

# "FEWER MARRIAGES AMONG WOMEN OF THE FUTURE"

## Mrs. Donald McLean Deplores the Trend of Modern Femininity---Suffrage a Cup With Bitter Dregs, She Says---Dangerous Tendencies That Threaten the Race.

By Edward Marshall.

Here is a woman who has done things very much worth doing; now she says things very much worth reading. Emily Nelson Ritchie McLean is called a "patriotic worker." She was born at Prospect Hall, Frederick, Md., the daughter of Judge John and Betty Ritchie, and was graduated from Frederick Seminary, now the Women's College, where she later took post-graduate courses in languages, history, and mathematics. In 1883 she married Donald McLean, a distinguished member of the New York bar. She is a charter member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and was ten years regent of the New York Chapter, later becoming President General of the National organization, of which she is at present honorary President General.

THE woman of the future; what will she be like?

That was the interesting query which formed the basis of my talk with this extraordinarily able representative of the Better Sex. Her answers fascinated and illuminated.

She thinks it will be seen that the woman who is coming will greatly differ from the woman of the past, and from the woman who is here. She does not think that woman suffrage is desirable; though not actively opposing it, she admits, regretfully, that matrimony grows less popular with womankind as the years pass, and incidentally she indorses Mr. Roosevelt's views upon "race suicide."

She regrets enormously some of the changes she predicts.

And that, with the statement of her history and her achievements, which appears above, is enough of introduction, because every word of introduction keeps us away from what she has herself to say. I talked with her in her own home, where we were surrounded by a wonderful collection of Revolutionary relics and trophies of her notable career. The sideboard in her dining room was once Barbara Fritchie's. Almost wherever there is space for it reposes, glittering, some splendid bit of plate memorial of the appreciation of some group of women for her work as their representative.

Her personality is as delightful as her career has been notable; her thought sequence is unwaveringly logical.

"What will the years bring in the way of change to womankind?" I asked.

"I expect no drastic change in the next generation, but in two or three I do," she replied. "Women change less rapidly than one who reads the modern newspaper would be led to think. You can Burbank almost any other form of life more readily than you can the human form of life. But there will be surface changes. Not all of them, I think, will really be admirable. It is impossible for women to engage in public matters as violently as many have done lately without becoming definitely truculent, and the fighting mood must wear away the softer moods which, in the past, have characterized and adorned femininity. When I speak of women who engage in public matters violently, I frankly mean the suffragists—the women who are struggling for the ballot and for other things which they regard as 'rights.' I believe that they are losing some of their best attributes by fighting thus, and I don't believe that what they are so fiercely fighting for is worth it. I don't believe they really need or even really want it. My sex is getting into the bad habit of warfare without cause sufficiently important to form a good excuse for their departure from tradition, without an object sufficiently important even partly to offset what the battle costs.

"But when I decried the thought of women fighting in the streets, defying the police, struggling in their prison corridors, and starving themselves in prison cells, as Englishwomen have been doing in their battle for the suffrage, I do not mean at all to voice a disapproval of the self-supporting woman's legitimate struggle to make for herself a proper place in the world, to get her rightful recognition, her earned wage—her proper pay, in whatever detail, just as man gets his. No one can admire the self-supporting woman more than I do. I do not consider that by bravely struggling for existence independently she loses anything whatever, necessarily, of her most lovely attributes, nor loses anything of dignity. On the other hand, I think she gains all along the line. The woman wage earner is an unavoidable product of our present system, and while we must regret some details of that system, we cannot but admire this product. The professional woman also gains by her profession, and with her gain comes gain for the whole world, for she is developing for woman a larger and more practical brain, which will be a benefit to many generations yet unborn.

### Three Elements in Struggling Womankind.

"There are three elements in the mass of struggling womankind to-day. With two of these I sympathize; with one of them I do not sympathize.

"The one with which I do not sympathize is called the 'militant.' She is not helping woman's cause, I think, but hurting it, and in hurting woman's cause she is injuring society; and the methods of her fighting are such as no good 'sport' would 'stand for' in any other line of battle. She is treating man as her plain enemy, which he is not, and she is neither fairer in the least high-minded in her methods of combating him. Women who fight men by men's own method should be willing to accept what they may get in the fight—hard knocks, if they come—just as they expect their foe to accept such when they give as good as they get. They plainly are not to be sympathized with. They are being martyrs, after having asked for themselves a martyr's fate.

"The elements with whom I sympathize are the working and professional woman.

"With these three elements added to the primal element, which is known as the 'old-fashioned woman,' are coming to the surface changes which are evident already, and of the mixture will be born, in future generations, the new type which inevitably is coming. Add new elements to any chemical mixture and you are certain to produce thereby entirely new effects, although the same old elements remain. Now, what will be the new effects in womankind?"

### First Effect Will Be On Matrimony.

"First of all, the new conditions will be certain to have their grave effect on matrimony, which, in days gone by, was almost the only possible outlook for the intelligent and self-respecting woman who was not queer nor yet unfortunate. Here, undoubtedly, is where society will be most notably affected. Marriage will decrease as a result of the new tendency of womankind. In the old days there was always the fair chance that any given woman, no matter how long she might wait before she married, would eventually be wed, but under new conditions this is unlikely to be true of women who do not marry in their youth. Women who live far beyond the twenties without marrying are, in the future, more likely to pass their whole lives in celibacy. Women earning their own living without the aid of men will not be likely to accept mates whom they do not actually love. They will marry for reasons born of sentimental romance or they will stay single. It will be the old story of 'he who hesitates is lost,' with 'she' substituted for the 'he' of the proverb. The age of romance passes quickly with most women, as with most men, and when romance is once gone, in days to come, competent women will be unlikely to be willing to accept the bonds of matrimony. Being capable of self-support, they will be likely to exercise this capability rather than to embark on unknown seas of doubtful nature.

"Marriages will continue to be born of the sentimental passion of the young, as they have ever been; but as life goes on the woman who at all questions the value of matrimony will see about her many of her sex who have been very comfortable without it, and will therefore be unafraid to risk dispensing with it for herself. In the old days even those who questioned it still married, almost of necessity; if the new woman doubts it in the least she will not marry. She should, however, remember that 'Old Time is still a-flying, and a lonely old woman is a sad sight.'

### Married Woman, Though, the Happy Woman.

"In my opinion, this will be a most unhappy situation. I think the woman who is married is, in the long run, the happy woman—and the useful and wise woman. It is impossible to be married without learning much of true unselfishness, and it is possible to live a single life and know absolutely nothing of it. If married women did not learn unselfishness, husbands might become extinct, be extirpated, utterly destroyed.

"The softening and sweetening effect of matrimony upon women is no greater than its like effect on men, so women, in withdrawing from the 'career of marriage,' as they plainly are withdrawing, will not only harmfully restrict our population, make themselves unhappy and achieve much selfishness, but they will make men selfish, too, and rob them of the chance of homes and happiness. The protecting, supporting, and indulgent qualities in men—the finest qualities they have where women are concerned—are developed only through the medium of matrimony and are sure to shrivel in the future."

I sat and blinked for a few seconds. Then I asked: "What effect will all this have on motherhood?"

"Why, that is obvious," the charming famous woman answered. "And the tendency toward shirking motherhood, by eschewing matrimony, or in any way whatever, is very bad, indeed, and growing. Less matrimony means, of course, less maternity, but where maternity does exist the march of generations cannot quell the maternal instinct of love; any tendency of the non-maternal members of the sex to shun it will affect those who love by instinct its divine joys and the mighty compensations of its great responsibilities. There will be fewer, far of these instinctive mothers, the very finest type of womanhood, but the principal characteristics of motherhood will not change—they are eternal and unchanging. They may be enameled by theories, but—scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar—scratch a woman who has borne a child and you will find a mother, no matter how she may have tried to hide her instincts of maternity beneath the gloss of modern methods.

"The two questions which were automatically answered in the affirmative in the past now often puzzle women for a time, and, eventually, are answered in the negative. 'Am I to marry?' every woman asks—in every woman's mind there is an element of doubt, in these days, about the wisdom of the step. And, if she marries, after she is married, the woman asks herself as seriously if she is to accept motherhood. With our grandmothers this was not so. Women married if they could, and if they married they bore children if they could.

### Fewer Marriages and Fewer Children.

"But in the future fewer women will bear children, while those who do accept motherhood will bear far fewer

children. That will, of course, mean a decreasing population. What the social effects of this will be I leave to sociologists to make much clearer than I can, but I believe they will be most unfortunate. Mr. Roosevelt has the right idea. He is the preacher of virtue, modesty, and the bearing of children, and is, at the same time, broad enough to believe in giving women's interests a chance to expand through their brain."

"If he were feminized he would then possess the qualities he now extols in womanhood, and would have courage,



Mrs. Donald McLean.

fair dealing, and breadth of view, without those catlike qualities of womankind, which are the sex's greatest handicap. The decrease in the marriage rate and the decrease in the birth rate are sorry things for men and women both, and sad things for the country, but they seem to be inevitable. Motherhood will not be accentuated among the characteristics of the woman of the future, and that is most unfortunate.

### Where Woman Will Not Change.

"Woman will not change in the characteristics of youth while her youth lasts, nor in the characteristics of maturity, when she has achieved maturity; but youth passes, and if she reaches ripe maturity without matrimony, then the woman of the future will never be a mother. And the future will never be a mother, keeping clear of the deep claims of the maternal spirit, will bring about a change in woman's soul. She will learn lessons in pure selfishness which will be bad for her to learn."

"What intellectual changes will occur with these?"

"Many, and they will be great. The tendency from matrimony, the dislike for bearing children, will change the normal course of woman's thought. A growing theory is that women have been unjustly treated in the social scheme because their brains have not been allowed to develop as men's brains have. One hears talk continually of the shackles which have bound the woman's intellect—shackles riveted by man, of course. But my theory is that women, intellectually, could never have developed and never can develop on the same lines which man's intellectual development has followed. I believe they are false lines for her to try to follow.

"No; in my opinion, the tremendous effort women are now making to become intellectual duplicates of men are very much mistaken. The peculiarly male intellect and the essentially female intellect, I think, are equally desirable and necessary to the perfection of the social body. I admit no less a value for the characteristically feminine mind than for the essentially male mind. But the qualities of the two minds are and were intended to be different.

### Modern Woman an Imitation of Man.

"Of course, if the feminine mind is left entirely neglected by education

and companionship it will remain as does a diamond unmined and uncut, and the world will not be benefited by any of its potential beauties. But, if, on the other hand, it is developed along the other lines—is cut in the forms which fit men's minds—there still is a great loss to the world—almost as great, I think, as if it actually remains entirely uncut. Higher education, so called, is in danger of producing in our women an imitation of the male qualities—not developing native gifts.

"Now the question is whether the feminine mind is not actually, definitely changing through having been educated to a certain point along these lines—for schools and colleges can only take it to a certain point; they cannot take it all the way—and being thrown thus into rivalry and combinations and companionships with male minds other than those of normal matrimony." Will coming generations see woman's mind with still more brilliancy and still less of the old, steady, lovely glow of motherhood and domesticity?

"I feel that the situation is yet too new to make positive prophecy possible, but personally I should prefer that her own type, her own individuality, and her own gifts should be entirely regained, retained, and fostered to the fullest flower than that woman should attempt to graft cuttings on them from the tree of man's mind and sit back wondering what the fruits will be.

### Woman and Politics.

"Personally, however, I feel that there is little reason for real fear. The development of woman is, I fancy, for the best—or will, at least, eventually be—along lines which will lead to real improvement. She is not growing less vain, but is proud in these days of new things also. She is beginning to be proud of intellectually, and that, while it is better vanity than the vanity of finery of old, is still a vanity. It would be a sorry day for the whole race if woman wholly lost her vanity, for vanity may sometimes be and often is translated into proper pride. Powder, paint, and politics need not necessarily be separated in women."

"That brings us," I ventured, "to the matter of suffrage and to woman's participation in politics."

"Whether woman gets the ballot or not," Mrs. McLean said, "is not a matter of small moment as compared to the fact that she has actually endeavored to secure it. The drastic change in her case when she first decided that she might secure it, decided that she wanted it, and started in to make the effort. The beginning of the feeling was a change far greater than the actual gaining of the ballot ever could be. What effect will the ballot have on her? The greatest of its effects has already been produced.

"If a woman does participate freely in politics, it must, of necessity, greatly change the habits of her life. But merely

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"If, on the other hand, the young girl ruthlessly takes the chances given her by the world's progress, and the elders cannot take them, it will make of her a very selfish individual. But, on the whole, I believe that her relief from drudgery and entrance into the world of active, outside industry, will raise rather than lower her moral tone. The average American girl starts good. The larger the crowd of working girls, therefore, the larger the average of good girls. Insensibly these good girls hold the weak and erring up—hold them to a higher standard than they might maintain if they were isolated. If, in an office building, for example, there are a hundred stenographers employed the percentage of good will be higher than it would be if but ten were working there. The presence of so many involuntary watchers will have its good effect. This is almost certain; that unless a girl absolutely knows another to be bad she will believe her to be good, and be afraid herself to do wrong things before her. Therefore women will be helpful to one another morally, increasingly, by force of their examples as more and more of them find place in our industrial life."

### The Relation of the Sexes.

"But do not think by this that I am warning girls to distrust men—men in the mass. It is the human need that man and woman should be thrown together. It started in the Garden of Eden, and, though some carping critics may claim that that same Garden was lost to man through that companionship, the majority of men believe, I think, with dear Mark Twain: 'Wherever Eve is, there is Eden.' And I rather think that women hold much the same views in regard to Adam.

"This modern life of ours presents a curious and puzzling problem at this point. It is thrusting a vast influx of girls into commercial instead of home life. How are young men and women, in these new conditions, to be brought together for that natural companionship which is their right by birth? Our system as it stands is, in this regard, quite startlingly imperfect. What opportunity, for instance, has the young office clerk, brought a stranger—from the country to the city—to meet nice girls, from whom he wisely might select a mate? What opportunity has the girl behind the counter in the average big store to properly and innocently meet the sort of youths from whom to choose a worthy husband?"

"Here lies one of the greatest of the dangers of the rush to cities—the inability of young people to meet properly young people of the other sex.

"I know of one young man who, in his home town, knew so many girls that, to use his own vernacular, his derby was always breaking at the brim from being tipped so much, but who after he reached New York City and went to work here did not meet, in five long years, one nice girl, except the two employed in the same office and some pert and unattractive lodgers in those boarding houses which he chanced to live in. He has told me that those years in New York City were unutterably lonely, that the best part of his life was gone.

"Women who were not desirable were easy to become acquainted with, and for a time he found his female friends among them. Who could really blame him much for that? But eventually, for he was clean-minded, fine-grained at heart, they sickened him and he got along without acquaintanceship of women. Existence then was dry and colorless, for the sexes need each other. Finally the hunger for a home became so strong in this youth's heart that he asked the only girl he knew in New York City to marry him, and she consented, admitting to him afterward that he was quite the only young man she had met in the metropolis. They were not fitted for each other, in the least, and their marriage was unhappy.

### A Vast Chance for a Philanthropist.

"There are thousands of such cases every year in New York City, and a vast opportunity for some broad-minded rich man lies in the correction of this evil. I am informed that one man, Mr. Arbuckle, is attempting it, with some success, on a small scale, but there is an opportunity for a really great work."

"In the establishment of a clearing house for wives and husbands?"

"In the establishment of a clearing house for modest, righteous, social intercourse, which will bring the fit youth of the two sexes properly together. That in the great cities of the country young men and women cannot meet and get acquainted as they should is responsible, I think, for much of the sad grit which the divorce mills grind.

"But even if this clearing house for social intercourse should be established there would still remain, I fear, many

### The Girl of the Period.

"And here, let me say a word or two of the young girl of this day and generation. I am bitterly opposed to her increasing tendency toward leaving drudgery to the old because they are, she assumes, accustomed to it. If industrial invention relieves both generations and gives to the older the placid

ity of leisure in which to close their lives, that is well. Then the young must look for wider horizons, more varied occupations, or drop into that storied evil which is ever ready for the idle hands.

"If, on the other hand, the young girl ruthlessly takes the chances given her by the world's progress, and the elders cannot take them, it will make of her a very selfish individual. But, on the whole, I believe that her relief from drudgery and entrance into the world of active, outside industry, will raise rather than lower her moral tone. The average American girl starts good. The larger the crowd of working girls, therefore, the larger the average of good girls. Insensibly these good girls hold the weak and erring up—hold them to a higher standard than they might maintain if they were isolated. If, in an office building, for example, there are a hundred stenographers employed the percentage of good will be higher than it would be if but ten were working there. The presence of so many involuntary watchers will have its good effect. This is almost certain; that unless a girl absolutely knows another to be bad she will believe her to be good, and be afraid herself to do wrong things before her. Therefore women will be helpful to one another morally, increasingly, by force of their examples as more and more of them find place in our industrial life."

"And male companionship?" I ventured.

"It goes without saying," Mrs. McLean answered, "that the companionship of men of their own class is better for working girls than that of many men of a so-called 'higher' class. Girls are prone to think the opposite, which is unfortunate. There is a glamour which they think means ultimate happiness in the attention of men outside their own line of life; but it is a truism which cannot too often be repeated, that for the one case where King Cophelua raises the beggarmaid, there have always been a thousand cases in which pseudo Princes have first used the humble girls to whom they have taken fancy and then thrown them into the gutter."

"Is then, the trend of the age really toward race suicide?"

"If so, it is the woman's fault," said she, at length. "Race suicide, of course, must mean the ultimate destruction of humanity, but, first, it means the desolation of the home. And desolation of the home means desolation of the Nation, for the whole strength of the mass lies in the strength of the individual unit, and the unit of the body social is the family.

"The tendency toward race suicide is apparent, and is due, I think, to a mistaken conception on the part of modern women of what really means freedom. I don't think the man of the twentieth century shrinks from the physical ordeal of childbirth any more than women of the earlier times did. The ordeal is nature. The intricacies of modern life have so developed women's nervous systems that they suffer more than did their grandmothers at such times; but it is not that which makes them shrink from bearing children. It is the fear of the great self-denial which motherhood demands, the limitations which it puts on social pleasures and on business activities. Domestic care would handicap the modern woman in many efforts in which she is at present becoming engrossed; the trend in education and comfortable circles is against such families for this selfish reason: 'Looking back a quarter of a century the contrast is most striking.'

"That this prejudice against bearing should be strongest among the prosperous is a melancholy and significant fact. Less blame might justly be attached to the avoidance of the great responsibility among the laboring classes, with whom the struggle for existence is much more desperate and pleasures are much scarcer.

### Concrete Selfishness of Womankind.

"It is true that many theorists hold in these days that the interests of the human race would be advanced if fewer children were born, all having possible sources of support and education, rather than more, a majority of whom are thrust into the sad uncertainty of small financial provision; but the existing situation is not due to the abstract reasoning of theories. It is due to concrete selfishness of womankind, I fear. When we get down to bed-rock facts I must confess that I believe few men whose wives would give them the responsibility of large families; and I do not believe that many women seriously shrink from the physical ordeal. They are not astray, in fact, I think, by their restless craving for 'emancipation,' of which cup they have already tasted a few intoxicating drops—a cup of the dregs of which they know not of."

"If the type of woman changes in the next generation, it will be because women are willing to pay for freedom such a price as the sacrifice of family love, family care, and family affection. The situation, I confess, is full of menace. It sometimes seems to me that the sex is wavering between the procedure of the French Revolution and that of our own American War of Independence. The French called for and would have liberty. Equality and fraternity were very minor parts of the trilogy which they demanded. They declared that they would dare to gain their end, and what was the result? Destruction of life, property, and principle—and the creation of an empire. On the other hand, our own American revolutionists also demanded liberty, but it was liberty, not license which they asked—the perfect law of liberty; the proper exaltation of the human soul, the reasonable throwing to one side of threat and bond, outcome of the natural craving of the human creature for an opportunity to do its best, not for mere license to do its worst.

"Women ought to study these wars. Since the sex has grown so great, now in its own and the world's eyes, upon what meat shall it be fed? Shall it have liberty without the best of reason, space to engage in the best of all human occupations, the satisfaction of pure selfishness? Or will we women fight for freedom to our natural gifts of mind and body, and of soul, so that they may be best served humanly, and thus bring to the race true, best happiness? I admit, but I urge for my sex, as generations the final choice of the latter."

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