



*Read & Return to Honer of Pope*  
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**MRS. WOODHULL**

And Her "Social Freedom."

**By AUSTIN KENT.**

AUTHOR OF "FREE LOVE."

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**With An Appendix.**

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## MRS. VICTORIA C. WOODHULL AND HER "SOCIAL FREEDOM."

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BY AUSTIN KENT.

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In view of my article in BANNER OF LIGHT, May 4th, with the heading, "Is Mrs. Woodhull understood?" some friends have asked me, if I could, to state clearly the position of Mrs. W. on the "social" question, and give my views as to its truth or error.

A woman, small in stature, of good countenance, and feminine in manner, took the liberty to think freely, write her thought, and read it to six thousand people,—six thousand more returning to their homes—not finding standing room in the Hall.

In this Lecture, Mrs. Woodhull used no language touching "social freedom" which had not been often used by the best minds, in relation to mental and religious freedom,—yet a host of human hornets were ready to sting her. It was not strange, and was no "disgrace" that many Spiritualists should demur to her positions, and closely, if kindly criticise them. Some Spiritualists are and have been life-long conservatives. But how could any *Spiritualist* condemn free thought and free speech, no matter where they may have led an honest soul! At this we have a right to marvel.

There has been no evidence before the public of anything in Mrs. W.'s past conjugal life which is not generally considered right and proper by Spiritualists. There has been much which is truly praiseworthy. We have no evidence that she is



not as pure in heart, and as disinterested in motive, as the purest and best of her critics. [I here offer Mr. Tilton my warmest thanks for giving us so much of her history.] All disparaging references to Mrs. Woodhull's character and motives have been, to say the least, out of order,—and more than justify the suspicion that the writers found it hard, if not impossible, to meet and rebut her arguments. I insist that it is no “disgrace” for a Spiritualist to be in a *minority of one*,—however radical his or her ideas may be. There can never be too much honorable criticism.

The only questions justly before the public, are—

1. What does Mrs. Woodhull mean? and,
2. Are her views truth, or error?

I understand Mrs. W. to apply the same and only the same principles of freedom to conjugal love that Protestants generally apply to religion. Protestants profess to believe in leaving every man's religion—whether pure or impure, true or false—*free*, except when and where it trespasses on a like freedom in others. Mrs. W. claims no more and no less for conjugal love. In her lectures she has made as clear a distinction between love and lust as any of us can make between pure and impure religion, or between true and false worship. But she thinks it wisest and best to leave both conditions—love and lust—free, with only such exceptions as her opponents generally make on religious matters. She believes that even lust, in spirit and in action, would be less free, and do less harm ultimately, under the reign of her idea of freedom than under our law, as we practically license lust in the marriage bed. We do worse than that, we license a vast deal of rape.

I have never favored, but have always deplored and feared the results of such an application of freedom. Some of the wisest and best men and women living, and in the upper spheres, have viewed the subject as Mrs. W. does. I name Robert Owen, the father of Robert Dale, than whom, few



better men ever lived. I confess I think these people have the reason, the logic, and the argument on their side. They insist that freedom is the best, if not the only soil, in which to grow pure men and pure women. Protestants so hold as to religion.

To illustrate and make Mrs. W.'s meaning very plain, I will imitate her great "disgrace" by asserting what, and only what I believe, namely: That "I have a right to hold any religious faith; to worship one God, many Gods, or no God or Gods; to worship bread, water, or stone; a snake, or a devil, as many have and do; to set up in my house or front yard any number of Gods or images of Gods; or to change my faith and worship daily, or as often as I choose or must." No sane *Protestant* can or will deny this assertion, or find any fault with it. No one can misunderstand it. The assertion does not necessarily imply, as some of Mrs. W.'s opponents have wrongly affirmed, that the person making it holds all these things to be possible. It may be little more than an emphatic manner of saying—*It is no other person's business*—which truly it is not. I have the same "natural right" to *lust* that I have to believe in, fear, and worship a *Snake or a Devil*, and no other, or more. Society has the same right to "control and restrain" me in both cases; and no more or other in the first case than in the last.

Permit me to act the Attorney, not alone or mainly for M<sup>rs</sup>. Woodhull, who has not employed me; but for a legion of minds in the upper spheres who have. I argue the case. Pure love, religious or conjugal, harms no one. Both are of great utility and give great felicity. Is the reader sure, can anybody be sure that undeveloped conjugal or sexual love has caused more misery than corrupt and undeveloped religion? I can safely defy the comparison. But in the case before us it is of no consequence.

I further ask—can you, can I, can anybody be quite sure that the remedy in both cases is not the same? *If our Protes-*



*tant free principles are right, are good, are safe, and are the best thing to promote and hasten the growth of the moral, mental, and religious man—who of us can be quite sure that they are not good, if not as good for the growth and purification of the conjugal man? I am not.* To ask this question is to answer it. We have so soon reached the hard-pan in the argument. I respectfully challenge every man and woman of Mrs. Woodhull's opponents to meet and rebut, or even to essentially weaken the force of our position. Mr. Tuttle, Mrs. King, and others,—lay aside, for a season, your fear for your reputation, and the reputation of spiritualism. It is comparatively of little consequence to *you* about my or Mrs. W.'s character or motives, or whether we are generally logical or "illogical," wise or foolish. Strike directly and squarely, not in anger and abuse, but in argument, at Mrs. W.'s main error, if it be an error. *Prove it an error.* I repeat—your and my premises, religious freedom, being good, the reason, the logic, and the argument are all on the side of Mrs. Woodhull, on the side of more conjugal freedom.

In our fright at the logical results of the Protestant idea of "civil and religious freedom," shall we return to Rome, or shall we give up our scare and press on towards still more freedom? It must ultimately be freedom, as freedom is heaven, is harmony, while despotism is hell.

Our Roman Catholic brothers must, just now, be in a broad grin, in witnessing the extreme feeling among some of us Spiritualists and Radicals at the first full sight of what is resulting, and must result from our Darling Freedom.

I know that only Free-Love, as this term was first used, can save our civilization from its sexual corruptions, its rottenness, and its horrible running sores, both in and out of marriage. But I have always said—"Do not abolish the law of exclusive, dual marriage sooner and faster than you are morally born into the higher law of universal love and justice." I make this point plain in my book, Free-Love, though a few persons



have seemed to overlook it. I now believe that those who go too far against such counsels must suffer deeply and perhaps long. It might have been morally possible to free the slaves without war. They were not. I now doubt if men and women will ever generally regard such counsels on conjugal matters, even if it be morally possible. Some persons can, will and do.

Mrs. Woodhull, Mr. Barry, Mr. Andrews, and many others, offer this gospel of freedom to conjugal "sinners," believing it a sure remedy, if not the best and only remedy possible in the case. I do not know that to most men and women it is not both. I am conscious of still being more or less, on this subject, under the influence of my Puritan *conservative* education. I am, in some degree, in sympathy with all of Mrs. W.'s honorable opponents. But if we do not and cannot adopt the views and course of these good people, let us leave them absolutely free to discuss them, and in no way ape the churches in their greatest injustice and meanness by slandering and persecuting them.

Freedom in religion has done much harm, and in many ways. It has caused much strife and great waste. But it has done vastly less harm than good. It is working, we think, a slow, but sure religious cure. Is the reader sure that there is any other possible road to religious purity and health? Who dare assert that mental progress is possible without freedom?

I have a "natural right" to walk the streets "naked" as did Isaiah, (and as Adam and Eve must have done in the Garden!) While our race are in their present low and undeveloped condition, I think society ought not to permit this. Nobody has argued for allowing such freedom. But if natural rights are *absolutely* "inalienable," such restraint is illogical. In any case, it proves that we only differ from the Catholics as to *when, how often, and in what manner* it is right and expedient for society to control the individual. This is the



only difference between Mrs. W. and her opponents. She may not know this any more than they do, or more than they see that there is no other difference between them and the Roman Catholics. It is a question as to more or less freedom.

I was for "woman's rights" forty (40) years ago, and before those words were so used. She has as good a right to the ballot as man. Yet I have little doubt that "woman's rights" and "social freedom" with their present meaning, will, for an indefinite time, increase the sufferings of both sexes. I am more sure that both must ultimate in greater good to all. I am sorry the first must be so, I am sorry nature and the Gods could not give us a less rough road to health, harmony, and Heaven. *Experience* is sometimes, a very dear school, but most people will learn in no other.

On love and marriage Protestants and Catholics are nearly on the same plane, which is *Roman*. If our idea and practice—so far as it goes—of "religious liberty" is better than Rome's religious despotism, it is safe to say, Mrs. W.'s "social freedom" *may* be better than our and Rome's, at the best, *conjugal semi-despotism*. Theodore Tilton—a superior man—plead for the removal of this despotism, and a thousand human blood-hounds were on his track. Must we now see Protestants and even semi-radicals and reformers fight "social freedom" with the same weapons, and much in the same manner and spirit as Rome has long fought "religious freedom?" It is sickening!!

Mrs. Woodhull believes that a more conjugal freedom will ultimate in less promiscuity, in more permanent loves,—and finally in monogamy, or much nearer to it than we now are. If human nature was created, designed, or formed for exclusive dual relations, in its highest and best man and womanhood, that must be the issue. If it was not, it is folly, it is madness to seek and expect it. True love is *abiding*—not fickle. Mrs. W. would free woman from all *forced* relations. Few persons are willing openly to oppose this. It cannot be wrong.



I have as good a right to judge of what will promote my own happiness in conjugal as in religious matters. I said society has no more right to restrain the action of my conjugal love than my religious love. In neither should a man be permitted to trespass on the equal rights of all others, Judge Holbrook argues that society has the right to "restrain" the individual from doing that which is not "for the highest good of the greatest number." *Rome* thinks it for the highest good of the greatest number to crush out nearly all mental and religious freedom. I am glad the Judge believes in a good degree of mental freedom, even though it makes him inconsistent and illogical. Since if he held the same views of mental freedom that he does of conjugal freedom, and had the power, my "fun" in writing and in seeing this article in print must have been spoiled. The same applies with equal force to many other of Mrs. W.'s opponents. When steeped down, the main question seems to come to just this: "*When, and how far may the majority, or the more powerful, enforce their opinions of what is "for the highest good of the greatest number" upon the minority or weaker party; and how much may they punish or rob one man a little to bless and give another man more?*" I here hold up the glass without comment.

It is notorious that our laws do not allow conjugal freedom as they do religious freedom. Josh Houses are built and furnished with images of gods, and no one objects. Our constitution allows and defends it. Men are permitted to leave one church and join another daily and freely, or to renounce all churches and all religion. On the other hand, if one attempts to live a bigamist or polygamist, all parties being in harmony, he is furnished a home in a State's Prison. If a man is even *suspected* by some jealous, tyrannical and brutal husband, of trespassing on *his* exclusive conjugal claims, even by the free consent and choice of the other party, he is liable to be shot down in the streets, and the murderer may escape conviction, if not a trial. Possibly he may go on some honorable foreign mission.



Mrs. Woodhull comes out in a sharp and forcible protest against such laws and such public opinion, and demands the same conjugal freedom that our laws give us on religious matters.

Judge J. W. Edmonds protests against Mrs. W. with more than common *feeling* for him. Many others do the same. Judge E. C. Holbrook writes about a page, in all, in the Religio Philosophical Journal. I have read and re-read both of the Judge's articles, and I find no word or sentence in which he would make conjugal love less free than religious and money matters. He asserts "that all matters pertaining to love and marriage are as much proper subjects of control and restraint by law as any other." "*As much.*" Who objects to this? He only asks to put love "on a par with other natural rights," with "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I so understand him. Then why these five columns?! Where has Mrs. Woodhull asked for *more* conjugal freedom than our constitution grants and secures to *religious* freedom?

Does the Judge tell us Mrs. W. states her principles of conjugal freedom in broad and unlimited terms? I ask, has she done this more so than does the United States Constitution on religious freedom, or than nine-tenths of our lecturers on religious freedom? I assert that if Mrs. W. had used the same language touching religious freedom, many of her now opponents would have eulogized her. Judge Holbrook, I am obliged to conclude that you would not allow as much conjugal as religious freedom; or that you wrote that whole page under a misconception. I have no doubt the first is true. And here is where the thing rubs with you and with others who have written much, as you have.

I call for close quarters and for more stern logic. We ought not to complain of a "woman's" want of logic, and then outdo her in loose, random, and illogical composition. In case the sect you alluded to had taken the liberty to



worship "naked" in their own private meetings would you have Government imprison them? A writer in the Index suggests the supposable case of "a woman of the town" who might propose to walk the streets naked to advertise her business. There is no difference of opinion as to what is proper in such cases. But the fact that Mrs. W.'s opponents have been driven to hunt up such imaginary, such exceptional, extreme, and almost morally impossible cases to illustrate their dissent from what they imagine to be her position, is, to say the least, a very strong argument in her favor. "Isaiah" could not be permitted to walk *our* streets naked even if he should say "God commanded it," or that his *religion* required it. I do not affirm or deny that there are any *absolutely* "inalienable rights." No government allows any.

Judge Holbrook says he took up his pen in this controversy for "fun." I offer him the "fun" of replying to what he cannot overlook as the main arguments in this article. I invite all who have complained of Mrs. Woodhull's want of logic, to test their own logic by confuting the logic in this article. If my friend A. E. Newton is essentially my opponent, I ask him to show wherein.

Since some of Mrs. W.'s opponents are fond of looking up exceptional cases, I must gratify them with one on our side. There are, at this time, two beautiful and good twin sisters in an Asylum in our state from broken hearts. Both loved one boy. He loved both girls, and would gladly have taken both. Neither could take him at the expense of the other. Our laws and public opinion were inexorable. I have the charity for Judge H. to believe that he would gladly give that boy a permit to marry both girls if the law gave him the right to do it. My "fun" is up. The reader must have another. A boy was in love, and courting twins, supposing he was courting but one girl. *They* first saw his mistake, and arranged a meeting for the first time in his presence. One of them asked, "Which of us have you meant to court?" He



said, "I cannot tell." She asked, "Which do you love and desire to marry?" He said, "Both." None of them are married or insane.

Some Spiritualists have expressed a desire to humble Mrs W. and her friends. That is impossible. None of us can humble anybody but ourselves. Possibly you may divide the Spiritualists' ranks by forming *Sectarian* organizations.

If Spiritualists ever divide, it must be into *conservatives* and *radicals*. The conservatives must do it by leaving the radicals. In the late excitement I see some who are getting lost, and must yet retrace their steps. If the division must come, I would gladly aid all in determining their true home.

From my standpoint, Judge J. W. Edmonds has been a life-long conservative. From *his* I must be an extreme Radical, and more likely a fanatic. Only a moral miracle could bring us to see eye to eye on the love question. In this we are not an unfair representation of the mass of Spiritualists. The Judge and myself are both old enough to be wise. He is my senior in years. I am older as a Spiritualist. Since my conversion to the modern idea of spiritualism dates back thirty-three years this September, 1872. I had held more or less intelligent and useful communication with unseen intelligences during fifteen years previous. I have been forty years an abolitionist. I was in entire sympathy with Mr. Garrison, then with John Brown, even in his raid on Virginia. When all other means seemed sure to fail, I did what I could to get up our late terrible war, believing and feeling that even such a war was less bad, less terrible than the perpetuity of American Slavery. When the pinch of war came, and our government showed signs of a disposition to abolish Slavery, I freely gave my only son (only child) to fight its battles. *I was then confined to my bed and chair, and knew this must be for life.*

When war threatened, Judge Edmonds used his large influence to prevent, or rather, to suspend it—as it would have



proved only that—by dividing the Union, and so leaving the slaves to their fate; and this, when we had long held them for their masters to rivet their chains. I write this from no disrespect to the Judge. I have respected him for forty years, and even when I felt the deepest grief at his course. Through the aid of Washington, he has seen and confessed his error in the one act referred to. But if he had not, I have ever viewed him as an honest man, and perhaps as true to his mental organization as I have been to mine. The blacks were a part of me. For thirty years I had daily heard their prayers and their groans. I never could see color when looking at humanity. I had fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children in slavery. Had the Judge's natural father, mother, wife and children been in slavery, he would have felt and acted as I did. In that case, instead of an effort to escape the responsibilities of slavery by dividing the Union, he too, would have been in heart and in head "a John Brown man."

On conjugal matters, I have personally experienced only harmony. But my close relation to all human sufferings has forced me to feel deeply and to think deeply on such matters. From the plane of the Judge, I am sure he must have thought John Brown "insane," as some of his old comrades have thought him "insane," and as he and others now think Mrs. Woodhull something worse than that, if not that. Had he read my letters, one to Governor Wise of Virginia, another to Salmon P. Chase, then Governor of Ohio, in those stirring times, he, no doubt, would have thought *me* insane. There is no use in mincing words here. If Judge Edmonds and those on his plane have always and do represent the highest and purest sanity on *humane and reformatory* subjects, the writer and those on his plane, have not and do not. If the pro-slavery churches—North and South—in their inhuman and hellish perseverance in defense of slavery, were samples of strict sanity as they always claimed to be, Mr. Garrison and his



friends were not ; they were more or less insane. If the pro-slavery politicians who did so much to make the war necessary, and then so much to protract it, till our sacrifices in men and in means were enormous, were samples of sane heads and sane hearts, the men who were the most for freedom were not.

We may and must forgive, but we never can, we never ought to ignore or forget, especially not while the same spirit lives in all its force and power. The past should be a monitor and a warning to the present, and the future. If an extreme sense of injustice, and extreme sympathy with sufferers is incompatible with the best sanity, the writer has known little of the best.

Before our son left for the war, in the presence of his captain, I said to him, "If you are required to return a fugitive slave," (it had been done, and was against all laws of war) "respectfully but firmly decline. If your officer insists and attempts to force you to it, sooner than obey, shoot him." What man who is not less than human would not choose death rather than aid in enslaving his own parents and near friends? Does or does not strict sanity require one to do by other people's parents and friends what any man not beneath the brute would do by his own? It has been well said, that "the insane and fanatics of yesterday are often the wise men of to-day, and may be the saints and sages of to-morrow."

Judge Edmonds' daughter was, and probably is in the Roman Catholic Church. Her father desired her to remain there. This is no doubt, right and wise for him and for her. A true daughter of the writer could not live in that church, and hardly better in any orthodox Protestant Church.

Dear reader, when the division comes, if come it must, and you know yourself to be conservative in the blood, go *from* Mrs. Woodhull and her friends. If you are radical in the blood, go with her and them, and may the Gods be merciful to both radicals and conservatives. All are his children, or nature's product.



*Tennie C. Claflin* said—in substance—in a lecture, “We have tried to make ‘rake’ as disgraceful as ‘whore.’ We cannot do it. And now we are determined to take the disgrace out of ‘whore.’ This, to me, is awfully just. It ought to go into the next edition of Mr. Stebbins’ book,—“The Bible of the Ages.” I shout over its real meaning,—*Amen and Amen!* In nothing has woman so disgraced herself and shown her weakness as in cursing her sex, her sisters for even one lapse from legal virtue, while she fawns upon, courts, and, seemingly, will about as soon marry the known libertine. These curses on one side and fawning on the other more often come from those who have the least real purity. In view of woman’s dependence I forgive her. But I bless any and every woman who has the moral courage to free herself and to try to free her sex from such abject and degrading mental slavery. Diabolically insane is that public opinion which sustains such injustice, and all to “keep marriage respectable!” What a host of comparatively innocent and pure spirits, compared to many in marriage, and compared to most of her sharpest accusers, have been and are being offered on this altar!

There is nothing more infamously insane than that public opinion which holds a child disgraced because its parents had no license from a Priest or Justice to make children—because it came into the world illegally. By the laws of God and nature “illegitimacy” is impossible. Such public opinion is only madness. This same public permits a man to beget any number of children in the marriage bed by virtual rape, and covers his act with respectability. We are urged to believe that such society has a great regard for true love and real purity. (I believe it still true that “harlots” stand a better chance for heaven than prudes and Pharisees. Jesus was right.)

I here tell those children whose parents were considered disorderly in their begetting, that they are in the very best of



company. I name a *Farragut*, than whom perhaps a wiser and better sailor and officer never rode the sea,—and an Abraham Lincoln, than whom but few better men have lived, and no wiser or better man ever sat in the President's chair at Washington.

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NOTE.—This article was not written to *prove* that freedom is better than despotism, hence does not claim to meet the Roman mind. The writer has no idea of going over a controversy of some hundred or more years. But if the reader is a believer in mental and religious freedom, let him write or get some able believer to write his principles of religious freedom, and then write his strong reasons, his logic and arguments in support of said principles, and he will have Mrs. W.'s and her friends' reasons and arguments for conjugal freedom. I concede to Rome that religious despotism may make the best bigots and the best slaves. But I deny that it makes the best men, best women, and best society.

Does any one attempt to brake the force of the logic in the body of this article by denying all essential analogy between the religious and conjugal brain, I can only here notify him that I sell a *Book*, the price of which is 80 cents, post-paid, which demonstrates the correctness of such analogy, and annihilates all arguments against it. I will mail the work for less to those who feel unable to pay so much. The work,—“FREE LOVE”—has been pronounced by some of the best minds among whom were some of its opponents, to be one of the deepest and most logical works ever published in America.

My dear reader,—after enduring a life of uncommon physical suffering, all from hereditary causes, *I have now been confined to my bed and chair over fifteen years, and fed ten years*; cause, inflammatory rheumatism. My knees are fastened as one sits in his chair. My hands cannot be got nearer than one foot of my face. *I can do nothing but write*, and that in much pain. My right hand thumb and forefinger are fastened as one holds the pen. I am past sixty-three; but I think I feel the mental weakness of most men eighty or over. My memory fails, and I ask the reader to overlook any marks of this weakness which he may discover.

AUSTIN KENT.

Stockholm. St. Lawrence Co., New York,  
Sept. 1872.



## APPENDIX.

Since writing this article, Mrs. Woodhull writes ;—" To me the distinction between what the individual has and has not an absolute right to control is very clear and well defined. Anything which does not involve others, the individual controls absolutely. Anything that involves two individuals, they control absolutely ; and so on up to and including the whole community." In reply to my reference to Judge Holbrook's suggestion that a sect might think it their duty to worship "naked," Mrs. Woodhull says :—" The individual has an absolute right to go naked in his own room. Two individuals in the same room have the right if agreed. But mark, the *streets* belong not to individuals, but to the public, and the public has a right to regulate it as a public, the same as an individual has a right to regulate his own room or house. The individual is not only the individual, but also a part of the community ; and in matters over which the community has the right of control the individual is lost in the larger body. Hence I do not see that there are any individual rights that are not, or ought not to be "inalienable," since besides those rights there are also community rights which are "just as inalienable as they are." If any of Mrs. Woodhull's opponents have made as clear a statement of principles on this subject, I have overlooked it. It is *very good*. I challenge Mrs. W.'s opponents to write a criticism against its application to conjugal freedom which will not bear against the Protestant idea of "civil and religious freedom" as well. Still it is not always clear to me, when and where to apply these principles.

Have I or have I not an "inalienable" right to cut short my stay in the body ? Who allows it ? I know of no right more "inalienable" or more absolute than the right of woman to choose the father of her children. If, after bearing one or more children by one man, a woman thinks herself capable of making a wiser and better choice, it is her right to choose again, and possibly again. If one woman has a right to sell, give, or for any reason, bargain away the conjugal use of her body for life to one man, another has a right to do the same for any less time to another man. If society is bound to protect the first in her right, it ought to protect the last as well. If Mrs. Hardinge-Britten demurs at this last statement, (I have heard that she does,) I invite her to criticise it in some *free paper*.

Do you tell us the "influence" of such a course is bad on society and very bad on exclusive marriage ? I am not discussing my own







## WOODHULL AND BEECHER.

Feb., 1873.

Whether Mrs. Woodhull was right or wrong in exposing Mr. Beecher's past life, the Beechers had cut off *their* right to even censure her for it. She was in the wake of a great, a Beecher example. Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe had published more infamous charges against Byron and his sister. Mrs. Stowe wrote of the dead who could not defend themselves. Mrs. Woodhull wrote of the living who can defend themselves if innocent, and she gave them every chance to do it. But there is now no doubt of their substantial truth—Mr. Beecher did not censure his sister for her article on Byron.

The Rev. Charles Voysey (a popular, but radical clergyman in England,) in F. E. Abbott's *Index*, writing on "The good of Moral Evil," says, "You may keep people in order by laws, by threats of punishment, and by swift and impartial administration of justice. But these methods of getting people to behave well, do not necessarily make people good. On the contrary, the tendency of these methods is to keep them from knowing that there is such a thing as real goodness at all." Mr. V. admits the necessity of more or less of these law measures, but asserts that using these means alone is to "leave out the core and kernel, and to plant only the shell." ° ° He says "We have not really given them *liberty*." If we "withhold liberty" we "make real goodness for the time being impossible." ° ° "Liberty is the first essential of real goodness." ° ° "If we are to become good at all, we can only become good of our own free choice, and we cannot intelligently choose between right and wrong until we have tried both and know what we are doing." In abridging I have not mis-stated Mr. Voysey's meaning. It is so far the Protestant argument for the necessity of freedom on all subjects to real mental or moral progress. It is exactly *Mrs. Woodhull's* doctrines, or principles. The elder Owen (now dead,) Andrews, Barry, and a host of others, mean just this, and no more.

EXTRACTS OF PRIVATE LETTERS FROM PARKER PILLSBURY  
TO A FRIEND.

TOLEDO, Ohio, Nov. 5, 1872.

*My Dear Friend* :—What are they doing to Victoria, the brave? Are those charges against that Wall-Street broker true, do you, can you believe? If so, though she die and rot in Ludlow-Street Jail, she will yet be enshrined as a martyr worthy of more honor than all the victims of St. Bartholomew's day together.



If what she charges on that man be true, what young girl is safe one moment? Better they be enjungled with tigers and hyenas, or encaved with adders and rattlesnakes! What father, what mother of daughters does not kindle into fiery indignation at such atrocity? To believe a mortal being ever made up such a chapter of horrors is simply awful! To know that such had been an actual transaction by man or fiend, is to mark an epoch in the annals of guilt, shame and crime that bleaches all I ever heard before into innocence.

If the revelations of that one man be true, no matter though Mrs. Woodhull were an imp of hell, the age owes her a debt of gratitude. She should have a monument of polished, Parian marble, as high as Trinity steeple, and every father and mother of daughters, should be proud to contribute each a stone. If her conscience approve what she has done, no matter now what she may suffer. If she have not borne any false witness in this affair, though she may hang, as did John Brown, like him also she shall be immortal, as her soul also "goes marching on."

Hastily, but truly yours,

PARKER PILLSBURY.

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SALEM, Ohio, Feb. 6, 1873.

It seems to me that the last WEEKLY is the most remarkable and most valuable newspaper ever printed. There is but one word in it which I regret. There is but one word in Paine's Age of Reason which I deplore. There are many in the Bible which I should loathe did I care anything about them, or the book itself, one way or another.

The word I dislike is near the bottom of twelfth page. "Living Lion" is good; the other *baste* is no good. Sumner once called his *odorous* name in the Senate. I want the tone of the WEEKLY to be dignified and lofty as the Majesty of God. Were I living in or near New York, I certainly would go and give it one day in the week, could I make its appearance, in some respects, a little more presentable—not its matter, but its mechanical and artistic appearance. I presume it has to be hurried up as amid the flame of battle, and cannot stand much on the matter of music nor mode of advance; secure only, as it ever aims to be, against retreat or surrender.

I heard yesterday that the name of Mrs. Woodhull was blasphemed in the call for the recent Woman Suffrage Convention at Washington, it being said: "Mrs. Woodhull has not been invited, is not expected to attend."

I would not have signed such a call to save that accursed city from the fate and fire of Sodom.



Perhaps, did I know Mrs. Woodhull better, *I might like her worse*. But she is now the most outraged, persecuted woman I ever saw. And so far as I can learn of her manner, temper, spirit, she is sublimely brave, noble, heroic—more worthy a martyr's fame and crown than any woman the nineteenth century has yet produced! I don't care who knows that as the honest opinion of

PARKER PILLSBURY.

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SALEM, Ohio, Feb. 13, 1873.

At the opening of the rebellion I lost caste with Garrison for adherence to Wendell Phillips. At the close of the war Phillips anathematized me for going with the *Revolution* for women; not against, but along with the negro suffrage. Phillips contending then that it was "not woman's, but the Negro's hour."

And forfeiting the favor of the two chieftains, of all the anti-slavery clans, I lost, of course, the friendship of their followers but I should have to do the same thing over again were the same events to transpire which then impelled me.

Suffrage seems now almost assured, and other questions, more momentous now press their claims.

Mrs. Woodhull, unexpectedly doubtless to herself, as well as to everybody else is the fulcrum for the triune question of free speech, free press and free religion; and as such, I regard her at this moment as the most important woman on the globe. No other represents so many of the most vital interest of human destiny; and standing serenely, nobly brave as she now to me appears; contending in truly divine spirit and earnestness for the highest, holiest of human rights, rights of men as well as women; whatever of influence I have or can have, with men or gods, shall all be cheerfully given in her behalf.

You ask if you may print part of a letter of mine. I write no more for newspapers not even for the *Index*—but you may, if it is worth it, print anything of mine of general or public interest. It is no time to be afraid or ashamed of one's self or sentiments. Faithfully and truly yours,

PARKER PILLSBURY.



# WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

BY MRS. WOODHULL.

The question whether Spiritualism is humanitarian or sectarian is at length fairly launched. The same question that has divided and subdivided religious sects until they now number themselves by hundreds near unto thousands, is at work in Spiritualism. Protestantism, it seems, has not yet completed its work. There must still be more protests and more divisions and more new formations of so-called religious organizations.

But here another question arises, and it is this: Shall we never reach a religion from which there can be no division? We unhesitatingly answer, Yes? but not until the religion that is reached be as broad as humanity, reaching downward as low as the lowest devil, and upward as high as the highest angel.

The fact that a question of division has arisen among Spiritualists is proof as clear as the noon-day sun that Spiritualism, as understood by some, is not the final religion; is not that complete and rounded-to-fullness faith which shall stand the test of all time and satisfy the soul of every human being. Hence those who call themselves Spiritualists, and at the same time endeavor to shut out any part of humanity from that Spiritualism; or to shut out from their Spiritualism the consideration of any humanitarian question—any question which deeply and virtually interests any part of the great human family—by so doing, put forth their best efforts to demonstrate that Spiritualism is not the final and perfect Ism to which all nations kindred and tongues shall finally come.

There are even those who deem it requisite to fashion a measure, by which to test those who pretend to be Spiritualists, to prove them worthy or unworthy to be admitted to close communion. That is to say; a class of people calling themselves Spiritualists assume to themselves the authority and right to determine who may and who may not be Spiritualists. Was there ever a sect of so-called Christians more sectarian than that class? Nevertheless, some of its orators stand on the rostrum and declare that Spiritualism is the true religion, and is large enough to take in all humanity; and the very next time they speak, with all the affected virtue of the veriest Pharisee, they assert that "Spiritualism has nothing to do with side issues." Now, in the name of common sense, and in the name of a common



humanity, we would like to ask this class of teachers, What are "side issues," in a question that is boundless—that is large enough for the whole human family?

But, says one, "Spiritualism as a religion has nothing to do with the social question." Ah! our good friend, then, there is a question that doesn't belong to the sphere of a religion that is as large as humanity. "Besides," says another, "Spiritualism can't carry more than it has already on its back. It can't take on the Social Question." Then, our good friend, you confess, and unblushingly too, that your Spiritualism is so weak that it can't stand the truth, let it be what it may, and lead where it may. Is that what you mean? Do you have the effrontery to pretend that you have a religion that is afraid of truth, afraid to investigate, afraid to take up the advocacy of any important question? Is that what you really mean to have the world understand your Spiritualism consists of? And you, for the last twenty years, have been condemning the same thing in Churchites! What better are ye than they?

The churches said they could not stand Spiritualism—did not dare to investigate it—did not even dare to have it known that any of their members visited mediums; and you laughed them to scorn—even felt a contempt for their foolishness, their weakness, their lack of manhood and womanhood; yet, now that a new question has risen under the sun—no newer to you than Spiritualism was to them—you, forgetting your scoffs and contempts, place yourselves in the same position you so recently condemned in others—become your own condemnation.

For our part we never see a professing Spiritualist assume this position without a blush of shame mantling our cheeks, that any who have been brave enough to become spiritualist should become too cowardly to face any truth, to investigate any question, and especially to see them ignore the social question.

Of all questions having the most vital of all interests, this one stands pre-eminent. It is that one in which every human being is more deeply interested than in any other. It is as much more vital and important than is the mere knowledge that we live after physical death, as the fact of perfection in body, mind and soul, is more important than the means by which imperfect bodies, minds and souls can be made to endure life—to say nothing about its enjoyment. It is all very well to have an elegantly furnished house; but a much more important thing to have a good house to furnish. It is even better to have a good house even poorly furnished than to have a bad house so well furnished as to be tumbled in ruins by its own weight,



which is the fact of most of our physical bodies—tenements in which the spirit dwells.

We would not have it understood that we undervalue the immense benefit to the human family that the knowledge of spirit life will bring. By no means. We have spent to many blessed hours in its contemplation; felt too often the sweetness and the blessedness of spirit presence; and too often communed with those who would otherwise be as though lost. But what we do mean, and what we would be understood as meaning, is: that however beautiful and glorious the truth of continuous life may be, we should not lose sight of more basic *questions* in its contemplation; should not become intoxicated with its loveliness, and permit the day to pass and do no work; or the night to approach and find us where we were when the day came.

Spiritualism, in the sense in which we fear too many regard it, is the most intensely selfish religion that has ever come to man. In the self-satisfaction that comes to the individual, when he regards his future life as assured, he loses all thought of and regard for the coming generation. What good will it do to the unborn millions, that you revel in the consciousness that you were not to die and be no more? We sometimes wonder that Spiritualists can so thoroughly surrender themselves to this idea. It is quite too much like the old-school religionists, who sing of their city the New Jerusalem, with its streets of silver and palaces of gold, forgetting the groaning millions in hell-fire beneath. "It is all right with me; what care I for any body else?" is the same in the Spiritualist as in the Sectarian.

Now, we would have our Spiritualism something very different from this stuff, which is unworthy to be tolerated by a professedly large-souled people. While basking in the sunshine of spirit existence, we would also turn earthward and inquire: What of those who shall come after us? Are we preparing easier and better roads for them to travel than were those in which we have travelled? And are we also making such preparation and improvement as shall insure that they have vehicles better than we have in which to travel? Are we endeavoring to replace the old and unsightly stage coaches and slow ox-carts by the luxurious palace car and the swift express?

These are the vital questions for the true humanitarian to be endeavoring to answer; to be, when solved, adorned by the beauties that are being showered upon the world from the homes of the angels; and it is to these that we would invite all Spiritualists. No reform can ever eventuate in great and lasting good to the world unless it begin to reform where the evil to be reformed begins. Now our idea of reform is this: Reform for the world means a better class



of men and women. Unless there can be better men and women, then there is no reform; and men and women cannot be very much better than they now are, unless they are first conceived by better conditions, gestated under better circumstances, and grown through better treatment. Perfect these three processes and there must necessarily be perfect men and women. Heretofore the direct issues of these several things have been either evaded or ignored. The realm in which they dwell has been considered one into which no modest person could enter. But the time has come in which it must be proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the land, that no modest person can refuse to enter this realm, and to do whatever lies in his or her power to correct its heretofore utterly neglected functions. These have been performed in ignorance and darkness, quite too long. It is time that they be brought out into the light—into the sunshine, which gives health and strength, and be thoroughly analyzed and perfectly understood by every person before they shall ever dare to assume them.

Has Spiritualism nothing to do with this greatest-of-all questions? Has it nothing to do with making humanity purer and better?—nothing to do with making it brighter, happier, and more as the spirit world would have it, before it enters their domain? Surely they have too much imperfection with which to deal. Surely they would have this mundane sphere better perform its work. Then say no more that Spiritualism has nothing to do with the social question; but rather let it seize hold of it and drag it up from its present daubed and filthy condition, and plant it on the throne, where all must worship at its shrine and obey its mandates.

#### AN ENGLISH VIEW OF MRS. WOODHULL AND HER WORK.

The subjoined letter, from an English correspondent, puts the case as looked upon from his standpoint, in clear and unmistakable language :

EDITORS BANNER OF LIGHT: *Sirs*—May I be allowed to say, briefly, a word on the recent speeches of Mrs. Victoria C. Woodhull, and her sister, Miss Tennie Claflin, and how they are received by those I come in contact with here in England?

These speeches have, I believe, caused considerable sensation in the States, and here they have caused many surprising statements of opinions. In England, as in the States, in some cases, they have been replied to by being abused; but also, in *many* other cases, they have caused people to think over subjects that had hitherto been taken as a matter of course. In fact, I do not think I am overstating the fact when I say they have caused a revolution in private social thought—private, I mean, so far as



simple conversation goes; for we have not had yet any one who has been bold enough to imitate your New York business ladies, and take up and discuss the matter on a public platform; yet, from what has come under my own notice, I am sure these opinions are becoming more prevalent, and they are only kept in private life because of the fact that, as yet, they are new, novel and unfashionable. Nevertheless, I do believe these ideas are growing stronger each day. It is not for me to speak of the value of the arguments that are put forward, or yet here discuss them; I have my own opinion concerning them, and only hope they may be well ventilated and discussed, and their truth and morality tested. It must be acknowledged by all that Mrs. Woodhull has raised some grave social problems, and that she has struck at the very root of one of the most universal of social customs. Whether her views are right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, must be or ought to be proved.

I think it is well for us all to follow the truth, let it lead where it may, and that no consideration of policy ought to prevent us meeting honestly any question that can be fairly put before us. I altogether deprecate the manner some take of answering inconvenient arguments, viz. by abuse; and think that no philosophic or truth-loving mind will so act; but, on the contrary, for the sake of mankind and humanity, I trust all free-thinkers will lose no opportunity of condemning this style of reasoning, and give every argument on whatever subject, and coming from whomsoever it may, a fair field and no favor.

I am interested in the discussing of this subject, and hope it will be thoroughly examined, and that, during the examination, we shall all avoid the unseemly and ignoble style of calling names.

Let Mrs. Woodhull be right or wrong, in this age of progressive principles and freedom she can claim a respectful and fair hearing, to deny her which will be unjust on our part. For myself—and I might speak for many others of my own personal acquaintance—I do publicly thank her for bringing the question before the people, and I cannot but admire the plucky, brave and fearless manner in which she has dared to advocate and expound what she seems to honestly think the right, in the face of the fact that it is unfashionable. It is just possible that courage may consist in other acts than facing a battery or leading a forlorn hope, and also it is just possible that general opinion may be wrong, and the views held by "society" decidedly pernicious.

Apologizing for intruding upon your space, yet feeling it almost a duty ask you to insert this letter,

I am, dear sir, yours, etc.,

ROBERT J. KENDALL.

4 Catherine Terrace,  
Burley Fields, Leeds, Eng. }







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