

## THE ROLE OF WOMAN IN THE MODERN WORLD

"Woman is the last fortress of every people. If the man falls, God punishes the man; but if the woman falls, God will punish the whole people." This ancient proverb points to a root cause of our present disorders in the failure of modern woman.

Not every contemporary woman is a modern woman. And many who might fall under that definition do so regretfully, more by force of circumstance than by choice. Now one might ask, what is a modern woman? It is a term for a woman facing an economic-sociological situation that was created by the industrial revolution and by our age of Technology. She is a being who is expected to be prepared for two roles, either simultaneously or consecutively, of a business or professional career and of a wife and mother.

The kind of world we live in is a world which has grown up in the last hundred and fifty years. During that time the style of life has greatly changed. The majority of the population no longer live in small townships, with farms on their doorstep—they live in sprawling cities. The majority of the working population no longer work at home—they work in factories. The average person no longer finds his recreation at home—he buys some kind of commercialized entertainment. Even children, from the earliest years, spend the greater part of their day away from home. All these things are part of a world that has been, more than anything else, made by the Industrial Revolution. Our civilization is an industrial civilization.

In bygone days our civilization was a simple peasant and craftsman one and, although an economic revolution had begun in the sixteenth century, the full impact of the machine did not come till after 1800. Until then life centred around the home, and naturally the wife had her position. From that position she derived her dignity, her prestige and her consciousness of the security of these things. It is very difficult to realize just how many different tasks the women of the household were called on to do in those days, for conditions now are just the opposite from what they were then. Besides being the centre of industrial activity, the home was the only educational institution. Because of this, woman's place was doubly important, both to society and to herself. Her work was irreplaceable and she knew it, and derived from it a stability and satisfaction, and a sense of personal accomplishment. Also the home in a peasant society was the centre of recreation. One cannot say that woman of that period was invariably happy, but she was



satisfied emotionally and conscientiously. Her place in society was assured. There had never been any question of it.

The effect of this threefold loss of the home is that woman is left alone, and without the surroundings which formerly gave her value and purpose. This is the tragedy of modern woman—that a new society has come into being without her, leaving her without the necessary emotional and social support of knowing that she has an indispensable place in the world. In contrast to the pre-industrial past it is believed by many women themselves that a reasonably well-educated girl with courage and a cool head can combine marriage and a job. It is often felt that the holding of a job at some time or other, even if there were no necessity for it, adds to a girl's prestige, enlarges her self-confidence and poise, makes her more desirable as a marriage partner.

The modern woman has statistically and scientifically proved many things about herself and her powers. Her efficiency is doubted. G. K. Chesterton blandly admitted that women were more efficient than men in business and that was one good reason why they shouldn't be there! In almost every field, in spite of a good deal of discrimination and prejudice women have come to the top.

However, it is commonly asserted that modern woman is dissatisfied, often "frustrated", and that she has paid for her victories only at the cost of very considerable damage to herself and to society as a whole.

Ever since Freud was largely misread and misunderstood by the bright boys in the advertising agencies, all goods and services, it has been thought, can best be sold in association with a kind of abstract sex appeal. We have Miss Beer and Miss Citrus Fruit and Miss Asphalt Tile and Miss Tobacco. The agency boys apparently have so much contempt for American women that they do not hesitate to tell them that their chances of marriage are directly related to the soap they use or the turtle neck sweaters they wear.

Frequently today the modern woman has to be a specialist to succeed in business or the professions. As a result she often loses contact with that cultural wisdom from the past that is transmitted through family life.

Many modern women give the best part of their time and energies to strangers, not even to something as personal as strangers, often to large anonymous institutions. At the close of day, they have little to give their husbands and children except the irritation resulting from an undue nervous strain resulting from specialized and often mechanically monotonous work.

If woman is to find her true place in society, she must gain respect and dignity by recovering the modesty, purity and chas-



tity which have been sacrificed for a debasing materialism and a false sense of equality. She has to be convinced that her work at home is far more important, far more dignified, far more exalted, than anything she can do abroad, and that it calls for all the powers of the spirit and the intellect as well as of physical work. For, her special God-given dignity, not as a human person but as a woman, comes from her destiny to be a wife and a mother.

—A GUEST CONTRIBUTOR.

### MARTHA

Since the majority of tales begin at the beginning, let us bow this once to custom and do likewise. In that state of super-sensitivity that seems to be the heritage of the grass-green Freshman, I found myself seated in the classroom in the basement of the Science Building awaiting the class that would launch officially my program of education at Saint Dunstan's. This field of sensitivity that enveloped me, this awareness that made me heedful of everything that went on around me, this feeling that no amount of de-gaussing (I didn't even know of the term then) could dispell, wasn't lessened in the least by the fact that I was one of the very few who had appeared for class in a coat, shirt and tie. Each of the common and everyday bits of activity that normally prevail in a classroom on the first day of classes impressed themselves vividly on my mind, things that have long since grown so commonplace and trivial that they are scarcely noticed. As I sat there pondering this situation, there walked into this field of awareness a very pretty dark-haired girl on her way to the sacrosanct side of the room that custom decreed was reserved for our co-ed classmates. At once my powers of concentration seemed to be drawn as if by some unseen but All Seeing Power to focus on the seat into which she had glided with a lady-like grace and dignity of bearing that seemed at variance with her tender years. This bearing spoke at once of innocence and sagacity, and my mental calculation was that she was quite settled, determined, acutely aware of and in control of her destiny.

As she sat there awaiting the beginning of class, she displayed none of the giddiness or frivolity of deportment that seemed to pervade that far corner of the room, but rather she seemed possessed of a decorous bearing that would admit to none of this, except perhaps for a discrete nod and smile for an old friend. Another observation that I found pleasantly striking was that, unlike many of those who sat around her, she did not look as though mother had let her wear make-up for the first time. While many of the other girls, in what seemed to be an effort to make up for the years that they had been forbidden the use of cos-



metics, had applied copious amounts of paints of various sorts and topped this off with lipstick thick enough to choke a normal person; this lovely lady, I noticed, wore make-up sparingly. Just a touch of lipstick was all I could detect. Evidently she had nothing to hide or to improve upon, and I couldn't help but agree. In my enraptured absorption, I also noticed that although her mouth was framed in a demure silence, her alert and impish looking dark eyes were continually in communication. They seemed to be seeking, searching, compelling, as they scanned the anxious faces around her; alternately dark and pensive and then radiantly light and shining, depending on their intent and on just how the light happened to be playing on them. Although I fully realized that no message of theirs was intended for me, I still found it interesting to read into them as they passed me on their way to their destination. The next thing that occurred to me was that I must learn the name of this fair young thing who had so excitingly disturbed my usual state of equilibrium, so I decided to find it out if I could when the roll was called. By this time, I was too absorbed in my little endeavour to return any of the overtures of friendship that were being so freely extended by classmates all around me, and the noise of coughing and the scraping of chairs increased my anxiety, for I feared that I might miss her name in the hubbub.

The period that followed was really quite a mental exercise because I had to retain at least temporarily the name of each girl that was called out until I could see whether or not she would respond to it. I shifted uneasily in my seat as I strained to catch each name that fell from the lips of the professor, and with a furtive glance I traced down each lead. Finally I heard a "Martha . . .", and a loud cough blotted out the rest of the name as I saw the lady of my inspiration gracefully race her hand over her head and move her lips in reply. So, she was Martha; at least that was something to go on, and for the first time since I had entered the classroom, I managed to really relax. I now experienced a satisfying feeling of well-being, a sense of belonging, and I was very much pleased with myself. Certainly with that much to go on I could pick up the rest of her name in our next class, and then - - -

—CHOYA.

#### MEMO TO THE I. R. A.

What Ireland needs is an Anglican Dean  
To herald her cause on the English scene.  
The Russians did it, so why can't She?  
All that's between *them* is the Irish Sea.  
He needn't be a Jonathan Swift,  
As long as he gives the cause a lift.

ELIJAH