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<MODERN MAN-HATERS.>

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Among the many odd social phenomena of the present day may be reckoned

the class of women who are professed despisers and contemners of men;

pretty misanthropes, doubtful alike of the wisdom of the past and the

distinctions of nature, but vigorously believing in a good time coming

when women are to take the lead and men to be as docile dogs in their

wake. To be sure, as if by way of keeping the balance even and

maintaining the sum of forces in the world in due equilibrium, a

purely useless and absurd kind of womanhood is more in fashion than it

used to be; but this does not affect either the accuracy or the

strangeness of our first statement; and the number of women now in

revolt against the natural, the supremacy of men is something

unparalleled in our history. Both before and during the first French

Revolution the \_esprits forts\_ in petticoats were agents of no small

account in the work of social reorganization going on; but hitherto

women, here in England, have been content to believe as they have been

taught, and to trust the men to whom they belong with a simple kind

of faith in their friendliness and good intentions, which reads now

like a tradition of the past.

With the advanced class of women, the modern man-haters, one of the

articles of their creed is to regard men as their natural enemies from

whom they must both protect themselves and be protected; and one of

their favourite exercises is to rail at them as both weak and wicked,

both moral cowards and personal bullies, with whom the best wisdom is

to have least intercourse, and on whom no woman who has either

common-sense or self-respect would rely. To those who get the

confidence of women many startling revelations are made; but one of

the most startling is the fierce kind of contempt for men, and the

unnatural revolt against anything like control or guidance, which

animates the class of modern man-haters. That husbands, fathers,

brothers should be thought by women to be tyrannical, severe, selfish,

or anything else expressive of the misuse of strength, is perhaps

natural and no doubt too often deserved; but we confess it seems an

odd inversion of relations when a pretty, frail, delicate woman, with

a narrow forehead, accuses her broad-shouldered, square-browed male

companions of the meaner and more cowardly class of faults hitherto

considered distinctively feminine. And when she says with a disdainful

toss of her small head, 'Men are so weak and unjust, I have no respect

for them!' we wonder where the strength and justice of the world can

have taken shelter, for, if we are to trust our senses, we can

scarcely credit her with having them in her keeping.

On the other hand, the man-hater ascribes to her own sex every good

quality under heaven; and, not content with taking the more patient

and negative virtues which have always been allowed to women, boldly

bestows on them the energetic and active as well, and robs men of

their inborn characteristics that she may deck her own sex with their

spoils. She grants, of course, that men are superior in physical

strength and courage; but she qualifies the admission by adding that

all they are good for is to push a way for her in a crowd, to protect

her at night against burglars, to take care of her on a journey, to

fight for her when occasion demands, to bear the heavy end of the

stick always, to work hard that she may enjoy and encounter dangers

that she may be safe. This is the only use of their lives, so far as

she is concerned. And to women of this way of thinking the earth is

neither the Lord's, nor yet man's, but woman's.

Apart from this mere brute strength which has been given to men mainly

for her advantage, she says they are nuisances and for the most part

shams; and she wonders with less surprise than disdain at those of her

sisters who have kept trust in them; who still honestly profess to

both love and respect them; and who are not ashamed to own that they

rely on men's better judgment in all important matters of life, and

look to them for counsel and protection generally. The modern

man-hater does none of these things. If she has a husband she holds

him as her enemy \_ex officio\_, and undertakes home-life as a state of

declared warfare where she must be in antagonism if she would not be

in slavery. Has she money? It must be tied up safe from his control;

not as a joint precaution against future misfortune, but as a personal

protection against his malice; for the modern theory is that a husband

will, if he can get it, squander his wife's money simply for cruelty

and to spite her, though in so doing he may ruin himself as well. It

is a new reading of the old saying about being revenged on one's face.

Has she friends whom he, in his quality of man of the world, knows to

be unsuitable companions for her, and such as he conscientiously

objects to receive into his house? His advice to her to drop them is

an unwarrantable interference with her most sacred affections, and she

stands by her undesirable acquaintances, for whom she has never

particularly cared until now, with the constancy of a martyr defending

her faith. If it would please her to rush into public life as the

noisy advocate of any nasty subject that may be on hand--his refusal

to have his name dragged through the mire at the instance of her folly

is coercion in its worst form--the coercion of her conscience, of her

mental liberty; and she complains bitterly to her friends among the

shrieking sisterhood of the harsh restrictions he places on her

freedom of action. Her heart is with them, she says; and perhaps she

gives them pecuniary and other aid in private; but she cannot follow

them on to the platform, nor sign her name to passionate manifestoes

as ignorant as they are unseemly; nor tout for signatures to petitions

on things of which she knows nothing, and the true bearing of which

she cannot understand; nor dabble in dirt till she has lost the sense

of its being dirt at all. And, not being able to disgrace her husband

that she may swell the ranks of the unsexed, she is quoted by the

shriekers as one among many examples of the subjection of women and

the odious tyranny under which they live.

As for the man, no hard words are too hard for him. It is only enmity

which animates him, only tyranny and oppression which govern him.

There is no intention of friendly guidance in his determination to

prevent his wife from making a gigantic blunder--feeling of kindly

protection in the authority which he uses to keep her from offering

herself as a mark for public ridicule and damaging discussion, wherein

the bloom of her name and nature would be swept away for ever. It is

all the base exercise of an unrighteous power; and the first crusade

to be undertaken in these latter days is the woman's crusade against

masculine supremacy.

Warm partizan however, as she is of her own sex, the modern man-hater

cannot forgive the woman we spoke of who still believes in

old-fashioned distinctions; who thinks that nature framed men for

power and women for tenderness, and that the fitting, because the

natural, division of things is protection on the one side and a

reasonable measure of--we will not mince the word--obedience on the

other. For indeed the one involves the other. Women of this kind,

whose sentiment of sex is natural and healthy, the modern man-hater

regards as traitors in the camp; or as slaves content with their

slavery, and therefore in more pitiable case than those who, like

herself, jangle their chains noisily and seek to break them by loud

uproar.

But even worse than the women who honestly love and respect the men to

whom they belong, and who find their highest happiness in pleasing

them and their truest wisdom in self-surrender, are those who frankly

confess the shortcomings of their own sex, and think the best chance

of mending a fault is first to understand that it is a fault. With

these worse than traitors no terms are to be kept; and the man-haters

rise in a body and ostracize the offenders. To be known to have said

that women are weak; that their best place is at home; that filthy

matters are not for their handling; that the instinct of feminine

modesty is not a thing to be disregarded in the education of girls nor

the action of matrons; are sins for which these self-accusers are

accounted 'creatures' not fit for the recognition of the nobler-souled

man-hater. The gynecian war between these two sections of womanhood is

one of the oddest things belonging to this odd condition of affairs.

This sect of modern man-haters is recruited from three classes

mainly--those who have been cruelly treated by men, and whose faith

in one half of the human race cannot survive their own one sad

experience; those restless and ambitious persons who are less than

women, greedy of notoriety, indifferent to home life, holding home

duties in disdain, with strong passions rather than warm affections,

with perverted instincts in one direction and none worthy of the name

in another; and those who are the born vestals of nature, whose

organization fails in the sweeter sympathies of womanhood, and who are

unsexed by the atrophy of their instincts as the other class are by

the perversion and coarsening of theirs. By all these men are held to

be enemies and oppressors; and even love is ranked as a mere matter of

the senses, whereby women are first subjugated and then betrayed.

The crimes of which these modern man-haters accuse their hereditary

enemies are worthy of Munchausen. A great part of the sorry success

gained by the opposers of the famous Acts has been due to the

monstrous fictions which have been told of men's dealings with the

women under consideration. No brutality has been too gross to be

related as an absolute truth, of which the name, address, and all

possible verification could be given, if desired. And the women who

have taken the lead in this matter have not been afraid to ascribe to

some of the most honourable names in the opposite ranks words and

deeds which would have befouled a savage. Details of every apocryphal

crime have been passed from one credulous or malicious matron to the

other, over the five o'clock tea; and tender-natured women,

horror-stricken at what they heard, have accepted as proofs of the

ineradicable enmity of man to woman these unfounded fables which the

unsexed so positively asserted among themselves as facts.

The ease of conscience with which the man-hating propagandists have

accepted and propagated slanderous inventions in this matter has been

remarkable, to say the least of it; and were it not for the gravity of

the principles at stake, and the nastiness of the subject, the stories

of men's vileness in connexion with this matter, would make one of the

absurdest jest-books possible, illustrative of the credulity, the

falsehood, and the ingenious imagination of women. We do not say that

women have no just causes of complaint against men. They have; and

many. And so long as human nature is what it is, strength will at

times be brutal rather than protective, and weakness will avenge

itself with more craft than patience. But that is a very different

thing from the sectional enmity which the modern man-haters assert,

and the revolt which they make it their religion to preach. No good

will come of such a movement, which is in point of fact creating the

ill-feeling it has assumed. On the contrary, if women will but believe

that on the whole men wish to be their friends and to treat them with

fairness and generosity, they will find the work of self-protection

much easier and the reconcilement of opposing interests greatly

simplified.