

# A Defence of YOUTH



Today girls help carry the financial load along with their parents to keep the home fires burning



"If rebellion against the old order of things is what is wanted, I'll get up on a soapbox and 'spout' it," declares Miss Evans

By Alice L. Tildesley

THAT age-old passion for arraigning youth has lately been indulged in by Pearl S. Buck, noted writer, in a recent article in a national magazine. She has, she says, been making a survey of young men and women in America, and has found them to be "charming, mild and completely selfish." They are docile creatures who do not rebel against their parents and teachers as they should. They are beautiful, strong-bodied creatures with no angers and no determinations. American youth, continues Pearl Buck, is shielded, praised, coaxed and indulged.

Madge Evans, convicted on sight of being young, beautiful and charming, comes now before you to defend the youth of the land.

"The charges are false—absolutely false!" she declared, raising clear blue eyes from a perusal of them.

"Youth is not selfish. It is greedy, perhaps, just as puppies are greedy; it wants to taste everything to see what it's like. It has a hearty appetite for life, but that's because it's healthy and young. It's thoughtless, but it's not wicked."

"Selfishness belongs to older people. When people grow old, something seems to happen to them—I don't know what it is, but they harden, become bitter and cruel, nothing matters to them but money. They think that what happens to youth doesn't matter. They don't care whether youth suffers or not. Let youth go to war, let them do without jobs, let them put off getting married, let them eat out their hearts—that's the attitude! All they care about is how much money it means to them."

"That's what I call selfishness!"

SLIM and lovely in a dove-gray dress, she sat on the blue couch in her living room and fairly flamed with indignation.

"So we're pampered, are we?" she cried. "This is the first I've heard of it. Who are these weird young people in Miss Buck's survey?"

"We aren't a nation of Barbara Huttons. You might as well say that all Americans are rich because John D. Rockefeller has done very well for himself. The wealthy girls and boys who are so carefully shielded and indulged are in such a minority that they don't count. The majority of our young people are the idle poor, and if you knew how they feel, you wouldn't call them mild and without angers."

"I don't understand the viewpoint of the young people who think 'bread drops as manna out of heaven,' according to Miss Buck. I've worked ever since I was 1 year old. My brother and I posed for artists. We did baby books. We posed for advertisements. When I was 8 years old, I became a child star in motion pictures and continued working with the company until I was 10."

"I can't remember the time I didn't know that I had to earn a living. When I was 10 I went to school, where I made a number of young friends, who still are very close. They have nothing



Prudence and Toughie are two Scotties that keep the Madge Evans household in an uproar most of the day

to do with the stage or screen, so I feel that when I discuss the youth of today I understand the problems of boys and girls outside the acting profession.

"One of my schoolmates is an interne in Bellevue Hospital, one of them is in charge of Camp Fire Girls' clubs. She's staying here with me now, and we often talk of the problems that face our generation—unemployment, the threat of war."

"I know about unemployment at firsthand. I spent a whole year looking for work after I left school. I used to visit agents' offices every day. I did extra work. I pursued managers and producers. I know what it is to be one of twenty-five girls sent out after one angle job; to be lined up in a row with twenty-four other girls and to try to look so different that choosing me would be inevitable. Just try to look smart and 'different' when you haven't any

money! It's bad enough the first few times you go, but to keep going every day is what breaks your heart."

"Then we've had it in the family, as well. My brother had a good job in New York, but with the depression his firm went out of business. He tried hard, but he couldn't get anything to do, so at length Mother and I begged him to come out here and stay with us while he looked around. He was with us for a year, going out every day to try to get something to do. If what Miss Buck thinks of youth were true, he should have been content with things as they were, for he had a good home, plenty to eat, lots of entertainment. He was deprived of nothing but a chance to work."

"But he wasn't satisfied. He made himself dangerously ill worrying; for a time the doctor wasn't sure he could pull him through. When at last he got

## Madge Evans Takes Vigorous Issue With Pearl Buck's Charge That American Young Folks Are a Pampered and Petted Lot

his chance, he recovered; now he's doing very well and we're proud of him."

She turned her bright head at the sound of footsteps in the hall, and hailed their owner.

"Mother! Come in and tell us how docile your children are!" she cried. "Tell us how you've pampered me. Sit down and listen to this indictment."

Mrs. Evans, thus appealed to, heard it quietly. Then she said, with a smile: "I am afraid Miss Buck is confusing this country with China. It seems to me that she must be thinking of my generation, rather than Madge's. I grew up in England. In my day, youth didn't rebel against age—at any rate, not aloud. We might mutter to ourselves: 'Well, I don't believe that!' but we didn't dare say so to the autocrats who ruled the home. If my children don't agree with me, they argue the question—politely, perhaps, but firmly."

"In my day, if a girl had said to her parents: 'I'm taking an apartment away from home. I'm going to be on my own'—the parents would have said: 'Nonsense!' and yanked her home by the back of her neck. Today, such an announcement would be received calmly.

Madge Evans, delightful to look at, lovely to know

"Very well," the parent says, "but see that you settle the bills yourself. I'll support you at home, but when you leave, you're independent."

"A mother of yesterday didn't permit her child to try her wings. She was afraid her darling would bump her head or bruise herself out in a callous world. Today, she knows that her child must learn how to take care of herself, that she can't be protected forever. Though it hurts, she must stand back and let the child alone."

"We're both soft and mild, are we?" Madge combed the article again. "I can't believe the writer has met any of the girls I know. She seems to be talking of girls of another era. Girls like Agnes in 'David Copperfield.' She was sweet and faithful and pleasant. She was devoted to her father and she waited for David, patiently, until he was able to afford to marry her. All very commendable, perhaps."

"But today, Agnes would not have wasted the years. She'd have gone out after a job herself and they'd have pooled their salaries and made a home. She might have had to spend the day with a crabby old man who expected her to get out letters like a multigraphing machine, and she might have had to market after she left the office, and then prepare vegetables and salad, cook the hamburger and fix gelatin for dessert when she got home, but at least they'd have been together."

"The old idea was that girls must marry as soon as possible to get off the family's back. They picked out a young man—whatever young man was in sight—and they got him if they were lucky, transferring themselves from Father's shoulders to his, but not altering the fact that they were burdens. Today they help carry the load."

THE defender of youth began to attack the prosecution.

"They sacrifice themselves for us, do they? Not that I've noticed."

"Look at the captains of industry, as they used to be called; those 'great men' who had pieces written about them in success magazines telling how wonderful they were! They rose from newspaper to head of the establishment; they built empires; they acquired holdings so vast that they couldn't count them. And they didn't know enough about managing their businesses to prevent their washing and wrecking the world!"

"Age should be condemned, not youth. The war was brought on by graybeards, to satisfy their greed. Youth had to do the fighting. That was to be a war to end war, a war for humanity, a war to make the world safe for democracy. It settled nothing."

"Everything that happened afterward was blamed on war-flaming flappers, the depression, unemployment. And

now maybe they are going to have another war and kill some more young people. Age never learns. Experience teaches them nothing!

"If rebellion is what is wanted by those of Miss Buck's generation (who are responsible for the frightful mess we're in now), I'm going to rebel when war comes. I'll get on a soapbox and talk against sacrificing youth until somebody cracks me down. Youth knows there's nothing to be gained by war, if older people don't."

Madge sprang up from the couch. "That's Ruth coming in now! I'll get her. I'll let her tell you about young people today. She's the Camp Fire Club girl I mentioned—"

"Stevens, tall and dark and calm beside the golden flame that was Madge, read the challenge quietly."

"Ruth attended the Youth Today conference, all the big youth conventions," explained Madge, eagerly.

"At one convention the viewpoint of more than 200,000 young people was represented," said the calm girl. "It seemed to me that they were bewildered, rather than mild. They were anxious, worried, suffering. Their chief demand was for jobs. They wanted to work more than anything else in the world."

"One boy got up to address the convention in reply to attacks on youth. 'We don't want to be like you older people!' he said, looking straight down at Newton D. Baker and the other officials. I think that expresses it as well as anything else. They'd like to do something, but they haven't the power."

"WHAT chance has youth?" Madge asked, indignantly. "No man gets into a responsible position until he's 40—and that's young for most political jobs. They say he has no experience, but by the time they accept him, he's lost that fine sense of what is true. His belief in righteousness has dulled. That terrible something that happens to older people has overtaken him."

"Look at college elections, as compared to national ones. At college, they may argue as to a candidate's fitness for office, but they don't indulge in personalities. No one says: 'He can't be president because of his religion.' We won't elect him because his sister was in a scandal. He won't do because he's related to so-and-so. He's elected on his merits, because he'll make a good officer, and for no other reason."

"How does that compare with campaigns for national offices? They're unfair; they're filthy; they drag in things that have nothing to do with the cause. Youth isn't afraid to try something new."

"Not so long ago, students all over America staged a rally against war. They were rebelling against something that you'd think would gain them the respect of every one not actually in the monster class. What happened? They were arrested, clubbed, called 'Reds'! Some were expelled. They had to take them back again and admit they weren't Reds, but doesn't it make you think?"

"It's the young people who still have to fight if we have another war. Yet older people have the nerve to talk of how they have pampered us, indulged us, sacrificed for us."

"Give us the world, and see what we'll do with it. Give it to us now. We can't do worse with it than they have done!"

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