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AMONG the other existing institutions which will be favoured with a short shrift by the body of coming female voters will be the barmaid. Barmaids, as a class, have few friends. To the average woman who considers herself respectable, the barmaid is the embodiment of all that is evil. If, after hearing all that has been said of her in a galling convention, some misguided man ventures to seek refreshment at her shrine, he does so furtively and with the additional delight of feeling that he runs a chance of a wiggling. If he is a young man and the experience is yet new, he marvels to find that the barmaid bears any human and feminine traits whatever. In some cases he is so agreeably disappointed that he falls in love with her forthwith, much to the consternation of the masculine friend of the family who was so incautious as to lead him to the shrine of the ambiguous syren.

The said friend, being an old stager, has perhaps ceased to have much sentiment with reference to either barmaids or other maids, and the supposition that Dolly could ever strike a light in the bosom of his young protégé never entered his mind. He himself has long come to regard her as a useful adjunct towards assisting the enjoyment of the fluid, as she can talk just sufficient for the nonce, expects nothing special in the way of chivalry, and is prepared at any moment for his departure. To him this business-like indifference on her part is the charm, for he has a holy horror of magnetizing any woman, well-knowing the endless complications it entails.

The younger man, however, revels in the delicious flames chiefly springing from himself. Dolly is almost innocent of design in the matter, but is still enough of a woman to appreciate a man's flattery and admiration, and suckles the young calf with a very good imitation of the milk of feminine kindness. Her arts are those of the sisters who disown her, only more finished by experience, and her intentions are much less agglutinative, for though she has perhaps a tender feeling for her admirer, she is prepared for any amount of slipperiness on the part of man. He, however, is the headlong one, and precipitates himself into the pit of matrimony to the rage and disgust of his female acquaintances, who, finding they have missed their mark, charitably hope he may be miserable with the 'creature' of his choice. As for the friend, his credit being cracked with the family, he is driven to solace himself at the shrine of some other Hebe, who speedily compasses and adapts herself to his ideas.

Barmaids are unpopular with other women because they have such unbounded opportunities. Even if the liquor business were robbed of its speculative element, and bars reduced to a condition of the utmost decorum everywhere, the prejudice would still exist. As men know, the great blemish of the calling is the necessity it carries with it of making custom at all cost, even among the low and dissipated; but this is merely the consequence of unrestricted competition. It is usually not from love but from necessity that a girl takes to the bar, and often deems herself fortunate in having headed many less suitable applicants. So long as there is so much selfishness, family and otherwise, and it is necessary to hustle for a living, the barmaid is entitled to some leniency of judgment. Few barmaids would fail to assert their dignity did society protect them against the avaricious demands of their employers, and there are many whose presence men seek with a feeling of kindness and regard, founded upon a knowledge of the trials incident to their calling, and of the good sense with which they meet them.

Is not the legislator worthy of his hire? Those who know most about him will probably say that the average member is, even now that the honorarium stands at £150, engaged by the public at a wildly fancy price. The services of the exceptional member are, of course, inestimable, and as in most other co-operative businesses where work is paid by time and not by the piece, the lax and indifferent many reap the reward which really belongs to the few. Until these colonies obtain the right of enacting their own political constitutions by plebiscite, and the voters fix the honorarium once and for all, the public will be treated periodically to this spectacle of a number of employes fixing the amount of their own salary.

It is, as regarded from a business standpoint, a really good sort of joke to see this little farce going on in what is called the Council of the Nation. A body of men, hired by the electors at a certain rate, undertake to do the work of legislation at a particular figure, and as soon as they have got into the saddle, set about decreeing that their salary should be increased. There is nothing else like it in the world, because, owing to the absurd state of politics, there is no other sphere in life where such flagrant want of honesty and honour would be tolerated. A person with the ordinary sense of justice can understand a legislature contemplating the enactment of a law of the above nature to take effect after the next general election. In such case the voters would get timely notice of the change intended, and the question could be made a test one with candidates. As the matter now stands the public is in the position of Sinbad. It has put the 'Old Man of the Sea' upon its shoulders, and he is running the show with an utter disregard of the patron who has to pay the expenses.

Retribution there is none, because however much people may vapour about dishonesty and immorality when it comes to roost within their own circle, the questionable acts of public men, especially when corporately perpetrated, seem to be forgotten with curious rapidity. There is not a fact more calculated to excite distrust and dependency in the mind of the advocates of advanced democratic legislation than this exhibition of 'smartness' on the part of those temporarily entrusted with the destinies of New Zealand. After the scorching condemnation of the men of the Vogelian reign, one would have thought that a newer and a brighter lesson was going to be read to the rising youth of this country. Of yore, Gallio was reported to have asked in despair, 'What is truth?' Now, if he had lived and read this, he might have been incredulous, but sad to say, it is the truth of a body of men who ought to know better.

What a fearful and wonderful creation is the clerical mind? It is hermaphrodite, with something of the vigour of the male combined with the clamorousness and inconsequence of the female intellect. Whenever the civil power enacts aught bearing upon the questions of either education or marriage, there is certain to be some section of the Christian clergy calling down the lightning from the skies upon the tamperers with their exclusive prerogatives, which lightning, strange to say, never comes. Certainly in every body of ecclesiastics there are men who lay no claim to infallibility, and who are content to lend in silence personal assistance to the cause of progress. There are, however, always enough of the hide-bound belligerent type ready to rave thunderously from the public platform in a useless sort of way against the irresistible tide of advancing reform.

Men, notably lawyers, doctors, scientists, and journalists, have never been very amenable to the influences of the clergy. Whatever may be the failings of the male sex, a dislike of logic and knowledge is not their weakest point. An Marie Bashkirtseff said, they are rather too much taken up with their intellect to be what is called 'good.' However that may be, laymen always knew how to fight and die for their intellectual convictions, and though the clergy of the existing generation have been very quick to appropriate the glory of the reforms won by the laity in the preceding generation, and to persuade women that the Church did it all, the historical facts are all the other way. Except in the case of mutual religious persecution, the clergy of every denomination have either opposed the laity, or having found opposition fruitless, changed front, and having stolen the laity's policy, endeavoured to aggrandize their own influence with women by inducing them to believe that the reforms originated with them.

Every layman notes in the clergy an approximation to the female modes of thought. The cleric who is exceptional in this respect is a mere accident in his profession, and the policy of his cloth pursues its course uninfluenced by him. The clerical mind, no more than the average female mind of to-day, originates nothing. It is essentially conservative, and would soon become intellectually and socially stagnant were it not for secular influences operating on it from without. A small contingent of the laity, known as philosophers or reformers, drag the clergy and the women on from the front, while the mass of the laity prod them on from behind. Owing, however, to the dead weight of ignorance fostered by the clergy in the minds of women and children, the progress must necessarily be slow.

To get women married, and to rule the children resulting from the marriage through the mother, has been the sole aim of the clergy in every age. Hence marriage and education are the corner-stones of their domination, and to onst their influence in either is to practically clip their claws. Even Catholic countries have now, nearly all of them, swept away the religious sanction from marriage, the contract being established by mere civil ceremony. The clergy, however, seek to dignify this as much as possible by impressing women with the idea that they are not *legally* married unless in a consecrated edifice with all the mesmeric accompaniments of bridesmaids, bouquets, fine dresses, and voluptuous music. The English common law has never regarded the clergy as other than officials licensed by it to superintend the making of a civil contract, and the formula used at the Registrar's office is what really gives effect to marriage, and not the recital of marriage service. Without the inscription of their names upon the list of duly qualified celebrants at Wellington, no clergyman of any denomination in New Zealand could marry a woman to a man by mere virtue of his clerical character. When a woman goes to be married at church in England or in New Zealand, she may flatter herself that she is being married by a clergyman and being married in a church, but the state is marrying her all the same.

And as the State marries her, so the State lays down the conditions under which her marriage may be dissolved. There is nothing compulsive or obligatory in these. The clergy are raving as if the law were intent upon divorcing couples by force, just as it makes citizens pay the property tax. The law is so logical that it says that the offending consort cannot get a divorce by reason of his or her wrong-doing. It is the consort who suffers, and innocently suffers, who may, if he or she like, apply to get divorced. If that consort's love has not waned, the aid of the courts will never be invoked. The clergy apparently seek to keep persons together when it cannot conduce to the general happiness of the parents or the offspring, and this they do for the reason that they regard marriage as a divine sacrament for which mankind was created, and not as a civil agreement constructed for the convenience of mankind. Strangely, too, the logic of facts is against them, for whenever the procuring of a divorce has been made more easy, their supposed disciples, the wives, have been more inclined to obtain relief than the husbands. This, possibly, shows that men are a bad lot, but since it also proves that women are ceasing to regard the influence of the churches, most men, not clergy, will view the fact as a convenient petard for hoisting the enemy.

THE MESSAGE OF NATURE.

THERE'S a dreamland over here,
Come and see! Come and see!
There's a glory over here,
Come to me! Come to me!
Lay thy head upon my breast,
I will tell thee what is best,
I will tell thee what is best,
Come to me!

There's a sweetness in the air
Over here! Over here!
Everlasting freshness fair
Over here! Over here!
List, my voice! Go tune thy ear,
Beauty's secret thou wilt hear,
Hark! the music of the sphere!
Come to me!

Peace and quiet reign above
Ever more! Ever more!
The beautiful and grand in love
More and more! More and more!
Hear the throbbings of my heart,
Learn the secret of life's art,
It will teach thy soul its part,
Come to me!

ALICE MEREDITH.

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