

October 10, 1908.]

THE SPECTATOR.

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use our dowerless talent as have the ironworkers, the pitmen, the factory operatives, and the Socialists at large; our need so to do becomes hourly more urgent.—I am, Sir, &c.,

CONSTITUTIONALIST.

THE "AMERICAN WOMAN."

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—The "vivid" communication you published last week is, as you rightly say, so "suggestive" that I hope you will be good enough to publish some of the thoughts which it has suggested to an Englishwoman. You guard yourself in your editorial note from appearing to countenance an attack on the women of a friendly nation. But what you find "no small pleasure" in giving prominence to is really a thinly veiled attack on women as "found throughout the modern world." It may be timely in these pleasure-loving days to mark one's detestation of the idle, self-indulgent, hard pleasure-seeker,—man or woman. It is true that civilisation has made it possible for many men and a still larger number of women to live in absolute idleness if they like. And if such a book as "The Metropolis" presents a true picture of American social life, Dr. Macphail may well write severely of its women,—one wonders that he should let off the men scot-free. But the characters in "The Metropolis," and the women of Dr. Macphail's "vivid" picture are the horrid "freaks" of civilisation, and not its normal product. Sometimes he seems conscious that he is speaking of the exceptional cases; but then comes such a startling statement as the following: "There is money and idleness for the women of the well-to-do: idleness alone for the women of the poor." (The italics are mine.) This statement vitiates the whole article. He is so angry because some women can be and are idle that he is blind to the fact that the majority of women are compelled by nature and circumstances to work harder than most men. The poor woman of to-day is cook and nurse and dressmaker and laundress and wife and mother and part bread-winner all in one. In masses of homes the wife must add earnings to the husband's to keep body and soul together. If lurid pictures are to be drawn of the evil ways of one sex at one end of society, let a counterbalancing picture be shown of the lurid facts too frequently found at the other end, where the husband is often content to let his wife do all the bread-winning, while preserving to himself the manly prerogatives of the vote and the leather belt. I hope that everybody who reads Dr. Macphail's letter will also read the short sketch of "The Mother" in Mr. Galsworthy's recently published "Commentaries."

According to Dr. Macphail, the well-to-do woman of to-day delegates all her duties; and he would not mind it so much if they were not delegated to men instead of to other women. Does he really think that in ordinary society we all enjoy the superior dainties supplied by the man cook? Do most of us have all our clothes from Worth? Does he accept unconsciously the mass of domestic services that even the rich do not get men to do for them? The invaluable nurse is recognised by him as being a woman, and so she is called a hireling. The vast army of women teachers who are educating all the little children, and most of the big ones, in these modern days are outside Dr. Macphail's line of vision. They do not fit in with his argument that since the woman no longer has to prepare the skin and cook the flesh of the animal shot by her husband, civilisation has turned her into an idle being. It would be as true to say that since the man no longer has to slay his food, he too is an idler; but the folly of the latter assertion of course requires no demonstration. In real truth, however, according to Dr. Macphail's own showing, the well-to-do woman often needs in these days to find and make work for herself. And because she is doing it in all seriousness, and devoting herself to philanthropic and social and political interests with an increasing sense of responsibility or a growing desire to try actively to better the conditions of things about her, she is treated to the bitterest gibe of all. But there is no pleasing Dr. Macphail, whether you give your leisure for others and want a vote, or are content with a simple outdoor game, although you cannot hit a ball as hard as a man can. Should a woman go for a walk, I wonder, seeing that the average woman cannot walk as far or as fast as the average man?

But to conclude. You, Sir, might take some comfort from the fact that it is not the idle, the self-indulgent, or the

frivolous woman who wants a vote. They all think it a most unwomanly desire. It is only the real worker among and for other women who is asking for it in the hope that even the frivolous and the idle may be stirred to a deeper sense of the responsibilities of their sex.—I am, Sir, &c.,

EDITH BETHUNE-BAKER.

23 Cranmer Road, Cambridge.

[We admit that there is a great deal of truth in Mrs. Bethune-Baker's criticism of the details of Dr. Macphail's letter,—a letter which, we were careful to point out, represented the writer's views, and by no means in all points the views of the *Spectator*. We expressed our dissent from the passage about the nurse even more strongly than Mrs. Baker. At the same time, we are convinced that, in spite of occasional exaggerations and injustices, Dr. Macphail is doing good service in condemning the particular type of woman he describes. His concluding letter, which deals with the unwillingness of the "American woman" to perform the main function of woman in the world, is now and then much too strongly expressed, but in the main it follows the lines of President Roosevelt's arraignment of a certain selfish section. Though we cannot, for obvious reasons, open our columns to a discussion of "race suicide," we must express our general agreement with the President on this matter.—*Ed. Spectator.*]

"KILLING NO MURDER."

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Half-a-century ago my father sometimes took me to attend trials in a provincial town. One of those trials was for infanticide. I was present when the jury gave their verdict; the foreman stated that there had been some difference of opinion among them, and that they had given the accused the benefit of the doubt. The Judge, of course, discharged the prisoner; but he intimated that he could not understand how the saving doubt had arisen. After a like verdict in the same town, my father, who had been foreman of the Grand Jury, was told by the Judge that the jury had acquitted the prisoner against the clearest evidence, and that if such indulgence continued to be shown to infanticide the horrid crime would never cease. Had the verdicts been different in these cases, the Judges (or Judge) would probably have wished the penalty of death to be inflicted, the penalty from which, about the same time, in "Adam Bede" Hetty was represented as having escaped by a hair's-breadth. The Home Secretary and others have lately expressed a very different sentiment. But I am not now concerned to criticise that sentiment; I refer to it only as significant of the trend of public opinion. Suffice it to remark that, if an extreme punishment for infanticide were often inflicted, such severity would be followed by frequent acquittals, and therefore by no punishment at all.—I am, Sir, &c.,

LIONEL A. TOLLEMACHE.

Athenæum Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Is it not possible that the appeal of the "helpless infants," whose cause you uphold (*Spectator*, October 3rd), to the heart of an unmarried mother may tell on the side of extinguishing, rather than preserving, the lives for which this world presents so dark a vista? I well remember, many years ago, the expression of a physician (afterwards distinguished) at a time when the misery of the poor was much in all men's minds. "It is an astonishing thing, when one comes to think of it," he said, "that in the slums of London a doctor is able to bring an infant into the world with any earnest endeavour to preserve the little life there taking its start. For all that human eye can see, the best thing for every child born in certain quarters of London would be a speedy death. We must not think of all that. Our instinct to preserve life in all circumstances is independent of rational justification." If that was the feeling of a wise and philanthropic physician regarding the lives of children who at least had fathers, may not a cognate impulse sway the heart of a mother as she gives, unpremeditated by terror, unaccompanied by anguish, the death which cuts off hopeless struggle, toil, privation, and loneliness from the creature for whose existence she is responsible?—I am, Sir, &c.,

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

[It is, of course, conceivable that a mother with her mind

sophisticated in the manner suggested by our correspondent might think herself justified in murdering her child, or, as she might put it, in applying to it the humane principle of euthanasia. That, however, is not the attitude of the ordinary child-killer. She "kills her kid"—to use the words quoted by the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*—because it is to her a terrible encumbrance,—something which she is at the moment under a tremendous temptation to relieve herself of in spite of the nobler instincts that are dragging her the other way. To suppose that even one murderous mother in a thousand acts with the idea of saving her child from the miseries and evils of a degraded life is to make an assumption which would be very difficult to substantiate. What we want to do is to help the poor creature to resist the temptation to relieve herself of her troubles and perplexities by the perpetration of a hideous and unnatural crime. Do we help her more in the agony of her temptation by telling her that if she yields she will not do anything really very wrong, and by letting her think that she will more deserve to be pitied than punished, or by making it clear to her through the action of the law that the State holds the killing of her children by a mother a specially shameful crime? To suggest the excuse of conversion to the doctrine of euthanasia strikes us as dangerous and demoralising as it is unreal.—ED. *Spectator*.]

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—May I reinforce your timely remarks in last week's *Spectator* on the Daisy Lord case by the following quotation from the essay on "Solitude" in Mrs. Meynell's "Spirit of Place"? The perusal of the two together may give our sentimentalists food for reflection. After dwelling on the unique nature of the intimacy between a woman and her child, and its absolute seclusion, Mrs. Meynell goes on to say:—

"That solitude partaken—the only partaken solitude in the world—is the Point of Honour of ethics. Treachery to that obligation and a betrayal of that confidence might well be held to be the least pardonable of all crimes. There is no innocent sleep so innocent as sleep shared between a woman and a child, the little breath hurrying beside the longer, as a child's foot runs. But the favourite crime of the sentimentalist is that of a woman against her child. Her power, her intimacy, her opportunity, that should be her accusers, are held to excuse her. She gains the most slovenly of indulgences and the grossest compassion, on the vulgar grounds that her crime was easy."

—I am, Sir, &c.,
Woodnesboro', Kent.

HUGH E. M. STUTFIELD.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I should like to thank you in my own name, and in the name of many others, for the stand you are taking in regard to the matter of child murder, and the many kindred subjects which, we are disconcerted to find, are becoming public questions. I believe the great silences are with us, but the noise is decidedly disquieting. When, for philosophical reasons, the responsibility of fatherhood is destroyed by the "endowment of motherhood," and the primal instinct of a woman to protect her child, even at her own inconvenience, is eradicated, it seems we may expect the beginning of the millennium! Perhaps we would not need to fear the party, of which these things are the hope, for social regeneration, if the growing desire for pleasure and ease at all costs were not befouling our literature and corrupting at its roots that higher sense of life which has made, and still makes, a man and woman love children more than dress and dinner-parties, and more than "beer and skittles."—I am, Sir, &c.,

EDITH H. SCOTT.

THE NEWCASTLE ELECTION.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I notice Mr. Carr in your last issue closes his interesting analysis with the old false reproach against the democracy of fickleness. When will politicians realise that this "weakness" lies, not in the democracy, but in politics? The people ask of Government the maintenance of liberty, and therefore security against aggression. Politicians, tempted to magnify their powers, stir up strife by encouraging the idea that when people want things done they should look to the State instead of co-operating among themselves. Surely it has been made abundantly clear that, so far as the ballot-box shows the will

of the people, the democracy consistently resents proposed attacks on its liberties, for when politics are transferred from national to domestic concerns the advocates of restrictive legislation are usually an energetic minority.—I am, Sir, &c.,

S. HUTCHINSON HARRIS.

3 Arundel Terrace, Brighton.

"WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS."

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Though I disagree with most of your dramatic critic's article on *What Every Woman Knows* in the issue of September 26th, I shall trouble you only for space enough to try to convince him of the mistaken view he has taken of Mr. Barrie's "purpose" in his last paragraph. "There are various indications," writes "Ignotus," "that the play is intended, in part at least, as a contribution to the discussion upon the relations of the sexes." Mr. Barrie, he holds, would have us believe that the true function of woman is to delude her husband into thinking she is ignorant and foolish. I think it is only just to point out that "Ignotus" has been so busy looking for Mr. Barrie's purpose that he has obviously missed that which prompted Mrs. Shand to conceal her own powers,—namely, the purpose of avoiding the disillusionment of her beloved John; a disillusionment which would necessarily follow her admission of her own share in his success. This may not be the idealist's view of the form true love should take, but it must be admitted by students of human nature that it is what actually happens every day. Therefore I would venture to suggest that your critic, by ignoring such a point as this, has proved himself capable of missing all the other human nature (the lack of which he laments) with which the play abounds. The greatest musician cannot produce harmony on an instrument which is out of tune, any more than Mr. Barrie can hope to make the unsympathetic answer to his subtle touch. May not some defect of this kind in the receiver be an explanation of your critic's rather sweeping description of the play as a "mere succession of disconnected notes"? I suggest that "Ignotus" should descend from his pedestal of idealism and take notice of the "folk about him," in the hope that some day it may be given him to recognise and acknowledge that charm of which Maggie Wylie truly says: "If you have it, you don't need anything else, not even education; and if you haven't it, it doesn't much matter what else you have."—I am, Sir, &c.,

Inchbroom, Birkenhead.

RONALD JEANS.

MORE LAND FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST AT DERWENTWATER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Thanks to the generosity of friends, and helped by the appeal which you so kindly allowed me to make in the *Spectator*, the purchase price has been raised of the land at the south-east end of Derwentwater, which as soon as the lawyers arrange matters will be handed over to the National Trust. This new acquisition, in conjunction with the adjacent property, which has, partly through gift and partly through terms of easy purchase from members of a local syndicate, been obtained by the Trust, will be a great addition to the enjoyment of the public, who will now have free landing and wandering on the whole of the wooded capes and bays of the southern shore, who will be able to pass from Brandelhow through Manisty as far as the river Derwent, and obtain access at two points on the main road that runs by Manisty to Grange.—I am, Sir, &c.,

H. D. RAWNSLEY.

Hôtel Bazzoni, Tremezzo, Lago di Como.

INDIAN SOLDIERS IN THE TRANSVAAL.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—I am much obliged to Mr. Ritch for supplying in your last issue official confirmation of the fact which I asserted in your issue of the 26th ult.,—viz., that the Indians who served in the Transvaal were non-combatants. I do not think that this would be clear to the ordinary reader of the phrase, "the battlefields where they served"; and it is important that it should not be supposed that coloured combatants served in the South African War. (I am sorry that to express my meaning I am driven to the use of the word "coloured.") I am not unaware of the sufferings endured by the Transvaal Indians. It is because I admire the dignity and courage of