

WOMAN A FREE TRADER

By LYDIA AVERY COONLEY WARD

Gunten, Switzerland, Oct. 1.—It is said that every woman is a born free trader. Certainly if not so born, life abroad and thought at home tend to make her one. Here she may go with ease from country to country, occasionally answering the question, whether she carries wine, tobacco, or cards, and seldom having her trunks opened. Only on returning to her native land is the American woman insulted by having her private possessions overhauled by men employed to do this disgraceful work.

England, limited in area and with fewer than our natural advantages, thrives on free trade. In Australia two great divisions of the country, separated only by invisible lines, had for years, the one free trade, the other protection, and were equally prosperous.

The enormous expense of our custom houses which provoke dishonesty in officials as well as in citizens, might well be saved. The short sighted policy of keeping works of art out of a country is irrational. Conscientious smuggling goes on constantly, and private smugglers are pitied and not blamed when discovered. Women should certainly be excused for violating laws they despise and in the making of which they have had no hand.

In our country men are cunning enough to exploit the people, and the people are simple enough to allow themselves to be exploited. Witness some examples that can readily be multiplied.

The duty on borax is five cents a pound. In the United States it sells for six cents and in England for a cent and a half a pound. It is made in California, the stock in the manufacturing company being owned in England. So not only do the English buy borax at a low price, while we pay a high one, but the difference goes into English pockets. And it is the American people at large who fill the pockets of these few Englishmen. Should we not be a little less proud of ourselves, and instead of making our boasts the laughing stock of the world, find what sensible foreigners think of us?

Members of parliament simply laugh at the way we allow ourselves to be "swindled out of our eye teeth," as my grandfather used to say. For it is we, the people, who pay the enormous sums that go into private pockets, and it is our men who send to Washington and to State capitals representatives paid to perpetuate the system.

Here in the mountains of Switzerland, where things are proverbially dear, Armour's canned meats are sold for six cents a can less than we pay for them in Chicago. Comment is unnecessary.

Some years ago fine mineral springs were discovered in Canada and the property was bought by Americans. Soon after the purchase the Dingley bill put a prohibitive tariff on mineral waters by a straight tax on each bottle. The buyers saw their enterprise doomed to failure, but they were equal to the emergency. Finding that there was no tax on ice, and that no valuable properties were lost by freezing, the plant was built and the waters cross the border as ice, which is melted, bottled, and sold at enormous profit, since the tariff on rival waters becomes clear profit to this foxy firm.

Is there a moral difference in this evasion of the law and in that which evades duties on works of art? I think there is. I believe the evasion of an unrighteous tax for personal enrichment deserves far greater condemnation than its evasion for the purpose of enriching one's native land.

Moreover, men have less right to evade laws they have made, indirectly if not directly, than women have to evade laws they are refused a hand in making and which they believe contrary to human ethics. By the spirit of our ancestors who declared that taxation without representation is tyranny, we have the same rights

of rebellion that fired the breasts of those who threw the tea into Boston Harbor.

Since I wrote the above my attention is called to Miss Replier's caustic article in "Life." I quote a few sentences where all deserve quotation. "It would be a pleasant thing for the home-coming American to dilate with some fairer emotion than anxiety and wrath. He would enjoy being received as a man and a brother, instead of as a suspected criminal. He would like to breathe ecstatically: 'This is my own, my native land!' without the prescriptive addition, 'And may its custom house be damned!' . . . Of course the hundred dollar limit is exceeded. Of course the law is broken. Preposterous laws have always been broken since the beginning of recorded history. To ask a woman who has been in Europe eighteen months if she has spent more than a hundred dollars is pure idiocy. To put such a question in the form of an oath, and to refuse to abide by the oath when uttered, is an insult." As Miss Replier also says, the whole performance is unworthy of a government whose revenues dazzle the world.

I think it is not strange that women believe their promotion to citizenship would improve conditions. It could scarcely make them worse than they are.

CO-OPERATION IN CREAMERIES

Of the 6,000 creameries in the United States, something like 1,800 are co-operative. The proportion of co-operative concerns is gradually increasing. The annual output is about 500,000,000 pounds, which sold during 1907 for an average of about 2½ cents per pound. This means a gross return of approximately \$140,000,000. There is no way of determining how much of this is net profit, but a careful investigation of several individual cases shows that the co-operative creamery patron gets more for his work and his investment than the man who sells his milk or cream to a proprietary creamery. Like all other human institutions, co-operative creameries are occasionally unprofitable. The proportion of failures is growing smaller each year as the dairymen become familiar with handling their own business. The same cheering news comes from the co-operative elevator field, and all are familiar with the remarkable success of co-operative fruit shipping associations. The outlook for united effort of this kind is quite satisfactory, as is evidenced by the encouraging reports appearing in Orange Judd Farmer.

MUNICIPAL CONTROL OF MEAT PRICES

An attempt has been made by the municipality of Stuttgart to regulate the retail prices for meat, and the attempt is said to work satisfactorily. A permanent commission has there been appointed, consisting of a member of the town council (who presides), the chief veterinary surgeon (appointed by the town), the superintendent of the municipal slaughter house and an official of the municipal police (who represent the municipality), and three members of the butchers' guild, all of whom meet towards the end of each month to fix the retail price of meat for the following month. The commission can be convened also at other times upon the written application of three members; the change of price may operate only as from 1st or 15th of any month. The meat prices are thus fixed in more regular proportion to the cattle market price. The members of the butchers' guild are bound under pain of punishment to the prices fixed. The butchers are said to have submitted to this scheme for the reason also that they hope thus most effectively to meet the agrarian objection that the high prices of meat are due to the excessive prices charged by retailers.—Commercial Intelligence.