

The Price You Pay for the Modern Girl.

V.

"A generation or two ago..... sex was a matter for the biological laboratories and not for the funny papers. The American woman was on her pedestal and respect for her was instinctive, as all the travelers from abroad used to write in their memoirs. Since then a revolution in the status of woman has taken place in this country. She has definitely entered into competition with men in the world of affairs. She has all the opportunities for education which used to be reserved for men only; she is man's equal in political life. From an interior she has become superior before the marriage law because he is forced to support her and she doesn't have to support him. She has abandoned her pedestal and is standing on her own feet. She goes farther; she tries her best to trample the toes of the men who are competing with her in industry, trade, the professions and the arts by insisting upon a code of conduct which presumes she is still a helpless inferior. Sisters abuse the male sex upon every occasion.

"Chivalry was born when men possessing all the power and all the privileges volunteered to wait on and cherish the helpless. It was the finest moral development the world has known.

"Feminism has killed it." -- Chicago Tribune editorial, May 20, 1925.

Part of this editorial is true; part of it is false. Chivalry did set woman upon a pedestal, and modern woman has descended from it. The writer overlooks the supernatural background of chivalry: it was devotion to the Mother of God that raised woman from her position as a chattel, that made her the queen of the home and the counsellor of the husband, that made her the inspiration and the guiding star of the knight errant, that made her encircling arms the sanctuary of the frightened and the erring child. When Paganism replaces Christianity as the background of civilization, woman goes back to her position as a chattel.

A generation ago there was much invective against what was called "the double standard of morals," which was a name given to society's ostracism of the fallen woman and calm acceptance of the fallen man. The flapper's remedy for the double standard is not to bring the man up to her single standard, but to step down to his single standard. God created woman for man; He created man for aggression and He gave woman a cool nature to temper his ardor; He gave her modesty to protect her purity. When she despises her gifts, God's plan is disturbed.

Catholic chivalry can never die. So long as men say the memorare to a woman, so long as they kneel and ask the mother of God to inspire noble thoughts in their hearts; so long as they cherish the girlish innocence of St. Agnes (whose feast we celebrated yesterday) -- innocence which gave her courage even before the executioner's block; so long as Notre Dames exist -- whether here or in Thibet or in the Congo -- Catholic men will continue to swear allegiance to all that is pure in woman and to venerate in the Virginity and Motherhood of Mary all that is highest and best in womanhood.

Catholic chivalry can never die, because the Church which fosters it will never pass away. It will be triumphant in heaven for all eternity when this old earth ceases to be. Pagan minds cannot understand this, because they cannot understand the source of spiritual youth and strength. Puny minds cannot understand it; the idea is too vast for them. And among our own, even now and then at Notre Dame, there are jackasses who cannot understand it. From their pagan playmates they have learned little dirty stories and aspersions that sound like the jests of decadent Rome. A jackass cannot understand Catholic chivalry.