

AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

A DEPARTMENT MAINLY FOR WOMEN

The Deadly Feminine

BY CANADIENNE.

IF you wish to interest any woman in a certain man, inform her that he is a woman-hater. The converse of this proposition is not true. A man is not attracted to a woman who is an alleged man-hater. He shuns her instinctively, as if she must be an embittered and malicious old maid. Consequently, when the advertising department of a woman's magazine set forth in large type that Mr. Kipling's new poem on the woman question, which would appear in the November issue, was "like a lash across a woman's face," the managers of that department displayed the wisdom of the serpent. Every woman who read that announcement was interested and curious. She bought, borrowed or stole the November issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, to find a chrysanthemum cover on the outside and Mr. Kipling's lines, "The Female of the Species: A Study in Natural History," on the eleventh page, with a new photograph of the author, spectacled, peak-capped and cigared, beside the fatal verses. A majority deserted the complexion page for poetry. After all, some of us were disappointed. The poem has been compared to Mr. William Watson's notorious attack, "The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue"; but it was neither so bitter nor so brilliant as the latter production. Mr. Watson, it is alleged, referred to the wife of the Premier of Great Britain, and made this damaging admission to the New York reporters. As the poet had taken tea in the Asquith drawing-room, it was generally considered shabby, not to say unappreciative, for him to reward a cup of fragrant oolong with such a mouth-puckering lemon. Mr. Kipling's contribution is not personal, but general, although there are two stanzas which seem to refer to those ardent ladies who pull door-bells, smash windows and chain themselves to pillars, in the attempt to convince stubborn male legislators that women should have votes.

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IT is characteristic of Rudyard the Riotous that his poems elicit replies and provoke parodies. Many a fair maiden took her fountain pen in hand, 'way back in 1897, to reply in feminine fashion to that extraordinary picture-poem, "The Vampire." When he wrote "Our Lady of the Snows," there were scores of good Canadian yeomen who deserted the plough to write a few lines in defence of our long-suffering climate. When he broke forth in "The Islander" and made a few remarks on "The flannelled fools at the wickets," there was hardly an athlete who did not hasten to avenge the attack in verse.

Already, Mr. Hall Caine has come to the rescue with a metrical reply to "The Female of the Species." There is scarcely a magazine in Canada which will not receive a more-or-less poetic protest from a woman reader who resents the ultra-realism of the author of "The Jungle Book." Mr. Kipling asserts that woman is ever intense and narrow-minded, whether in her maternal affection or in her intellectual convictions, that she cannot understand the "God of Abstract Justice," and that when she becomes aroused on public questions there ensue—

"Unprovoked and awful charges—even so the she-bear fights;
Speech that drips, corrodes and poisons—even so the cobra bites."

It would not be well for Mr. Kipling to enter the political fray and allow himself to be nominated in that "Sussex-by-the-Sea" of which he is so fond. Think of the grand rally of suffragettes in that spot, and the gauntlet of feminine opposition which the poet would run! An annexationist would have a happier time as candidate in West Toronto than the famous author in the Land of Emmeline Pankhurst. However, he cherishes no political aspirations, and is quite content to write studies in natural history from his peaceful retreat, unmindful of the conflict which follows. He may well be content to remain in literary seclusion, for, is it not written in the gossip of book review departments, that he receives, at least, one dollar a word—and who knows how much for a hyphen or a semi-colon? There is one drop of consolation in the feminine cup. The poet, himself, is a married man, and his very own wife, if she is wise in her day and generation, will take possession of the *Ladies' Home Journal* cheque, and spend it on a more elaborate gown, beaded,

be-fringed and be-jewelled, than the Kipling household has seen before.

"Did you ever notice," said a Hamilton girl, "that it's always a little man, who is all nerves, who says or writes horrid things about women? A nice, jolly big man, whom all the girls like, never talks about a woman as if she were a bear or a snake."

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IS the "study" true to life? In order to answer that vexed question, it would be necessary to define life—and, so far, no one seems to have done so, to the satisfaction of either saint or scientist. If humanity is no higher than the sheep and goats which "nourish a blind life within the brain," if the modern household is only a wild beast's lair, if social life presents nothing nobler than the Jungle, then the writer of "The Female of the Species" has produced a truthful lay. So far as this poem is concerned, he sees in woman nothing higher than bear



MRS. EMMELINE PANKHURST
The noted English suffragette who spoke in Massey Hall,
Toronto, December 12th.

or cobra. Perhaps he takes the old, Oriental attitude that the soul, if there be such, is exclusively a masculine possession.

Man is venturing upon quicksand when he makes a declaration concerning the nature of woman. Mr. Kipling protects himself ingeniously by stating naively that it is woman herself who warns man against her sister in debate or council, assuring him that he "will meet no cool discussion." However, he makes several rather rash assertions regarding feminine limitations which may arise in judgment against him someday. Once upon a time there was a professor in the city of New York who wrote a little article against the university woman, in the course of which he blundered into the remark: "Man has assigned a certain place to woman, as he has a perfect knowledge of her nature and attainments." Think of any man, even a professor, being brave enough to say such a thing! An advanced woman—Charlotte Gilman, I think—replied to the professor, and beautiful was the controversy which followed. Years and years afterwards, the professor married and hoped to be happy ever after. There was another lady, whom he had once thought he loved, and she hied her to the courts with a bundle of old love-letters, tied with blue ribbon, and proceeded to enliven legal circles with a breach of promise suit. The bride of the professor was really annoyed, the professor's head drooped as he listened to the ancient terms of endearment and the Philistines on the yellow journals rejoiced. Then, someone—perhaps it was a woman—hunted up the old magazine article and quoted the words as to man's perfect understanding of woman's nature. The pro-

fessor is no longer on the faculty of that great university—peradventure, at this moment he is writing a letter of commendation to Mr. Kipling.

It may be old-fashioned taste, but I turn with infinite relish to poetry more than half a century old and read again the closing lines of the seventh division of Tennyson's "Princess," bright with a prophecy of "the crowning race of humankind." They may be idealism, in comparison with the ruder lines, but there is more beauty and, therefore, more truth, in the inspiration of the Laureate than in the tinkling rhymes of the Banjo Band. Nobler is the creed of him who never doubted that "thru' the gates that bar the distance comes a gleam of what is higher."

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Mrs. Pankhurst in Toronto.

WHEN Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, the famous leader of England's militant suffragettes, appeared in Toronto two years ago, the attitude of the public was curiosity, flavoured with censure. Mrs. Pankhurst addressed the members of the Canadian Club and every man of them declared her a charming woman and an admirable speaker. She spoke in Massey Hall, giving the history of the woman suffrage movement and explaining why some of the advocates had adopted militant methods, and the curious hearers became sympathetic admirers, if not adherents. After two years of political conflict, Mrs. Pankhurst returned to us, to address a Massey Hall audience once more, and to speak on behalf of the Cause before the Women's Canadian Club.

Her enthusiastic devotion to the gaining Cause has been marked, during the last twenty-four months, by evident physical stress, but Mrs. Pankhurst's voice is clear and courageous as of old, nor have the trials of the conflict embittered her spirit in the least. As one listens to her, one realizes the earnestness of these educated and refined Englishwomen who have braved the law and the discomforts of a term in gaol, if they may further the ends for which they are working. You may be utterly indifferent to the vote, you may disapprove entirely of disturbing public meetings and creating a disturbance in the highway—but you must admit that Mrs. Pankhurst is eminently womanly and essentially sane. Those who expect to hear rant or hysterics will be disappointed. She is logical, witty and graceful, with the convincing force of the woman who knows whereof she speaks. She indulges in no diatribe regarding "mere men," she utters no perfervid platitudes about down-trodden women. Justice is her plea, and, as a pleader she is most effective. In fact, her appeal is intellectual, rather than emotional. One suspects occasionally that she is purposely keeping back a flood of impassioned feeling, and that, in consideration of popular prejudice, she is subordinating sentimental considerations, in order that she may not be accused of appealing to anything less—or more—than the reasoning faculty. She shows that intimacy with political life and processes which is characteristic of the intelligent Englishwoman. There is no ostentation in this familiarity, merely the natural ease of one who is in her element in discussion of the widest public questions.

While her recent address in Massey Hall was both interesting and illuminating, it was not characterized by the vitality which marked her earlier effort of two years ago—for the reason that Mrs. Pankhurst, like *Alan Breck*, is a "bonny fechter" and was at her best in the hour when she was winning her way against heavy odds. Her physical fragility is in her favour, as it emphasizes the inequality of the struggle and gives an absurd aspect to any charge of unbecoming aggression. She is remarkably careful in matters of local reference, and is not to be trapped into giving any advice regarding Canadian affairs. She possesses valour and the better part of valour, also, and is both keen and courteous in debate.

Those who have heard and met Mrs. Pankhurst are in no doubt as to the outcome of her crusade in Great Britain. She and her comrades have organized such a force as the British Isles have not seen before. It includes women of all classes and professions, animated by the one aim and possessed of a determination which means ultimate victory. Whatever may be true of the women of Canada, it is manifest that the vast majority of English women desire the suffrage and are prepared to suffer for what they regard as political freedom. Mrs. Pankhurst is keenly sensitive to the humorous aspects of the struggles, and tells of the many ingenious devices for forcing the legislators to take the petition seriously, in a fashion which appeals to both the risibilities and the reason. As a man remarked two years ago after hearing her at the Canadian Club: "She's a Leader and a Lady."