

THE QUESTION OF WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

The following interesting article on this topic, from a correspondent of the *Buffalo Union and Times*, appeared in the last issue of that journal:

Some years ago I entered into a correspondence with an old gentleman, an acquaintance of my childish years. He was a non-Catholic and in his old age seemed to be looking into all sorts of isms, not having anything else to occupy his mind. I began the correspondence on "Woman's Rights," into which question he was involving himself; and then humorously having taken my stand as a preacher I gave him the opportunity of criticising my sermons, which contained truths of religion and some humorous sentences to help them down. I could only reach him in this way, he not relishing religious conversations. He became a convert and died a holy death; before this, however, he returned me my letters requesting me to have them published—they seemed to strike him as to the point. I threw them aside, but lately decided to send this one to your paper, as it may possibly give some Woman's Rights people a new view of the question. A Jesuit of high standing approved of its publication, as did also a lawyer, a Protestant.

MY VENERABLE FRIEND:—

I would so deeply regret to have you in your declining years identify yourself with that movement called, or rather mis-called, "Woman's Rights," that I cannot resist the desire of setting before you some of its absurdity, for your benevolent disposition so inclines you to see the bright side of all things, that I fear you sometimes take for purest gold that which will never stand the crucible.

"For thy fancy can invest
Common things with beauty rare."

Do not, however, I beg of you, entertain for one moment, the thought that in opposing this movement I underrate woman or her mission; on the contrary, I respect both too much to desire the one to be wronged or the other undervalued, and wrongs rather than "rights" would certainly be her position in its adoption.

I am convinced, and of this fact I would that I might convince you, that the man who countenances or co-operates with the so-called "Woman's Rights Movement" does woman a positive injury, the greater the more extended his influence may be.

Before accepting the ideas of another and incorporating them into one's own or lending oneself to any movement, it is well to carefully and impartially consider both sides of the matter, and, to do this one must lay aside all prejudice and deal fairly with it; by doing this one would save himself many an after regret. I think this will be so in the case in question, and as I see that some of your good lady friends have been doing their best to win you over to their way of thinking I will take the liberty of doing that which you have always encouraged me to do from my early years, viz., to always speak to you with frankness.

I believe that you will readily admit that I am better acquainted with the peculiarities of my own sex than you are supposed to be, with all your wisdom and experience; therefore I will set before you my views upon the matter, and, as you once admitted that I had almost converted you to my opinion, which is that of the majority of sensible people, I would consider it a pleasurable triumph to render this conversion a perfect one.

In the beginning of the creation of the human race, woman was placed in full possession of all her rights and subject to but one law—that of obedience to her Creator; but unfortunately she aspired to one right too many, and being naturally of a generous disposition she hastened to share it with her husband, and in so doing not only fell from her high estate but dragged along with her the unfortunate one whom she had beguiled. Almighty God, always condescending to the weak, pitied poor man; seeing him so easily led, and lest he might be plunged into still greater evils on account of woman's inventive genius and energy in putting it into execution, considered it best to place her under some controlling power. This as we may clearly see is not in itself a bad thing, but rather a wise precaution on the part of the Almighty, who makes all things work together for good as thereby woman's acuteness of intellect and agility in action would be moderated and man who is of a naturally slower organization, being placed as it were over this high pressure would not alone be materially assisted in the journey of life but even forced onward and upward when in danger of lagging behind.

Woman, generous as usual, acknowledges her fault and submits to its consequences, thereby expiating it in a few short years of time, while man, with the same magnanimity which caused him to lay all the blame upon woman in the beginning, now avenges himself for his own weakness, by using to the utmost the power with which he is invested, and choosing for his own share the best things of this world by right of the nine points of the law, possession, leaves to woman the refuse, religion.

Woman has not lost her clear-sightedness, however; therefore she accepts the rejected treasure and finds in it support under trials, comfort in afflictions and an unflinching hope for the future—for this reason

she endures tribulations more heroically, bears sufferings more patiently and dies more resignedly than man.

But although Almighty God has appeared so severe to woman, it seems that in reality He loves her the better and has reserved for her the best places in heaven, and while you men are waiting outside its gates to have your stupendous works tried by the fire, which I fear will spare but little, woman, unencumbered, save by her wrongs, will quietly pass over your heads and entering, take possession, for heaven is one of woman's rights; man willingly cedes it to her now and I doubt if he can dispossess her of it hereafter.

Woman's real rights are respect, refinement and religion. Now if woman meets man on an equal footing in the pathway of life, for instance in the army, the navy, the pulpit and bar, as well as in the judicial, legislative and executive capacities—for, if one of her rights is to vote, another equally just, is that of being voted for, and of course it is supposed that she has fitted herself for these positions by study and familiarity with men and events of the times, and has a general idea of trade, commerce and international law as well as acquaintance with the leading journals, in order that her ideas may not be narrowed down to suit the ideas of father, husband or brother—is it to be expected that man will defer to her through politeness because she is a woman, or through justice because she is in the right? Will he not, instead, abuse her if he finds she cannot be won over to his way of thinking? Where then will be the respect due her?

If professions are opened to the educated woman equally with man, the uneducated also must share in his laborious occupations, as for instance farming and trading, stone-cutting, brick-laying and hod-carrying, car and hack-driving, steam and rail running, etc., etc., etc. And in all these laborious occupations, often during the intense cold of winter or till the late hours of the night shall she be deprived of those things considered so consoling and even necessary to the majority of men—a friendly glass, a comfortable smoke or an occasional quid of tobacco?

She has also an equal right to speculate to make something for the children whom it is her equal right to support, and leaving Wall and Broad streets to her lofty minded sisters this propensity may develop into betting, gambling and horse-racing.

Her clothing is so clumsy for all this kind of work, particularly in stormy weather; her bonnet is so unadapted to keeping off the summer rain and winter storms and her skirts so well adapted to the gathering up the loose dust and mud that common sense suggests to her that hat and pants, not bonnet and dress, were intended for this sort of laborious employment. Customs have changed and why should not fashions change to suit them? Alas for her refinement!

Woman will never stop half way and who will dare to stop her? Certainly not man; the first one failed to do so when greater things were at stake and his successors will surely not be more successful now. He who once opened Pandora's box found out to his cost his utter powerlessness to re-enclose the evils he had so easily set free; too late he made the discovery that it had been better for himself and the world if he had considered the consequences before he raised the lid.

Now agree with me if you please that it would be better to leave woman alone; the mighty power within her which enables her to bear up under that which man generally cannot—the contempt which falls upon religion—this power, I say if turned upon the things of time, may cause you men to rue the share you had in its emancipation and a modern Diogenes may search in vain throughout the world to find a spark of religion.

I would advise men who so strongly advocate the rights of women, if it is done through respect and to benefit her, to turn instead their effort upon the securing to her of those rights which she already possesses and to remember that the law does not always carry its observance with it and that it will not run to the assistance of woman nor will she always seek its aid; if so, lawyers may "multiply on the face of the earth," because man has on his side physical strength and something more besides. A sensible woman carries within her her own law and she knows how to make use of it without any foreign intervention; she likewise knows how to manage her husband quite to her own satisfaction as well as for the welfare of the community, but she does this in a quiet way, allowing him to hold the reins, of which he is so tenacious, while she points out the road he is to take.

Undoubtedly woman's mind is naturally equal to that of the majority of men's; even without any advantages it is often far superior, and if equally cultivated to what a degree might it not attain; but as man cannot be deprived of the rights he so greatly glories in, would it not be well, in the case of suffrages, instead of increasing the voters to limit them if possible.

All things are meted out with justice, and women, endowed in a greater degree with the heroic virtue of patience can the better afford to allow to man the enjoyment of his brief career upon this earth confident in the assurance that the eternal years are hers.

Husband: "That fence wants painting badly. I think I'll do it myself." Wife: "Yes, do it yourself, if you think it wants to be done badly."