

WOMAN'S SUPPLEMENT

A FEW PAGES PREPARED TO MY LADY'S TASTE

The Editorial Table

The Early Victorian Age.

IN these days of much writing on topics alleged to be of interest to women, one thing is evident to a painful and wearisome degree—and that is the condescension shown to those of a former generation. In England, the woman who wishes to be considered ultra-modern and advanced, refers lightly and scornfully to "Early Victorian" women and their views. In this country, we merely fall back on such hackneyed expressions as "old fogeyish" and "out-of-date."

Now, all this talk is foolish and mistaken, and merely betrays the ignorance of the would-be critics. In order to praise modern progress and estimate scientific advancement, it is not necessary to refer to our forefathers as poor creatures whose chief importance lies in the fact that they produced such remarkable offspring. So far as the Victorian age was concerned, it is only necessary to glance at the names of those who were prominent in artistic, literary, religious and scientific circles, in the year 1840, to be assured that the celebrities of that day were not destitute of grey matter, and were even capable of expressing their views in very tolerable English. Gladstone, Darwin and Tennyson, all born in that *annus mirabilis*, 1809, were then in the early vigour of manhood and formed a trio which it will not be easy for 1940 to surpass. Mrs. Browning, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot are hardly to be described as feeble-minded representatives of their sex. If the women writers of 1940 can produce an "Aurora Leigh," a "Shirley" or a "Middlemarch," they will not need votes to prove their possession of brains.

Condescending Daughters.

WHEN this spirit of belittling the past is carried into the discussion of the general unsatisfactoriness of our parents, the discussion becomes obnoxious, and, in some instances, disgusting. One magazine devoted to women's interests has published a series of articles in which mothers are addressed as if they were rather lacking in ordinary intelligence and sadly in need of such instruction as only the journalist or "special article" writer can supply.

An instance of this extremely tiresome condescension, characteristic of the popular feminine publication of to-day is at hand, in a plaintive article, entitled, "My Mother Didn't Tell Me," published in the October number of a magazine devoted chiefly to domestic affairs. The writer of this wailing production declares: "I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that the average mother in this country—the average, educated, intelligent mother—avoids participating in the intellectual development of her daughters."

Well, really, isn't that too bad? Are you not sorry for the writer of this screed who, by the way, does not sign her name to her "indictment" of the older generation. She says plaintively: "There is not one single question of vital importance that I can discuss freely with my mother. I have never been able to get her advice or counsel—it seems to me that she rarely ever gave these matters her serious consideration. . . . It is time for the older women to meet the problems that the life of this country puts to the young people at every turn of the road."

The writer of this most "superior" article does not tell us just what it was that her mother failed to tell her, nor does she specify the questions of vital importance which she may not discuss with that sadly inferior parent. Judging from the complaining author's egotistic absorption and belief in her own amazing advancement, one would guess that she is a high-school girl about sixteen years of age. However, she informs us that she is twenty-seven, and

we consequently wonder that she is yet so juvenile in attitude.

Our Libelled Grandmothers.

AS a matter of fact, it is only the very young girl who thinks that she has any new problems to meet—anything which her mother does not understand. The woman knows—and knows more fully every day—that her mother is possessed of world-old wisdom and that her mother's precepts are worth all the problem novels that the nastiest-minded modern fiction-mongers can produce. As for our grandmothers—well, is there anything sweeter or wiser than the face of the woman who has told fairy tales to her children's children, and has repeated to them the sage advice which she gave to their fathers and mothers a generation ago? One grievance of this magazine contributor is that her mother does not take her religious doubts with great seriousness. The daughter seems to have become deeply learned, quite early in life, as she says: "Everything we learned made the exact

religious beliefs of our infancy impossible to us"—and the mother merely treated her many wild questions with a "certain indulgence." The ordinary mature reader will come to the conclusion that this was a wise and patient mother, who must have been sadly bored at times by her excessively conceited daughter. Every sophomore is very doubtful of religious teaching and has a theory, all his very own, of the origin of evil. Youth is exceedingly sceptical of what the "Law and the Prophets have said," but learns, as the years go by, that the mother's teaching is among the things which are eternal.

What rubbish such articles are and how is it that a patient public has tolerated them so long? Our mothers and grandmothers met the same "problems" as we do—and Heaven send that we meet them as sturdily and bravely! They are referred to by the modern scribbler for the magazine as if they were illiterate and narrow in their intellectual interests. This is the most impertinent perversion of the facts regarding the training given to our "foremothers." I have a small Greek grammar, bound as the modern school-book is not bound, with faded inscription in Italian hand, which my grandmother knew by heart many years ago—and I, alas! know only the Greek roots which grew in the old red-backed spelling-book. Let us make confession regarding our own shortcomings and leave our grandmothers' educational failings alone. As for what we need to be "told," our mothers generally do their duty in spite of what the modern man editor of feminine publications has to say on the

subject. It may be that our mothers and grandmothers believed in reserve, reticence and other old-fashioned qualities which the modern paragrapher may see fit to ridicule and decry. The chief lack in the early training of this writer of complaints about mothers would appear to be a dearth of such chastisement as would have made her a more bearable companion.

The Lass Who Loves a Soldier.

ENGLISH society naturally takes a deep interest in the approaching marriage of Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the "Hero of Mafeking," who has won the hand and heart of Miss Olive Soames, a charming English girl more than thirty years his junior. But Cupid laughs at disparity in years, and gallant "B.-P." is an officer who might well take a maiden's fancy.

JEAN GRAHAM.



Mrs. Flora MacDonald Denison, President of the Canadian Suffrage Association, who was Spokeswoman for the Deputation Which Waited on Mr. Borden, when the Premier Visited Toronto Recently.