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The Women of To-day.

WE read of that misguided man, Macauley, saying, not so many years ago, that "if there is any truth in history, women have always been, and still are, playthings, captives and beasts of burden." But Macauley was speaking of his own and past times. Words that applied to the sex fifty or a hundred years ago would be meaningless to-day; and although there are still many who, on platform and paper, urge that woman should reign only within the walls of her kingdom—home, yet the fact stands glaringly out that the women of to-day are forced into the not altogether enviable position they hold in the business world. It is not always from a love of notoriety, or from idle ambition, or because they realize that they are intellectually man's equal, and consequently competent to rival him in all arts and professions. It is, alas! too often because so many of them must work or starve. And why more now than in the past? Those who have studied the question offer numerous answers—that in many countries women outnumber the men, and thousands must take up the burden of self-support, also that the tendency of the times is to shake off the absolute dependence on man that characterized the women of a hundred years ago. But a greater and more potent reason seems to lie in the fact that where a hundred men, for reasons not always entirely unselfish and chivalrous, do their utmost to keep women out of the positions they are so steadily working their way into, a thousand will shift the problem of ways and means for the family's support on to the willing shoulders of the woman. The little ones must have the things necessary to life and comfort, she herself must live, the home must be kept together, and so the woman bravely takes up the duties and responsibilities that are by nature man's—responsibilities which he ignores or neglects, and leaves her no alternative but to assume. She goes out into the ways that for ages have belonged to the fathers and brothers and husbands; and to-day, sometimes from free choice and self-gratification only, but oftener from necessity, we find women in nearly every profession, and almost every business, making their way to success.

In speaking of the future of woman at the annual banquet of the New Vagabond's Club in London, England, a short time ago, Hall Caine says: "There are more Marthas than Marys in the world to-day. The time has gone forever when singing and dancing are woman's only accomplishment, and even a charming daughter of Herodias cannot quite dance a man's head off. When the law has done its best, and society its utmost, there is yet something unfair, or at least difficult, in the position that woman by nature holds in the world. Great numbers of them have come out in competition with men, and some have a hard and

cruel time of it. On the fate of our women, especially our working-women, the future of our country depends, and it is amazing that parliament and the press, and above all, the Church, have hitherto given so little attention to so great a problem. Going in and out among our own ways of life, are many women of education, refinement and great gifts, our own sisters and daughters, who are standing up in the battle of life, and are fighting it inch by inch like men, determined by God's help to come out of it straight. Some rumors, we hear of masculine jealousy, that women are competing, perhaps too successfully, with some of us in some professions, but I will not believe that any man worthy of the name ever yet owed a woman a grudge because she was beating him in his craft, and I appeal to fair-minded men to see that, when a woman crosses their path in her struggle to live, she has a fair field, fair play, and every chance and every help a man's hand can give her. Let us remember our own knock-down blows, and if we get up and fight again, perhaps to conquer, let us remember how much more their like may hurt a woman than a man."

The world would be a better place, and the women have a less hard and bitter fight for existence, if there were more men who think with Hall Caine.

Now and then we hear of those who go to the other extreme, and take upon themselves duties and responsibilities, in reality, not their own. They may have ambitions of which they never speak, and hopes that are as dear to them as those of their more fortunate neighbors, but they stoically bury them deep in their hearts and plod on, year after year, carrying loads which other hands imposed—loads, in the faithful carrying of which they lose all chance of realizing their own dreams. Such are rare in this nineteenth century, and when one crosses our path we thank God that men of that kind did not all pass out with a dead age.

The complaint that women are crowding out the men is easily answered. Not from choice will one woman in a hundred give up her sweet, quiet home-life to join the jostling crowds in the paths of business. She does it in self-defence, because those fail who should give her a just measure of her rights. And so, with the growing independence of the times, she faces the inevitable, and goes out to win for herself what she would otherwise do without. Too much praise cannot be given the women who, often so unfairly handicapped, have fought and won their laurels equally with the men. To-day they can be found filling, with honor and credit, important positions everywhere—in literature, in the hospitals, in journalism, in medicine, out on the field of battle, with their tender care and brave hearts, in offices and shops—almost in every sphere; and wherever they go they carry with them an influence that purifies and refines.

A Question of Conscience.

WE often wonder at the strange and inexplicable faculty men, and for that matter women, also, have of forgetting their small debts, and the petty loans that may have been made them. Here it is the fifty cent piece borrowed for luncheon; there the unredeemed concert or opera ticket. Yet they do not forget their larger debts, the promissory notes, or the maturing drafts. And not only in the matter of redeeming the odd tickets here or there, but the voluntary taking of a number of them to dispose of for some church, or other worthy purpose, and after the affair is over, the neglect to make any return whatsoever of either tickets or money. This is a practice that is becoming most lamentably common, and yet those who are guilty of it deem themselves honest. Not along ago an instance of this occurred. An entertainment was given in aid of a worthy institution, the whole trouble and responsibility, falling, as usual, on the shoulders of a loyal few. Many others, equally interested, took tickets—for themselves and to dispose of—yet the number who did not make any returns at all, although they were repeatedly requested to do so, was surprisingly large. These religiously attend church, wearing expressions of sincere piety and deepest spirituality, but watch closely, and when the plate comes around they will dive deep into pocket after pocket in search of the smallest coin they possess. When one sees so much of this present day Christianity, it seems truly wonderful that there are any free churches at all, the solution, of course, being that the burden falls on the few.

And on the subject of church collections does not this custom of passing the plate bring us back most unpleasantly to the sordid side of life, coming as it does in the middle of a beautiful service. The plate goes from one to another, from you to your poverty-stricken brother, who feels his poverty never more than at this moment, and is ashamed to let it pass without his contribution, and in the rebellion against his unhappy lot, which the occasion helps to arouse, his heart grows hard, when the service might otherwise have filled it with love and peace and contentment. Could we not all with much less show and ostentation, quietly drop our tithes into boxes placed in each vestibule as we pass out, or in! None would know, for none would see, following the best of precepts "Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth."

But unfortunately this nineteenth century Christianity steps in. We give not proportionately to our means, but in accordance with the opinions and demands of our neighbors, as has been amply proven by the greatly increased offertories since the substitution of plates in many of our churches for the deep bags used a few years ago.