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Ersilia Cavedagni
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The Woman

Ersilia Cavedagni

28 October 1899

Generally men, rightly or wrongly, claim to have an intellectual and moral superiority over women, in addition to physical superiority. So be it! I want to grant it.

Strangely enough, in the vast majority of cases the man who considers himself superior to the woman takes little or no effort to reduce her inferiority and to raise the woman to his level.

This happens more especially among men who have a wife or partner. It would be logical that, if only out of a feeling of pride, the husband or partner should strive to improve, develop and perfect the intellectual conditions of the woman with whom they share their existence. And instead the opposite occurs. If a man is sometimes interested in educating a woman, it is in completely different conditions than when the woman is his companion in life.

This also happens many times (not to say most of the time) among anarchists themselves who should also give an example of better civil and human relations even in today's social life, which should be a preparation for them for the society of the future, longed for by them. And I talk about it precisely so that our companions might reflect on this fact and note the many

injustices that they also commit towards their companions, no less than the others, and indeed with greater guilt than the others, because they are more conscious.

Frankly, isn't it true that anarchists who care about educating and, above all, forming an anarchist conscience in the woman who is their wife or companion are very rare? Instead, how many times, even when the woman has the desire, and, if nothing else, the curiosity to educate herself, to learn, to penetrate the reason of the doctrine and the movement of anarchism, how many times do gentlemen comrades respond with an annoyed expression, with a grimace of carelessness and almost disdain because they consider themselves superior beings, *quasi* worthy of only taking care of *certain things*, while women have only to take care of the kitchen and other household chores!

This is one of the most serious faults of many of our comrades, in my opinion. Those among our comrades who, living together with a woman, act like this – and they are the majority, unfortunately! I have to admit – it seems to me that they do not fully realize the social mission that women carry out in today's society, and are destined to carry out more in the society of the future.

The woman is and will always be the educator of the family, the one who has and will always have the most direct and most important influence on her children, the one who will communicate to them the first impressions, the first suggestions, the first criteria of social life, the one who, finally, above all, will be able to decide on the entire formation of a new society, if she is able to instill feelings and ideas of progress, freedom, and emancipation in the tender and virgin minds and hearts of children.

I am not talking about the cases in which the woman, not convinced, but rather a natural opponent of anarchist propaganda due to their lack of consciousness, tries to prevent her husband or partner from dedicating themselves to it. Many

times we hear the complaints of these comrades who feel sorry for themselves because they have the misfortune of having a tyrannical companion who opposes their free action, who prevents them, for the sake of a quiet life, from giving themselves to the cause with that enthusiasm that burns in their spirit. But if this happens, whose fault is it, dear comrades, if not mainly yourselves? Whose fault is it if not you who are willing to carry out propaganda for anyone, so long as it's not your partner? Whose fault is it, if not you, who are unable to respond to your partner's recriminations, objections, tears, or anger with anything other than the unconvincing compliments of being stupid, ignorant, and... so on, and don't try in the least to use towards her calm and sweet words of persuasion and reasoning? Why say that it would all be a waste of breath? Why don't you even try?

If instead of getting lost in useless complaints and disputes, which embitter tempers and cause bad blood, our comrades who aren't fortunate enough to live with a woman who professes the same principles as them, began to make their first propaganda in the family, at the family table or perhaps on the common table, in the long hours of yawning vigils between boredom and annoyance, this would prove much more consistent with their ideals than by trying to evangelize only to others...who are not of their family.

It's just swell that many comrades expect their women to become anarchists just because they live together and have contact with other anarchists, without the need for propaganda, explanations, or persuasion. This seems ridiculous: but who can honestly deny that it doesn't happen very often?

I would like comrades who live with a woman to reflect a little on this wrong and this injustice of which they are most often guilty towards their partners.

Before spreading propaganda to strangers, do it at home, comrades. And then you will see that the woman, instead of forbidding you to go to conferences, to meetings, and finally

to participate in the anarchist movement, will herself be sorry when, due to domestic duties, she too will not be able to participate actively.

Educate and convince your women first of all, o comrades, because it is they who can educate and raise a new generation free of prejudices, superstitions and errors, the new generation that more than this old one, corrupted by the evil influence of the past, will be suitable to form the propitious and fertile soil from which the beautiful society of the future will flourish.

And then the woman, as soon as a glimmer of conscience clears her mind, can reflect and persuade herself that her true emancipation can only be her own work. As long as she waits with supine resignation for man to emancipate her and make her free, she will always remain submissive to him.

To raise your forehead, don't wait for anyone to tell you: rise up and be free. And let her rise up resolved to no longer be a slave.

Ersilia

–*L'Aurora*, October 28, 1899