

# WOMEN ADD THEIR INTERESTS

## The Selfishness of Man

By BEATRICE FAIRFAX

Most women are sooner or later driven to the conclusion that men are usually selfish creatures and there is a certain amount of truth in the accusation although it is promulgated only by men who are also brutes.

The stronger creature ought always protect the weaker—a man is stronger than woman both physically and in the trenchment of power the world has given him. That he abuses this power very often is due to heedlessness and lack of knowledge, rather than to any conscious desire to be cruel.

Selfishness on the part of men generally means following the line of their own desires without consulting the wishes of the women whose joy comes from their hands.

I know a kindly-souled man who responds with the utmost tenderness and sympathy to the cry of pain or sorrow. He hates to see the woman he loves suffer. It fairly tortures him to know that she has a headache. At all times he feels as if the world should admire and cater to her.

But he expects her to find her joy in his joy. He takes her to see all the comic operas of which the city boasts, and he actually does not know that the one thing she really enjoys is a good melodrama. Probably the melodrama wouldn't bore him—the might even enjoy it, but he simply doesn't know or care to find out whether the woman he loves has individual tastes quite outside the realm of the things he likes to do.

This masculine quality of taking it for granted that what pleases you pleases those you love exaggerated itself into a heedlessness of individuality that goes so far as to wreck marriage.

When a man says "I love you, I want you," he thinks all is said, and he expects the woman who loves him to fall promptly and gracefully into his arms. It seldom occurs to him to wonder if he can make her happy, once he is fairly sure that a given woman can make him happy. With calm lordliness he expects belonging to him to reflect benignant sunshine back on his beloved.

He may be unfailingly kind and gentle and tender, but it is according to his own ideals of kindness and gentleness and tenderness that he proceeds.

When a woman wants a dandelion all the American Beauties in the world will mean nothing to her. And a diamond necklace is cold comfort to the woman whose one desire is for a caress or for a sympathetic word.

Too many men divide the world sharply into masculine and feminine. After all, the world is made up of individuals—not of lords of creation or their dependents, but of thinking human beings who in spite of sex differences are equally capable of feelings, emotions, desires and preferences.

The "little things" that mean so much to women generally quite escape masculine attention. If men know or noticed they would probably not refuse to make the small concessions that mean so much to women. But they have an impatient way of sweeping aside the trifles that women value and broadminded. They simply do not perceive many of the delicate little chances for kindness—and they happen to glimpse them they sweep them aside as petty and trivial.

Real selfishness consists very largely in putting yourself in some one else's place and in imagining what you would desire if you could exchange individualities. Men seldom do this. What they want strikes them as a paramount issue. They lose much of the delicate and exquisite joy to be found in perfect giving by their very intention to offer what is wanted instead of what they feel should be wanted.

But how they give the things that occur to them to offer! How willingly men slave for the luxuries which are nothing to them, but which are important to the women who depend on them. How often men go about in shabby suits of out-of-date tailoring while wives and daughters are smart in Fifth Avenue clothes.

Selfishness is a matter of the individual rather than of the sex. There are plenty of cold, calculating women and there are stubborn and brutal men in over-abundant numbers. But a generalization that calls men selfish is not fair. A certain blindness—a certain heedless unconsciousness of the desires of others—a certain lordly taking for granted that what pleases Darby will, as a result, please Joan, are all masculine characteristics. Some of these things means actual selfishness—only indicates a certain lack of fineness of perception.

If, instead of growing indignant at the men they call selfish brutes, women would bring a little common sense to bear on the situation they might pity them for the masculine blindness that prevents the highest type of sympathy and generous understanding.

And since sympathy and generous understanding are in the equipment of fine women—they are the selfish ones if they fail to realize their heritage in dealing with the boys-grown-up who are men.

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