

Love, marriage, and divorce and the sovereignty of the individual

Stephen Pearl Andrews

The columns of the *New York Tribune* have been abruptly, though not altogether unexpectedly, closed to me, in the midst of a Discussion upon the subjects named in the title-page to this pamphlet, which had been courted and invited by Mr. Horace Greeley, the responsible Editor of that influential journal. After detaining my replies to himself and to Mr. James from four to eight weeks, Mr. Greeley at length returns them to me, accompanied by a private note, approving my criticisms upon Mr. James, but assigning reasons for the declination of both of my communications.

The ostensible grounds for excluding my comments upon positions assumed, and arguments in support of those positions, are, 1st. That my replies “do not get the discussion one inch ahead.” I obviously could not put the discussion ahead by stating and developing new positions, until I had answered those assumed by my opponent. Whether the real reason for “burking” my rejoinder was that I did not do the last well enough, or that I did it rather too effectively and conclusively for my continued popularity at the Tribune office, so many readers as I shall now be able to reach with some little industry on my part, will have the opportunity to decide. 2d. That expressions are employed by me which are offensive to the public sense of decency, and especially that the medical illustration of my lady correspondent is unfit for publication. I purpose now to publish the rejected replies as written, that the world may judge whether any thing I have said or embodied in them is of a nature which might reasonably be supposed likely “to dash the modesty” of Mr. Greeley, or the habitual readers of the Tribune.

The defenders of slavery, and the fastidious aristocratic classes everywhere, make a similar objection to that here urged, to displaying the unsightly accompaniments of the systems they uphold. Much, however, as I dislike to have my feelings or my tastes offended, I can not help regarding the actual flogging of women, for example, in Austria, and the salt and pepper applications to the torn backs of negroes in the South, as not only in themselves worse than the pen and ink descriptions of the same transactions, but as fully justifying the latter, and actually demanding them, as a means of shaming the facts out of existence. So of the disgusting and intolerable features of any oppressive Social Institution. It is true that scenes of abhorrent and enforced debauchery, although covered by the respectable garb of legality, are not pleasing subjects for contemplation; but to my mind they are still less fitting to exist at all. If the denial of the

latter fact can not in conscience be made, I have little respect for that silly suggestion of virtue which, by turning its face to the wall, refuses to see, and hopes for the best, without so much as a protest against the enormous degradation of our common humanity. The position is one not often assumed by Mr. Greeley, and does not seem to me either natural or becoming to him.

3d. The third objection is, that he (Mr. Greeley) can not permit his paper to be made the organ of repeatedly announcing and defending doctrines so destructive to the public well being, and especially that he can not tolerate the reiterated assumption and Fornication, Adultery, etc., are no crimes. I can hardly conceive why the first statement of a dangerous or offensive set of opinions should be innocent enough for the columns of the Tribune, and a re-statement of the same thing for the purpose of answering the objections or misrepresentations of an opponent should be too bad for the same columns. I can discover no reason, consistent with good faith, for prohibiting a writer who has been permitted so to commit himself to unpopular doctrines, from explaining his meaning until he is entirely comprehensible to all who desire to understand him. But if this objection were really such as weighs with the Editor of the Tribune, which I will show presently it is not, it could only be founded in misapprehension. I am as honestly and thoroughly opposed to Adultery, for example as the Editor of the Tribune can be, except that we might differ in the definition. I charge adultery upon nine-tenths of the married couples in this city, committed not out of, but within, the limits of their marriage bonds.

Let me endeavor to make myself clear upon this point. If I were in a catholic country, and derided or denounced the mass and the other ceremonies of the Church, I should clearly be held by the whole people to be an opposer of Religion. Indeed, such a deportment might even be found described in the dictionary definition, in that country, of Irreligion or Atheism; and yet, it is quite conceivable by us, that just such a course would be, or might be, dictated by a zeal for Religion beyond any thing prompting the defense of the stereotyped formalities of the place. The ambiguity exists in the diversity of understanding of the word Religion. The one believes the thing signified to consist in, or at least only to co-exist with, certain rights and ceremonies with which it has always been associated in his mind; the other has a much higher, and, as we think, a much purer conception of the idea to which the word corresponds. The former is, nevertheless, confirmed in his impression by the outward fact, that those whom he has hitherto seen least regardful of the external worship to which he is himself addicted, are the lawless and vagabond, who are fitted for every species of criminal act. He is not sufficiently developed in intellect and expansive in comprehension to discriminate and individualize, and by generalizing too early, confounds me, the religious philosopher and enthusiast, with the vulgar herd of the godless and abandoned-the man who is above him with the man who is below him- because they both differ from him, and in one feature of that difference, to his cloudy understanding, they seem to agree. In the same manner there are those who are below the restraints of the marriage institution, and those who are above their necessity; while the majority in civilized countries are a yet upon a level with the institution, and manufacture the public sentiment in conformity with that fact.

At the commencement of the Protestant Reformation, three centuries ago, the world lay bound by three strong cords of superstition, the Ecclesiastical, the Governmental, and the Matrimonial. The Church, the State, and the Family, each claimed to be of divine origin, and to exist by divine right.

The claim of the Church was shaken by Luther, and from his day to ours, Religion and Ecclesiastical Organization have been separating themselves, as ideas, wider and wider in men's

minds. Washington and the American Revolution mark a similar era in Political Affairs, and modern Socialism foreshadows a corresponding change in the sphere of the Domestic Relations. Men now distinguish pretty clearly that elevation of aims and that devotion to the good and true, which they now mean by Religion, from a Church Establishment or an Organization of any sort. They distinguish, in like manner, the prosperity, the well-being, and civic order of the community, from Crowns, and Cabinets, and Parliaments, and Standing Armies of Politicians and Soldiers. In like manner, they begin to distinguish Purity in the sexual union of loving souls from the sordid considerations of a marriage settlement, and even from the humane, prudential, and economical arrangements for the care of the offspring.

The fallacy-exploded by the development of mind-consists in the assumption, that "The Church" is essential to the existence of elevated sentiments towards God and one's fellow-beings-that the love of spiritual truths and of the social virtues is not naturally in men, growing with their growth, but, that it has to be put into them, and kept in them by the constant instrumentality of Popes, Cardinals, Bishops and Priests, Councils, Inquisitions, Constitutions and Synods-that men do not, by nature, love order, and justice, and harmony in their civic relations, and love it the more in proportion to their refinement, education, and development, and only need to know how they are to be attained, and to be relieved from hindrances and overmastering temptations adversely, to give themselves gladly to the pursuit of those virtues; but that, on the contrary, these elements likewise have to be provided and administered by Magistrates and Bailiffs, and all the tedious machinery of government; and, finally, that men do not, naturally, love their own offspring, and the mothers of their children, and deference for the sex, and sexual Purity, and all the beautiful and all the beautiful and refining influences of that the purest and holiest of all our intercourse on earth, and gravitate powerfully toward the realization, of those loves, in proportion as they become, through all elevating influences, more perfect men-but that those virtues again have to be made, injected, and preserved in human beings by Legislation, which, strangely enough, is merely the collective action of the same beings who, taken individually, are assumed to be destitute of those same qualities. So opposite is the truth, that it is the love of these very virtues which cheats and constrains men to endure the organizations and systems under which they groan, because they have been taught that those systems are the only condition of retaining the virtues. It is the discovery of this sham, which, I have said, marks the development of mind. The cheat, thus exposed, is to be taken in connection with another. It is assumed, that just those forms of action which these artificial organizations or patent manufactories of Virtue prescribe are the sole true forms of action, that their product is the genuine article, and that every other product is Vice. Hence the attention of mankind is turned wholly away from the study of Nature, and the human mind gradually trained to the acceptance of authority and tradition without question or dissent.

In this manner, Piety is made to signify Zeal for the Church or a Sect, Patriotism, Loyalty to a Sovereign, and Purity, Fidelity to the Marriage Bond. In the same manner, Irreligion is identified with Heresy, Treason with the Rights of the People, and Debauchery with the Freedom of the Affections. It suits the Bigot, the Despot, and the Male or Female Prude to foster this confusion of things dissimilar, and to denounce the champions of Freedom as licentious and wicked men-the enemies of mankind.

In the case supposed, the Catholic denounces the Protestant as guilty of Impiety, and so in this case, Mr. Greeley denounces me, as favoring Impurity and Adultery. It is clear, as I have said, that whether I do so or not, depends upon the definitions of the terms. If by Adultery is meant

a breach of a legal bond, binding a man and a woman, between whom there are repugnance and disgust instead of attraction and love, to live together in the marital embrace, then there may be some grounds for the charge; but if, as I choose to define it, Adultery means a sexual union, induced by any other motive, however amiable or justifiable in itself, than that mutual Love which by Nature prompts the amative conjunction of the sexes, materially and spiritually, then do I oppose and inveigh against, and then does Mr. Greeley defend and uphold Adultery. As to Purity, I have no idea whatever that Mr. Greeley knows, owing to the perverting influence of authority or legislation, what Purity is. Nor does he know what Impurity is, for, since all things must be known by contrasts, no man, whose conceptions upon this subject do not transcend the limits of legality, can know it, nor loathe it, as those do, who, having conceived of or experienced a genuine freedom, come to distinguish a prurient fancy from a genuine affection, and learn to make the highest and most perfect affinities of their nature the Law of their being.

But however pernicious my views may be held to be, the fact of their being so is no reason, according to Mr. Greeley, why they should not be given to the world. At least, although he now urges it as a reason, it is only a few weeks since he stoutly defended the opposite position; and if there be any settled principle or policy to which he has professed and attempted to adhere, it has been, more than any other, that all sorts of opinions, good, bad, and "detestable" even, should have a chance to be uttered, and so confirmed or refuted. It has been his favorite doctrine apparently, that "Error need not be feared while the Truth is left free to combat it." Very recently, in stating the policy of the Tribune, he gave the noblest estimate ever promulgated of the true function of the Newspaper, namely, "To let everybody know what everybody else is thinking." To a writer, calling himself "Young America," who objected to the Tribune reporting arguments of Catholics, Mr. Greeley replied in substance, that he should just as readily report the doings, and arguments, and opinions of a Convention of Atheists, as he should do the same service for his own co-religionists. In this very discussion he says, "We are inflexibly opposed, therefore, to any extension of the privileges of divorce, now accorded by our laws, but we are not opposed to the discussion of the subject; on the contrary, we deem such discussion as already too long neglected." Of Mr. James he says, "We totally differ from him on some quite fundamental questions, but that is no reason for suppressing what he has to say." In his reply to me, published herein, he repudiates the right to suppress what I have to say, while he avers that he would aid to suppress me if I attempted to act on my own opinions. Finally, in various ways and upon various occasions, the columns of the Tribune were formally thrown open for the full discussion of this subject of Marriage and Divorce, as well for those views of the subject which the Editor deems pernicious, as for the other side. The Editor of the Observer reproached him for so doing, and he defended the course as the only truth-seeking and honorable procedure. He wishes especially to drag to the light, in their full extension and strength, those "eminently detestable" doctrines, of one phrase of which he seems to regard me as a representative, in order that they might forever after have got their quietus from a blow of the sledge-hammer of his logic.

If, now, the valiant Editor proves shaky in his adherence to this truly sublime position, of justice and a fair hearing to all parties, shall we, in kindness to him, find the solution in the supposition that he was dishonest in assuming it, or give him the benefit of the milder hypothesis, that he found himself rather farther at sea than he is accustomed to navigate, and betook himself again in alarm to the coast voyage?

I shall leave it to the public to decide, finally, what was the real cause of getting myself turned out of Court before I had fairly stated, much less argued, my defense. I shall not, in the meantime,

however, hesitate to say what I think of the matter myself. I have no the slightest idea that any one of the reasons assigned influenced the decision a straw's weight. The sole cause of my extrusion was, that Mr. Greeley found himself completely "headed" and hemmed in in the argument, was the astuteness clearly to perceive that fact, while he had neither the dialectical skill to obscure the issues and disguise it, nor the magnanimity frankly to acknowledge a defeat. Hence, there was no alternative but to apply "the gag" and "suppress" me, by the exercise of that power which the present organization of the press, and his position in connection with it, lodges in his hands. Had fortune made him the Emperor of Austria, and me a subject, he would have done the same thing in a slightly different manner, in strict accordance with his character and the principles he has avowed in this discussion. Such men mistake themselves when they suppose that they have any genuine affection for freedom. They laud it only so far as prejudice or education incline them to favor this or that instance of its operation. They refer their defense of it to no principle. No security has yet been achieved for the continuance of the enjoyment of such freedom and such rights as we now enjoy; no safeguard even against a final return to despotism, and thence to barbarism, until the Principle upon which the right to freedom rests, and the scope of that principle, are discovered, nor until a public sentiment exists, based upon that knowledge. Americans, no more than barbarians, have as yet attained to the fullness of that wisdom, and as little as any does Mr. Greeley know of any such guide through the maze of problems which environ him, and, perhaps less than most, is he capable of following it.

Circumstances- the fact that he is a prominent Editor, that he has strenuously advocated certain reformatory measures, and that he has the reputation of great benevolence-have given to Mr. Greeley somewhat the position of a leader of the Reform Movement in America. The lovers of Progress look to him in that capacity. The publicity and the immense importance of such a position will justify me, I think, in giving my estimate of the man and of his fitness for the work he is expected to perform, in the same manner as we investigate the character of a politician, or as Mr. Greeley himself would analyze for us the pretensions of Louis Napoleon or the Duke of Wellington. Similar considerations will authorize me in mingling with the portraiture of Mr. Greeley, a few shadowy outlines of Mr. James, contrasting them a la Plutarch in his "Lives of the Great Men."

Fourier (who was really about the most remarkable genius who has lived) claims, as his grand discovery, that Attraction, which Newton discovered to be the Law of the Regulator of the motions of material bodies, is equally the Law and the God-intended Regulator of the whole affectional and social sphere in human affairs; in other words, that Newton's discovery was partial, while his is integral, and lays the basis of a science of Analogy between the material and the spiritual world, so that reasoning may be carried on with safety from one to the other.

This principle, announced by Fourier as the starting point of all science, has been accepted by Mr. Greeley in a single one of its applications, namely, the organization of labor, and wholly rejected by him in its universality, as applicable to the human passions, and elsewhere. The farthest he seems ever to have seen into the magnificent speculations of Fourier, is to the economy to be gained by labor done upon the large scale, and the possibility of the retention of profits by the laborers themselves by means of association. It is as if a man should gain the reputation of a leader in the promulgation of the Copernico-Newtonian System of Astronomy, by publishing his conviction that the moon is retained in her orbit by gravitation toward the earth, while denying wholly that the earth is round, or that the sun is the centre of the system, or that attraction can be supposed to operate at such an immense distance as that body and the planets. In the

same manner, Mr. Greeley can understand the Sovereignty of the Individual in one aspect, as the assertion of one's own rights, but not at all in the other, namely, as the concession of the rights of all others, and through its limitation, "to be exercised at one's own cost"- the exact demarkator between what one may and what he may not do. He is a man of great power, and strikes hard blows, when he fairly gets a chance to strike at all, but with his prevailing inconsistency he reminds one of a blind giant hitting out at random in a fray.

Mr. Greeley has never been able to see any thing in the "Cost Principle" except the fact that it abolishes interest on money, and hence he begins at once by opposing it. He has worked hard for his money, and it seems to him a very natural, convenient, and proper thing, that that money so earned, should go on earning more for him while he sleeps. This one consideration settles, with him, the whole question. He does not comprehend in this sublime and simple principle a universal Law of Equity, which distributes wealth exactly according to Right; reduces all products to the Minimum price, thereby immensely augmenting consumption; removes all obstacles to the Adjustment of Supply and Demand; brings all human labor into steady demand; exchanges it for exact Equivalents; organizes Industry; places every human being in his or her appropriate work or function; substitutes universal Cooperation in the place of universal Antagonism; renders practicable the economies of the large scale, and the division of labor in every department; houses the whole people in palaces, surrounds them with luxury and refinement, and hundredfolds the wealth of the world. Such manifold and magnificent results from a simple change in the method of conducting ordinary trade, transcend the capacity of Mr. Greeley and the Philosophers of the Tribune; while there are now boys, and girls too, not twelve years of age, who can scientifically demonstrate these results as legitimate and certain, and can by the aid of this key solve with facility all the problems of Political Economy with a clearness, comprehensiveness, and precision never dreamed of by Say, Adam Smith, or Ricardo.

Mr. Greeley is, undoubtedly, a man of benevolence. He is profusely, perhaps even foolishly, lavish, as he begins, doubtless, himself to think, in his expenditures for the relief of suffering, and for random experiments, without system or coherent design, for the improvement of the condition of mankind. He is benevolent, too, chiefly in the lower and material range of human affairs. His thought rises no higher, apparently, than supplying men with food for the body, raiment, and shelter. At most, he aspires after so much education as will enable them "to cipher" and make profit. He has no experience of, no sympathy with, and no ability to conceive that immense hunger of the soul which craves, and will have, despite all the conventionalities of the Universe, the gratification of spiritual affinities, the congenial atmosphere of loving hearts. The explosive power of a grand passion is all Greek to him. So of all the delicate and more attenuated sentiment which forms the exquisite aroma of human society. He understands best, and appreciates most, the coarse, material realities of life. Purely mental exercitation is repugnant to him.

In this latter characteristic Mr. Greeley is the exact antipodes of Mr. James. This latter gentleman tends powerfully toward metaphysical subtleties and spiritual entities, until he is completely lifted off the solid earth, and loses all knowledge of practical things. The latter is of the class of purely ideal reformers, men who will lounge at their ease upon damask sofas, and dream of a harmonic and beautiful world to be created hereafter, while they would be probably the very last to whom the earnest worker, in any branch of human concerns, could resort for aid with any prospect of success. He hates actual reform and reformers, and regards benevolence as a disease.

With the points of difference above indicated, the two men we are now comparing are alike in the fact, that within their respective and opposite spheres their vision is kaleidoscopic. This is the word to describe them. It is not a microscope, nor a telescope, nor the healthy natural eye which they employ in the examination of a subject. Broken fragments of prejudice reflect the light at a thousand angles of incidence, producing effects which, in the earthy world of Mr. Greeley, are dull, and somber, and commonplace, and in the ethereal region inhabited by Mr. James, splendid, sparkling, and beautiful. Either can be relied on as a guide to anything exact or true. Both are suggestive, inspiring, and disappointing. Neither is a whole man, and the halves which they do present are not homogeneously consistent. Mr. Greeley would have been greatly improved in exactitude and taste by a mathematical and classical, or even a legal training; Mr. James, on the contrary, by an education in a workshop or a counting-house, or the scramble of political life, any thing which would have related him to the actual world around him. Both are superior men, measured by comparison with the still smaller fragments of men which compose the mass of society in its present state of social chaos; both are exceedingly small men measured by the ideal one may form of integral and well-developed manhood; *mens sana in corpore sano*. Let not the selfish egotist, whose highest thought has never risen to the well-being of mankind in any shape, "chuckle" over this criticism upon Horace Greeley, a man who compares with him as "Hyperion to a Satyr," a man who has done something, and attempted much, with powerful endeavor and honest enthusiasm for the elevation of humanity. The criticism is not dictated by any disposition to depreciate such a man, but only to ascertain the fitnesses and the unfitnesses of things. How far can the great and already powerful and every-growing party of American Social Reformers or Progressives, look to Horace Greeley as a competent conductor through the labyrinth of problems which the complicated and obviously vicious constitution of society, resting as a basis upon the depression, wretchedness, and semi-barbarism of the masses of the people, presents to them for resolution. My answer is, Not at all. He has been a sort of John the Baptist, if you will, one crying, literally, in the wilderness, "Prepare the way," but with no power to lead the way himself. His mission was to agitate powerfully and successfully- not to organize. He has no complete theory of his own, can not comprehend the theories of others, and has little practical talent for construction. He feels keenly the evils around him, those at least, growing out of the first grade of human wants, and grasps eagerly at the first contrivances suggested by any body, for immediate or apparent relief. In all this he differs from Mr. James, who ranges ideally in a much higher sphere, who is an astute, and terribly searching and merciless, though not altogether a sound and reliable, critic of the old, and who, as respects the future, belongs to the school of Seers and Prophets, not that of the Philosophers or rational thinkers, a mere jet d'eau of aspiration, reaching a higher elevation at some points than almost any other man, but breaking into spray and impalpable mist, glittering in the sun, and descending to earth with no weight or mechanical force to effect any great end. It is not such men, one or both, whom the world now chiefly needs.

JOSIAH WARREN, an obscure, plain man, one of the people, a common-sense thinker, the most profoundly analytical thinker who has ever dealt with this class of subjects, has discovered principles which render the righteous organization of society as simple a matter of Science as any other. "The Sovereignty of the Individual, with its Limit, and "Cost the Limit of Price," will make his frame, and mark an epoch in the world's history. The realization of the results of those principles is already begun upon a scale too small, and with a quietness too self-reliant to have attracted much of the public notice; but with a success satisfactory and inspiring to those

practically engaged in the movement. It is something to be able to affirm that there is at least one town in existence where women and children receive equal remuneration for their labor with men, not from benevolence, but upon a well-recognized principle of justice, and by general concurrence, without pledges or constraint.

Mr. Warren is the Euclid of Social Science. He may not understand Algebra, the Differential Calculus, or Fluxions, but all Social Science, and every beneficent, successful, and permanent Social Institution ever hereafter erected, must rest upon the principles which have been discovered and announced by him. There is no alternative; and reformers may as well begin by understanding that they have a Science to study and a definite work to perform, and not a mere senseless, and endless, and aimless agitation to maintain. The work demands pioneers, men who have muscles, and brains, and backbones. It needs men who are architects, and can see intellectually the form, and proportions, and adaptations of the whole immense edifice to be erected; and stone-cutters, and masons, and builders of every grade; men, especially at this stage, who can go down to the foundations and excavate the dirt and lay the mudsills of the social fabric. The Greeleys and the Jameses are not such men. They must bide their time, and when the work is done, they will, perhaps, tardily recognize the fact, though they could not, a priori, comprehend the principles, upon which it was to be accomplished.

It was for the purpose of foreshadowing the entire extent of the work to be performed, of expounding the principles that are now known, of provoking discussion, opposition, criticism by the ablest pens, of every point I had to propound, that I desired the use of the columns of the Tribune. It was a mere accident- the fact that a discussion was already pending, and that further discussion was invited- which determined the point of beginning to be the subject of Marriage and Divorce. IT is such information as I possess upon the whole scope of subjects in which Mr. Greeley is supposed to take a special interest, and of which the Tribune newspaper is regarded as, in some sense, the organ in this country, that I desired to lay before the world, through its instrumentality. It is that information which, worth much or little, Mr. Greeley refuses to permit his readers to obtain. How far the narrowness of such exclusion comports with the pretensions of that sheet, will be judged of differently, doubtless, by different individualities.

Mr. Greeley has no conception, and never had, of the entirety of the Social Revolution which is actually, if not obviously, impending; which, indeed, is hourly progressing in our modern society. He is not a Socialist in any integral, revolution, and comprehensive sense. He has no comprehension of so broad an idea as a universal Analogy He does not know that is impossible that some one grand department of social affairs, the love relations for example, should be exactly right upon their old chance foundation, in the absence of science, reflective or foreseeing, and that all other departments have been radically wrong; just as impossible as it is for one member of the human body to be in a state of perfect health, and all the rest to be grievously, and almost mortally, diseased. Ignorant of this great fact, and mistaking doctrinal preconceptions or personal preferences for principles, his opinions are a mosaic of contradiction he is a queer cross between ultra radicalism and bigoted orthodoxy, vibrating unsteadily betwixt the two. Hence, as I have said, he is totally unreliable as a leader, and must be an object of constant annoyance and disappointment to his followers and friends, as he is of mingled ridicule and contempt, to personal enemies who recognize no compensations in the really excellent traits of the man.

As an antagonist, or an umpire between antagonists, Mr. Greeley is unfair, tricky, and mean. Owing to the want of consistency in his own mind, and his liability to side-influences of all sorts, he is practically dishonest to an eminent degree. It is with reference to unconsciousness and want

of design in his prevarications that I have pronounced him honest. Honorable, in prevarications that I have pronounced him honest. Honorable, in the chivalric sense of the term, he has no pretensions of any sort to be regarded. He is lamentably wanting in the more gentlemanly attributes of the man. Whoever looks for delicate consideration for the sensibilities of another, urbanity of manners, magnanimity, or even that sturdy sense of fair-dealing, of which noble specimens may be seen in the English peasant or prize-fighter, must look elsewhere. Perhaps no better illustrations can be given of some of these defects as an impartial journalist and high-minded opponent, than the two follow facts: My communications in this Controversy were freely placed at the disposition of Mr. James before they were published, to be conned and studied by him, and one of them written round and half replied to in an answer by him to "The Observer," in order that his reply to me might be dispatched by a dash of the pen, and a mere reference to what he had already written.

The other illustration is the fact, that while Mr. Greeley has refused to allow me the reply to his own and Mr. James's arguments, he has reserved from the public all knowledge of such refusal. He has not had the decency to inform his readers that he had chosen to close the discussion abruptly, and that I am not permitted to reply. He has done what he could, therefore, to leave the impression upon their minds that I have been silenced, not by the tyrannical use of arbitrary power, but by the force of logic; thus stealing the reputation for victory in a battle which he was wanting in the courage to fight. Such an issue with Mr. Greeley was, perhaps, not very surprising from the estimate I am now inditing of his organization, propensities, and order of culture. With Mr. James, I confess it was somewhat different. I thought him to have bred in a circle which, with other faults in abundance, cherishes, nevertheless, a high-minded and chivalric bearing toward antagonists, no less than gentle courtesy towards one's friends. Fidgety exertions, by personal influence in that quarter, to suppress the criticism of an opponent, and an unmannerly readiness to avail oneself of the improprieties of Editors and Sub-Editors in communicating information which ought to be reserved, were obstacles in the way of a fair hearing which I did not anticipate.

It is appropriate that I should mention the origin and antecedents of this Discussion. Mr. James published, in the Tribune, a very saucy and superficial Review of a work by DOCTOR LAZARUS, entitled, "LOVE vs. MARRIAGE,"¹ in which the whole gist of the argument lay in the sheer and naked assumption that the Family, not the Individual, is the nucleus of society. Out of this grew up a discussion between him and the Editor of the New-York Observer, an influential and highly respectable religious newspaper of this city, of the Presbyterian denomination, who took Mr. James to task for some of his heresies, and Mr. Greeley also, for allowing the discussion of such subjects at all in his paper. The replies of Mr. James, in which he stated his own positions on the marriage question, seemed to me, while abounding certainly in vigorous invective, so inconsequential and loose in their reasoning, that I ventured, under the general statement of Mr. Greeley that he wished the whole subject thoroughly discussed, to put to Mr. James a few questions, consistent replies to which would have greatly cleared the understanding of his positions, and strengthened the cause of Freedom, which he assumed to defend. What followed will appear by the discussion itself.

The scope of my present design does not include the publication of the discussion between Mr. James and the Observer. I shall begin, nevertheless, with one of the replies of Mr. James to that opponent, as well from its necessary connection with what follows, as for the purpose of

¹ Published by Fowlers & Wells, New-York

enabling the reader to judge to what degree Mr. James entitles himself to delicate and considerate treatment by his own habitual suavity of manner. I regret any appearance of unfairness in omitting the exceedingly able and caustic replies of "The Observer," but my limits preclude so extensive a republication, my purpose being to present here what was excluded from publication elsewhere.

Before closing this Introduction, I wish to make a few remarks upon the general subject, and especially as respects the dangerous and eminently detestable nature of my principles and views.

The priestly bigot and intellectual tyrant believes in all honesty that Freedom of Thought and of Conscience are dangerous things for those over whom his influence rules, because he begins by the

Assumption that he is a useful person, and that the function he performs and the influence he exerts are essential, indispensable even, to the well-being of the people. He can not be pronounced dishonest on the mere ground that his interest is involved, since the people themselves, whose interest is really adverse, admit and entertain the same idea. It is usually ignorance on both sides; more rarely the relation of impostor and dupe. It is the first assumption which vitiates both his and their whole subsequent chain of reasoning. It is obvious enough that Freedom of Thought and Conscience do tend to shake that Authority which all parties have begun by admitting it to be indispensable to maintain. Hence Freedom of Thought and Conscience are bad things. No reasoning can be more conclusive, the premise being assumed. Hence investigation is stifled, until men grow bold enough to ask, What is the use of the priestly bigot and intellectual tyrant at all?

So in the political sphere. The petty Prince of some obscure Principality, perhaps honestly desires the education and advancement of his subjects. He encourages schools, literature, and the Freedom of the Press; but he has never had any other thought than that all this is to go along with the status quo, in relation to himself and his right to reign. Presently the diffusion of learning and the awakening of mind begin to show themselves in old and still bolder speculations about Self-Government, monarchical usurpations, and other matters which threaten danger to status quo. Our benevolent despot, who has all along tacitly assumed, in perfect good faith, the indispensableness of his own princely services, is alarmed, and attempts to impose limits and restraints upon discussion, for the good of the people. This is all the more difficult for the education they have already received. Speculation grows bolder and resistance more rampant, as the result of the attempt. Repression, at all hazards, then becomes the only resort of the unconscious tyrant, who, at every step, has acted, as he thinks, for the best good of his thankless and rebellious subjects. Submission or bloodshed and butchery, are their only alternative. Reaction and Revolution are arrayed in deadly hostility against each other, and the monarch and the conservative portion of the people are driven to the only conclusion to which they can arrive; that education and mental enlargement are destructive and bad things— a diabolical element in human society. The fatal blunder is the assumption, as a starting-point, that there is something now existing which must not, in any event, be changed. To keep good this assumption, nothing must be changed, for when change begins it will not respect your bounds and limits. Hence ignorance and universal immobility must be sedulously preserved. No sound philosophy can ever exist which is tainted by veneration for the sanctities of the old.

The new in one thing necessitates the new in all things, to the extent that adaptation and adjustment may demand. Let him who is unready for such sweeping revolution, withhold his

hand before he begins to agitate for Reform. Prejudice and Philosophy do not, and can not, comport with each other.

In the same manner, Freedom is the open boast, the watchwords, and the rallying cry of all the most advanced nations of Christendom. But there is a tacit assumption in the midst of all this, that the Family Institution must forever remain intact. It is the social idol, as Royalty has been the political and the Church the religious upon another, namely, the utility, the indispensableness of that Institution, first, to the preservation of Purity in the intercourse of the sexes, and secondly, to the proper care and affectionate culture of children, and finally, to the protection and support of the weaker sex. Sexual purity, the Preservation of Offspring, and the Security of the Weaker Sex, and intuitively felt to be right and good; hence the Family, it is assumed, is sacred and divine, and hence, again, that in no case must it be questioned or assailed. But Freedom for the affections is liable to pass the limits of the Family, and Freedom (of this sort) is therefore a bad thing. Hence, at this point, a reaction against Freedom.

The general human mind seldom mistakes in reasoning. The error, if there be one, is more commonly the false assumption of some fact or facts to reason from, or else incompleteness in carrying on the process to its final results. If the fact be so, that Purity can be cultivated and preserved, children properly reared, and women protected, only in the Family, all the other consequences logically follow, and there is one species of Human Freedom- an exception to the general estimate of that attribute of manhood-a curse and a blight instead of a blessing, a thing to be warred on and exterminated; not to be aspired after, lauded and cherished.

It is certainly a legitimate question to ask, Is the fact really so? Are the three desiderata I have indicated only attainable through a certain existing institution which mankind have, marvelously enough, had the wisdom to establish- in the midst of their general ignorance and underdevelopment in all other respects- upon precisely the right basis?

First, then, as respects the first point, the preservation of Sexual Purity. To determine whether Perpetual and Exclusive Marriage is essential to that end, we must first answer the question: What constitutes Purity? To this question, the common, I may say the vulgar answer, Mr. Greeley's answer, is Fidelity to the Marriage Relation (or, in the absence of that bond, no Sexual Relations at all) Put into categorical formula, the two proposition are then simply as follows: 1 The Marriage Institution is Sacred because it is Indispensable to the Preservation of Purity. 2. Purity is the Preservation of the Marriage Institution. Of course this rotary method of ratiocination is simply absurd, and can not, for a moment, satisfy the really philosophical or inquiring mind.

Let me, then, give a different answer to this question and see who will demur. Sexual Purity, I will say, is that kind of relation, whatever it be between the sexes, which contributes in the highest degree to their mutual health and happiness, taking into account the remote as well as the immediate results.

If this definition is accepted, then clearly the whole field is open to new, radical, and scientific investigation, physiological, psychological, and economical, infinitely broader and more thorough than the world has ever yet even thought of applying; and he must be a fearful Egotist who, in the present stage of our experiences, can venture to affirm that he knows the whole truth, the final word of Science, on the subject. One thing only is certain, namely, that absolute Freedom, accompanied, too, by the temporary evils of an ignorant use of that Freedom, is a condition precedent, even to furnish the facts upon which to reason safely at all upon the matter. Any settlement of the question by us now would have hardly as much value as a decision made in the heart of Russia upon the best form of Human Government. No pretension can be made that Purity, in

the sense in which I use the term, has ever yet been attained by laws to enforce it. Prostitution, in Marriage and out of it, and solitary vice, characterize Society as it is.

IF the workings of Freedom should prove that Purity in this sense is attainable otherwise, this argument in behalf of Compulsory Marriage fails. On the contrary, if Freedom is forever prohibited hereafter, as it forever has been prohibited heretofore, how is it to be known that such a result would not come of it? One portion of mankind believe there would, and another that there would not, while the opportunity is refused to submit the question to the test of experiment and fact.

The second point is the care and culture of children. Certainly small boast can be made of the success of mankind hitherto in the practice of that art, when statistics inform us that nearly one half of the whole human family die in infancy! And when nine tenths of the remainder are merely grown up abortions, half made before birth, and worse distorted and perverted by ignorant mismanagement and horrible abuses afterward! Alas! Do children get cared for and reared in the Family arrangement now, with any skill, any true science, any just appreciation of the real nature of that sublime but delicate task, which demands more precise knowledge, more refined instincts, and more prudence and judgment than any other? Do our existing Domestic Institutions commend themselves by their fruits, or are the wholesale infanticides and the dreadful tortures of childhood now prevalent, of a kind, the bare repetition of which will cause the ears of a later and wiser generation to tingle? Is it not possible that our most cherished social usages may be as terrible to them to contemplate as the hecatombs of political murders by the Neapolitan Government are at this day to us?

Suppose now that a future experience should demonstrate the fact, that, of children reared in Unitary Nurseries, conducted by Skilled and Professional Nurses, Matrons, and Physiologists, the mothers-except those engaged by choice in the nursery-being at most, within reach for the purpose of suckling their infants at given hours, not on in a hundred died during the first five year! Suppose that, by such an arrangement, the same labor which now requires the time of fifty women, could be so systemized as to occupy no more than that of five, leaving forty-five persons free for productive industry in other departments! Suppose that the children so reared grew up with larger frames and sounder constitutions, brighter intellects, livelier affections, and superior faculties in every way; suppose that all this were so obvious and incontestable, that no one ventured to dispute it, and so attractive that hardly any mother would desire or venture to attempt the isolated rearing of her babe, what would become of this second ground upon which the Family Institution is maintained by force of arms, as the sole means of appropriate guardianship for childhood?

The third and last basis of the Family is the protection and maintenance of women themselves. Here again, it does not seem to me that the system in vogue, by which the husband and father earns all the money, and doles it out in charitable pittances to wife and daughters, who are kept as helpless dependents, in ignorance of business and the responsibilities of life, has achieved any decided title to our exalted admiration. The poor stipendiaries of paternal or marital munificence are liable at any time to be thrown upon their own resources, with no resources to be thrown upon. The absence of all prior necessity for the exercise of prevision unfitting them for self-support and protection, and the system affording them none but the most precarious assurances, their liabilities are terrible, and daily experiences are cruel in the extreme. At the best, and while the protection endures, its results are mental imbecility and bodily disease. There is hardly one woman in ten in our midst, who knows, from year's end to year's end, what it is to enjoy even

tolerable health. The few who, despite the system, attain some development, are tortured by the consciousness and the mortifications of their dependency, and the perpetual succession of petty annoyances incident to it, of which their lordly companions, self-congratulatory for their own intentions of kindness, are profoundly unconscious. Shut up to the necessity of this continuous and exhausting endurance, wives have the same motives that slaves have for professing contentment, and smile deceitfully while the heart swells indignantly, and the tear trembles in the eye. Man complains habitually of the waywardness and perversity of Woman, and never suspects that he himself, and his own false relations to her, are the key to the thousand apparent contradictions in her deportment and character. The last thing that the husband is likely to know, in marriage as it is, is the real state of the heart that throbs next him as he lays his head upon his own pillow. Woman, as well as the slave, must first be wholly free before she can afford to take the risk to speak freely. She dare not utter boldly her own complaint, and she will even denounce openly, while she prays fervently in secret for the God-speed of the friend who does it for her.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Stephen Pearl Andrews
Love, marriage, and divorce and the sovereignty of the individual

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/andrews/love.html. Proofread online
source RevoltLib.com, retrieved on July 12, 2020.

Introductory Chapter:

usa.anarchistlibraries.net