

ARTICLE VII.

SENTIMENTAL SOCIOLOGY.

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SOCIOLOGY may be called the modern fad. The student a thousand years hence who reviews the literature of the last quarter of this century will find that word the key to its thought and life. Novels are based on it, newspapers are filled with it, and the pulpit teems with it. We would not lay one straw in its progress nor become a detractor from its glory—rather we hail it as a harbinger of a renaissance of Christianity. The modern pulpit has heard the same voice that called to Zaccheus, "Come down," and, coming down, has found the Christ, not so much among theological quibbles as sociological problems. The theological seminary has done nothing more in sympathy with the spirit of Jesus, or more fraught with hope for the future, than when by the side of systematic theology it has placed systematic sociology. It is high time that every pulpit became a "Chair of Applied Christianity." Let no man accuse me of being an enemy of sociology; for I doubt if any follow it with keener interest or more intense sympathy. Because I love it and am wrapped up in its triumphs, I am quick to perceive its danger. The damage that may be done by a machine when diverted from its purpose is in proportion to its power; and the dangers that attend sociology are in direct ratio to its possibilities; hence, when we point out its danger, we also magnify its power and possibilities.

The danger into which the modern sociology has run,

is the denial of the freedom of man's will. Everywhere there is a tendency to explain the actions of men by other causes than volitions. Man is a machine, a puppet, a mere automaton; and modern sociology has discovered that the strings that work this helpless being are heredity and environment. It has become the *ignis fatuus* of the scientist. Professor Tyndall tells us, that we live in a realm of "physical and moral necessity." Professor Huxley says, that even murderers do what they cannot help doing, and are no more worthy of punishment than those who do what are called virtuous acts. And the unscientific Ingersoll, their foster son, only apes them when, in his Chicago speech, he declares, "Men should not be sent to the penitentiary as a punishment, because we must remember that men do as they must," and Dr. Maudsley says, "There is a destiny made for a man by his ancestors, and no one can elude, were he able to attempt it, the tyranny of his organization." J. Colter Munson, in the "Service of Man," says, "A man with a criminal nature and education, under given circumstances of temptation, can no more help committing crime than he could help having a headache under certain conditions of brain and stomach." Henry Beauchamp says, in the *Fortnightly Review*, "Free-will is a myth invented by man to satisfy his emotions, not his reason. But the law of heredity conclusively demonstrates that free-will and freedom of action stand in the category of lively imaginings. Therefore, crime, as the law understands it, is non-existent, since no imputability can be recognized when a man is not responsible for his actions. Therefore the law is not justified in inflicting punishment."

These men can take a tape, and tell to a fraction how much of a criminal a man will be, and how much responsibility a man should bear. Given, that a man has certain kinds of molecules floating about in his system; that his

face is lopsided, his skull cursed with certain protuberances and depressions, or, like Holmes, he has a marked deficiency of one side of the nose and of one ear, a difference of one and a half inch in the length of his arms and an equal shortening of one leg from knee to heel, etc., that man becomes a criminal, whether he will or no, and hence cannot be held responsible for his crime. Such a criminal should not be punished, but should be sent to Saratoga Springs to recuperate from his disease. The law should not punish him any more than the wagon should be blamed for the runaway; but it should dig up his grandfather's bones, and "hang him by the neck until he be dead." Instead of trying him by a jury, he should be subjected to an "X Ray," in order to find out what molecule, inherited from his fathers, has caused all this trouble; and, while the molecule is sent to prison, the poor victim of its machination should be sent to the hospital at the state's expense. What an injustice has been heaped upon the poor Indian who has for generation after generation inherited a love for scalps! What a pity that men should have killed cannibals who from time immemorial had inherited the æsthetic taste for human flesh! Punishment was entirely out of place, because they were following their natural bent. "By this process the moral responsibility of the criminal is absolutely removed by the denial of free-will, and what a man does, he does inevitable, according to the composition and the resolution of the various influences acting on him at a given moment," says Mr. Lea in the *Forum*. Then we may conclude that Holmes and Hayward might have been Washingtons and Lincolns, had they had different grandfathers. Judas would have been as much loved as he is now hated, if he had not been suffering from a fit of inherited indigestion. And, in order to be charitable, we must conclude, with Joseph Parker, that "Adam's fall was due to the bad drainage and bad air

of that slum called Eden." Their sin was not caused by heredity; hence must have been caused by environment. Life thus becomes a Punch and Judy show, with heredity and environment behind the scenes pulling the strings.

Now let us make all possible allowance for both these influences. We are the children of a thousand ancestors, and in us runs the intermingled blood of a thousand streams of life. At first our life-blood may have flowed purely; but to it has been added a rivulet of passion, of vice, of envy, of anger, of a thousand microbes bred of the devil, until within us there may seem at times a combination that predestinated us to perdition. Account for Byron by a passionate mother, for Napoleon as the son of Letizia Ramoline, and his weak son as the offspring of Marie Louise. Lay all the stress possible on Dugdale's study of the Jukes family, and on the other hand of the Adams and Darwins. Yet the phenomenon remaining to be accounted for is, that virtue is not as hereditary as vice. The most that can be claimed for *good* heredity is, that one may be born with a minimum tendency to evil and with a maximum freedom to choose the good. Whereas the children of criminals are almost certain to be criminals, it does not appear nearly so certain that the children of ministers will become ministers. The question remains, why one tendency is not as strong as the other. Following this out, one seems to be driven back to the doctrine of original sin and "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." But the strength of heredity and the old adage "Blood will tell" is impaired when we remember that, when the children of virtuous and vicious parents are interchanged, the blood of each is transformed by environment. That heredity can be overcome, is the corner-stone of modern sociological movements, and is the mainspring of social settlements. And, on the other hand, the great fact remains, that men have defied the tendencies of blood as full of devilish microbes

as the Chicago River, and have turned back the stream that bore them swiftly and surely to moral wreckage. Shall we not find another agency at work more powerful than heredity?

The sentimentalist says, that environment will do this. Let us make all possible allowance for environment. None of us can tell how much we owe to the fact that we were brought up on the old farm, breathing into our bodies, with the fresh ozone, the fragrance of apple and peach blow. God only knows what we might have been, had we been born into the world in a little dark garret or cellar in some slum. The child that comes damned into the world is almost certain to go damned out of the world. Morning, noon, and night should we praise God, that, instead of amid oaths and vulgarity, and alcoholic fumes, we began and ended the day about the family altar. It is easy enough for one, born, reared, and still living in a country life, to speak lightly of the loadstone about a child's neck which environment becomes; and, if from it he gets a little respite at day, he returns at night only to feel it tugging and dragging him downward. We all know the words of John Bunyan as he looked on a criminal, "But for the grace of God there goes John Bunyan," and those manly words of Governor Seymour, "I have passed upon some thousands of pardon cases, and I recollect not one in which I might not have been in the place of the guilty party, with his heredity, his temptation, and his environment."

But there is still a phenomenon here which must be explained. A single rotten apple put into a barrel of sound ones will not be made whole, but it will rot the whole barrel. A single sound apple put in a barrel of rotten ones will not rejuvenate the rotten, but the rotten will deteriorate the sound. A vicious child turned loose among virtuous children will teach them more vice than he will learn virtue. A sound man put into a pest-house will be diseased, but a

man taken from the pest-house, and put into a house of health, will not contract their health. A child of a slum will be a street Arab or a tramp almost inevitably, but a child of virtuous surroundings is not so sure to be a saint. Many a virtuous father and mother have combined a noble heredity with a pure environment, and have died broken-hearted over a prodigal son who never returned. It is said that a young lawyer spent a vacation in visiting the birthplace of Webster, and, standing there, exclaimed: "The iron of the hills was in his blood! the granite mountains lent weight to his massive mind." The old farmer replied: "These mountains are the same as they always were, and the climate hasn't changed, I am sure; but no Daniel Webster has been seen in these parts these fifty years. If the climate made Webster, I wish 'twould make another one." Behind environment even there must be another factor, and that factor is the human will. *Heredity and environment may furnish a tendency toward vice or virtue, but never a necessity for vice or virtue.*

No man born into the world is without a certain tendency toward sin. Warden Brush of Sing Sing said, that "the chief cause of crime is the want of family discipline." But family discipline does not pretend to improve the environment or purify the blood, but to educate the powers of self-control and the sense of moral responsibility. What is needed, is the emphasis of the supremacy of the human will and individual responsibility. Shakespeare says, "Our bodies are our gardens; to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce; . . . supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many; either to have it sterile with idleness, or fertile with industry; why, the power and corrigible authority of it lies in our wills." Men must be taught that neither heredity nor environment is a complete apology for evil, but that individually man is responsible for not overcoming

them. They can be resisted. The world has been made better only by those who have made themselves better than their ancestors, and have waged a relentless and victorious war against inherited tendencies. No man ever stands with his hand upon the latch-string of vice, but that his other hand may grasp the door-knob of virtue. No man lives who could not have been better had he so desired. Harriet Beecher Stowe said of Frederick Douglass, "He had as far to climb to be where the poorest white boy is as the poorest white boy has to be President." Their credit should be equal; and many a man has as far to climb, and as much to overcome, to stand on a moral equality with the country son of virtuous parents as that county lad has to be an angel. But he can climb. John Bunyan was the son of vicious parents, and breathed a vicious atmosphere; but he defied both. Jerry McAuley was steeped in crime from his youth, but, even late in life, expelled the inherited molecules of vice, burst the bonds of his environment, and became a purifier of his environment instead of its slave. Marcus Aurelius rose like a pure, white water-lily, though the roots of his life rested in ancestral muck, and passed through the environment of Roman slime.

William Rounds, Secretary of the National Prison Association, says: "I wish to put myself on record, after a study of the criminals, and contrary to my previous utterances, as going back to the doctrine of free-will as laid down by our fathers, and I wish to be understood distinctly and squarely to hold the doctrine of moral responsibility as applying to every individual; at the same time making all allowance for such physical conditions as may weaken the will, and in some cases destroy it. I do not believe for one moment that crime is a disease, or by necessity the result of disease; though I do believe it may be the result of disease in some cases. Of the seven hundred criminals I have examined, I have found that more than five hun-

dred had a clear motive and a sane motive, though a perfectly understood dishonest one and a criminal one; that in the conducting of their affairs they showed intelligence, and in pursuit of their avocations a determined and controllable will. I do not believe that one-fifth were ever in a condition where they could not have turned around, had they determined to do so, and led virtuous and upright lives." Sallust, were he living, would handle this degeneracy theory roughly; and he lived at a time, when, if we are to believe Horace, the study of a Max Nordau or a Lombroso would have been glutted with models of degeneracy taken from the streets of Rome. In the opening pages of the Catilinarian conspiracy, he says, "All men who desire to set themselves above the other animals, must strive with the utmost labor, lest they pass their lives in silence, like the beast whom nature has fixed prone, and obedient to the dictates of the belly." And he gave Catiline to the eternal scorn of men, because he did not "strive with the utmost labor," but, morally indolent, obeyed the dictates of his passion, and drifted down the stream of a degenerate life. Man strives. The brute drifts, and seeks to enjoy. Men are not evil because they are degenerate, but because they make no effort to avoid being brutish. No man need long be the slave of his dead grandfather. No man need long submit to the galling fetters of environment; for the difference between him and the beast is, that there is a soul within, that asserts, "I am free to be and do." Once a swine, always a swine. Once a serpent, always a serpent. But never, once a criminal, always a criminal. No one but a false prophet of a creed of despair would ever go to men, weighed down by a consciousness of their sins, and say, "You are the son of your father; hence you can never be better than you are." And no one but an enemy of society or an invertebrate sentimentalist would say to society's enemies, "Because you are

the son of your father, you are not morally responsible," and begin to damn dead ancestors, or inanimate conditions above which it was possible to have arisen. Give society no such opiate to conscience; for, while conscience sleeps, the enemy soweth the tares of social chaos.

Dr. Bradford well says: "Freedom is real, and men must be continually confronted with it and its attendant responsibility. Until men are born again, if men think they are not accountable, they will follow their selfish inclinations; and if society teaches that they are driven by forces over which they have no control, they will, by and by, turn those forces on society to its ruin. There is no hope for the man who has no faith in his possibilities and his responsibilities. If the inner testimony to freedom is discredited, the last bulwark against chaos is broken down. All forms of philosophical thought which teach that man is but a fatuitous grouping of atoms, or which allow that even heredity can fetter the will without damaging the mind, so far as they prevail, sap the foundations of improvement. Neither heredity nor environment destroy responsibility."

Is it not a most glorious fact that we are made heirs and ministers of a better gospel? The clarion note of the gospel of this age should be, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Man is free. The will of man is supreme. By it he can defy heredity and circumstances, heaven or hell, God or the devil. The destiny of man rests in his own hands. He is not mortgaged by any spendthrift of an ancestor. The key to the present and the future of every man lies in that citadel, never yet taken by any force, except under surrender. By it he may bolt and bar every approach of virtue, and by it he may say to the swelling tides of passion, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Was this not what Christ recognized in Israel? He said, "The truth shall make you free"; and they replied, "We be Abraham's seed, and have not been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free"? He replied, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is *your will* to do." The will here had transformed them from being the legitimate children of Abraham, to being the children of the devil. And again he seems to recognize heredity (Matt. xxiii. 30-33) when he called them to witness that they were in actions the children of those who slew the prophets, and told them to go on in their hereditary course, and fill up the measure of their fathers; but this did not excuse them in his mind, for he added, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He stood and wept over Jerusalem, because they "would not," not because they "could not." The unwillingness of men should solicit more tears than their inability, because, in the one case, responsibility cannot be shifted. This appears again, when, admitting that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," Christ yet opened the door wide for escape by allowing a man "to be born again," if only he shall cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner—the heir of a thousand sinners!" And did he not recognize the validity and supremacy of the human will, when he approved the will of the thief on the cross who rebuked his environment and chose Paradise? The will was crowned king then and there by Jesus. The will has always been granted the right of appeal to the Supreme Court of God. There is no other way to account for certain phenomena indubitable—scientifically inexplicable. Because of this, Saul, when on his face in the dust going to Damascus, threw away all his proud heritage of Abraham, and his environment so strong that it marked the

race like a name blown in the bottle, and said to the despised Nazarene, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Bill Sunday the blasphemous ball-player stood listening to a song service in the street; and, in the twinkling of an eye, put his foot on environment, and became William Sunday the evangelist. What place have such phenomena in the theology of an evolutionist? Evolution must have time; but this was in the twinkling of an eye. It demonstrates that the will is left yet intact, capable of achieving any triumph, or supinely submitting to any serfdom. It is in the will, rather than in the intellect, that moral qualities lie. If men are put into this world a rigid casting from an ancestral mold, and, standing like an æolian harp, must answer to every wind that blows, what shame is there in vice, or merit in virtue? No; rather let us preach to men the gospel of liberty, and tell them, in the words of Dr. Hillis: "We are not waifs and strays with which the winds and elements sport; we are ocean steamers, with power to defy the winds and waves; to hold our helm whithersoever we will, to mark our course, to determine for ourselves the distant harbor. Invincibility is not in circumstance, but in man. No fetter has ever been invented that may not be broken. Liberty and peace may still be yours through the delivering Christ." Professor Denney, in his fourth lecture, says: "The Bible assumes that man is not merely *in* nature, but over it; that he is, so to speak, not only its crown but its sovereign. In virtue of that relation to God, that kinship to him, which is of his very essence, man is destined to have dominion over creation; he is to assert his freedom, and to put all things under his feet. The sins of the fathers are only ruinous when sons make them their own. What we inherit may be said to fix our trial, but not our fate. Every man is to be put to the proof somehow, and to a certain extent his natural ancestry determines the mode of it; it depends on

them, so to speak, whether his temptation is to be anger, intemperance, lust, greed, duplicity, or whatever else. But it does not depend on them what the issue of this trial is to be. It depends on man himself, and, above all, on his faith in God."

There is no question that we have many social problems to face, and God bless the men who face them; but they will never be solved by sentimental sociology whose backbone is determinism. What is needed to make sociology effective is to send society to school in the education of the human will, and emphasis of individual responsibility. While the need of the time is religion, and not dogma, yet the times demand a theological sociology rather than a sociological theology. If sociology is to be effective, it must be Christian, and not Darwinian. Darwinism says, that man is cast in the mold of his ancestors; but Christianity, admitting that hypothesis, affirms that every man may be born again into the ancestry of our Father in heaven, and defy either ancestry or conditions through "him who is able to save to the uttermost."

The rapid increase of crime is contemporaneous with the inroads of the liberal theology in the pulpits. Future rewards and punishments, heaven and hell, the necessity of atonement, the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," together with the freedom of human choice and individual responsibility, have either been relegated to a silence that is not golden, or are openly sneered at. In their places has been put a God of love and complacency, and a future that is probationary, and sin not a fruit of choice, but of blood and conditions. On such a theology, sin gorges itself fat. The fear of the Lord has become a back number; the terrors of the law have gone to the place of the "bogy-man"; while "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" means no more than a warning against goblins. It must be admitted that theological opinions have

undergone most desirable and delightful changes in regard to the harsher aspects of the gospel. But the theory that men are to be won from vice by preaching only one phase of love, is a beautiful one if it were not so disappointing. I question if an aroused will is not as much a product of fear as of love. Men can neither be coddled nor cudged into virtue; but there is a manly medium which accomplishes most, because it rows with both oars of the boat. Fear is a proper motive for governing men. Dr. Bradford is correct in saying, that, "if drunkards were treated as criminals, there would be a surprising manifestation of power to resist temptation." It may fairly be questioned how expedient is the preaching of such sermons as that by the Rabbi, when for two hours he preached on "vessels of wrath" till the lamps died out, and Elspeth Macfayden cried, "God have mercy upon us," and the Rabbi himself said, "I wish I had never been born." We pity men possessed by such a theology; but America may well envy Scotland the possession of such a manhood. Remove that theology, and there is no accounting for the characters that Scotland produced. That iron warrior Cromwell was characterized by a Calvinistic harshness. There is much in his character neither to commend nor copy. We could have loved him more had he possessed more of the gentleness of Jesus. And yet history records that his is the only army on record which did not swear, rob, and outrage women, but punished their violaters with public whippings.

If sociology would attain the zenith of power, it must remember that there is a warning as well as a winsome side to truth. Society needs a sociology, that, while it stands before the Felixes and Drusillas, "reasoning of righteousness and temperance," does not forget to add "judgment to come"; while it holds out God to be one of love and compassion, yet reminds men that his is a holy love, which, trampled on, displays its reverse side, which

is stern justice; that, while it paints in all its glowing colors the compassion for the woman taken in sin, and the thief on the cross, does not forget to add, "The soul that sinneth it shall die"; that while it weeps over the slums, prisons, and saloons, because "ye would not," does not fear to proclaim, "Your house is left unto you desolate," and holds out before men the inexorable decree, "We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according that he hath done good and bad." Under such a schooling, the will of man will be stimulated, and society helped to bring forth those fruits of the Spirit which shall be the chief features of that Utopia, promised alike by theology and sociology,—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law.