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I. WOMAN IN THE CHURCH.

As straws show the direction of the wind, so recent events in church and state indicate the movement of a popular current, more or less clearly defined, towards the removal of what are called woman's disabilities, and her enfranchisement in what are claimed to be her civil and ecclesiastical rights. There is not room in an article like this for a discussion of the genesis of this movement, or for a review, however cursory, of the debates and deliverances of various public assemblies, social, political and ecclesiastical, in which the strength of the movement has recently made itself felt. There is, we think, no just ground for fear that its current will gain momentum enough to sweep away the conservative barriers within which woman's agency is rightly confined. We have no sympathy with the fears expressed by a distinguished speaker in one of the recent Northfield conferences, when he says, "We behold woman to-day in a condition in which she is absolutely a menace to human society; grown restless and discontented; clamoring for rights when Christianity has brought her all that she has; at times divorced from the church, listening to the siren's song of infidelity, threatening to depart from the church that would withhold from her any privileges or rights she would claim; in the very capital of our nation threatening to join hand with anarchists to secure under another government what she may not secure here." It would be a gross injustice to the noble women of our land to hold them responsible for the incendiary utterances of a few restless spirits amongst them, or to suppose that they endorse the revolutionary sentiments of the speaker to whom Bishop

tained in this way a pleasant interchange of ideas, and the whole meeting had a delightful *social* feature about it, and was free from the routine and the cut-and-dry methods usually found in our prayer-meetings. If some means could be devised to take away the stiffness and formality we usually see, it would be a great relief. Why do our ministers think they must always "lecture," that is, preach a sort of short and informal sermon? It puts a great strain on them, and nearly everybody has to admit that in the large majority of cases our prayer-meetings are dull and (as many say) unedifying. By insisting on holding to this unwelcome service ministers assume a weight, which, if laid aside, would enable them to run with greater patience the race that is set before them. How many of you, brethren in the ministry, feel that the cold, lifeless prayer-meetings do more to chill your hearts and clog your efforts than almost any other one thing? A goodly number, I am sure.

One word more. Please do not misconstrue these remarks as an attack on the prayer-meeting. It is an attack on the spirit that would unduly exalt this service, and make attendance upon it a necessary sign of healthy Christian life. But my hope is that I may do some good by calling attention to the matter, and that other and able pens may take it up and see if this service cannot be robbed of its tedium. I expect to keep on going, anyhow, for the reasons given above, but it is hard work, and I should like to have it become a pleasure. I should like to see pastors feel perfectly free to drop this service if they wanted to, and to see the people perfectly free to stay away, if *they* wanted to, without giving any offence, and without discouraging the pastors. It seems to me that, with this freedom, both parties might be benefited.

"A VIEUZX."

LIBERTY LESS LICENSE.

THE liberty of American citizenship is equal to the liberty guaranteed by the constitution, less the license exercised by the body politic.

A pertinent and much-needed lesson for the people of the United States just now to learn is that "Surfeit is the father of much fast." Our land has given to the world the conception and actuality of civil and religious liberty. In this, and this only, has she advanced beyond the national life of the old world. This is her crown of glory. It threatens to become her garment of shame. There are certain outgrowths of freedom most inimical to freedom.

The fact that this is a free country acts as a magnet to the worst elements of European and Asiatic population. Much of our best population have we drawn from the culture and sober, thrifty circles of the old world, but it has been at an enormous price. With them have come vast hordes of the disreputable, diseased, debased, vicious, free-thinking, and free-living. These have been invested with all the rights and privileges of citizenship. They vote, and their voice is as potent as that of the native-born in determining the destiny of the nation. To their untutored minds liberty means license—permission to do as you please, regardless of the rights of others. Their creed is selfish greed, and to gorge themselves they would slaughter a thousand. Their notions are most industriously promulgated, so that they may not be measured like cattle, per capita. The home population has caught the vile contagion, which, like smallpox or yellow fever, surcharges the very atmosphere.

There is current a theory of personal rights which the fathers would never recognize as the thing for which they fought; and before it liberty is crumbling into license. This spirit is spreading into every type of life, attacking every representative institution, and unless the strong arm of some brave reform is uplifted to stay it, our liberty will be lost in a despotism which is the worst of all, because it is a despotism of self.

1. Like every movement, be it noble or base, this one first reveals itself in the philosophical and economic speculations of the times. There it takes the form of what might be termed *anarchistic law*. It would enfranchise the individual with the right to thrust forth upon his fellow-men any sentiment, it matters not how godless, any deed, it matters not how offensive, provided he be acting forth honest convictions. In short, it overrides all law, both human and divine, and thus itself becomes lawless. Anarchistic law is the genius of Mr. George's "Progress and Poverty," which professes to make poverty progress, but which surely would make progress poverty. It is anarchistic law that Mr. Ingersoll and men of his ilk flaunt in the face of the church and a Christian land. They affirm that they are sincere in the opinions which they hold; and then, *mirabile dictu*, they claim that sincerity gives incontestable right to express and promulgate. While it may be true that man within the sphere of self is supreme, so soon as he touches a fellow-man that sovereignty ceases, and he becomes amenable to a law for the common good. The untrammelled right to advocate any opinion one may cherish is not liberty, but license, and since it is license, it is liberty's foe.

2. Philosophical sentiments soon formulate into creeds and materialize into deeds. Hence we need not be surprised at the socialistic, anarchistic, and nihilistic movements that every now and then develop, and are suppressed only by the blunt force of police and military power. These are ruder, rougher children, but nevertheless legitimate children, of anarchistic law. Granted that so far these agitations have been only bubbles that have appeared for a moment on the surface of the stream, remember that the bubble proves an active disturbance beneath the surface.

"Strikes" and "trusts" would be impossible were it not that the philosophy of the masses is rotten on the subject of personal rights. Anarchy is license come down from the cloud land of anarchistic law into the dirty streetways, filled with mobs, and the ill-odored halls packed with clubs and cliques, listening to incendiary harangues from disturbers of the peace. It was license, rank and vile, that emanated in the form of a sermon from a certain New England preacher, who professed to have received, while in his study, a special baptism of the Holy Ghost, divinely inspiring and directing to go preach, on the next Lord's day, that the execution of the Chicago anarchists was kindred in nature and equal in magnitude to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ!

It would require a veritable allegorist, with marvellous penetration "between the lines," to find in the religious liberty guaranteed by the constitution the right thus to desecrate all religion, and make religion itself labor in the vile service of such an unclean spirit. Amid the darkness of early times it was the barbarous custom of our ancestors to prove innocence and ascertain the judgment of God by holding a red-hot bar of iron in the hand, or by sinking when cast into the water. More horrible by far is this fashion, prevalent in this age of light and in this land of lights, which makes sincerity the infallible test of innocence and private opinion the supreme criterion for the judgments of the Almighty.

3. Another bold step has license taken. It has assailed the law-making idea, and insists upon the unconstitutionality of any law which controverts what the individual regards as his personal rights. In this it has gone to the very throne, and if it can accomplish its purpose here, it will be easy work elsewhere. If it can make the law consonant with its idea of rights, the land must yield. It is very much like "Standard Oil piety," which will serve the Almighty provided it first be allowed to serve itself. "O yes," they say, "we want laws. We believe in the majesty of the law, and we are law-abiding citizens."

But to this bond they add the non-detachable coupon of a mental reservation, insisting that nothing can become a law which contradicts their conception of individual rights. And their notion of rights is very much like that of an East Tennessee mountaineer, "What's mine, my own; what's his'n, our'n." They believe in the right of private judgment with all the vim of their righteous souls, provided it is their private judgment.

Most notably has this feature of license showed its cloven foot in the effort making to limit or prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage. It is urged that such a statute would contradict the law-making idea, would outrage private rights, and trample on the sacredest and simplest claims of justice. We would humbly submit that liberty is not infringed when a blackguard's mouth is stopped or a murderer's neck is broken; neither is it an infringement of private rights for the law to say to the whiskey-vender, "Stop that leech-like business of yours, sapping the life-blood of society and home."

By what right, either public or private, either innate or acquired, may a man, giving himself soul and body to dollars and cents, become even indirectly the means of destroying your manhood, of blasting the happiness of your home, and of defiling the purity of society? He is like the mistletoe, that fastens itself upon the old tree that has stood the storms of many years, and sucks the life sap until the old tree dies. And to throw over such work as this the mantle of freedom is but to prove how far in the public mind license has taken the place of liberty.

4. If we will follow farther the trail of this same unbridled, irresponsible spirit, it will lead us from the legislative hall to the pulpit. It is finding its way into our theological thought, and there its mandate is that one ought not to subscribe to a creed whether he believes it or not. It deplors "the narrow bigotry of creeds," "the barbarous doctrine of creeds," "the savage despotism of creeds," "the antediluvianism of creeds."

This spirit in theology has received the name of HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS. It seems that somewhere in man's soul, the exact locality has not yet been made a matter of revelation, there is a faculty, more magical than the wand of an Arabian conjurer, by which unrevealed truth is discovered and ascertained truth infallibly tested. This faculty is called higher consciousness, and although your higher consciousness may affirm something positively contradictory to my higher

consciousness, we must believe that both are right. This is liberty's demand. Higher consciousness not only spurns the shackle of any creed, but it likewise rises superior to the Word of God.

Is it tyranny to make a man promise to tell the truth before you sanction his work? Is it circumscribing a man's religious liberty for a church to demand of its ordained representatives a subscription to its faith before they shall receive its *imprimatur*? You may believe a lie as much as you please, but you have no right to try to make me believe it. What these ecclesiastical mountebanks and religious tumblers seek is license, not liberty. With a brazenness that has nothing to commend it has this spirit, rife in our land, dared to enter the sacred realm of religion, and with the shameless blade of free thought, higher consciousness, it has assailed the idea of religious liberty, which is alike the representative of the constitution and the Bible. Not yet has it succeeded, and we pray God that it may never; but its thrusts have made angrier the ugly sore in the side of liberty.

5. Just one more instance evidencing the same tendency. License has gotten into female circles, and there it is working "confusion worse confounded." It is said that woman is entitled to a larger and more mannish sphere. Not only may she appear before mixed audiences, not only may she follow certain vocations heretofore demanding masculine qualifications for *candidacy thereto*, but she is entitled to a voice in legislation. She should vote. This defection has not yet grown sufficiently strong to call for more than grave apprehensions. The worst that it has done has been to link itself to and thereby damn certain moral reforms in themselves desirable.

The strongest argument in favor of the license of female suffrage is that it will ensure the success of the temperance movement. Not stopping to discuss the possibility of buying female votes and corrupting the female ballot, let it be supposed that a prohibitory law has been enacted through the votes of the women; what would it be worth? Not more than the paper which holds it, for there would not be power enough back of the law for its enforcement. Voting is not and never can be the right of woman, for the simple reason that God has not made her capable of bearing arms. No one has an intrinsic right to a voice in the affairs of his country save he who can defend his country. As well attempt to prevent a financial crisis by the manufacture of paper money as to destroy the liquor traffic with female ballots. There is no power in the ballot itself. The power lies in that which the ballot represents. Some one has said that "just as paper money must

have metal behind it—the dollar, so the ballot must have metal behind it—the bullet.”

But female suffrage is something more than useless. It is the vilest license, in that it is a violation of nature's laws. God never intended woman to suffer suffrage. Not one word would we say against those women, true and good, for the noble work they have done against the liquor curse. Rather would we praise, but at the same time lift a warning voice against that devilish ingenuity that has coupled female suffrage to the cause of temperance.

Thus may be traced the workings of a spirit which, produced by our national life, is the nation's foe. From what has been said one may get an inadequate conception of how far license has permeated our thought and practice. Surely it has gone so far that a warning voice should be heeded. If it be asked, What is the remedy? who is the patriot that shall chop off the head of this demon, dammed by greed and sired by ignorance? it may be replied, that the question contains its own answer. It goes without the saying that the guardians of liberty are the church and the school. It is only the love of the gospel that will annihilate greed, the mother of license, and it is only a liberal education that will annihilate ignorance, the father of license. Hence he is the true patriot who is the friend of the church and the friend of the school.

America's pride is her freedom. Woe! if it should become her shame. To-day her liberty is less her license. We must not forget that preservation is as essential as creation. Freedom best is FREEDOM KEPT.

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MEMBERSHIP IN PRO-RE-NATA MEETINGS.

A QUESTION has been raised in one of our church courts as to the right of membership in *pro-re-nata* meetings of Presbytery, especially in those that may be held between the meeting of Synod and the following stated meeting of Presbytery. There were three opinions—first, that the right belonged to the member of the last stated meeting; second, that it belonged to the Synodical representative; third, that there should be a new election. And it is possible that a similar variety of opinions exists in other parts of our church. We here consider the nature of the meeting, and who may join in the call; the *status* of elders in Synod, and the logical consequences.