Superfluous Women

HAVE BECOME THE PROBLEM IN ALL COUNTRIES WHERE CIVILIZATION FLOURISHES.

WHAT of the Superfluous Woman? The query is not put jestfully, nor in a spirit of mirth. It is presented in all seriousness and with the hope that an adequate answer may speedily be offered. For the Superfluous Woman is ever on the increase, and with her increase the question of what she is to do becomes daily more acute.

And her problem is serious. Not only is it of import to her, but to every member of the opposite sex as well. For the Superfluous Woman must live. No one may deny her that right. She is equally entitled, with her more fortunate sister, to a rooftree and hearth and the means whereby she may enjoy them.

Hence, as the State has not yet made provision for such as she, and, as it is at present conducted, is apparently no nearer so doing than it was half a century ago, she must needs look out for herself. The result is that in the keen competition of today some one must suffer, and not seldom it is one of the masculine gender.

Necessarily this is so, because until recent years it has been men who have held practically all the positions in every branch of commerce and industry. Every year, however, sees a more nearly equal proportion of men and women engaged in the various pursuits through which a livelihood is gained, and it will not be many years, if the present annual increase is maintained, before the sexes will be nearly evenly divided in every branch of endeavor.

And what is the Superfluous Woman?

Why is she superfluous?

Does she not perform her part in the scheme of modern life?

She Is a Worker.

First of all, it must be understood that the so-called superfluous woman is never the feminine parasite, who produces nothing, the female drone, who depends on some male to give her all that she has. This class can never become large enough to create a danger to the state for obvious reasons.

Nor is she the social parasite of her sex, who constitutes a menace to the health and morals of every large community, although the same elemental causes that have brought the superfluous woman into being have in part been responsible for the existence of her weaker sister—the preponderance of the female population over the male.

On the contrarys, the superfluous woman is essentially a worker. She is only superfluous in that she has no part in the reproduction of the race.

Taking refuge in generalities, she is one who, because of her natural love of independence, or through her inability, for whatever reason, to find the mate she desires, is thrown entirely upon her own resources and compelled to earn her own living without other aid than her own talent and wit. And she must, of necessity, continue to exist as long as the feminine element of the population outnumbers the male in the present proportion.

Meanwhile the situation, viewed in its broader aspects, becomes yearly more dangerously acute. The necessities which confront the superfluous woman at every turn bring about two results.

One is, that being compelled to gain a livelihood at all hazards, she is rarely able to receive full value for her labor. This is doubly unfortunate in that it reacts upon her own standards and because it creates an unfair and, at the same time, a false competition for those who are already in the field.

But the other result, while not at once apparent, is, after all, by far the more important of the two, because of its far-reaching effects. For the superfluous woman creates others of her own kind by reason of the fact that her competition prevents men from marrying, as it compels them to work for a wage insufficient to support both themselves and a family.

Shortage of Husbands.

And this condition, if carried to its logical conclusion, will result, in another generation, in a competition between feminine workers that will still further reduce their earning capacities.

Educated and intelligent women all over the world who have studied the subject have recognized the importance of these questions. Socialism and eugenics have been discussed as a means to relieve the situation. But when every angle of the problem has been considered, and every solution offered, there is still one fact—unchangeable, undeniable and unalterable—to be faced.

All over the world the female population prodominates over the male, this being true in greater degree in civilized countries than in savage or barbarous ones. Consequently, there are not enough husbands to go around.

And where there are not enough husbands to go around, and where male relatives, if there are any, show no eagerness to come forward and put their shoulders to the wheel, it necessarily follows that there must be superfluous womanhood.

Formerly she was apt to fade gently into delicate and anemic spinsterhood as a governess, companion, or in some subordinate, self-effacing position, but this is not true today. Nowadays women are vigorously independent in mind and body and have a growing self-reliance that well matches the boasted quality of their masculine competitors.

Hence it is that the superfluous woman has begun to think for herself, to seek a solution of her own problem; one that presents fewer difficulties for her and minimizes the competition.

"How can I best fit into the struggle for life?" she asks herself. And eventually, it is to be hoped, she will find her own answer.

But while many professions are open to the modern woman there is none that is not crowded to capacity. Besides this, to many—in fact, the great majority—there is neither time nor opportunity to acquire the knowledge necessary to practice a profession.

What is learned must be learned during the hours of actual labor. And this knowledge, as a general rule, is necessarily extremely limited, often extending no farther than the performance of the daily task.

In Massachusetts efforts have been recently made to ascertain statistics concerning the poorer classes of superfluous women in that state. More than 16,000 women and girls in candy factories, department stores, laundries and cotton mills were found to be earning less than $6 a week, out of a total of considerably less than twice that number whose earnings were investigated by the commission.

These were the average rank and file, regular "year-in-and-year-out" army of women wage earners, many of whom had been working at their respective trades and in their respective positions for periods ranging from 10 to 30 years.

The exact percentages of the workers who were employed for less than this meager sum was 65 per cent of the candy workers, 40 per cent of the laundry workers, 38 per cent of the cotton operatives and 36 per cent of saleswomen. Of about 500 minors (under 18 years old) employed in retail stores, two-thirds averaged less than $4 a week and 96 per cent averaged less than $5 a week.

The average earnings in the factories and laundries were less than these figures.

Misfortunes of the Surplus.

These figures are interesting to the student of sociology because of the prevalent notion that the wages of labor correspond by an invisible but infallible economic law to the earnings or productive capacity of the laborer.

Out of the fullness of an experience which included a study of the 16,000 women and girls above referred to the active secretary of the minimum wage investigation in Massachusetts concludes and states that "there is no such law."

More especially among the unorganized and lower grades of labor wages are the result of tradition and of slight competition—from the employing point of view.

It will readily be seen that the superfluous woman, who has received no special training and who has no means of obtaining it, faces a serious situation and one that does not readily present a solution.

The report of the Massachusetts commission lays stress on the fact that great numbers of women and girls have been forced into channels of public industry in the present generation. The number in vital need of work exceeds the demand, and the women in the harder grades of labor are largely compelled to take whatever wage they can get for whatever strength or skill they have to sell.

The lack of organization among women leaves the case one of individual bargaining power between the out-of-work woman and the factory or store manager. The modern commercial zeal for economic management causes many of the managers to beat down the wages of the more helpless employes to a point which in many cases has been a source of surprise and honest shame to the owners of the business, when the matter had been forcibly brought to their attention by disinterested representatives of the public conscience.

The commission further points out that the wages bear little or no relation to the value of the workers' output, or to the selling price of the goods, and this is more than borne out by the facts which have now been reduced to statistics.

Anything which offers even a partial solution of this problem should be given serious consideration, and the superfluous woman of America, eager to solve the problem of existence, might do well to take a lesson from her English sister.

In England the superfluous woman exists in even greater numbers than in the United States, and her problem has been an even more serious one, owing to the myriad prejudices and precedents with which the English are wont to hedge about their commercial, social and industrial life.

So the English woman has taken to gardening. Always an enthusiast in the realm of horticulture, it is only within the last few years that she has taken it up as a profession. And already she has won signal success, finding the new method of earning a living both satisfactory and remunerative.

Both as workers in home gardens and as teachers of gardening combined with nature study in schools there is a growing demand for women's services. Several of the great English estates have women as head gardeners, though of course this is a higher branch of the work than the average woman can hope to aspire to.

But there is nothing in gardening that a woman can't do. Even the rougher work is not too severe upon her, and in the lighter tasks, such as weeding and pruning, she excels her masculine competitors. Her natural inclination, however, is generally in the direction of planning and improving, and in this she easily leads the field.

Market gardening has attracted many of the English women, who have entered this branch of endeavor, but for this some capital is required, and nursery gardening has the same drawback. But what many have found most profitable, and at the same time most pleasant in its nature, is specializing in violets or some other popular flower.

New Fields for Women.

Two women may go into partnership to run a little violet farm, and be assured that they can make a good annual income. On the other hand, as is now being done in England, attention may be given to the development of the making of perfumes as an industry of more than pigmy proportions.

Then there is the French intensive gardening, which, however, requires more technical and expert information than the average woman without means can readily obtain. Of course it goes without saying that some study—the more the better—should be made of the science of gardening before it is engaged in, but this can be gained in a dozen different ways.

Naturally, it should be begun in a small way at first, until certain of the prime essentials of the work are understood, but this may be done before and after working hours. A simple knowledge of botany is also an invaluable asset.

In England many schools where the science of gardening and as an art is taught have been established, and it would be a splendid thing if several could be founded here, where girls who would be compelled eventually to earn their own livings might learn the business thoroughly.

Jobbing gardening has proved most profitable for the English women, and is perhaps one of the best branches of the work to enter, in that it requires little or no capital to begin. The first object of the work is to take town and suburban gardens and attend to their care and upkeep precisely as does the nursery man's jobber, but to improve their conditions and develop their possibilities as he generally is not able to do.

And here is a field where the American woman, once she has mastered some of the details of the gardener's art, would be generally successful. She could put her natural taste into practical service, maintain her health and have for herself a comfortable income.

It may be that the suggestion will be made use of by some member of the class unjustly dubbed "superfluous women."

But the problem, after all, will remain for most:

What shall she do?

The Feminine Parasite.

Ten Minutes With The Funny Men.

SOME OF THE QUIPS AND JESTS FROM PENS OF THE NEWSPAPER HUMORISTS.

Terse Tales From Humorous Pens

IN A MINORITY.

A case was being tried in the West of England, and at its termination the judge charged the jury, and they retired for consultation. Hour after hour passed, and no verdict was brought in. The judge's dinner hour arrived, and he became hungry and impatient. Upon inquiry he learned that one obstinate juryman was holding out against 11. That he could not stand, and he ordered the 12 men to be brought before him. He told them that in his charge to them he had so plainly stated the case and the law that the verdict ought to be unanimous, and the man who permitted his individual opinion to weigh against the judgment of 11 men of wisdom was unfit and disqualified ever again to act in the capacity of juryman. At the end of this excited harangue a little squeaky voice came from one of the jury. He said: "Will your lordship allow me to say a word?" Permission being given, he added: "May it please your lordship, I am the only man on your side."—Exchange.

LONDON'S MUSICAL TRAINING.

Jack London, when on a recent visit to New York, was introduced to a musician in one of the popular Broadway cafes.

"I am a musician in a small way," said London. "My musical talent was once the means of saving my life."

The musician was at once very much interested.

"How was that?" he asked.

"There was a great flood in the town of my boyhood," explained London. "When the water struck our house my father got on a bed and floated with the stream until he was rescued."

"And you?" queried the musician.

"Well," smiled London, "I accompanied him on the piano."—Judge.

ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT

George Washington Johnson stood before an avenging judge, and realized that all the evidence was against him, says the Popular Magazine. It was the same old charge.

"But," said the judge with a perplexed frown, "I don't understand, Johnson, how it was possible for you to steal those chickens when they were roosting right under the owner's window and there were two vicious bulldogs in the yard."

"It wouldn't do you no good, jedge, foh me to 'splain how I caught 'em," replied the successful culprit. "You couldn't do it if you tried forty times, an' you might git a hide full of buckshot de ve'y fust time you put your laig ober de fence. De best way for you to do is to buy your chickens in de market."

FOOLISH QUESTION.

Dubbleigh's car lay flat on its side and deep in the mud in the freshly plowed field, having skidded off the road, through the low stone wall, to get there.

"Ah!" cried a passerby from the roadside. "Had an accident?"

Dubbleigh tried to hold his tongue, but the strain was too much for him.

"No, of course not," he replied coldly. "I've just bought a new car and brought my old one out here to bury it. Got a pickax and a shovel in your pocket you could lend me? I can't seem to dig very deep with my motor horn."—Harper's.

ALL HIS.

Senator Vardaman, so the story goes, once rented a plot of several acres to one of his black neighbors. The land was to be planted in corn, and the Senator, then ex-Governor, was to receive one-fourth. The corn was duly harvested, but the Senator did not receive his fourth. Meeting the negro one day, he said:

"Look here, Sam, have you harvested your corn?"

"Yes, sah, boss, long 'go."

"Well, wasn't I to get a fourth?"

"Yes, sah, boss, dat's de truf, but dar warn't no fo'th. Dar was jes' three loads, and dey was mine."—Judge.

OUT OF BABES' MOUTHS.

Thomas W. Lawson, condemning crooked business, said to a Boston reporter:

"A Broadway office boy was caught in a nasty lie by the head bookkeeper the other day.

"'My son,' said the bookkeeper solemnly, 'do you know what becomes of boys who deceive and prevaricate?'

"The youngster looked at the shabby old bookkeeper, sneered and answered:

"'Of course, I do. The boss lifts 'em right out of the starvation, pen-pushin' class, makes 'em department heads and takes 'em into the firm before they're 40.'"—Washington, D. C., Star.

HOW IT ORIGINATED.

"I spent my vacation in beautiful Wiscasset," said Jerome S. McWade, the Duluth capitalist, according to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. "Wiscasset, you know, is famous for having originated the immortal phrase, 'The woods is full of 'em.'

"This is the story:

"A very deaf old man was shooting squirrels out Wiscasset way. A stranger happened along and said:

"'Mr. Man, which is the road to Wiscasset?'

"The deaf old man failing to understand, answered:

"'That's one—that's a squirrel—settin' up thar on that three! See him?'

"'I didn't ask you about the squirrels,' said the stranger, impatiently. 'I asked you, durn it all, which was the road to Wiscasset?'

"'Yep,' said the deaf old huntsman, excitedly. 'Yep, that's another, too, just a peekin' outen that knot hole.'

"Then the stranger, losing his patience, roared:

"'You're a fool!'

"'Yep, the woods is full of 'em,' said the old man, complacently."

HIS NEARLY-EDUCATED SON.

"Your studies are costin' me a heap o' money," observed his rustic father, reaching down in his jeans for another roll to slip to his nearly-educated son.

"I know it, father," replied the son, with considerable emotion. His emotion did not prevent his pocketing the wad, but he went on talking, just as if there had been no interruption.

Then he smiled sweetly, assumed a puzzled expression and added: "And I don't see why my studies should be so expensive. Why, dad, I try to study just as little as possible."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

TOO LATE.

"Are you going fishing tomorrow morning?" asked the rural citizen.

"No," replied the man from town. "So long as I can't go fishing today I won't bother. I never yet fished without learning that they were biting fine yesterday."

Quips and Flings

"Cholly received a letter this morning from Gladys Maud. He consumed an hour in reading it." "Was the letter very long" "Not very long. He spent most of the time looking for page 2."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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Harassed Prisoner—Pray, great chief, why do you keep your servant tied up so long?

Cannibal King—A thousand pardons, dear missionary, but we are waiting for the consignment of paper bags from Sydney.—Sydney Bulletin.

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Housewife (to tramp)—I don't approve of people begging. Any man can find work if he looks hard enough.

Tramp—Alas, mum, dat's just de trouble; I'm such a hard-looker dat no one will give me a job.—Philadelphia Record.

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"My uncle only left me $5000. Wonder if I could break the will?" "Sure thing. He must have been crazy to leave you anything."—Boston Post.

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"And so, after inviting your friends to a game dinner, you were not served with any part of the bird!"

"Oh, yes; I got the bill."—Smart Set.

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"There isn't one man in a million who would be so mean to his wife and children as you are," remarked the wife, bitterly. "Now, that's what I admire in you, dear," ventured the husband, slowly, "you have such a head for figures."—Harper's Magazine.

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Bowler—All ready for the bowling season. I thought you were going to make extensive improvements in the alleys this Summer? I don't see any.

Proprietor—Great Scott, man, the alleys will be fully six and a half inches closer to the bar than they were last year.—Puck.

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Mrs. Wabash—I thought when I married you that you were original.

Mr. Wabash—And am I not?

Mrs. Wabash—No, you use the same excuses for staying out late that all my other husbands used.—New Orleans Picayune.

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"Do you care for Esperanto?" he asked the sweet young thing, as they were demolishing plates of cream after the opera.

"Which was he?" replied the sweet young thing. "The one with the blond mustache?"—Boston Globe.

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"How did the drink go, Pat?"

"Foin, sorr; but, faith, it do be callin' for company."—London Tit-Bits.

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"But, count, you are old enough to be my father."

"Ah, I wish I were—such happiness—to haf such a beautiful lot of money as your father has!"—New York World.

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Hicks—Don't you find your flat very small?

Wicks—No; you see I've always lived within my income, so I'm used to cramped quarters.

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"What one thing have that couple in common?"

"I don't know; unless it is that she is dove-eyed and he is pigeon-toed."—Baltimore American.

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A Pointer For Him.—"I suppose, observed the tramp, bitterly, "you would like to have me get off the earth. But I cannot."

"Have you tried soft soap?" asked the woman in the blue gingham dress, dispassionately.—Puck.

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"Life is full of problems."

"Yes, and if I could settle a certain one of them I wouldn't bother about the rest."

"What problem is that?"

"Whether or not to drink water with one's meals. For years I've been reading medical opinions on both sides and I'm no nearer a solution than I was 20 years ago."

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Judge—What has the prisoner to say for himself?

Prisoner—I have been sent to prison twice before, your honor—

Judge—What has that to do with your getting off this time?

Prisoner—I think the court should show some deference to the popular feeling against a third term.

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Maggie—Why did they make a change in ministers at your church?

Annie—Why, the former one spoke so often on the responsibilities of marriage that none of the unmarried men in the congregation would propose.—Judge.

Among the Poets of the Daily Press

RICH.

The love that's in my baby's eyes, the play times that we have at night,
The joy that's in my lady's smile, her cheering words that all is right,
The little home where we abide that rings with laughter—aye, and song,
I would not risk in any way by any act that I deem wrong.

There is no price that I would take to tinge my loved one's cheeks with shame,
To rob them of their pride in me, and dull the eyes with love aflame;
There is no profit that I'd take to cloud my home now sunshine filled,
No sum of gold that could bring back the laughter once it had been stilled.

They do not ask that I be rich, they do not urge me to be great,
To climb the mountain heights of fame or claim the honors of the state.
They ask me merely to be kind; they want me only to be true,
And in return they give me love when each long day of work is through.

I'll keep my home a dwelling place for merry laughter and for song;
I would not risk one little smile by bartering with what is wrong.
I'll keep those eyes aglow with pride, unto their love I'll fondly cling;
For though I may be poor in purse—in joys I'm richer than a king.
—Detroit Free Press.

A CITY STREET.

Note: The following old poem was read the other day in Congress. It pictures a situation which is true of every city and town where so-called "improvements" are the order of the day.

They took a few old bricks
And they took a little tar,
With various ingredients
Imported from afar.
They hammered it and rolled it,
And they then went away—
They said they had a pavement
That would last for many a day.

But they came with picks and smote it
To lay a water main,
And then they called the workmen
To put it back again.
To run a railway cable
They took it up some more,
And then they put it back again
Just where it was before.

They took it up for conduits
To run the telephone,
And then they put it back again
As hard as any stone.
They took it up for wires
To feed the 'lectric light,
And then they put it back again,
Which was no more than right.

Oh, the pavement's full of furrows,
There are patches everywhere;
You'd like to ride upon it,
But it's seldom that you dare.
It's a very handsome pavement,
A credit to the town,
But they're always diggin' of it up
Or puttin' of it down.
—The Pathfinder.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS.

The baby takes to her bed at night
A one eyed rabbit that once was white;
A watch that came from a cracker, I think;
And a lidless inkpot that never held ink.
And the secret is locked in her tiny breast
Of why she loves these and leaves the rest.

And I give a loving glance as I go
To three brass pots on a shelf in a row;
To my grandfather's grandfather's loving cup
And a bandy legged chair I once picked up.
And I can't, for the life of me, make you see
Why just these things are a part of me!
—J. H. Macnair, in London Spectator.

THE APATHETIC CITIZEN.

There was a young fellow of Cadis
Who said, "What a blessing free trade is;
But it's not my ambition
To turn politician—
So let's go and talk to the ladies."
—"A Lyttel Booke of Nonsanse."