

Fashionable Society Scored

No nation can ever grow greater than its women. None ever has; none ever will. It is the women who decide the fate of a nation, and that has always been so, as history proves.

What tremendous power and responsibility, therefore, rests with womankind. I wonder if they realize it. In the poorer classes I think they do, or are coming to, but the attitude of the rich is appalling.

I called the other day to see Mrs. J. Borden Harriman at the Colony Club. While I sat in the reception room waiting to be received I watched the fashionable women come and go. Nearly all of them, if you asked them, would tell you proudly that they belonged to society. But if you asked them what society meant they could not answer you truthfully without covering themselves with shame.

I will tell you why they could not, or would not, answer: Because the word society, as applied to women of today, stands for idleness, fads, extravagance and display of wealth.

The women I saw parade before me were "bluffs." They glanced at me languidly, because that in society is the correct way to look at anybody not of their own class.

They posed and strutted before me like the poor, ignorant geese that they are, and probably imagined that I was impressed. I was, but not in the way they intended. I realized that they were posing and strutting because they had nothing else to occupy their minds, and so I pitied them. My pity was not without censure, however, because in these times of suffering the idle rich woman who parades her finery before the hungry and poverty-stricken is a modern inquisitor turning the thumb-screws of envy and despair into the very vitals of those who are in reality her sisters.

The high ideals of womanhood can never be realized in Colony clubs. The mission of woman is to develop human hearts and minds along charitable and sympathetic lines. The canker worm that is gnawing at the vitals of our womanhood is the failure of the rich woman to fulfill her mission in life. We are society-mad, and the craze—I am sorry to have to say it, but I realize that it is too true—is growing worse.

I look on Mrs. Harriman as an exceptional woman of her class, but even she has only scratched the surface of things as they really are. In Mrs. Harriman I find a woman of force and character. She could be the great factor in the education of women of her own set. By that I mean she could educate them to a realization of their duty in life and help

to turn them from their follies, vanities and shams to putting their time toward helping their unfortunate sisters.

Mrs. Harriman is groping and seeking the light, and with her ability to grasp great problems will do much toward bettering conditions wherever she may extend her work.

The hard part of Mrs. Harriman's task will be for her to overcome the effect of her environments, but she is very gifted and has an open mind, which is more than I can say for any others in her class that I have met.

As soon as every woman grasps the idea that every other woman is her sister, then we will begin to better conditions. For instance, I saw a girl in a store the other day ready to drop from weariness. Her fatigue was apparent, and yet I noticed a woman customer loaded down with expensive furs and jewels call on this girl to get down several heavy boxes of goods. Then, after glancing over them, she concluded she didn't want to buy anything. This rich woman wouldn't have asked her own sister to do that, but she didn't view the shop girl in that light. Oh, no; she was "only a shop girl."

I spoke to this girl after the woman had left and found that she worked about twelve hours a day, and for a dollar a day. Out of this she had to buy her clothes, her lunch and supply her carfare. What a life!

It is among the poor that you find that sisterly feeling I have spoken about, because the poor know what suffering is and means, and sympathize with others. You never see a well-dressed woman give up her seat in the subway to an old woman, do you? No, never; but I have often had a poor, tired shop girl rise with a smile and proffer me her seat because of my white hair.

WOMAN WHO DOESN'T NURSE HER OWN CHILD IS WRONG

The rich woman who had a mind to raise her child can't expect to get the right viewpoint of life. If they would raise their own babies their hearts would open and their feelings would become human. And the effect on the child is just as bad.

A nurse can't give mother's love to somebody else's child.

And while I am talking about children and mothers I want to say that if women are against war they can do much to prevent it by changing their methods of bringing up children. Every woman should train her child to have a horror of war. Any woman who buys a toy gun or pistol for her child ought to be put in a sanitarium. When you see a child parading about in a cardboard suit of armor and a gayly colored helmet, carrying a gun, you can say to yourself that some mother is filling her child's mind with thoughts of murder, for that is what that uniform and gun represent. I don't believe in drilling men or children for murder, and whenever I see

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a man in uniform walking around with a belt full of bullets, I say to myself, "There goes a murderer."

The power of women is limitless. Look at what they are doing for shattered Belgium. A great work that, but why not do as much for their sisters over here. I didn't see the women rising en masse for their stricken sisters of Colorado, Calumet and West Virginia during the mine strike riots, and God knows they needed help as much as the Belgians, and do yet.

Let woman put aside her vanities for the real things of life. It nauseates me to see your average city woman. She is always overdressed, and although she wears gloves she is careful to leave her right hand bared so that she can display her fingers crowded to their utmost with jewels. Whenever I see that sort of a display I think of the gems as representing the blood of some crucified child. The woman of today, the woman of the "upper classes," I mean, is a sad commentary on civilization, as we are pleased to call it.

Everywhere I go in a city I see this same display of jewelry. The women even go to church on Sunday with their fingers and breasts ablaze with diamonds. This includes the wives of ministers themselves. We never heard of Christ wearing diamonds.

When one starts to investigate conditions the result is appalling. We are supposed to be progressing, but a little study in comparisons seems to point the other way. For instance, it is a fact that although this country is in its infancy, and has gained in wealth more in fifty years than any other country has in 700 years still we have more poverty in comparison with any of those old countries.

No human being in this country ever ought to go hungry, and there's something radically wrong somewhere when our jails are continually overcrowded. An immense amount of good can be done with playgrounds and supporting other means to give the poor outdoor exercise. Healthy bodies go toward making healthy minds and a healthy woman, though poor, can [work and?] do more to overcome their condition if minds and bodies are kept in a normal state.

I have always felt that no true state of civilization can ever be realized as long as we continue to have two classes of society. But that is a tremendous problem, and it will take a terrific amount of labor to remedy it. I think myself that we are bound to have a revolution here before these questions are straightened out. We were on the verge of it in the Colorado strike and the reason we did not have it then was not due to the good judgment of public officials, but to that of labor officials, who worked unceasingly to prevent it.