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EDITORIAL

UNIVERSAL “MODERNISM.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE dust of the recent suffrage battle, when Suffragists and Anti-Suffragists gathered from far and wide, and clashed at Albany with the Legislature as umpire, having settled, there remains on the field one fact that raises the incident to “world-wide significance.” That fact lay in the pro-suffrage activity of the Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw.

Miss Shaw is a minister. On Sundays the lady steps into the pulpit and preaches out of the Bible. If there is one subject upon which there is no palpable discord between one passage in the Bible and another that subject is the status of woman. Whether in the Old or the New Testament, the language is generally explicit upon the subaltern position, one may even say the subject position, of woman. Step-motherly as the Old Testament treats her, she fares not materially different in the New, of whose tenets especially Miss Shaw is an ordained spokesman. No less an authority than St. Paul proclaims that man was not created for the woman, “but the woman for the man”; he orders her not to speak, she being “commanded to being under obedience,” nor must she be “suffered to teach” but “to be in silence.” And the Church Fathers, with St. Chrysostom leading, describe woman as an “evil,” an evil which St. Chrysostom qualifies in one passage as “necessary”{and} in another as “painted”; he looks upon her as a “temptation,” he designates her a “calamity,” he describes her as a “domestic peril,” and he warns against her as a “deadly fascination.” Such is the “philosophy” concerning woman of the creed that the Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw preaches. Yet Miss Shaw is a suffragist, a leading suffragist, one of the most earnest, effective and brilliant.

Does the Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw realize the contradiction of her posture? If she did, her instance would have no special significance. She would then simply be rankable among the vulgar horde of hypocrites. She certainly does not belong

there. Hence the lady's deep significance.

Correctly did Auguste Comte point out that, whereas in lower stages of life, evolution takes place regardless and without the knowledge and assistance of the living body, in the upper, or Man, stage of life, evolution is materially aided by Man himself. The conditions under which lower life exists are transformed by themselves; at the Man stage he has much, though not everything, to say in the evolution of the conditions in which he lives. The Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw illustrates the Comtian maxim, together with its limitations.

The appearance of Miss Shaw's powerful personality on the evolutionary stage of social conditions, she "taking evolution by the hand" and mightily contributing in shaping these conditions, illustrates the Comtian maxim regarding the share taken by higher life in the evolutionary process. The contradictory posture of that same powerful personality—as a minister preaching from a text that decrees woman's "silence"; as a limb of society, resistlessly advocating a principle that repeals the decree—illustrates the limitations of the Comtian maxim. However high the stage of life, still there clings to it some of the features of the lower. It pushes, true enough; but is itself pushed by forces it knows not of, by forces it is so little aware of that, as in the instance of the Suffragist Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, it is not infrequently driven to amazing contradictions

It is not the Roman Catholic Church alone that is in the throes of a Modernist upheaval. As in that church pious elements and its leading intellects, the "Modernists," are moving obedient to a resistless Evolutionary Force, so everywhere else. Everywhere, the sensitive elements of society are on the move—blindly, for a spell, during which one part of their being clashes, at war with the other part; presently open-eyed when they became ONE with themselves.

Modernism is the feature of our century.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org