

MUST WOMAN EMANCIPATE HERSELF?

The great German Socialist, Bebel, in his book entitled "Woman," introduces the startling statement that woman was the first human being to taste bondage. And that her enslaver was her brother, Man.

Bebel further says that woman can no more expect that man will free her than that the working class may expect to be freed by the capitalist class.

What are women to do about the situation? This is a question that deserves serious consideration. * * *

And evidently it is receiving it from the women themselves. There are 8,000,000 women in the federated clubs of the world who are seeking, first of all, for self-expression. For woman's right to live and work and exercise her functions as a human being.

Just how the women expect finally to attain their ends, perhaps they themselves do not know. But they are gaining round, step by step, and as they make gains their visions and demands increase. Eventually they must be for full and complete emancipation—intellectual, political and economic. And working the problem out themselves will give them fuller control of their powers when their freedom finally comes.

In his "Social Revolution" Kautsky says that revolution is only revolution when it "proceeds from an hitherto oppressed class." Reforms, then, may be made by men which will alleviate the physical condition of women, political rights may be granted them, industrial equality may be thrust upon them, by the sex that has held them in bondage so long, but these would not mean to woman what self-emancipation would mean. And for this reason; the woman who does not realize her slavery, who does not work for its abolition, cannot use her freedom intelligently when it comes to her.

A "man's Utopia," a "man's co-operative commonwealth," a "man's Socialism," might bring to woman ease and comfort, but not necessarily an awakened social consciousness. The actual work of the world could be done by men and machinery. Robbed by the factory of her old-time home employment, and unawakened to political and civic issues, woman would be reduced to a luxury, dependent through her sex upon the whims of men for support.

Such a reduction of woman to sex-parasitism would mean calamity to the social organism.

Yet there are men who, contrary to Bebel, insist that women keep their peace until men shall obtain for them the ease and comforts of a better society.

Such argument is out of joint with reason. First, men cannot inaugurate a better society except they do it in harmony with evolution, and evolution today means the inclusion of women in social affairs. Second, the inclusion of women in social affairs means social consciousness, which comes only through experience and mental awakening.

How essential it is, then, that women arrive at this social consciousness, that they may help direct the affairs of the world, no small part of which will be the wiping out of all sex bondage, both that of the "protected" woman and that of the unfortunate sister of the street.—The Progressive Woman.