

ican *Journal of Sociology*, and he had to stand a simultaneous attack from opposite quarters. Both the woman suffragists and the anti-suffragists took him for an enemy and rivaled each other in the virulence of their criticism. This would lead one to suppose either that the book occupied the safe middle ground or that it was carelessly worded. Both suppositions are true. Professor Thomas does not take an extreme position nor has he promulgated any very novel or startlingly radical theories, but he has not taken enough pains to make his meaning plain and to guard his words from misconstruction. Any sociological statements on the sex question ought to be provided with fenders.

Most of the misconstructions of the theories of Professor Thomas have arisen because he has not distinguished clearly between those feminine peculiarities that are inherited and those due to custom and tradition. He is not to blame for this, for neither he nor any one else in the world knows enough to make such a distinction. We cannot tell what kind of creature "the normal woman" is, still less what she might be, because neither under savagery nor civilization has she had a chance to exist. Professor Thomas's failure to emphasize the extent of our ignorance on this fundamental question has made him liable to the charge of underestimating the abilities and character of women. But probably nothing less than a footnote at the bottom of every page would have protected him from it.

Professor Thomas first considers in detail the organic differences in the sexes, arriving at the conclusion that

"Man is fitted for feats of strength and bursts of energy; woman has more stability and endurance. While woman remains nearer to the infantile type, man approaches more to the senile. The extreme variational tendency of man expresses itself in a larger percentage of genius, insanity and idiocy; woman remains more nearly normal."

He then discusses the origin of social traits and customs as shown in the lower races, the genesis of modesty, the mental and physical differentiation of the sexes, due to diverse employment, and the various forms of marriage, drawing his facts and illustrations from a wide

## Sex and Society

ANY book which purports to probe thru the conventionalities and which has inscribed such a title as *Sex and Society*<sup>1</sup> upon a red cover is sure to create a sensation while the public is in its present nervous state. Professor Thomas's articles began to raise a commotion while they were still appearing in the *Amer-*

<sup>1</sup>SEX AND SOCIETY. Studies in the Social Psychology of Sex. By William I. Thomas. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. \$1.50.

range of reading and presenting them in a manner comprehensible and interesting to the general reader. The most important part of the book is that which deals with the survival of the usages of savagery in modern life, such as the double standard of morals, the theory that women should be barred from useful work, the proprietary view of marriage and the practice of chaperonage. We commend the following paragraphs to those colleagues of the author who are attempting to segregate the students in the University of Chicago and thereby deepening the intellectual gulf between the sexes which he deploras:

"The world of white civilization is intellectually rich because it has amassed a rich fund of general ideas, and has organized these into specialized bodies of knowledge, and has also developed a special technique for the presentation of this knowledge and standpoint to the young members of society, and for localizing their attention in special fields of interest. When for any reason a class of society is excluded from this process, as women have been historically, it must necessarily remain ignorant. But, while no one would make any question that women confined as these in New Ireland and China, as shown above, must have an intelligence as restricted as their mode of life, we are apt to lose sight altogether of the fact that chivalry and chaperonage and modern convention are the persistence of the old race habit of contempt for women, and of their intellectual sequestration. Men and women still form two distinct classes and are not in free communication with each other.

"Women may and do protest against the triviality of their lives, but emotional interests are more immediate than intellectual ones, and human nature does not drift into intellectual pursuit voluntarily, but is forced into it in connection with the urgency of practical activities. The women who are obliged to work are of the poorer classes, and have not that leisure and opportunity preliminary to any specialized acquirement; while those who have leisure are supported in that position both by money and by precedent and habit, and have no immediate stimulation to lift them out of it.

The general ill-health of girls of the better classes, and the equally general post-matrimonial breakdown, are probably due largely to the fact that the nervous organization demands more normal stimulations and reactions than are supplied. The American woman of the better classes has superior rights and no duties, and yet she is worrying herself to death—not over specific troubles, but because she has lost her connection with reality. Many women, more intelligent and energetic than their husbands and brothers, have no more serious occupations than to play the house-cat, with or without ornament."

Professor Thomas says that "child-

bearing is an incident in the life of the normal woman of no more significance . . . than the interruption of the work of men by their indoor and outdoor games." Mrs. Commander has written a book to prove the opposite, that child-bearing has become so severe a tax upon women who desire to maintain a high standard of life that race-suicide is inevitable unless there is a radical readjustment of industrial conditions. It is well that the publishers put a question mark after the title on the cover, for the limitation of families cannot be called *The American Idea*, since it has prevailed much longer and more extensively in Europe than in this country. With Mrs. Commander's ideas our readers are somewhat acquainted thru her articles in THE INDEPENDENT. She does not have so much to say about the life of savages as Professor Thomas, but she has inquired persistently and promiscuously into the life of today, particularly into the reasons given by men and women for their disinclination to have large families. She finds that it is among the well-to-do women, who have the most liberty and leisure, who have little housework and no outside employment, that child-bearing is most generally avoided, while laboring women and those in the professions are more willing to have children, notwithstanding the interference with their work.

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<sup>2</sup> THE AMERICAN IDEA. Does the national tendency toward a small family point to race suicide or race development? By Lydia Kingsmill Commander. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co. \$1.50.