

Canadian Suffrage Association Series.

Man's World.



By Rev. R. J. Hutcheon.

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BY REV. R. J. HUTCHEON.



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EVERY wide reader of the Press and the Magazines will bear me out when I say that there is growing up in the hearts of the people everywhere a feeling that there is something radically wrong with the world. Look where you will, in the Orient or the Occident, and you become conscious of a vast and growing unrest among the masses. China is in the midst of a Revolution; Russia is in a chronic state of political disorder; Germany has the constant menace of a growing socialism; France is forever confronted with uprisings among the labor classes; England has been almost paralyzed recently by strikes and the fear of strikes; the United States is torn asunder by the strife between capital and labor, and can hardly sleep in its bed at night without dreaming of some commercial disaster that may befall it before morning. Every few months the European world is filled with the rumors of war, and the navy yards ring day and night with the noise of Dreadnought construction.

Even in the more private aspects of life

the same unrest, the same sense of there being something wrong with the world, is manifest. The frequency of divorce and the persistency with which the question of marriage is discussed in the literature of to-day, show that there is a vast and growing unrest in the home and the family. No body of educators ever meet without giving expression to their feeling that there is something radically wrong with our whole educational system. The Church, both in the Roman Catholic section and in the Protestant section, is anxious about the future, and hardly knows whether to resist or welcome the changes which loom up before it. The drama and current fiction and the tone of social life all come in for their share of criticism, and serious people think in all earnestness that they see around them the marks of a decadent society—of a society which is getting ready to perish and pass off the world's stage through its own inner decay.

All in all, the consciousness that there is something wrong with the world is growing towards a climax, and is prophetic, in all likelihood, of vast social changes during the century on which we have entered. The sense of there being something wrong always gives rise to efforts to set things right, and we may confidently expect that this century will witness vast social experiments of one kind and another, and that the constructive

genius of man will have an opportunity in the sphere of social betterment such as it never had before since the world began.

Now, is it possible for us to put our finger on any one thing and say: "There is the main source of the world's evils"? The book which is to be the basis or text of my remarks to-night may be said to be an answer to that question. Mrs. Gilman practically upholds the thesis that the main trouble with the world lies in the fact that it has been and for the most part still is a man-made world.

I am well aware that many a man would laugh at any serious discussion of such a thesis and dismiss it from his mind as a product of feminine hysteria, but anyone who has read one of Mrs. Gilman's books, or has heard her lecture, knows that she cannot be dismissed by a mere supercilious wave of the masculine hand. On the side of form, I do not consider Mrs. Gilman a great writer either in prose or verse. In charm of manner and in imaginative power she cannot compare with Olive Schreiner, whose book on "Woman and Labor" I reviewed from this pulpit last spring; she has so much to say, and is in such a hurry to say it, that she does not stop to mass her matter or polish her sentences or care for her rhythm as the supreme literary artist is compelled to do. But on the side of substance, of the facts stated, of the arguments advanced, of the

suggestions thrown out, of the insight to see and the courage to state the truth, Mrs. Gilman has no equal among the women writers of the present time with whom I am acquainted. She is no mere free-lance in the world of journalism, with a knack of saying superficial things sharply and catchingly; she is a real thinker, grounded in genuine knowledge of biology and economics, familiar with the writings of Ward, Giddings, and Ross, and all the best and most advanced sociologists, and wise with the wisdom which only large human experience and wide observation can give. I do not hesitate, then, to treat with perfect seriousness her thesis that the main trouble with the world lies in the fact that it is almost entirely a man-made world, or, in her own words, is due "to the effect on our human life of the unbridled dominance of one sex."

To show you just what she means by this, let me state the first great distinction which she makes. We are accustomed to divide the human world into the masculine and the feminine, as though the two sexes had very little in common; but Mrs. Gilman uses a new classification, which seems to me a much fairer and truer one. She speaks of the masculine, and the feminine, and the human. Masculine qualities are those which belong mainly to men, feminine qualities are those which belong mainly to women, human

qualities are those which belong equally to both. It is said that of an iceberg seven-eighths are always under water ; so we may say that seven-eighths of a man's qualities are human, not masculine, and seven-eighths of a woman's qualities are human, not feminine. Only in a few points do feminine and masculine natures differ, and it is essential that we should not mistake what those main points of difference are. In the every-day world of human achievement there is practically no great difference between the sexes, given equal conditions. Both men and women paint and sing and act and write stories and speak on the platform. Both sexes can organize businesses and social gatherings and educational systems and public campaigns. Both sexes succeed in the ministry, in medicine, in teaching, in law, in science and in government. Both sexes make a success in the various handicrafts. This whole world of human achievement is neither man's world nor woman's world ; it belongs equally to both ; and though one sex may achieve a little more or a little less in certain lines than the other sex, we now know with certainty what our fathers did not know or did not wish to recognize, viz. : that the great civilized world is neither masculine nor feminine, but human, and that what a man shall do or what a woman shall do depends, not on fundamental distinctions be-

tween their mental capacities, but on their inclinations and the actual circumstances and conditions of their lives.

Let us, then, in the light of the facts of life, erase from our minds entirely that old superstition that a great chasm separates the sexes from one another, that their mental powers are fundamentally different, and that God has assigned one class of industrial and social duties to one sex and another class of industrial and social duties to the other sex for all time. The truth is, that the majority of human powers are common to both sexes, and their points of difference are due to the different purposes which they severally serve in the physiological process of reproduction. The handicrafts, the professions, the sciences, the arts, amusements and recreations, government, education, religion—these are not masculine, nor are they feminine; they are simply human.

Having made clear this large human element which is common to both sexes, let us go on to ask what are the special contrasts between them. In that small but important region where the two sexes differ from each other, the basic female impulse may be said to be—to gather, to put together, to construct, and the basic male impulse to scatter, to disseminate, to destroy. Go behind the world of human achievement altogether—the world of the arts and professions and

handicrafts and tools and weapons of warfare—to the purely animal world, and you can soon see that the essentials of maleness and femaleness are as above stated. The physiological process which builds up the animal form goes on in the body of the female. She is the builder, the creator, the constructor, and though the constructive process goes on unconsciously, it must have a vast indirect effect on the whole character of her nervous system, and, in the human mother, on the mind and soul. The whole nervous and mental system of the female, through the growth of new lives in her own body, must be in harmony with the mood of sympathy and with the notion of growth, development, evolution, construction, to a degree which the male can achieve only after great effort. But if growth and construction is the basic female impulse, combat may be said to be the basic impulse of the male. The male of wild animals is always belligerent. Not that the female lacks courage ; in the defence of her offspring she can be as brave as the male parent ; but the male fights not merely in the defence of offspring, but for the sake of the female, i.e., for his own selfish ends, for the sake of beating a rival, or for the very joy of the combat. His nervous and mental system knows nothing of those creative, constructive, building-up processes which go on in the body of the

female ; nature does not use him except to scatter the seeds of life, and in fulfilling that end he becomes strong and belligerent, and well armed with sharp teeth or fierce claws or long horns. Growth, creation, construction—that is the basic female impulse ; combat, fierce desire, self-assertion—that is the basic male impulse.

Now if that analysis of the basic differences between the sexes, where they are different, be correct (and I do not see how it can be impugned) what should we expect a world to be like, which has been dominated for thousands of years by one sex—the male sex ? If combat, fierce desire, self-assertion is the basic male impulse, and the male sex rules in the home, in school, in industry, in religion, in government, in international politics, as it undoubtedly has ruled since time immemorial, what qualities might we expect to find in such a man-made world ? Surely the very qualities we do find—combat, coercion, force, power, self-assertion. Study carefully the unrest which we see today in all the departments of life and you will find that the cause of this unrest lies in what Mrs. Gilman calls the excessive maleness of the institutions which make up the modern world. Take the economic or industrial world as our first example. Is it not dominated from top to bottom by an extreme masculinity ? The fundamental conception

which dominates the science of Political Economy is that of the so-called economic man—a being absolutely controlled by the impulse for gain or self-interest and using his mind to find the easiest and surest and swiftest path to that self-interest. And where did the economist get his idea of “the economic man” except by studying a world of industry that was entirely man-made, and had never been modified or transformed by that sympathetic and co-operative impulse which can only come to society in large measure when the basic qualities of womanhood find free expression in it? To this day the main evils of the economic world are due to its excessive maleness—to the prevalence of combat, self-assertion, coercion, and the absence not only of co-operation but of the very desire to co-operate. The stock market is a daily battle between the bulls and the bears; capital tries to squeeze labor down to the last cent of wages, and labor tries to give capital the smallest return for the wages paid; financiers fight one another with every legitimate or illegitimate weapon they can lay their hands on; the railroads fight the shippers and the shippers fight the railroads. The whole industrial world is in a state of warfare, industry pitted against industry, class against class, and country against country. And if the women should turn to us men and say: “Behold your man-made

world ! See what comes of giving the entire direction of industry over into the hands of the male with his deep-seated tendency to coercion, self-assertion, combat and display ! See what you have made of the world by shutting out of your counsel those who are best qualified by their nature and their experience as mothers, as creators, builders or constructors, to be co-operators in the industrial world !” I, for one, do not know how to deny or controvert the justice of their criticism. The world of industry is a man-made world, and those men who know most about it are least satisfied with it, unless they are mere males and content with anything so long as they themselves succeed in the struggle.

Nor is the world of government any less man-made than the world of industry, or any more satisfactory. Think of the wars into which man-made governments have plunged the world ! Wars of aggression, wars of revenge and retaliation, wars designed to turn the public attention away from home problems, wars to uphold the throne of some monarch or the pride of some prime minister, or the policy of some colonial secretary ! Think of the treatment of crime by man-made governments ! Recall the methods of execution, the instruments of torture, the different kinds of prisons, the penalties inflicted on men for the slightest offences, the brutal

punishment of little children! When Mrs. Gilman says all this was due to the excessive prominence of the distinctively male impulse in the government of the world, how can we deny the justice of her criticism, or fail to acknowledge that mere maleness, with its resort to combat, coercion and self-assertion, is a poor equipment for the delicate art of governing, justly and fairly, the people of any country?

And when we turn from the large public aspects of life, such as industry and government, to the more private and personal aspects, the man-made character of our world is no less evident and no more satisfactory. Take our history. What has it been but a record of wars and conquests to suit the combative impulse of the men who wrote it and read it? Take our fiction. What is it for the greater part but either a glorification of adventure, fighting and killing, or an exhibition of the sex-passion, or, as Mrs. Gilman puts it, "the adventures of Him in pursuit of Her"? Take our games and sports—our lion, elephant and tiger hunting, our deer-killing, our foot-ball and polo, our pugilism and bull-baiting,—what are they but satisfactions of the basic male impulse towards combat, force and self-assertion? If both sexes were equally dominant in our life, the kind and the amount of our public sports would soon be modified. Take our

home life. What is the main source of the unrest that prevails in it to-day? Is it not that the family is too much man-made—that the husband has had a proprietary right over his wife, and that, while he existed for himself, she has been supposed to exist only for his sake? Take our standard of morals. What is the main reason for woman's protest against that standard at the present time? That it is entirely man-made. The husband expects to marry a pure, chaste woman, but he denies her right to ask the same of him. The fallen woman is driven out of respectable society; the partner of her guilt escapes scot-free. Take our hateful fashions. Who is responsible for them? Is it the woman who follows them? Not so, says Mrs. Gilman. It is the men of China who compel the women to keep their feet in machines that prevent them from growing. It is the men of Turkey who compel the women to wear veils. It is the men of Europe and America who are responsible for the sex-decoration which we commonly call fashion. Take our health. Who is responsible for the lessening vigor of the human race? It is the men, says Mrs. Gilman, for by confining woman within a small range of duties and within the four walls of a home they have robbed her of her early out-of-door life and reduced her physical vigor, and by their own vicious living have inoculated a

large portion of humanity with poisonous and noxious diseases. Take our religion. If women maintain it, men at least made it. Its vindictive deity, its terrible hell, its fire-breathing devil, its ecclesiastical tyrannies and persecutions, its rigid creeds—what are they all but the basic male impulse of force carried up into Heaven and down into Hell and into the innermost life of the church and the mind? Its Heaven of golden streets, its happy hunting-grounds, its (Mohammedan) Paradise where men are waited on by beautiful houris—what are they but pictures of a world where the basic male impulses of combat and desire find limitless expression and satisfaction? Look into human institutions, human ideas and human literature where you will and you find overwhelming evidence that it is essentially a man-made world. Man with his basic impulse of self-assertion has impressed himself on everything human, and if he has not kept the other half of the world, the woman, in servility, he has at least shut her out of his counsels and made but little use of her distinctively feminine qualities.

Is this man-made world a success? Let the first page of my lecture be an answer to my last. The wide-spread unrest of the world to-day shows that the masses do not think so. We have learned, or at least a few of us think we have learned, that you

can no more row a boat straight towards your dock by pulling on one oar than you can make a just, happy, harmonious society by allowing the qualities and ends of one sex to dominate in all human institutions. Man alone has not made a success of society : woman alone would not make a success of it in the future. God made us male and female—alike in a vast number of human qualities, but different in some fundamental impulses, and it is only through an equal development of the male and female qualities and an equal expression of them in the institutions of society that we can hope to permanently improve life. The question of the hour is not merely giving woman a vote—that is a mere incident in social evolution—it is a question of giving woman an equal chance with man to become her true and whole self and of utilizing all her qualities in the creation and regulation of the institutions within which all people, male and female, must alike live.

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