

Family Life Through The Ages

PART II.

MORGAN, in "Ancient Society," has recorded three distinct systems of consanguinity—the Malayan, Turanian or Ganowanian, and the Aryan. He has also outlined five different forms of the family—the Consanguine, Punaluan, Syndyasmian or Pairing, Patriarchal, and Monogamian.

It is not our purpose to deal in detail with these separate forms of the family or consanguinity. The reader can always refer to the main work to enlarge his acquaintance with any or all of these particular systems. While many valuable contributions have been made to the science of early races of men by modern writers, still, Morgan's work remains in a class by itself as the most important collection of facts on ethnology that has yet been presented.

In our last we concerned ourselves with pointing out the reasons for the reduction of the group, or the contraction of the circle, in the field of sexual relationship. The first great change we attributed to the knowledge acquired by primitive man through observing the deteriorating effects of close inbreeding. The remedy prescribed was prohibition of inter-marriage between certain sections of the group. The extension of this prohibition to other more remote degrees of relationship would obviously result in the impossibility of group marriage at all. As Engels in the "Origin of the Family" has it: "At last only one couple, temporarily and loosely united, remains: that molecule, the dissolution of which absolutely puts an end to marriage."

Marriage between single pairs was the rule in the Syndyasmian form of the family. But while one man and one woman took the place of the group in domestic affairs this pairing family possessed but few characteristics of the present form.

It was not by any means an indissoluble union, where the contracting parties vowed eternal allegiance through life's tempestuous journey. The contract could be broken at will. Either husband or wife could dispense with the other when occasion warranted. It was optional with the parties of the first and second parts how long the marriage relation continued. Sex love had not reached that stage of development later made possible by the growth of the property institution, so that the domestic union was essentially one of convenience alone.

The contest with the common enemy—nature, was yet too keen to permit of separate habitations for the married pairs. The old communistic mode of housekeeping still sufficed. A number of families lived under the same roof and kept house together. In all matters pertaining to household affairs the women were the rulers. They prepared the food and raised the children. Mere man found his sphere of influence on the outside. He had a mandatory over the hunting grounds, and it was his function to furnish the cats. When domestic difficulties loomed on the horizon it was generally the man who was forced to gather up his scanty trappings and leave the home. The children and household effects were under control of the women.

But petticoat government had its limitations and eventually its termination. Changes of a most important nature were taking place at the economic base of society. Something hitherto unknown, and unheeded, was making its appearance with rapid strides. This something was private property. From the time of its inception in earlier stages items of property were left in the hands of those who used them. Woman had control inside the home and man outside. In the hunting stage this would mean that woman predominated in an economic sense. Man's possessions were limited to crude hunting weapons, while woman's sphere of control extended to all the utensils necessary to the home.

But now the scene changes; a momentous metamorphosis had occurred. Social progress, gradually acquiring momentum, had received a great shove forward. New discoveries and inventions succeeded in leaving valuable property in the hands

of man. Cattle were captured and domesticated; mineral deposits were discovered and utilized; manufacturing of a crude nature was indulged in. Slavery appeared.

Into the possession of the male members of society came those various items of property. Man's star was in the ascendent; woman's on the wane. Private property resulted in a complete change in the family relations. Maternal law could not withstand the shock which property evoked. The children belonged to the woman. They were of her gens, and while such a system lasted the female share of the property alone could go to the children. The man's belongings went to his gens; to his brothers and sisters, and the children of his sisters.

It does not require a very keen power of abstract thought to conclude that maternal law was now at the end of its tether. That the superior economic position of man would result in the collapse of the ancient system of inheritance is easily seen. His children must inherit his property. To make this possible, woman's ancient prerogatives must be shattered. They were.

Monogamy, with its train of attendants jealousy, prostitution, and individual sex love, appeared on the scene together. Woman was completely defeated and all her rights surrendered to victorious man. Her function from now on was confined to rearing children and being the submissive slave of man.

Our present family order, then, has not existed since time began to count the centuries. The wedding service in our established churches declares that the present marriage system is as old as the human race itself. How far this is from being correct we can see by a glance at history. Even when the transformation did take place it was not engendered by pure, lofty, idealistic impulses. Grossly material incentives lie at its very base. Cold, calculating property requirements demanded its inception.

As for the family of today, while the form is in essence the same as it was at the birth of monogamy, many variations can be noticed. The relative positions of men and women have drastically changed. So much slop and piffle has been disseminated on the sex question in recent years that a brief reference to sex functions and positions will not be amiss.

The woman question has long been a fascinating field of research. Poets, novelists, magazine scribblers, quasi philosophers, and cub reporters have all contributed their quotas on lovely woman. The conclusions they have arrived at have depended largely on how the writer was affected at the time by the opposite sex. If all was happy and serene between the investigator and the object of his amours, then, beautiful and graphic phrases portray the becoming features of those lovely specimens of adorable femininity.

If, however, all is not well between the painter and the painted, the outlook on the matter is drastically changed. The glowing charms of womanhood have lost their attraction. The dimples in the chin, the lovelight in the eyes, the warts on the back of her neck, and the powder on her nose assume a gloomy and sombre aspect. The point of attack now is the vicious temper, the jealous disposition, the lack of conjugal fidelity, the vampirish methods, and other frailties that are not monopolized by either sex.

Such attempts at analyses may prove interesting and entertaining but, shunning as they do the very foundation of the subject, they cannot be in any degree instructive. They are nothing more than temperamental outbursts that are liable to sway to the opposite extreme with the slightest whim or fancy. Heroes and heroines, villains and vampires, who exist either for the purpose of ennobling their fellow creatures by the magic force of a Pollyanna, or breaking up homes, and strewing the wreckage of what was once domestic bliss around the feet of shattered hopes and unfulfilled romances, are not realistic and do not concern us.

To properly examine the respective positions of men and women in the world process we are forced to dig beneath the surface. Not even to any one branch of science can we limit our investigation. Many exponents of sex theories confine themselves to physiology, psychology, or sociology, and consider that in one of these fields they find ample means of fathoming the mysteries connected with sex relations.

References to woman as being man's superior, inferior, half, whole or equal, only portray the fact that the reviewer has not adequately studied the lesson. To know woman we must know sex first. This knowledge attained, we must then understand the influence of environment extending over a course of many centuries. Biological and sociological laws must be probed into, and dissected, before the problem is solved.

Looking at the different phases of organic nature that surround us, we find, in the midst of divergent surface features, a striking similarity at the base. Whether the particular organism be that of man, animal, fish, tree, flower, or plant, every moment of such an existence, whether covering a matter of hours or centuries, is made up of a process of assimilation and decomposition. One force building up, another tearing down; one constructive; the other destructive; or as the biologist would place them in the scientific category—anabolism and katabolism.

The outcome of the balance between those contending forces we know as life. Where the building up influence predominates, we have certain characteristics manifested that we know as femaleness, and where the opposite action overrides, maleness is the result. The attributes of the former are quiescence, passivity, conservatism, and of the latter activity and restlessness.

Deep down at the roots of biology and sociology, then, we find the vital differences between the sexes that must be unravelled ere the baffling problem is on the road to solution. Man and woman, instead of presenting two distinct entities that absolutely exclude all encroachments from the other direction, are both required to form that one organism—man. Each one dovetails into and completes the other. They are each the separate sides of the one shield. Comparison as to the importance of either sex in the complete organism is out of the question. As all the wheels of a watch are necessary to its time-keeping potentialities, and it would not be a watch without the inclusion of all the parts, so are the two sex functions indispensable to the human organism.

Starting from such a basis we can read the riddle. To know the present we must understand the past. The surface-grazing attempts of modern literary lights, and professors of unknown sciences, serve only to obscure the issue, and prevent the light of investigation from penetrating the misty realms of other ages. In our next we will conclude the review.

J. A. McD.

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