert and to insist that were American women to have more children their discontent would largely disappear. What is more, it would be for the undeniable good of this country if the cultivated women would consent to do their share of child-bearing, and not leave the greater part of this task to the Russian Jews and the poor Italian immigrants. As it is, in addition to all her other troubles, this country is at the necessity of forever lifting the bulk of the population up from low sources, and endlessly propagating the seeds of patriotism in hard ground; for it is the foreigners who give the work to the census-taker.

It is a great pain to an American woman to hear women spoken of slightingly as of small account in the affairs of the world, and particularly is this a pain when the man making the uncomplimentary remark is an American. But is a woman chances to work much in stores or offices she will be chagrined not a few times by hearing such heresy. Let her question the man who is so unmanly as to depreciate half of God's creation, and in ninety-nine cases out of

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