

When Women Run Things

A Glimpse Into a Feminine Future

By L. L. JONES

I HAVE tried many times to adjust myself in imagination to the social situation that will probably arise when Woman has, as the phrase goes, come into her own. I do not mean in the matter of political rights merely, for in any of the larger visions of feminism, that is but a preliminary flourish. I mean in the whole domain of social and personal relations. There is nothing startling to me in the idea of a woman's doing precisely what I do as a citizen or as a wage-earner, or in her having just as many chances as I have of serving on juries, or in the Supreme Court, or as President of the United States. Still less am I able to see the humorous aspects of such a change. Why do men profess to be amused at the bare thought of a woman serving as Secretary of War or as Secretary of the Navy or as prime minister in some foreign cabinet? The really absurd thing, as matters stand, is that these offices are so often filled by persons who, so far as an outsider can discern, have no qualification for them but their gender, and merely their grammatical gender at that. The contemplation of cabinet officers since the beginning of the war has made us so blasé toward real absurdity that a Secretary of the Navy dressed in an afternoon tea-gown would not seem funny in the least. Indeed it might animate hope. I sometimes wonder why the Secretary of the Navy does not dress in an afternoon tea-gown.

AND take some poor old doddering, distracted prime minister, for example, chosen because he will do no harm and driven out because he will not do anything whatever. When I read of M. Ribot or Mr. Asquith, I always think of my aunt. There is nothing ridiculous to me in the thought of my aunt as Prime Minister of Great Britain or as President of the Council in France. On the contrary, the thought is rather inspiring. That lack of *volonté* of which French deputies have so often complained in their prime ministers could never justly have been charged against my aunt. And never in her life was she "too late," like Mr. Asquith. I do not say that mistakes would not have been made by my aunt's ministry, but I do say there would not have been hesitation. In short, every quality so conspicuously lacking in those two old gentlemen was exceedingly abundant in my aunt. I should like to have seen the Opposition in the French Chamber of Deputies after one of those secret sessions with my aunt. I should like to have seen her way at one of those British councils where they pottered along to the Gallipoli disaster.

In times of peace my aunt might not have done so well as Mr. Asquith or M. Ribot, for she was inferior to them in the feminine tact

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required for that office in peace times. She was by nature a *war* prime minister. In contrast to them she was an ideal war prime minister. Under my aunt's cabinet, unity of action among the Allies would probably have come about not later than July, 1915. In whatever concerned my aunt unity of action always did come about, and as a rule much sooner than from any inter-Allied conference that I have ever heard of. Taking prime ministers as they run, it seems to me that any man has been very unfortunate in his female relatives, if he could not pick out from among them some one who would have done the trick as well. It would not seem to me at all funny if women were prime ministers. On the other hand it often seems to me rather droll that the average prime minister should really be a man. The net result of cabinet meetings is so often simply that which is commonly attributed to ladies' luncheons, when you consider them in the long run, that it seems as if one might be safely substituted for the other. There is no reason why the affairs of Great Britain should not be settled at a ladies' luncheon. As a matter of fact it has probably occurred. Most cabinet meetings have no more definite result than ladies' luncheons and the members have not had even the satisfaction of the luncheon.

THE war has so dislocated our sense of humor in this whole matter of women's filling men's places since the outbreak of hostilities that the comic paper point of view is meaningless, and, so far as being shocked at the thought of women in political office is concerned, we have seen so many frail, tender, meticulous, fussy, garrulous, epicene creatures holding the highest place under the most critical conditions that we are prepared for any change within the limits of the animal kingdom. It is not as if human beings were in a rational sense chosen for office. They merely happen in. We are so used to political mishaps in our democracy, that if fifty congressmen were by a stroke of a fairy wand turned tomorrow into chorus girls we should not be in the least alarmed over the legislative results. And take the hoary gibe that women will vote for men of manly charms without regard to their political qualifications. How much point is left in it? Suppose a man did reach the United States Senate merely because he was beautiful. It will be pretty generally admitted that a considerable number of Senators are as strangely lacking in any other quality that could account for their being there as they are in beauty. If a Senator's beauty made you glad, would it not be a distinct advantage, when there was nothing else about him that made you feel that way? Senator La Follette is not beautiful. What else is he that is in any sense desirable? Suppose the women of Wisconsin should some day contrive to secure the election to the Senate in place of Mr. La Follette, a large, muscular, perfectly proportioned, strikingly handsome, but almost idiotic man. Would not the positive advantages as compared with Mr. La Follette be enormously in that man's favor? The man who stood for office on the platform of his own good looks is on quite as reasonable a political

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platform as Mr. La Follette, and, should he be elected, he would be pleasant to the eye.

So far as political equality is concerned I believe I could adjust myself quite readily to a society governed by United States presidentesses, State governesses, and city mayorines, alderwomen, chairwomen, directrices, senatresses, and congresswomen, and I believe I should be just as happy if clergywomen preached to me, doctrices prescribed for me, policewomen helped me across the street, and chauffeuses ran the taxis which on rare occasions I can afford to take. In the political domain, if anyone tells me that women, when they have the ballot, will vote more foolishly than men, I can reply quite tranquilly that that is incredible. In the economic domain, if anyone tells me that the average woman is not fit for the large responsibilities of business enterprise, I can reflect comfortably that there is nothing whatever in the modern world to show that the average man is, either. In both of these fields moreover, the great feminine innovation is already so well along that nobody will be startled much by the further steps that it will certainly take (*Continued on page 102*) in the same direction. But when it comes to that wider and more intimate domain, the personal, my mind is less adequately prepared, and in some respects unreconciled. That whiskey and water, even just at bedtime, must go is certain; that tobacco will follow is probable. No man at all familiar with the leaders of the woman's movement can retain much confidence that he will be allowed to smoke. There is a hard reasonableness about them in all matters that pertain to health and ruthless hygiene is pretty sure to sweep over the community in the long run if their will prevails. Owing to certain dispositions into the details of which it is not now necessary to enter the duties of motherhood under the new régime will be considerably reduced. Great quantities of mother-power thus released will be poured into the public life where it will take the form of a health control, minute, inquisitorial and all-embracing.

ASINGLE woman can often make a man uncomfortable by the application of her cool reason to his irregularities in food, drink, underclothing, getting up and going to bed. In the new régime every adult citizen will probably be exposed to the equivalent of one hundred units of mother-power. A certain warm casualness that is promised in the domain of the sexual relations does not in my opinion offset the icy regularity of the tobacco-less, wine-less, physiologically matronized state which is indicated by the most advanced and thoughtful leaders of the movement.

I MAY learn in time to flit from concubine to concubine as a matter of course, as is earnestly desired by an Austrian feminist, and I may learn to inquire with perfect politeness of a young woman I barely know after the health of her present love-partner. But of what use is this element of variety, if every moment of life is under the merciless scrutiny of the Inquisitress-General of Diet, the Women's Eugenic Board, the Committee on Private Life Inspection, and the Bureau of Sanitary Propagation. I am perfectly willing to renounce that attitude of protection toward woman which her leaders denounce as the expression of a slave morality, but I am somewhat concerned by the amount of real protection she is threatening to bestow on me. One gathers from recent literature not merely that mother-right is coming into its own. One gathers that it is coming into almost everything. But that may be merely intentional over-statement in order to startle one into paying attention, just as a suffragette breaks windows.

I BELIEVE thoughtful suffragists have defended militancy in some such ground, regarding the

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throwing of bricks as merely a political form of punctuation. It italicizes woman's needs. Or as somebody puts it, "get her effects over the footlights." Then there is another consolation in the reflection that the more despotic type of feminist as we see her in her writings to-day may not repeat itself, for a well-known leader of the movement has declared with confidence that the aristocrats of the future will be celibates.

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