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Madeleine Pelletier
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The Wall of Private Life

Madeleine Pelletier

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According to the old political cliché, people must never go beyond the wall behind which politicians hide their private lives.

Politicians have until now almost always been rich bourgeois. Those who were not already had become rich bourgeois: a Paris councillor, a member of parliament, a minister, are wealthy people.

When a man has money, he wants to enjoy life, and, since the idealists are rare, rulers, like other men, look for happiness in satisfactions of an inferior order: good food, fine wine, easy women; the beast is never far away.

Soon bored of pleasures which are by nature little varied, they ask for anomaly, most easily masquerade, as a necessary spice... So and so asks for the... subjects to be dresses as young girls for their communion; another wants seminar students.

Most of the time, the wall of private life only hides dirty things, but since wolves don't turn on each other, and virtue is the exception, there is a silent agreement to cast a veil on common weaknesses.

From what was only a practical modus vivendi, some have made a doctrine, and they managed to convince the masses that the private life of a public man had no importance.

In a recent article, Mr. Vaillant-Couturier seems to want to re-examine this classic idea. He approves the anarchists for giving importance to the individual; he says that revolutionaries must apply themselves to surround themselves only with people whose lives are clean. He also says that revolutionaries must refrain drinking alcohol, especially in the provinces where people still drink way too much.

The private life of a sincere revolutionary has no walls, since they have nothing dirty to hide.

The duality between the public and the private is a fiction; the individual is one, and someone who is bad in private is not worth much either as a revolutionary.

“We are no saints” Jaurès said a while ago, a sentence to which the reaction did not fail to play against him.

Obviously not, we are no saints, and as long as they make no-one cry, everyone has the strictest right to choose their pleasures. But the men who pretend transforming society must be an elite. What is acceptable for anyone is not acceptable for someone who wants to take place among the promoters of the future society. Because we cannot love several things with passion; passion is exclusive. The real scientist only loves their laboratory; outside the subject of their research, everything is a burden to them: they are bored in society, the obligations of material life annoy them.

A revolutionary worthy of the name is the same: outside the idea, the propaganda, nothing interests them.

I must say I would never trust a revolutionary who would also be very sexual. I would think that the man might be sincere, but that he prefers love to revolution. If a tempter shows up, the sexual man will cede because with the money, he will be able to follow his passion which is the main thing in his existence. Mirabeau, Danton, and how many thousands since have sold themselves in this way.

The only person who is incorruptible is the one who loves their idea above all else.