

**A SURVEY OF THE WOMAN
PROBLEM, FROM THE
GERMAN BY HERMAN
SCHEFFAUER, NEW YORK, 1913**

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ROSA MAYREDER & HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

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FROM THE GERMAN OF
ROSA MAYREDER

By HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

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PREFACE

IN this book I have dealt in my own way with the problems of the woman's movement. Although in some respects I am not in entire agreement with this movement, I regard it, nevertheless, as one of the phenomena which honourably distinguish the present epoch from all previous periods of human history; nay, more, it seems to me to be one of the finest manifestations of an epoch which otherwise, in its poverty of ideals, of noble feelings, and of passionate beliefs, betrays evidence of degeneration.

Many of the ideas contained in my work may frequently have been expressed before. The first outlines were made fifteen years ago, and certain experiences of my early youth gave me the initial impulse to write it. Those readers, however, who are already acquainted with the literature on the subject will, I hope, find enough that is new to compensate them for what is old; while that large majority which, unfortunately, still knows very little about the movement, must remain satisfied with the comprehensive view of it which I have endeavoured to present. Some of the essays have already appeared in various periodicals, and in stringing them together it has been impossible to avoid repeti-

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tions. These will not vex the reader who recognises that certain truths cannot be repeated too often, since that which stands to reason does not necessarily compel belief, and that which is proved is not always admitted.

The woman's movement is due to three different causes, and has three different aims in view. In my opinion, these ought to be considered separately, however intimately they may be connected with one another, and however true it may be that, taken in conjunction with one another, they constitute the essential movement. Its threefold basis is economic, social, ethical-psychological.

During the few years in which the movement has begun to pass from the theoretical stage to the political, the economic and social problems have come to the front, while the ethical-psychological part has been kept in the background. I have, however, not dealt at all with the economic, and only slightly with the social, sides of the question. Although I recognise that without the economic revolution caused by the introduction of machinery the movement could hardly have become a practical one, yet I maintain that historically it has an idealistic, not a materialistic, origin. However great an influence the economic impulses may exert, much more importance is to be attached to the ideal postulates of the woman's movement. Economic improvements would have little effect in changing the real relations of the sexes. Even if a woman were able to gain her living independently of man, still she would not be free unless quite other influences began to operate in her favour.

The female sex will never, the old idealist Hippel to the contrary notwithstanding, be set on an equal footing

with the male merely as a result of "the magnanimity and sense of justice of man." Although, personally, I am absolutely convinced that these are the distinctive qualities of noble manhood, I still think that the world at large is moved by more elementary influences, and not by magnanimity or a sense of justice. That is true both of the ethical-psychological relations of the sexes and also of their relations in the economic affairs of life.

I mention this emphatically and at once in order to avoid the accusation that I have taken up the cudgels on behalf of the female sex against the male. Indeed, I have purposely avoided the question as to the superiority of one sex over the other. An unprejudiced judgment could be given only by a person who belonged to neither sex. Speaking for myself alone, and as a mere matter of subjective taste, I would give the preference to the male sex, but that seems to be a prejudice naturally inherent in the female.

To the majority of women as well as men, Kant's dictum on mankind in general will, unfortunately, apply all too well: "If you ask whether mankind is to be regarded as a good species or as a bad, I must confess that it has not much to boast about." Certainly, the ordinary woman has as little reason to boast as the ordinary man, and we ought to cease attempting to formulate any sweeping judgments about either sex as a whole. This method of generalisation is one of the vulgar mental habits of the present day which tend to confound the superior individual, the man who rises above the average, with the mass. The average man or woman, whether of the upper or of the middle class, is in no sense interesting, and the ordinary sex-characteristics do not make the study of either any more attrac-

tive. People begin to be interesting only when they differ from the ordinary type of their sex, when they are possessed of a certain individuality and emerge from the common rut. Then the vicissitudes of their lives attain a personal dignity, they are no longer commonplace, they have passed beyond the limitations of the type.

This book may be open to the accusation of dealing too much with exceptional examples, masculine and feminine, and it may also be said that, although such exceptions do occur, yet, broadly speaking, the differences between the sexes do not, as a rule, entitle us to question their validity.

What do we know of the psycho-sexual qualities of human beings, even of those with whom we are well acquainted? How difficult it is to lay bare the soul of man, so loth to allow itself to be examined, so swift to hide itself behind conventionalities as soon as it is conscious of being observed! And how crude and barbarous seem all our methods of expression when we approach that delicate, ethereal, manifold thing!

Is it possible for a man to be really understood when he differs from the ordinary run? Even when desirous to do so, would he be able to interpret himself to those from whom he differs? In ordinary intercourse with other men only the superficial and conventional aspects become visible, the inner and more personal traits are not revealed except to those of a similar temperament. That is the reason why the untypical remains so frequently unobserved, while the average type is supposed to be more common than it really is.

What should we have known of human nature if it had not been for the revelations of those who have shown themselves to us in their works? Such revela-

tions furnish the material which I have used with respect to its symptomatic significance in the second part of the book. It is the recognition of ideas, not their propagation, for which I have striven. I do not expect to convince opponents, for that would mean the conversion of people of a different type, and I do not believe that people of radically different temperaments can come to any understanding by intellectual means. Even when they are intellectually equal, they cannot approach one another by reasonable argumentations, for all convictions—at least, all genuine convictions—are only the outward expression of the inward nature. As a matter of fact, men do not talk or write in order to carry conviction to other men, but only to express their own. Those who are experienced in the subtleties of thinking know that every sort of opinion may be asserted and proved, and also doubted and controverted. The battle of opinions, however thoroughly and by whatsoever methods it may be carried on, is a mere idle game when it does not indicate the expression of tendencies which are vital to the individuality of the thinker.

I desire only that this book may come into the hands of those who are akin to me through having similar perceptions, and I hope that it will give them the kind of pleasure that we all experience when we see reflected, as in a mirror, the expression of our own inward feelings.

ROSA MAYREDER.