

China And The New Woman

By H. PETHERTON

"ONE of the most laudable things that the Nationalist government has been largely instrumental in bringing about is the emancipation of women in Chinese social and political life." The theory that lies behind the word laudable in the above quotation is one that is constantly being dinned into our ears—one can hardly pick up a publication without finding it set forth either implicitly or more often explicitly, every aspiring politician finds it necessary to subscribe to it, there is in fact one loud and unceasing chorus proclaiming that the emancipation of woman is proving a short cut to a new milenium.

One wonders, however, how much of this is lip service, how many of the choristers are sincerely convinced of the truth of the sentiments they utter. Is it not very often merely a case of repeating parrot like the popular cry of the moment, either because it is the popular cry, or through a mental laziness which prevents the individual thinking the matter out for himself?

At the back of most men's minds there still lingers conviction that, in the words of one die-hard bachelor, it is a pity that women were ever allowed out of the kitchen; and, indeed, it has yet to be proved that their emergence has been responsible for all the benefits that are commonly asserted to have followed on it. It is all a matter of mere assertion. It is easy to say that woman's influence has led to an amelioration of the conditions of life, to a humaner outlook, a more pacific disposition, to social reform of every description, but what real grounds are there for such a statement? The greater part of the progress made in the last 100 years was made before the era of 'woman's rights,' by a man-managed society at a period when the idea of women M.Ps, women lawyers, women doctors and the like would have shocked even the women themselves.

Apart however from this what is there in the female character to support the theory? Actions and influence are determined by character, and there is nothing in that of woman to support the supposition that given control she would bring about a better regime and eliminate want, misery, and social injustice any more quickly than man has been doing. It may be granted that provided things are going well with her she is superficially gentler, more sympathetic, more pacific than the average man, but this only lasts as long as things do go well with her. In times of stress she is far fiercer, far more unscrupulous. In the war it was the women who were the bitterest, it is they who since have harboured feelings of rancour and ill will the longer. In industrial disputes it is the women who egg on the men to violent action against blacklegs and all those they consider their opponents, and one has only to listen to a mob of women discussing how they would deal with an unpopular prisoner to realize how elemental their natures are. Lynch law is essentially feminine. Women too are notoriously more exacting employers than men, they believe in getting their money's worth—and more.

At bottom women are savager, more implacable than men. Where their own interests are concerned or their feelings

engaged they are constitutionally incapable of seeing both sides. It is rare to find a woman with a genuine conception of society as superior to the individual or rather family. She has a far stronger sense of property rights, a far stronger sense of family, and it is one of the strangest features of the socialist movement that it should be feminist in its general outlook. That socialism does make an appeal to women is true, but that appeal is entirely one of momentary self-interest. A woman does not advocate socialism because she is convinced that it is a better method of ordering society as a whole, but because it promises an improvement in her own individual lot; her faith rarely survives the acquisition of property of her own or the realisation that under socialism she would be allowed very little of her own and that many case her rights over it would be severely restricted. Women in fact make very poor idealists, no woman was ever yet found leading a lost cause, and the idea of social reform for its own sake as the just and proper thing is the last that would occur to her. As a class she is completely lacking in the crusading instinct, and the spectacle of a woman in a white heat of impersonal indignation over a social injustice has yet to be seen. If she does turn reformer for any other reason than because she believes it will advantage herself, it is either because of some cunning appeal to her emotions or through a passion for minding other people's business. In this latter respect it is worth noting that the male reforming busybody has usually many feminine characteristics. The idea that people can be made good by act of parliament is one of very recent origin, and a direct connection can be traced between it and the triumph of feminism. It was the women in the absence of the men who inflicted prohibition on the United States, not because they thought beer wrong, but because they had been told that less beer for the men would mean more money for them. As long as the 'drys' could maintain the fiction that prohibition and prosperity were synonymous women went on voting dry, but now that fiction has been exploded, and their prohibition zeal has gone up in the consequent smoke.

The apostles of disarmament pin a great deal of faith on the influence of women. They make their most vehement appeals to them, and on the surface they would seem to be justified. The appeal is invariably one of sentiment, to the emotions rather than the reason and women being admittedly in normal times of pacific and timorous disposition respond. But there is no confidence to be placed in that response. It is based entirely on the feeling that 'your Tommy is my Jack,' that their own human belongings may be involved, not on any detestation of war in itself. As long as it was merely a matter of paid gladiators they rather enjoyed its excitement in fact. At best women's pacifism is but a veneer which at the slightest threat to their own interests will disappear.

The moment that a civilization falls under feminine sway it takes on feminine characteristics. It loses direction and purpose, becomes softer, less virile, and yet at the same time fiercer and crueller. It means the substitution of intui-

tion—blessed word—for logic and reason, and of sentiment for common sense. The result is a regime based on the shifting sands of emotion, rather than the rock of intellectual and moral conviction.

Women in fact are psychologically and physiologically unfitted for direct participation in public affairs. On the other hand indirectly her influence can be of inestimable value, and the more indirect the more valuable. She has her part to play in the work of progress but it is through men not in direct competition with or in place of men. "Woman on earth" wrote de Maupassant "has two parts to play, quite distinct roles but both of them charming—love and maternity." "Our admirable masters the Greeks", he goes on, "perfectly understood the twofold mission of the companion of man," and he points out that, while the Greek had the admired mother of his children to soothe and inspire him at home he had his Aspasia to amuse and arouse him abroad. Mother and wife was one role—the highest and most respected role—to the Greeks. A woman with child was one of the earth's three most beautiful things—mistress was another, and no woman could combine the two, nor indeed did she in those days wish to do so. The same phenomenon can be noticed in every nation in its most virile periods. In China, in Japan, in 15th and 16th century Italy even in 18th century England, while the wife and mother held the place of honour, the courtesan also had her recognised and no lowly position in society. We do not however find either venturing on to the public stage. Occasionally it is true some exceptional woman appeared there, but usually it was in exceptional circumstances, and the influence she exerted was not because she was a woman but in spite of that fact. Almost invariably too some man is to be found behind the scenes manipulating and directing her, as Burleigh and Walsingham manipulated and directed Elizabeth, or as the French politicians used the single minded zeal of Joan of Arc only to discard her when her usefulness was over. Where this has not been the case the result has been, if not disaster, at least perilously near it, as witness Catherine the Great and Cleopatra.

In practically all these cases the woman is found to be of the mistress type—the primary female function of child bearing is avoided. Now while one Elizabeth may be revered as Gloriana, a nation of Elizabeths is hardly to be desired—the nation in such a case would very soon cease to exist. The ideal of the modern woman is to be both wife and mistress too, but it is very soon discovered that it cannot be done, that both are full time jobs. Certainly the proper management of a home is. It is only the mistress who has leisure at all to manage or rather try to manage the affairs of the nation. Accordingly it is the mistress characteristics that are fostered. The home becomes an hotel, and the nursery is converted into an office. Yet the woman still remains frustrated and disappointed, for it is a boudoir not a bureau that a man seeks when he leaves his work, and he goes off to find one in the house of one of her a less emancipated but wiser sisters, leaving her to vent her energy on the helpless body public. She has deliberately refused the higher role for which nature cast her, and is herself, for lack of understanding of the qualities required, rejected for the secondary. Her *raison d'être* is gone, she remains only a nuisance upsetting the whole order of society by attempting to perform

FROM THE DOCTOR'S NOTEBOOK

By OUR MEDICAL EDITOR

Diabetes is a common disease among the Chinese. It results from the upsetting of the normal chemical proportions of the body, giving rise to an unusual quantity of sugar in the blood and the urine. The sufferer is unable to make use of the sugar he consumes in the form of starch. Normally, starch eaten as rice, bread, potato, etc. is converted into a form of sugar that serves as fuel for the body functions, the surplus being stored in the liver. The internal secretion of the pancreas (sweetbread) is vital to this process, and in diabetes this secretion is absent or deficient. The patient suffers from great thirst, passes large quantities of urine with a high specific gravity, is easily tired, and progressively loses weight. In the later stages he may become comatose, and die from some concurrent disease, like consumption. The way to avoid this disease is to live a clean life, eat sparingly, especially of starchy foods, get plenty of exercise, and refuse to worry. It is safe to say that mental worry has brought on more cases of the disease in persons already predisposed to it than any other single cause. The condition can be cured, or at least ameliorated, by a strict adherence to a diet specially worked out by the physician for each individual case, assisted by the injection daily of insulin—a substance derived from the pancreas.

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It is not generally known that alcohol in small quantities is a valuable food, although beer drinkers will tell you that the beverage is fattening. Taken in large quantities, however, it is an insidious poison. It then hardens the arteries, raises the blood pressure, has a destructive effect on the liver and kidneys and lowers the resistance of the body to other diseases. Consumed in moderation and at the right time and place it has its value, particularly in times of depression, in giving rise to a sense of well-being. There is an erroneous impression among many people that alcohol helps one to keep warm. The warmth that permeates the whole body after a glass of wine or spirits is a spurious warmth. What really happens is that the blood vessels on the surface of the body expand and are filled with blood, leaving the internal organs anaemic. It is therefore dangerous to go out into the cold weather after consumption of large quantities of alcohol on the mistaken idea that it will help to keep one warm. A bad chill is more likely to result. If it is to be taken at all, it should be *after* coming out of the open and before going to bed.

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Among the common ailments of children diphtheria is one of the most serious and yet perhaps the most curable if taken

functions for which she was not fashioned.

It is to this pass that thirty years of feminism is bringing the West—a declining West. In her western importations China has always been inclined to show too great a catholicity, far too few powers of discrimination and selection. In many respects she is modelling herself too closely after the western model, and this is one of them.