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THE NEW CITIZENSHIP

BY

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Ideas are contagious and epidemic. They break out unexpectedly and without warning. Thought without expression is dynamic and gathers volume by repression. Evolution, when blocked and suppressed, becomes revolution.

At the present time there are many people seriously alarmed by the discontent among women. They say women are no longer contented with woman's work and woman's sphere. Women no longer find their highest joy in plain sewing and working in wool. The washboard has lost its charm and the days of the hair wreath are ended. Many people view this condition with alarm and believe that women are deserting the sacred sphere of home-making and the rearing of children; in short, that women are losing their usefulness. We may as well face the facts. We cannot drive women back to the spinning wheel and the mat hook. We do hear more of discontent among women than we once did. Labor saving devices have entered the home and women are saved the endless labor of days gone by, when a woman's hours of labor were: 5 a.m. to 5 a.m. The reason we hear of more discontent than formerly is that women have more time to be discontented. The horse on the treadmill may be discontented, but he has to keep on going, he has no time to tell his troubles to the horse near him.

But discontent is not necessarily wicked. There is such a thing as criminal contentment and there is such a thing as divine discontent. Discontent means the stirring of ambition, the desire to spread out, to improve, to grow. Discontent is a sign of life corresponding to growing pains in a healthy child. The poor woman who is making a brave struggle for existence, whose every energy is bent to the task of making

a living, is not saying much. She has not time. The women who are making the disturbance are women who have time of their own, who have time for observation. Women have more leisure than men now and the question is what are they going to do with it. Custom and conventionality recommends amusements, social functions intermixed with kindly deeds of charity, the making of strong and durable garments for the poor, visiting the sick, comforting the sad, advising the erring, all of which women are doing, but the trouble arises here,—is this, while women do these things they are thinking, they wonder about the causes, the underlying conditions,—must they always be.

Women have never yet lived in their own world. Man has assigned woman her sphere. Woman's sphere is anything a man does not wish to do himself. This is a simple distribution of labor and easily understood and very satisfactory to half the population. Men have given a great deal of attention to women. They have told us exactly what we are like. They have declared us to be illogical, hysterical, impulsive, loving, patient, forgiving, malicious, vindictive, bitter, not any too honest, not very reliable. They have given us credit for all the good in the world and yet blamed us for all the evil. They are very prone to speak of women, as a class, of women—women in bulk, making each individual woman responsible for the sins of all.

Recently when members of the W. C. T. U. went before our law makers in Ottawa, pleading for a much needed reform, the prohibition of cigarettes, pleading in the name of our boys, who are every day being ruined in body and soul, one of the members of Parliament rose in his place and told these women to go home and reform their own sex before they came looking for any reforms from men. He said women were the slaves of fashion and should not look for any measure of reform from men until their own sex was emancipated. No one would have dared to speak so illogically to men. Think of telling half-a-dozen men to go home and reform all mankind! Quite a large order, too,—yet women have constantly to listen to such unjust and unreasonable criticism. This insult to womanhood

passes unchallenged! The fault is not with the individual, but with the race. Our earliest writers spoke of women always in the mass. St. Augustine, one of the early writers of the Christian Church, described women as "a household menace, a daily peril, a necessary evil." St. Paul made his contribution, too, and although he was careful to say that in this matter he spoke on his own authority, yet this has not in any way obscured the faith of those who wish to believe as he did. "Wives obey your husbands." A woman must not speak in the Church but ask her husband quietly at home. St. Paul has made his commentary on the marriage question too, and advises all Christian workers to remain single "even as I am," but he goes on, "Marry if you must, only do not say 'I did not warn you.'"

No wonder women have had a hard time living down these things. In our own day we have historians who undertake to state what we are like and just where we stand. Sir Almoth Wright has recently written a book which no doubt will be popular in some circles. He says there are no good women, though there are some women who have come under the influence of good men. Women have never yet lived in their own world. Our world has been made for us; even the fashions for which we receive so much criticism are made by men. The feet of little girls in China are bound by the mother and the nurse, but it is not for their pleasure that this torture is practised, but that the little girl may be pleasing in the eyes of her father and in the eyes of a possible future husband. Missionaries tell us of the mother's grief and compassion for the little sufferer, yet the cruel fashion goes on. In our own civilization women have been taught that they must attract men. The attractive girl is the successful girl in the judgment of the world, and there is a deeper reason for this than appears, for the attractiveness of a girl often determines her social standing. A pretty girl marries a millionaire, is presented at court and travels in Europe; her plainer sister, though perhaps more intelligent and more unselfish, marries a boy from home, lives on a farm and works out in the

harvest time. I am not comparing the two destinies as to which holds the greatest chances for usefulness or happiness, but merely showing how widely divergent two lives may be. A woman's social standing largely depends upon her ability to attract men and her chances of marriage are so directly in proportion to her personal charm that our girls have one definite problem which excludes all others. For this reason beauty parlors flourish and University extension lectures languish.

We blame girls for dressing foolishly, boldly and immodestly, yet we who uphold this system of women's economic and social dependence are responsible for it. It is perfectly true that men are attracted by the bold, foolish and frivolous girls, and that the girl who is quite independent and strong minded is matrimonially disqualified. My little boy, in giving me directions one time as to what he wanted his birthday present to be, told me he wanted "something foolish"—thereby expressing a truly masculine wish.

Under our present social conditions many a woman has found that it pays to be foolish. Men like frivolity before marriage and yet all the sterner virtues after marriage. Men like frivolity and women have taken them at their word and given them too much of it.

The economic dependence of women, making it necessary that women must attract for a living, is one of the greatest injustices that has been done us.

Women are naturally the guardians of the race. Women know the cost of human life as no man can ever know it. Women learned to cook so that her children might be fed, learned to sew that her children might be clothed, learned to think that her children might be guided. Women no longer can be flattered or threatened into silence. For long years the old iniquitous lie has been told us that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, but it is no longer believed by thinking women. It is intended more as a bouquet than as a straight statement of facts. It is given as a sedative to soothe us if we grow restless. When driving with a small child we often let the little fellow hold the end of the reins, and if the child really believes

he is driving we consider the game successful, but we cannot deceive the average child very long. So, too, the average woman refuses to be deceived when she is praised like an angel and treated like an idiot. The hand that rocks the cradle does not rule the world or the liquor traffic would have been outlawed many years ago. Would any mother accept money in return for her boy's soul, the purity of his mind and the health of his body? Would any liquor dealer dare to offer you money for the privilege of corrupting your son? "May your money perish with you!" you would cry in scorn, yet our Province does this, our Government does this and glorifies and justifies its action. If it is wrong for the individual to accept blood money, why is it not wrong for a State? The liquor traffic and the white slave traffic are kept up by men for men, women are the victims, women pay the price. Oh no, when the hand that rocks the cradle gets its chance at ruling the world, it will be a safer, sweeter, cleaner world for the occupant of the cradle. Women have kept silence a long time. They have religiously believed it their duty like charity to bear all things, believe all things, endure all things. Now a change has come. Women are awakening to a sense of citizenship. No longer is the ideal woman the one who never lifts her eyes higher than the top pantry shelf nor allows her sympathy to extend past her own family. Women who believed they must sit down and be resigned are now rising up and being indignant. The new womanhood is the new citizenship. Women are asking why should property be held more sacred than human life, why is a man punished more severely for stealing a fur coat or a gold watch than he is for stealing a woman's virtue, her happiness and her good name? Why is it that in the law of this Province a woman has no legal claim on either her home or her child? Why is a man liable to five years' imprisonment for stealing a young girl and fourteen years' imprisonment for stealing cattle? Why is a woman's virtue valued at only \$25.00 in this Province? Why is not a woman factory inspector in this city, where there are so many more women employees than men? Why are women's petitions

so regularly and systematically ignored? Why are women not given equal pay for equal work? Why are women debarred from taking up homesteads? Why are women, physically weaker than men, further handicapped in the race of life by political nonentity? Why are women on election day classed with idiots, lunatics and criminals? These are some of the questions women are asking in this Province and the wise politician is the one who listens. It is no use to try to hush us up, we refuse to be hushed. These questions cannot be smoothed over, they must be settled.

Politicians tell us it would never do to give women equal pay with men or let them take up homesteads, for that would make women even more independent of marriage than they are at the present time, and it is not independent women we want—it is population.

Granting that population is very desirable, would it not be a wise plan to try to save what we have? Six thousand boys are needed in Canada every year to take the place of the six thousand drunkards who drop out of the race. How would it be to save them? Thousands of babies die every year from preventable causes. Would it not be a good plan to try to save them? In the far West where women are beyond the reach of nurses and doctors, many mothers and babies die every year from lack of medical skill. How would it be to save them? Public spirited women, but alas, without votes, have interviewed august bodies on the subject of sending Government nurses to these brave women who pay the toll of colonization. These delegates have always been courteously received and complimented on their work, but up to date not one dollar of government money has been spent, notwithstanding the fact that when a prince or a duke comes to our country to visit, we can pour out money like water.

Women are beginning to think of these things and to talk of them, and the argument which is so often put forth—it would suit women better to go home and darn their children's stockings—does not exactly relieve the difficulty. It does not take all of woman's energy or brains to keep the stockings darned or the meals cooked. Women are cooks and housemaids and home

makers and dressmakers and nurses, but they are something more, they are citizens. Already women have attained citizenship in ten states of the Union and Alaska, and instead of disaster to the homes, it has brought happiness and prosperity.

Last month when the strikers' war in Colorado had culminated in dreadful loss of life and still greater loss was imminent; when the Colorado Government sat dazed and helpless; in the face of these appalling disasters the women of Denver, one thousand of them, marched to the capital and demanded that an appeal be sent to the President for Federal troops to put an end to the trouble. The Governor haughtily refused, but the thousand women had a thousand votes and so their words were words of power. They assured the Governor that five thousand women instead of one thousand would be on his door step in another twelve hours if he did not do as he was told, so the haughtiness of his manner disappeared. He did their bidding promptly and without delay. There were many technicalities in the way, but the women were conscious of only one thing, men were being shot down like dogs, women and children too, and they demanded that this should cease. The newspapers are loud in their praise of the women's interference. It may not have been regular, may not have happened according to parliamentary procedure, but it was effective. Only one journal raises its puny wail and asks who was minding these women's children while they were interviewing the Governor. People are slow to forgive women for believing that they have social as well as private duties.

But the dawn is breaking and the darkness flees away. Women who long have sat in their boudoirs like the Lady of Shallot, looking at life in a mirror, are now throwing the glass aside and coming down into the conflict. The awakened womanhood, the aroused motherhood is the New Citizenship.