

THE BLUE-STOCKINGS FROM ASPASIA TO MRS. MONTAGU

(Clarence Rook, in the Reader.)

What is a Blue-Stocking? I turn to my Boswell, and find this passage: "About this time (1781) there was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated 'Blue-Stocking Clubs,' the origin of which title being little known, it may be worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of those societies when they first commenced was Mr. Stillingfleet, whose dress was remarkably grave, and in particular it was observed that he wore blue stockings. Such was the excellence of his conversation that his absence was felt as so great a loss that it used to be said, 'We can do nothing without the blue stockings.'"

There has always been the Blue-Stocking; there has always been the woman who substituted brain for beauty, or added it at compound interest, making herself a thousand per cent more interesting. The mere name of Sappho—a little sallow woman, or a tall woman, the records differ—stirs the soul. We have little of her work left, but she was certainly a New Woman some five and twenty centuries ago. And her stockings were blue. The women of Greece did not show their stockings, however, to posterity. One had scarcely a line, such as Mrs. Montagu supplies in the matter of London, as to the life of the woman of Athens or Rome written by herself. Dr. Donaldson points out, in his interesting book on "Women," that almost all we know of Greek women is written by men.

"Men rarely write dispassionately of women. They either are in love with them, or hate them, or pretend to hate them. They have had sweet or bitter experience of them. And when they do write about them, they write according to that experience."

WOMEN OF ATHENS.

Is that the explanation of the virtuous utterances of the comic poets whose plays the married women did not witness? Is that the explanation of the "Ecclesiazusae" by Aristophanes—"Women in Parliament"? For Athens had its "Sunagettes" and the man who scoffed at them in ancient Athens there must have been (to account for the success and the survival of the Aristophanic play) a considerable number of women who are suspected of a belief that if a woman could run a house, she could run a government. The Athenian wife was secluded; her duty was to preserve the purity of the citizen race. Not one Athenian woman, in an age full of great thinkers, poets, sculptors, painters and architects, ever attained to the slightest distinction in any one department of literature, art or science. "Great" says Pericles, in the famous funeral oration which Thucydides puts into his mouth, "is the glory of that woman who is least talked of among the men, either in the way of praise or blame." And that very Pericles, having agreed upon a separation from his Athenian wife, took as his companion the greatest Blue-Stocking of antiquity—Aspasia, whose fame has no touch of shame in it. According to Athenian law, they could not be husband and wife; but she held a position that no Athenian wife could hope to attain.

"Her house became the resort of all the great men of Athens. Socrates was often there. Phidias and Anaxagoras were intimate acquaintances, and probably Sophocles and Euripides."

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were in constant attendance. Indeed, never had any woman such a salon in the whole history of man. The greatest sculptor that ever lived, the grandest man of all antiquity, philosophers and poets, sculptors and painters, statesmen, historians, met each other and discussed congenial subjects in her rooms. And probably hence has arisen the tradition that she was the teacher of Socrates in philosophy and politics, and of Pericles in rhetoric.

But we really know little about Aspasia the Blue-Stocking, only the direct influence upon the men of the time. There is a marble bust of her, of which Dr. Donaldson has seen a copy in the Louvre.

"The face is not altogether beautiful according to Greek ideas. It has an expression of earnest and deep thought, but what strikes one most of all is the perplexed and baffled look which the whole face presents—as of some life-long anguish, resulting from some contentment which no mortal could wage successfully—not without a touch of exquisite sweetness, tenderness and charity. Could it be the struggle in behalf of her own sex?"

FROM ASPASIA TO MRS. MONTAGU
The woman of brain and conduct, who had set out from Miletus to influence men, the Blue-Stocking whom the outstanding man of that glorious era never omitted to kiss on departure or arrival, the woman who knew that she could never give Pericles a legitimate son—there you may see the tragedy of the Queen of Blue-Stockings!

Always there have been the women who wanted to pull the strings that make their mannikins jump, though, as Dr. Donaldson indicates, the early Christian Church was rather hard on them. They could do the dusting and the sweeping, they could be deaconesses—but not bishops. They might talk. Yet the Blue-Stocking was always there, one suspects, silent in personal literature sometimes, as Aspasia was, flashing into sudden light with Heloise and her Abelard, blazing with the reflected glory of the Renaissance, and clattering volubly in the pages of Mrs. Montagu's letters, around which Mr. Huchon has woven a scholarly sketch of the Blue-Stockings of the eighteenth century. And of these, Mrs. Montagu, the hostess of Hill street and Portman square, was among the chief. She wore blue stockings from childhood to old age, and at fourteen she wrote with the elaboration of fat and forty. She calls it "the female frailty of displaying more learning than is necessary or graceful." But she meant to succeed—to make no mistakes. "There is no end of the bad consequences of an improper marriage," she writes with the elaboration of fat and forty. She calls it "the female frailty of displaying more learning than is necessary or graceful." But she meant to succeed—to make no mistakes.

"He should have a great deal of sense and prudence to direct me and instruct me, much wit to divert me, beauty to please me, good humor to indulge me in the right, and to remove me gently when I am in the wrong; money enough to afford me more than I can want, and as much as I can wish."

HAPPINESS—AND GOLD.

And three years later she wrote: "Gold is the chief ingredient in the composition of worldly happiness." She won gold. "She has not that don d'air," wrote Miss Burney to Mrs. Thrale. But she married cold mines, and the owner of them died conveniently and left Elizabeth seven thousand a year. The gift of love was not hers. But she had the desire for influence, the longing for a salon, the fury of self-assertion. She was no Aspasia. For the Blue-Stocking was both beautiful and self-assertive. She had the courage to study Shakespeare and write an "Essay" upon him which was an answer to Voltaire's depreciation! A woman with seven thousand a year,

who kept open house, who was up against Voltaire—you may imagine the men and women who came to her breakfasts, and in that the Blue-Stocking attained her desire. Mrs. Hannah More dined at Hill street, in the wonderful "room of Cupidons." Dr. Johnson was there, as well as Sir Joshua Reynolds. Mrs. Hannah More writes: "She is not only the finest genius, but the finest lady I ever saw; she lives in the highest style of magnificence; her apartments and table are in the most splendid taste; but what baubles are these when speaking of a Montagu. Her form (for she has no body) is delicate even to fragility; her countenance the most animated in the world; the sprightly vivacity of fifteen, with the judgment and experience of a Nestor."

Later on, she had assembled all the wits of the age to meet Hannah More. "The only fault that charming woman has," says the honored guest, "is that she is fond of collecting a number of them together at one time."

There is always the Blue-Stocking—the woman who determines to influence men with her brain. There is the Aspasia, whose name oscillates between praise and execration (for the comedians of Athens did not miss their chance). And there is Mrs. Montagu, whose chastity was beyond reproach. Of the two Blue-Stockings who thus meet across the centuries I think I prefer Aspasia. Possibly because her letters were never published.—Clarence Rook, in the Reader.

WHEN BLUCHER

VISITED PARIS

OLD SOLDIER WANTED TO DESTROY MANY OBJECTS DEAR TO FRENCH HEART.

The pleasant story, just brought to light, of Humboldt's successful intervention to save the Jardin des Plantes from the wrath of Blucher, serves as a reminder, says the London Evening Standard, that that tough old soldier needed much by way of advisers to keep him from destroying objects dear and important to the French.

Wellington had often to interfere with him, and this not invariably with immediate success. He resolved to blow up the bridge of Jena. Wellington protested: "But the French destroyed the pillar at Roshach and so on," grumbled Blucher, "and the English burned Washington." Wellington, seeing that words were ineffective, placed English sentries on the bridge, believing that the Prussians would not make any attempt on the structure while these men were in position. But they did.

They mined one of the pillars and put in a charge of gunpowder and fired it. The charge exploded in the wrong way, and damaged the Prussians, leaving the bridge and the Englishmen on top in safety. This having failed, Blucher sought permission to demolish the column in the Place Vendôme. The King of Prussia arrived only just in time to prevent it.

Wellington managed better when dealing direct with the French. An almost unexampled instance of his chivalry was forthcoming in the movements preceding the battle of Orléans—the only battle in which he received an injury. The French had retreated over the bridge of the Ouve du Pau, and were preparing to blow it sky high. The Duke realized that if this were done it would cause great injury to the people of Orléans, so he sent an officer to South with a message.

A battle would doubtless take place on the following day, he said, and he promised that if South would spare the bridge the British army would not cross by it. South had felt reluctant to consent to the destruction, for the bridge was on French territory, and he willingly took his rival's word and left it intact. Wellington kept his promise. He led his men, under a heavy fire, across the bridge by way of the ford, and the bridge stands to this day.

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BIGGEST WARSHIP EVER LAUNCHED

DESCRIPTION OF THE DREAD-NAUGHT, THE NAVY'S PRIDE.

Embodies Lessons Taught by Russo-Japanese War—of 18,000 Tons Displacement—Turbine Engines.

The essential feature of the Dreadnaught, the largest warship afloat, which distinguishes her from all battleships now in commission in the world's fleets is that she is of huge size and mounts only one type of gun for use in battle.

The war between Japan and Russia conclusively showed that the intermediate armament carried by vessels flying European flags was not effective at modern battle ranges. It has been calculated that the effective ranges for battle have been raised from 3,000 yards to 7,000 or 8,000 yards. Careful calculations show that at such a distance the striking power of 7.5 inch and 6 inch guns, which have been the favorite intermediate weapons in the British navy hitherto, is comparatively useless.

Prior to the war Great Britain was mounting in each of the King Edward VII. class four 12 inch and four 9.2 inch guns, but since the battle of Tsushima she is inclined to depend altogether on the 12 inch gun.

It is understood that originally the Dreadnaught was to have carried twelve guns of the 12-inch type, but it was eventually decided to drop out two of these weapons in order to mount effectively ten pieces of this colossal striking power so that eight of them could fire on the broadside, six ahead and four astern, without endangering either the stability of the ship or running the risk of collision with the blast.

The armament of the Dreadnaught has encountered some criticism on account of the slowness of fire of the 12 inch gun in comparison with the rapidity which can be obtained by the 7.5 inch and 6 inch weapons. With the best gun crew the 12 inch guns or the 9.2 inch guns take only about two rounds a minute, while the 7.5 inch weapon can discharge as many as three or four, and the 6 inch gun can discharge in the same unit of time as many as eight projectiles.

It has been urged that though the smaller guns may not be able to pierce the armor plates of battleships or cruiser at modern ranges, the effect of a series of 100 pound shells falling on a ship is of great value in demoralizing a crew, driving the crew from exposed positions and bringing down top masts of one kind and another, thus frequently setting up fires.

On the other hand, it is urged that the rapidity of fire claimed for the smaller guns is largely imaginary at the range which will obtain in future battles. Owing to the limited supply of ammunition which can be carried in a modern man-of-war, the fight of each shell must be carefully watched, with a view to correcting the range before another is discharged.

This operation of watching each shell find its billet severely limits the rapidity of fire and experienced artillerymen say that in battle action not more than two shells a minute can be fired from any one gun with any hope of making good firing. Under these circumstances the advantage of the 6-inch and 7.5 inch weapons disappears.

The 12 inch gun which is mounted in the Dreadnaught is not, however, the weapon hitherto carried by British men-of-war. As the result of long experiment a 12 inch weapon of 45 calibre has been evolved which is claimed to be the best yet constructed for use afloat.

It may be noted that the newest 12 inch gun of the British navy, though it fires the same weight of projectile as the gun which is being mounted in the American ships of the Connecticut and

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the British fleets.

Another gain has been the rearrangement of the quarters for the officers and men. The admiral, captain and commissioned officers instead of being at the after parts of the ship, whereas their work is mainly forward, will in future have their cabins and mess-rooms almost directly under the forward and only bridge.

The Dreadnaught has been fitted with windows as large as those of an ordinary house. She resembles American built ships in arrangements for the comfort of the men of the lower deck.

The best possible system for heating and ventilating has been adopted. A commodious bakery has been installed so as to provide bread at all times in place of the hardack which has hitherto been served out in British ships.

In cost the Dreadnaught will be one of the cheapest battleships built for many years past.

Besides her ten 12 inch guns she carries twenty 12-pounders of a new and powerful type for defense against torpedo craft. She is built to attain a rate of over 21 knots, with a radius of action sufficient to carry her twice across the Atlantic.

In fighting strength she is equivalent

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to any two battleships built for the British fleet prior to the construction of the King Edward VII., yet had total cost, complete with guns, will be only \$1,797,497, while the ships of the sterling—Cassier's Magazine.

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The composer Rossini was a great eater. He went one day into a restaurant and ordered a dinner for three. After a while the waiter said: "The dinner is on the fire, sir; when the people come it is ready." "Very well," said Rossini, "serve it. I am the people."

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"KILLING THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG."

The Royal Commission proposes to limit security purchases to a narrow circle of Canadian bonds. The Canadian companies alone have to find investments for about twenty-five millions yearly, and there would not be enough of these securities to supply even them, to say nothing of the investing public. The competition for these favored bonds would greatly reduce the interest on them, thus tremendously diminishing the profits of policyholders, and probably even requiring premiums to be increased. Companies would also be encouraged to purchase bonds of small and weak concerns, simply because these would be legal, while infinitely better bonds could be barred. Stocks would be prohibited, entirely, except those of banks. The Finance Minister himself suggested a much safer and wiser basis some years previously, that no restriction be placed on bonds which carry mortgage, but that no stocks be permitted unless dividends have been paid for a term of years. The Commission would have shown more wisdom had they adopted the minister's suggestion.—Toronto Insurance paper.