

FREE SPEECH.

Speech is one thing. Free speech is quite another. Speech is a natural, physiological function of the normal individual. Free speech is a license, or right, given to each individual member of a social compact by every other member, because each feels it a necessity to his own welfare. To all but the dumb speech may be said to be free. Speech is one of those "inalienable rights" for which the fathers declared each man to be "endowed by his Creator" in the declaration of independence. If speech is a natural endowment of the Creator why is it that so many of his sons seek to suppress its indulgence by other sons of the same Father? The Creator is responsible, not man, for the results. It is not to question the wisdom of the All-wise to endeavor to suppress, or even to obstruct the most unlimited free speech? All Christians proclaim their trust in God. Politicians stamp "in God we trust" on national coins. Practically they both show they dare not rely on Him. They have not the trust they publicly profess. They are the infidels of infidels, the heretics of heretics. They profess faith with their lips and deny it in their acts.

Speech is the correlative physiological function of thought. The normal man, under normal conditions, cannot suppress his speech any more than he can stop thinking. That which the individual himself cannot do, no other individual or body of individuals should seek to force him to do. This is not saying that a man cannot temporarily suppress speech if his life or prosperity depends on it, but what are the effects on his manhood?

If speech is a natural, "God-given attribute," in one sense "the divine attribute of man," distinguishing him from all other animals, can any one give a rational reason why it should not be free as thought itself, which no man can suppress? Why should a man be forced to say "I did not dare speak because they were all against me, but I kept up a terrible thinking," an expression only too frequently heard when the person comes where he "dared to speak?" Is not that making a coward and a liar out of a man?

It is thought a terrible misfortune, some say "a punishment from God,"—for what reason except ignorance it is hard to discover—when a child is born dumb. Schools or asylums are built and endowers are blessed, in the hopes of teaching such to speak or in some way to communicate their thoughts, but the moment they express thought at variance with accepted or traditional opinion, ignorance seeks to gag them after benevolence has done its utmost to loosen their tongues. Consistency, thou art a jewel known only to the wise.

Toleration.

"But I do not like his ideas," says the cowardly pseudo conservative. "He is

too radical," says the timid traditionalist. "He is nothing but a crank," says the political boss. "He is an infernal mugwump," says the enslaved and machine partisan. "He can speak if he wants to but I will not stay to hear it," says the self-satisfied ignoramus. "It makes a vast difference whose ox is gored."

In the town where the writer sojourns there lives a man who can be honestly classed under all the above conditions. THE CONSERVATIVE has been given him frequently; mostly for amusement. In general it has been condemned, for the man hates an independent thinker, thinks a mugwump the incarnation of Satan, and a democrat, well, something unmentionable. When THE CONSERVATIVE, containing "The Invasion of the Silver Maggots," was given him that suited him, for a populist is an animal for which this man has no place, either in Heaven or any other place. In other words such men have no place for anything but themselves. They will never read or listen to anything opposed to their traditionalism if they can help it. They think themselves Americans of Americans and yet would deny to others their "constitutional" and "God-given rights." They are inquisitors in "spirit" and would be in fact, if they could. They tolerate free speech only because they must. This is the toleration of necessity.

The Toleration of Indifference.

The toleration of indifference to the truth is a far more dangerous and vastly increasing evil to that of necessity. It is the most common kind. So-called "religious toleration" is the best example. It is due to a lessening of the importance of ecclesiastical or traditional religion in the public mind. It accounts for the popularity of Ingersollism. Looking upon ecclesiasticism as religion the people are fast becoming agnostics; that is, nothingarians, nihilists in religion. Knowing not that religion is not ecclesiasticism; knowing not that religion is not theism; knowing not themselves, they know not that religion is natural to and inseparable from all men. It might be said all that is. Religion is the consciousness of the unity of all things. The religious man knows his unseparableness from the whole. He feels the grandeur of living. The people no longer look upon ecclesiasticism as religious truth, that is, the truth.

A leading and nationally well-known professor in one of our universities was a rigid Baptist in his previous position, but when called to his present chair asked, "which is the leading church?" Being told "the Congregational" he at once became a "liberal Congregationalist." He adapted himself to his environment but at the cost of all that makes a man a man. Such a person has no self-respect. He is so totally without

principle as to be unfit for a teacher of youth no matter what his fitness in his especial branch. The intolerant despotism of ignorant traditionalism and false conservatism is the brooding machine of cowardice, hypocrisy and falsehood. Such a man as that is an atheist in the truest sense. He is without manhood and ignorant of religion.

Indifferent toleration is dangerous to the moral integrity of the individual, the community and the state.

Oh, for men like Bayard,
Without reproach or fear;
The truth upon their tongues,
Honor on their spear.

What the country needs is true conservative men who dare to "stand up and be counted" no matter what they think; men who have the courage of their convictions and do not fear the free speech of others no matter how opposed to theirs. Only the self-conscious weakling runs away from free speech or desires it suppressed. The positive bigot is safer and more to be respected than the intellectual coward, or the indifferent tolerant. He stands up. He can be counted. We know what and where he is.

The immoral effect of the fear of free speech cannot be overestimated. It makes the veriest cowards and hypocrites out of otherwise good and true men and women. It is the curse of our public educational system. Ecclesiasticism is the basest intolerant, being the most ignorant. The boss and the political machine is the next. Both enslave the people. Despotism thrives when and where the people are weak. The United States is the head center of this kind of tyranny.

It was said of Alexander Hamilton that he sought to give this country a monarchical government with a president for life having power to appoint the respective governors of the states, thus placing the country under one head, as in a monarchy. The system is here if not the monarchy. It found its origin more in Jeffersonian republican-democracy than in Hamiltonian federalism. That is but natural. The federalists and their successors followed the bad example as a necessity. Instead of a hereditary monarchy we have the deathless and death-dealing machine. Death to manhood! Death to morality! Instead of "the king is dead, long live the king," we may hear that the boss is dead, but the machine still lives.

The machine penetrates everywhere, robbing men and women of their constitutional rights to free speech. It would stop their thinking if it could. It reduces citizenship to automatonism. The boss presses the button, an enslaved people do the rest. The appointment of school teachers in the smallest villages is indirectly dictated by the boss and ruled by the machine. Not to be outdone the ecclesiastical machine also gets in its demoralizing work. The teachers