

## PASSAGE 5

A stout old lady was walking with her basket down the middle of a street in Petrograd to the great confusion of the traffic and with no small *peril* to herself. It was pointed out to her that the pavement was the place for foot-passengers, but she replied:

'I am going to walk where I like. We've got liberty now.' It did not occur to the dear old lady that if liberty entitled the foot-passenger to walk down the middle of the road, it also entitled the cabdriver to drive on the pavement, and that the end of such liberty would be universal chaos. Everybody would get anywhere. Individual liberty would have become social anarchy.

There is a danger of the world getting liberty-drunk in these days like the old lady with the basket, and it is just as well to remind ourselves of what the rule of the road means. It means that in order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed. When the policeman, say, at *Piccadilly Circus* steps into middle and puts out his hands, he is a *symbol* not of *tyranny*, but of liberty. You may not think so. You may, being in a hurry and seeing your motor car pulled up by this insolence of officer, feel that your liberty has been outraged. How dare this fellow interfere with your free use of the public highway? Then, if you are a reasonable person, you will reflect that if he did not, incidentally, interfere

with you, he would interfere with no one; and the result would be that *Piccadilly Circus* would be *maelstrom*, that you would never cross at all, you have submitted to a curtailment of private liberty in order that you may enjoy a social order which makes your liberty a reality.

Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract. It is an accommodation of interest. In matters which do not touch anybody else's liberty, of course, I may be as free as I like. If I choose to go down the Strand in a dressing gown, with long hair and bare-feet, who shall say me nay? You have liberty to laugh at me but I have liberty to be indifferent to you. And if I have a fancy for dyeing my hair, or waxing my moustache, or wearing a tall hat, a frock-coat and sandals, or going to bed late or getting up early, I shall follow my *fancy* and ask no man's permission.

In all these and a thousand other details, you and I please ourselves and ask no one's leave. We have a whole kingdom in which we rule alone, can do what we choose; be wise or *ridiculous*. But when we directly step out of that kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty.

(494 words)

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In Petrograd, an old woman, with her basket, was causing hindrance to traffic on middle of road. When she was asked to walk on pavement. She replied that no one could stop her because they had got freedom, but she could not comprehend that any such freedom would also allow cab drivers to drive on footpath, and any such liberty would lead to chaos and anarchy. These days, people have become obsessed with liberty, whereas restrictions on individual liberties are necessary to ensure preservation of social order and common liberty.

If a policeman on road do not stop individuals then no one will be able to do his job. Liberty is a common rather than a personal matter. A person is completely free, and an absolute king in his personal matters as long as he does not intrude into anyone else's space because in social life liberty of everyone matters equally.

## PASSAGE 6