

Are Men Mice?

(Answered Yes and No)

I — Yes; But How Did We Get That Way?

by ALFRED UHLER

I WAS BORN a man-child. I couldn't help it and somehow I'm glad of it.

I like women. I have always liked them. Nothing that they can do or say will undermine my strong conviction that they add immeasurably to my enjoyment of life. No sobbing in a minor key about the mother waiting for her wandering boy in her little gray home in the west will destroy my illusion that a woman is a fine product of evolution. At 18 she is overpowering; at 25, delightful, if somewhat academic; at 30 she radiates a mysterious charm; and at 40 she is either a flop or a finality. But I like her best when she sticks to being a woman and doesn't attempt to take from me the things I can do best.

I have my pride. There are certain things that I alone can do.

For instance, I claim no credit for my biological functions; I only state that in the matter of children I am necessary. No woman can take over my prerogatives here.

Then I lay claim to a sort of lumbering logic, which allows me to see the horse before the cart. Nine times out of ten, it is my eye which eventually sees that the reason the car won't go up the hill is because the brake is jammed on hard. It is my hand that finally extricates the fourteen hairpins that have clogged up the drain for a week. I can also add up the figures in the checkbook better than she can. The fact that this recreation sometimes causes me perceptible pain does not stop me from arriving finally at the correct minus figure.

That I can successfully administer the bottle to the baby is just a by-product of my determination to be heard or felt somewhere, and for

this technique I claim no credit. Also I can cook and, ably seconded by the trustworthy bottle of Worcestershire sauce, have been known to create flavors never before tasted by man. I do this rather unwillingly, however, as I have never found that it stirs me very profoundly. On occasions I am an agile dishwasher, and have been known to work my way through a cubic yard of diapers in record time. I rather feel that this is not cricket and have never attempted to push my claims in these fields. On request I will, however, relinquish my aloof attitude.

The woman has a disagreeable time of it also, if she cannot persuade me to take her out in the evening. Here I sense my power. A wise withholding of this service, which I alone can offer, has done a great deal to add to my waning confidence. Without me, she proclaims herself a bold woman and, although sometimes this may actually be the case, she hates to admit it. I hold her by the fetters of my broadcloth evening clothes or the shiny warp of my last year's blue serge.

Most men I find rather tiresome. I have tried evenings at the club, college reunions, four-somes at golf and I find them wanting.

When men get together, they always practice a ritual from which they can never seem to escape, even in their cups. First of all, there is the formality of the droll story to be gone through. At the words *Have you heard this one?* a silence descends on the gathering. All the heads draw close together in a mock spirit of intimacy while the storyteller spins his new variation on the exhaustless theme of sex, after which the hoarse laugh echoes through the

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locker room. As the next man takes up another variation on the same theme, the same ritual is repeated.

The women are now joining in this game, and, while they lend a little vicarious excitement to a dull affair, I somehow wish they would leave us alone to our autoeroticism. This is eminently a male field.

LET'S GROW UP!

IN AMERICA today the woman sits in the saddle. To do this, she has accentuated her male characteristics. Her man is usually a muscular, inoffensive person who asks no more from the gods than the ability to make enough cash to keep her calm. She mothers him and secretly looks on him as a grown-up child. He is so docile, so lacking in excitement that her daydreams are centered about romance. But he is so entranced as he plays with his toys — bushels of wheat and crates of eggs — that he can never be persuaded to leave them for the more serious business of playing house.

As women enter the business world, they attempt to carry their mothering instincts with them. Women lawyers find that this sympathy is entirely out of place in the courts of law, where men fight to the death about the meaning of the word *contract* or weep crocodile tears over the placing of a comma between *but* and *as*. Guile is the chief requisite here. In this savage game of logic gone wild, a woman finds her best weapon an illogical one, for there is no man-made logic in sex. A jury made up of the usual emotionally starved American males, she finds, will be more easily persuaded by a properly displayed pair of legs than by the logic of her treble words. She soon perceives that the real reason her beautiful female client has such an easy time with the jury is because of their old mothers back on the farm.

The woman banker finds the going even more difficult. As she enters one of those marble mausoleums to money, she lays aside every womanly quality except common sense. She wanders about in this cold region of arithmetical figures whispering strange words of bonds and offerings and security gained at the cheap price of six per cent. Touch this creature, and she will seem as cold as a bundle of certificates for frosted foods. Only the fishy eye of the male banker is able to see the reason for her existence, and he does not look on her as a

woman. She gives up her birthright to engage in this frantic search for her father through the endless metal files and vaults.

On the secretarial plane, the woman is growing warmer. Here she is a more intimate mother to her boss than is his wife. She sees her boy in his great moments of elation and despair. She hears the magnificent ring of triumph in his voice as he proudly stands up and cries, "Sold!" and, "Profit!" She is with him and sees his fearful uncertainty and long backward look before he pallidly whispers, "Bought."

She measures him for collars and pants, orders his lunch of crackers and milk, and reminds him of the hour at which Willie Cashin, of the Mutual Distrust Company, is coming to play with him. She sees him in what is termed a conference with other uncertain males like himself. In this competitive game, she hears with pride his strident tones which rise above the chorus and thrills with him as he carries home the marbles.

She goes with him to conventions, where he returns with zest to his boyhood, alcoholically restored, where the business transacted is of such an exhausting character that he is finally carried prostrate to bed. She can now count her day as done. She is a subtle combination of stenographer, nursemaid, and mother.

We American men are still living in our childhood; we are still playing with our blocks. This was a time of safety, and we still think we want security. In other phases of life we extoll courage and the hero. In our social and family life we really demand the coward. Here we allow no chances to be taken.

Our marital heroes must come home on time every night, ask whether Jack has broken any windows today or whether Jill has been given her cod-liver oil, walk from the dining room to the living room and from the living room to bed. This is the safe ritual, and rebels against these routines are considered dangerous, unhappy men.

Where women are concerned, the American male is as timid as the amoeba. Instead of making the ladies feel so secure, he should show them some of the adventurous spirit that makes him climb mountains, find the North Pole, fly across all the oceans. They won't like it, at first, but in a short while they will sit up and take notice. And before many moons they will love it and decide to be women again.

ARE MEN MICE?



II — No; Not If We Can Help It!

by MARGARET FISHBACK

ONE MILITANT woman can drown out a thousand normal females who glory in domineering husbands. The average wife likes to feel sheltered and feminine. She leans enthusiastically on her mate's broad shoulder, in the style to which Mr. Uhler seems so wistfully unaccustomed. Even when she is argumentative and assertive, she secretly hopes her man will be masterful enough to overrule her.

The old Charlot's Revue ballad, so feelingly rendered by Beatrice Lillie, aptly expresses the feminine emotional viewpoint. It goes something like this:

*Blue eyes don't fill me with dreams of delight,
Youth never thrilled me with love at first sight.
But he who'll enchant me from now till I die
Is he who can plant me a lovely black eye.
Oh! to be taken unawares,
And kicked down a whole flight of stairs!*

Chorus

*I want a man to insult me,
To beat me, ill-treat me.
I want a man with some vim and some punch,
Who bruises me at breakfast, and lynchies me at
lunch.*

*I want a man who can wrestle,
As catch-as-catch-can as can be —
A regular smiter, a fighter, a biter,
Rough stuff . . . that's me!*

That may be a shade overexuberant, but even aggressively self-sufficient women have a sneaking admiration and longing for the genus cave man — with reasonable reservations. And, though Mr. Uhler plaintively asserts that the American husband is a worm in his subservience to domesticity, I've seen plenty that aren't. They tell their wives, they don't ask them; at most they confer, but the women never dictate.