

a policy would promote legitimate American commercial activities. But what is immensely more important, it might not only help ward off a new threat to China, but contribute to the peace of the world by preventing the development of a situation bound sometime or other to end in a red flood of blood.

JOHN DEWEY.

Peking, China.

## Feminism and Romance

**I** AM an almost rabid feminist. It happens that I am also, at odd times, a writer of stock romantic tales. But I notice that I keep these two interests in distinct compartments. There is as yet no perceptible seepage from the one to the other.

My story is under way. I have described the picturesque setting—a charming country house, let us say. On the steps of the commodious verandah the tall, bronzed, “clean-limbed” hero sits, smoking his well-loved briar. On the other side of the steps, the villain, smaller, sallow, dark, with brilliant but shifty eyes, plays nervously with his cigarette. The two men are conversing, outwardly amicable, in spite of their instinctive hostility. Enter the heroine. You know the heroine perfectly well in advance. You can skip my catalog of her charms.

All right, let's skip it. But let me ask you one thing. Do I by any chance—in any frantic reaching after originality—depict her as longing for “the vote”? You know that I do not.

Does she have ambitions? Does she aspire to be a physician, a lawyer, an architect, or even a newspaper woman or a teacher in the high school? Not she! How could a physician or lawyer, even a would-be physician or lawyer, blush as it will be her business to blush at every turn of the plot? And in a prospective journalist or schoolma'am how would you credit her curls, her white shoulders, rounded arms, and dainty feet?

Switching into my feminist self, I cannot but regard my heroine with contemptuous disfavor. I am forced to characterize her from this standpoint as sheltered, “kept,” a trifle, a ninny—a toy of love.

But my Mr. Hyde, the romancer, bobs up again.

“Would *you*,” he demands, “accept a modern, intellectual, ambitious woman in the thriller you like to read on a rainy evening when you are dead tired? Granted that in real life you prefer the modern type. But in a yarn you want an old-fashioned pretty girl with curls!”

“But,” I cry, tacitly admitting his charge, “it's a shame! They're all lay figures, these current ro-

mantic heroines—my own and other people's. They aren't really charming any more. They're just *x*, the love-motive—the alleged reason for the hero's extraordinary behavior. They're killing romance, and the world can't live without romance!”

“Well,” he retorts, “what are you going to do about it?”

I meditate deeply, for a romancer, before I reply—so deeply that I even see a sort of vision that uplifts me. But I am forced to begin my answer sadly enough:

“I don't suppose I shall do anything about it. I shall go on writing trashy yarns with paper-doll heroines and reading yarns of the same sort. There's no help for it, I'm afraid, in our day.

“You see,” I explain, “the woman of romance must belong to an accepted type. She may not be novel or strange or debatable in any way. If she is, she will annoy most readers of such stories. For romance is read subjectively. In romance the reader identifies himself—he is usually a man—with the hero, and how can you expect him to take pleasure in vicarious combat on behalf of a heroine who excites in him only wrathful contempt?”

“And the modern woman, though she is all about us, numerous enough to force a Constitutional amendment, and though she is, in fact, infinitely more attractive than her supine Victorian predecessor, has not yet reached popular acceptance as the standard of charm—the kind of woman the hero would inevitably fall in love with at sight and fight for against sevenfold odds.”

“You're right there!” says Hyde drily. “She hasn't!”

“But she will!” I cry, my vision returning. “She will! And when she does, she will bring in a new romance!”

“Ah! A new romance!” he echoes sarcastically. “And what will it be like?”

“For one thing,” I retort, “it will be twice as thrilling as the old—exactly twice. In the old romance—yours—only the hero can really have adventures and do clever and daring deeds. The heroine, as Howells once pointed out, is a drag on the action. What can she *do*? She can raise her eyes and lower them, smile, blush, faint. But fainting is worn out, and if blushing isn't, it ought to be. She may occasionally give artlessly sage advice. That is about as near as she can come to being practically useful in the entanglements. Of course, she has to be led in once in so often for a love scene. And what a job those love scenes are to write—and what a bore to read! And when we have them over, what to do with her? She must be deposited somewhere while the real events proceed. There ought to be a checking bureau for

heroines—with a clever modern girl in charge!

"But when the modern girl comes into her own and begins to figure in such stories—will she mope around in the checking bureau, waiting for the hero to finish his next adventure and come back for an intercalary philandering? She will be off having adventures of her own!"

Mr. Hyde manages to get a word in.

"Just *what* will she do?" he insinuates. He is shaken but still nasty.

"What will she not do? What is there that modern girls in real life don't do? She will drive motor cars, of course, and airplanes, and swim and shoot and fence. She will down the villain and tie him up and gag him quite as often as the hero will. The villain is always puny, you know, or else dissipated and hence in poor condition. One of our golfing girls would dispose of the average villain in five minutes and never even adjust her hair net afterwards. And as for plots and plans and councils of war—will she be gallantly escorted to the drawing-room before the headwork begins? She will dominate the councils, as she does in half the homes of America today.

"And detective work! The feminine Sherlock Holmes! Poe and Gaboriau and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle will shed tears in the Elysian Fields because they lived too soon. Really! Doesn't your wife figure out a mystery twice as fast as you do?"

"Even the love scenes will be different. Think of a 'different' love scene in a romance! For one thing the heroine, being economically independent and perfectly well able to take care of herself, will be in a position to do the proposing quite as much as the hero. You will read the love scenes again if only to see which one of them 'pops.'"

"You think it will be like that in real life, I suppose," says Hyde. He presents the incongruous spectacle of the villain shocked.

"Of course I do. Why is it that the man alone has the privilege of proposing nowadays? Merely because he has to offer not only his heart but his purse. Even current conventions," I add triumphantly, "recognize that a princess or an heiress must propose to a poor young man."

"Perhaps it's lucky for you and me," says Hyde, "that we live now, instead of in this splendid future you're so enthusiastic about. We mightn't have got proposed to!"

"We might not," I admit. "or been accepted when we proposed. Men will have to make themselves attractive again as they did in earlier ages—go back to doublet and hose, perhaps, and short cloaks and plumed hats. Trousers and derbies will cease to deface the human scene!"

"And think what that will mean for romance,"

I continue, "when the men as well as the women can be described as beautiful—when the hero's well-turned calves will have the same delightful piquancy that now pertains to the trim ankles of his lady-love!"

"Let me tell you one thing more—a thing that will appeal even to you. When those good days come, women as well as men will read romances. Your sales and your royalties will be doubled! You know well enough that women don't read them now—detective stories, or Wild West stories, or mistaken-identity yarns, or even the 'business-and-adventure' kind. Why should they? They can only identify themselves with the heroine, and the heroine is a sack of flour, and the hero a trousered frump, who only periodically favors her (incredibly) with the love-making of an automaton. But when the women begin to find themselves doing things in romance—foiling villains and detecting crimes and making love, as love ought to be made, to dainty fellows that one could dream about of nights,—they will crowd the book stores for your new thriller as if it were a sale of hats!"

"Well, well," says Hyde, interested at last, "let us hope you are right. But I do believe you're as much of a romancer as I am."

MAX MCCONN

## Astronomy

The sky is bare  
And throbbing with hot stars and sensuous air;  
The girl moon stands, a bride upon the floor  
Of midnight, tremulous  
Ere of her spousal room she ope the door;  
Through the uncurtained pane  
The curious planets stare,  
And whorls of dust look down on us,  
(Dust of old universes no more worth,  
Crumbled and lean)  
On us, beloved, and this earth,  
What is, and what has been.

Beloved, look again!  
What was our love before?  
Which of these stars was mother unto me  
That stare so curiously,  
Were you yon pleached nebula of yore?  
And cousin-moon, what shock of coupling suns  
Set you to wandering the night  
Like a white, open tomb?

Ah, we were planets once, in violet light  
That swung through constellations like bright birds,  
Or I, some sun, compeller of old stars  
In sleepy corners of the universe,  
Lord of a greater Mars,  
And you a comet that some curse  
Shook from the universal womb  
To trouble planets as a wild thing runs,  
Lawless, among the flocks and feeding herds!

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES.