

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Bebel's work, "Die Frau und der Socialismus," rendered in this English version with the title "Woman under Socialism," is the best-aimed shot at the existing social system, both strategically and tactically considered. It is wise tactics and strategy to attack an enemy on his weakest side. The Woman Question is the weakest link in the capitalist mail.

The workingman, we know, is a defenceless being; but it takes much sharpening of the intellect to appreciate the fact that "he cannot speak for himself." His sex is popularly coupled with the sense of strength. The illusion conceals his feebleness, and deprives him of help, often of sympathy. It is thus even with regard to the child. Proverbially weak and needing support, the child, nevertheless, is not everywhere a victim in the existing social order. Only in remote sense does the child of the ruling class suffer. The invocation of the "Rights of the Child" leaves substantially untouched the children of the rich. It is otherwise with woman. The shot that rips up the wrongs done to her touches a nerve that aches from end to end in the capitalist world. There is no woman, whatever her station, but in one way or other is a sufferer, a victim in modern society. While upon the woman of the working class the cross of capitalist society rests heaviest in all ways, not one of her sisters in all the upper ranks but bears some share of the burden, or, to be plainer, of the smudge,—and what is more to the point, they are aware of it. Accordingly, the invocation of the "Rights of Woman" not only rouses the spirit of the heaviest sufferers under capitalist society, and thereby adds swing to the blows of the male militants in their efforts to overthrow the existing order, it also lames the adversary by raising sympathizers in his own camp, and inciting sedition among his own retinue. Bebel's exhaustive work, here put in English garb, does this double work unerringly.

I might stop here. The ethic formula commands self-effacement to a translator. More so than well-brought-up children, who should be "seen and not heard," a translator should, where at all possible, be neither seen nor heard. That, however, is not always possible. In a work of this nature, which, to the extent of this one, projects itself into hypotheses of the future, and even whose premises necessarily branch off into fields that are not essentially basic to Socialism, much that is said is, as the author himself announces in his introduction, purely the personal opinion of the writer. With these a translator, however, much in general and fundamental accord, may not always agree. Not agreeing, he is in duty bound to modify the ethic formula to the extent of marking his exception, lest the general accord, implied in the act of translating, be construed into specific approval of objected-to passages and views. Mindful of a translator's duties as well as rights, I have reduced to a small number, and entered in the shape of running footnotes to the text, the dissent I thought necessary to the passages that to me seemed most objectionable in matters not related to the main question; and, as to matters related to the main question, rather than enter dissent in running footnotes, I have reserved for this place a summary of my own private views on the family of the future.

It is an error to imagine that, in its spiral course, society ever returns to where it started from. The spiral never returns upon its own track. Obedient to the law of social evolution, the race often is forced, in the course of its onward march, to drop much that is good, but also much that is bad. The bad, it is hoped, is dropped for all time; but the good, when picked up again, never is picked up as originally dropped. Between the original dropping and return to its vicinity along the tracks of the spiral, fresh elements join. These new accretions so transmute whatever is re-picked up that it is essentially remodeled. The "Communism," for instance, that the race is now heading toward, is, materially, a different article from the "Communism" it once left behind. We move in an upward spiral. No doubt moral concepts are the reflex of material possibilities. But, for one thing, moral concepts are in themselves a powerful force, often hard to distinguish in their effect from material ones; and, for another, these material possibilities unfold

material facts, secrets of Nature, that go to enrich the treasury of science, and quicken the moral sense. Of such material facts are the discoveries in embryology and kindred branches. They reveal the grave fact, previously reckoned with in the matter of the breeding of domestic animals, that the act of impregnation is an act of inoculation. This fact, absolutely material, furnishes a post-discovered material basis for a pre-surmised moral concept,—the “oneness of flesh” with father and mother. Thus science solidifies a poetic-moral yearning, once held imprisoned in the benumbing shell of theological dogma, and reflects its morality in the poetic expression of the monogamic family. The moral, as well as the material, accretions of the race's intellect, since it uncoiled out of early Communism, bar, to my mind, all prospect,—I would say danger, moral and hygienic,—of promiscuity, or of anything even remotely approaching that.

Modern society is in a state of decomposition. Institutions, long held as of all time and for all time, are crumbling. No wonder those bodies of society that come floating down to us with the prerogatives of “teacher” are seen to-day rushing to opposite extremes. On the matter of “Woman” or “The Family” the divergence among our rulers is most marked. While both extremes cling like shipwrecked mariners to the water-logged theory of private ownership in the means of production, the one extreme, represented by the Roman Catholic church-machine, is seen to recede ever further back within the shell of orthodoxy, and the other extreme, represented by the pseudo-Darwinians, is seen to fly into ever wilder flights of heterodoxy on the matter of “Marriage and Divorce.” Agreed, both, in keeping woman nailed to the cross of a now perverse social system, the former seeks to assuage her agony with the benumbing balm of resignation, the latter to relieve her torture with the blister of libertinage.

Between these two extremes stand the gathering forces of revolution that are taking shape in the militant Socialist Movement. Opinion among these forces, while it cannot be said to clash, takes on a variety of shades—as needs will happen among men, who, at one on basic principles, on the material substructure of institutional superstructure, can-

not but yield to the allurements of speculative thought on matters as yet hidden in the future, and below the horizon. For one, I hold there is as little ground for rejecting monogamy, by reason of the taint that clings to its inception, as there would be ground for rejecting co-operation, by reason of the like taint that accompanied its rise, and also clings to its development. For one, I hold that the smut of capitalist conditions, that to-day clings to monogamy, is as avoidable an "incident" in the evolutionary process as are the iniquities of capitalism that to-day are found the accompaniment of co-operative labor;—and the further the parallel is pursued through the many ramifications of the subject, the closer will it be discovered to hold. For one, I hold that the monogamous family—bruised and wounded in the cruel rough-and-tumble of modern society, where, with few favored exceptions of highest type, male creation is held down, physically, mentally and morally, to the brutalizing level of the brute, forced to grub and grub for bare existence, or, which amounts to the same, to scheme and scheme in order to avoid being forced so to grub and grub—will have its wounds staunched, its bruises healed, and, ennobled by the slowly acquired moral forces of conjugal, paternal and filial affection, bloom under Socialism into a lever of mighty power for the moral and physical elevation of the race.

At any rate, however the genius of our descendants may shape matters on this head, one thing is certain: Woman—the race's mothers, wives, sisters, daughters—long sinned against through unnumbered generations—is about to be atoned to. All the moral and intellectual forces of the age are seen obviously converging to that point. It will be the crowning work of Militant Socialism, like a mightier Perseus, to strike the shackles from the chained Andromeda of modern society, Woman, and raise her to the dignity of her sex.

DANIEL DE LEON.

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