

► *One leading Lucy Stoner who is at home in a man's world.*

CONFESSION OF A FEMINIST

By JANE GRANT

IT must be true that I'm a feminist, for all my friends say so. You drift into a thing like that. With me it probably started with a crack about how men have it pretty soft in the world; or maybe someone was twitting me for being a Lucy Stoner. And there you are, a feminist, and before you know it they say you don't like men, or they say that for various reasons (all unpleasant) you can't adjust yourself to a man's world.

I was funning at first about men having their way all the time. The women I know are neither oppressed nor repressed and, like me, most of them are economically independent. I have gone a little further than most of them by keeping my own name, rather than my husband's, but other women have married and kept their baptismal surnames. Maybe I'm tagged because I goad easily. Let someone

say, "Don't take Jane's arguments about equality too seriously, she's a feminist, you know," and I go marching up the street with a banner and an axe and a torch. All right, I'm a feminist. But I'm not picking on men and I'm betting that equal rights for women will work out fine for men.

From my point of view the fight for equality has never been a battle of the sexes. I have never, in fact, understood why men should object to equality. Men are quite nice when you get to know them and I'm one feminist who would not abolish them if I could. The only men I resent are that group of ancient Colonel Blimps who framed the English Common Law which made chattels of women. Perhaps those Blimps took their cue from St. Paul. It is probably understatement to say that the prejudices built up in St. Paul's name will be

JANE GRANT was born in Missouri and received her formal education there. She was the first general woman reporter on the New York Times, where she worked for fifteen years. In the last war she went to France with the YMCA as an entertainer for the soldiers. She was one of the founders of the New Yorker, and is now a free lance writer.

hard to live down for a long time yet. But the fact is that most men, except for an understandable reluctance to change custom, are tolerant and kind and helpful if you know how to get 'round them. At least that is what I have concluded in my long and quite comfortable association with them. Adjusting myself to their world is one of the things at which I have been rather competent.

You see, I was scarcely eighteen years old when I discovered that I had to earn my living. This happened in the years when women were denied admission to many occupations since opened to them, but that fact worried me not at all for I could sing and I set myself to rise to fame as an opera singer. In those days I lived on a high plane. It worked all right until the high plane gave me a terrifying view of perpendicular open space underneath my perilous economic perch. As it turned out my voice was "sweet," and would startle neither a church mouse nor a bishop. Something more solid was demanded. I took stock and quickly gave up the artistic for the substantial, which I found way down under in the newspaper world.

The great advantage of newspaper work was steadiness, although my microscopic salary would cause

a labor outburst today even in the most anti-feminist union. But when you have rehearsed fourteen weeks in the chorus of a show to be let out before you reach Broadway; when you barnstorm in vaudeville, playing one week in four; when you have a whirl in a cabaret as a member of a dancing team, you look upon ten dollars a week not only as a lot of money but as a very steady anchor. The *New York Times* and ten dollars a week was not so bad. I'm Scotch.

As I have said, I was eighteen, every minute was adventure and my only worry was to keep it going, to keep it steady. But that was the most difficult part of the job because the Fourth Estate glowered at women in those days. In the beginning I was charged not to reveal the fact that a female had been hired, and despite warnings from C. V. Van Anda, that great managing editor, that there would never be advancement for a woman at the *Times*, I began my career. All my associates were men and the situation suited me down to the ground. Men were old hat to me. I come from a large family of males. I knew their strength and their weakness and I was used to getting what I wanted from them by practicing old-fashioned guile.

I discovered the technique quite

early, when my gigantic grandfather, who was the terror of all the children, was miraculously softened one day when I lay my head on his broad chest as he sat in his great armchair. It was during his morning eggnog rite. At 10:30 each morning, except Sunday, and no matter how pressing the work was in the fields, he appeared at the farmhouse. You could set the clock by grandfather's eggnog and grandmother was always ready. It was no mere egg concoction for it contained an exact amount of stick measured from the bottle of spirits. Grandfather was a Baptist deacon and this was medicine, a tonic shared by no other member of the household. He drank it slowly as he delighted in the aroma of the brandy. I longed for a taste from grandfather's cup and I finally tried to get it—but not by asking. My try consisted of gazing helplessly up at him and then gently laying my head against him. He let me sip the cup and I never forgot how easy it was to practice the gentle art of being weak.

Thanks to grandfather and some brutish cousins an office full of men was not dismaying to me. I submitted to the nickname, Fluff, which the reporters at once tacked on me, and did not protest at the usual newspaper office hazings.

Life was gay and exciting. The reporters taught me how to handle stories and how to swear; some beau-ed me and some of the more wonderful fed me; and when we entered the war they pulled every string in Washington to help me with my dearest dream at the moment — to get to France with the AEF as a YMCA entertainer.

After the war I returned to the *Times* and was made a full-fledged reporter. I was in ecstasy — the first and only girl reporter on the *Times* — but I was also sober enough to know that I was just the index to a trend. The war had given women importance, women continued to make news and it was more and more necessary to have them interpreted in the press. It sounds ridiculous now but in 1920 it was news when women were admitted to law schools; it was news when women broke down the stilted medical faculties; practically front page news when a college of engineering matriculated female freshmen. Moreover, women had a vote — in other words, they were in a position to cause other than strictly domestic trouble, and could no longer be ignored. I knew very little about the early feminist struggles. I had followed the activities of the suffra-

gettes with interest but it was not my cause.

I was jolted out of my apathy on the day of my first wedding when one of the witnesses addressed me as Mrs. Ross. My heart stood still at the realization that my own little name had dissolved when the minister finished the service. It's not supposed to be nice to be too selfish about your possessions but a name is different. My name didn't mean a thing to anyone but me; it was a kind of symbol of me — of my aims, my joys, my sorrows. It was just too personal, too much a part of me to be summarily discarded by a wedding ceremony.

My husband was not humoring me when he agreed to help me keep my name. As a matter of fact he actually took the lead. We naïvely believed that all we had to do was to tell our friends that I would keep my name and that would be that. But we learned differently. Men ridiculed me and married women raged. You would have thought the business of a girl keeping her own name was illegal if not criminally immoral. The truth is that no legal obstacle has ever existed, because those old Common Law-makers had overlooked the entire matter of a married woman's name. Almost a hundred years ago Chief Justice Salmon P.

Chase discovered that omission and ruled in behalf of Lucy Stone, the pioneer in woman's cause, who was having no end of trouble in New England guarding her name.

Unless you have perseverance, lawyers and officials will make you sign your husband's name to legal documents, tell you that passports must be taken out in his name — which isn't true — and that you must register to vote under his name. When WACS, WAVES and girl marines marry, for instance, they are whipped into the new name without so much as "by your leave." It was in protest against things of this kind that some of us organized the Lucy Stone League.

II

We had mass meetings, made legal test cases in various states, sent deputations to Washington and made ourselves generally troublesome. Registering at hotels as "John W. Doe and wife, Jane Brown," was quite an oddity at first but we finally established the idea. Another triumph was the passport ruling. We had knocked unavailingly at the door of the State Department while Charles Evans Hughes presided there but Secretary of State Kellogg gave friendly ear and incorporated the

passport ruling. About the only field in which we made no perceptible dent was the field of sports. No matter how strong and skillful a woman athlete may be or how many male records she has broken you will read her name in the papers as Mrs. John Brown, seldom even Mrs. Mary Brown. Helen Wills Moody was an exception, but it was always Mrs. Moody, though she had piled up most of her trophies as Helen Wills. The American Athletic Union was outraged when we suggested that they stop tampering with the names of female sportswomen.

Beginning mildly with names I soon worked up indignation over other feminine taboos. If a girl had to turn handsprings to keep her own name, I reasoned, there must be other darker goings-on. There were plenty, and some of them were in reverse English. Take the matter of privileges. In one form or another every state, I found, was giving marked attention to legislation for women which, no matter how restrictive, was billed as "privilege." Politicians, labor leaders and social workers formed the unholy alliance that took the lead in drafting these so-called privilege laws. They included restricted hours of work, minimum wages, restriction on the occupa-

tions in which women could work, compulsory seats for women workers, and regulations of home work, all of which sounded great and good and made quite a convenient smokescreen.

Plainly visible in the haze, and annoying to a budding feminist, were those anti-suffragettes who, by keeping their fences nicely mended while their fellow females were scrapping for the vote, were now in positions of power as office holders and social workers. They were in the vanguard of the group who believe, in the recent words of Judge Dorothy Kenyon of New York City, that problems confronting women should be "the peculiar responsibility of thinking women." This female aristocracy is led today by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins; Mary Anderson, director of the Women's Division, Manpower Commission; Anna Rosenberg; and others who proclaim that "women must assume equal responsibility with men," but turn thumbs down on proposals for real equality. "Women are not ready for equality," they argue. "That must come slowly."

Now I for one, do not want to be run by a mental aristocracy, in pants or skirts. I want a rightful and equal voice for myself and other women. Despite all the fine

talk on the subject, we women seldom have a chance, a broad-scale chance, to participate in the life of society until there is a war. Then we pitch in, right and left, and learn trades and professions, do *en masse* the things individual women have always done. But we are expected to subside with the lull, and probably we shall once more when this war is won. After ninety-five years of steady prodding women have the vote, but they also have more than a thousand so-called protective laws in all the forty-eight states. The superficial impression that the feminist movement was wound up in triumph when the vote was obtained is as wrong as it can possibly be. The movement is in many ways at its height today with great battles yet to win.

III

I remember, away back in the 'twenties, how startled I was to find that I was legislated a member of a peculiarly fragile and "protected" female class of workers. New York State had passed a law making midnight the working woman's curfew. We were to be protected from the night air and hoodlums. The staff of a morning paper works nights and it waits for

the conventional "goodnight" until the paper has gone to press. Women employees of the paper, such as night-shift telephone operators, printers, proof-readers, secretaries and waitresses were all affected. In most cases they worked the shift because it was easier and more remunerative, but regardless of our preferences we were legislated out of work after midnight. Personally I escaped because the legislators suddenly decided that women reporters were "artists"—and hence excepted.

Back of that pink haze was straight subterfuge. Privilege and protection for women workers neatly widened the male labor market. Under "privilege", women were routed out of war-won jobs. In the 'twenties the move to return women to the status of household chattels was just as real and as strong as in the early 1800's but not as candid. In 1836 the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics, and Other Workingmen passed a resolution which wrapped up their point of view in a tight package for use by the New England legislatures:

Whereas, Labor is a physical and moral injury to women and a *competitive menace to men*, we recommend legislation to restrict women in industry.

You have to admire that kind of candor.

But candor had become a greater hazard by the 'twenties. Women had participated in the fight for democracy, they were voters and could defeat candidates; a smoke-screen was needed. All factions had up their guards. The mere fact that women had the vote was enough to bring on a torrent of pretty words from Senators and Congressmen and Assemblymen about the nobility of women and the purifying influence they would exert now that there was equality of the sexes. But we soon found we couldn't go far in this equality business. We are subject to a hybrid form of citizenship. We can call ourselves U. S. nationals — the Nineteenth Amendment allows that — but we are only occasionally recognized as persons under the supreme law of the land. We are permitted only by special dispensation rights and duties which male citizens enjoy as a matter of course.

All states have various laws allowing certain freedoms to women: some states permit them to serve on juries, others have laws that specifically allow them to hold public office, still others have legislated to permit women to enter professions formerly closed to them. The point, however, is that no such

laws are needed to give men these rights. In the very extension of new freedoms to women there is thus a humiliating recognition of inferior status.

And the fact remains that twenty-two states do not trust women to sit on juries. Some states allow married women no personal property nor the supervision of their children. In South Carolina even the wife's clothes have been held to be the husband's property. Georgia permits husbands to collect their wives' pay, and even in New York the wife's earnings from projects in the home belong to her husband. In Massachusetts and Michigan, among other places, the earnings of a minor child belong to the father only. In Ohio women are barred from earning a living as taxi drivers. In Florida, until this May, women could not engage in business without husbandly consent and had to go to court and be declared a "free earner" in order to make contracts and other legal documents. In Texas it took a special law to make it possible for a woman, "Ma" Ferguson, to act as Governor. In sixteen states, including New York and Connecticut, women are forbidden to work at night in certain specified industries. And this is a mere sampling.

The Fourteenth Amendment to

the Constitution clearly says, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without process of law, nor deny any persons within the jurisdiction the equal protection of laws." When that Amendment was passed, shortly after the Civil War, women read its plain language and assumed that as persons and citizens they were all bibbed and tuckered with constitutional equality. But not at all. When it came to a test case the Supreme Court ruled that persons were males and there has been the very devil to pay ever since. Fifty years later we got the vote. Will it be fifty years more before the Equal Rights Amendment — "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex" — is properly passed by Congress and ratified by the states?

Of course the fight would be simpler if more average women took a hand in it. Too many intelligent women have only the vaguest opinions on the subject. Many of them who should know better actually think that we already have equal rights. Then there are those others — a self-confessed feminist

like myself gazes at them in amazement — who refuse to be interested. Confident in their personal security, they brush the matter aside. Nearly all of them, I can assure you on the basis of some exhaustive personal polls, think that woman's lot is not a happy one, that we were born to suffer, that we are biologically so "different" if not "inferior." My complaint, therefore, is more against women than against men. Though of course, we still have to beat down the chivalry of the gentlemen in Washington towards those women opportunists who insist on special protection for us all.

Don't think I object to chivalry. I love it — at the proper time. And since I am now married to a southern fella I am treated to a lot of it. When we were first married he had an awful time with me about my opening doors and carrying bundles. I was brought up to wait upon myself, and with all these ideas about equality I suppose I have become a little defensive about doing my share. Also, being quite able-bodied, it seems silly not to be helpful when I can be. But my husband is very firm. *He* wants to ring elevator bells and pick up my handkerchief; it gives him a great deal of pleasure, so I admit I'm compromising my principles.

► The Menace of Japan *was*
scorned into oblivion.

HE WARNED US AGAINST JAPAN

BY EDWARD HUNTER

IT is time we made amends to a genial, shy Irishman named Taid O'Conroy — Tim to those who knew him. O'Conroy is dead now: not assassinated, as he had expected to be, but harassed to death because of the book which he gave us, and which we rejected, ten years ago. The book was *The Menace of Japan*. It was one of the first to expose the every-Jap-a-god mentality which even then had long been the motivating force of Nipponese world policy. O'Conroy pleaded with us to believe that this fanatical attitude, shared by the entire nation, made a Jap attack on America inevitable, but he succeeded only in arousing a few feeble shoulder shrugs.

One man in the Occident did take him seriously — another Irishman named George Bernard Shaw. "I want to tell people to read *The Menace of Japan*," GBS wrote.

"Prof. O'Conroy is one of the most remarkable men in the world. . . . The book is a revelation. Japan is a menace — to the West as well as to the East." All others — critics, experts, particularly American liberals — sneered and scowled the book into oblivion. As we look back now, in the midst of the war in the Pacific, upon O'Conroy's shrill warning and its reception at the time, we can see ourselves as in a mirror, with our complacencies and illusions staring us remorselessly in the face.

Few libraries even have a copy of O'Conroy's book, for only 2,400 came off the presses. But if you locate one you will find that the last sentence on the last page reads: "I say that JAPAN WANTS WAR."

The capitals are the author's own; and he italicized the statement that ninety million Japanese

EDWARD HUNTER, now on the war desk at the New York Post, has been a foreign correspondent and editor for seventeen years. He was editor of two newspapers in China, the Hankow Herald and the Peking Leader, and one in Japan, the Japan Advertiser. He was the only correspondent whose dispatches about the Japanese atrocities in Occupied Manchuria were read into the Minutes of the League of Nations.