

Woman Question

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

It has been claimed by those who advocate Woman Suffrage that the right to vote is a natural right, and therefore women are as much entitled to it as man. Perhaps we can best answer this by giving the views of Herbert Spencer who, having made a life-study of Sociology, is entitled to be considered good authority. He says: "If a man has general freedom to pursue the object of life, subject only to the rights of other men, if the integrity of his body is no way interfered with, if there is no impediment to his locomotion, if his ownership of all that he has earned or acquired is fully respected, if he may give or bequeath as he pleases, occupy himself in what way he likes, make a contract or exchange with whomsoever he will, hold any opinions and express them in speech or print, nothing remains for him to demand under the name of rights as properly understood. The giving of a vote in no way furthers the voter's life as does the exercise of these various liberties we properly call rights."

The value and influence of a vote has, we think, been very much overrated. In our own country we have seen how the will of the majority has been frustrated; how voting does not prevent the corruption of municipal government, does not prevent the growth of general and local organizations by which each individual is compelled to surrender his power to bosses

Harvey

and wire-pullers, does not prevent an enormous majority of consumers being taxed for the benefit of a small minority of manufacturers and artisans, does not even protect men from violent deaths. But small comparatively as the influence of a vote is in our opinion, we believe that while the world is subject to wars men, who are physically better able to defend their country in its armies, have from that fact a greater right to vote than women. To give women the right to vote for a war which they are physically incapable of carrying on, seems to us a greater wrong than taxation without representation of which there is so much complaint.

When we look at this question as a matter of desirability and expediency, it seems to us there can be but one decision. As civilization advances there is more and more a tendency towards a division of labor, to the giving to each person the work he is best fitted to do, and it seems a monstrous absurdity to suppose that women are best fitted to make laws and men to train children. It has been said, "Let me make the songs of a people and I care not who makes its laws." In a much truer sense it may be said, "Let me train the children of the world and I care not who makes its laws." We believe our country needs good wise mothers more than women voters, for we believe habits are more powerful than laws.

Another plea for giving Woman Suffrage is that without it they cannot obtain legal recognition of their just rights. But the facts do not sustain this claim. During the last thirty years various disabilities of women have been removed with very little resistance from men. *Comparing the behavior of men to men with the behavior of men to women, it is manifest that in modern times the sentiment of Justice has been more operative

*In the State of New York it is to be particularly noted that all these rights and privileges have been granted women, not at the request or solicitation of women, but as a voluntary concession, made by men to womanly women in recognition of natural right and justice.

in determining the last than the first. Ill treated classes of men have had to struggle far longer before they obtained from the classes which ill treated them, the concessions they demanded than women as a class has had to struggle before obtaining from man as a class the various freedoms they asked for. They have obtained these without political power and there is no reason to doubt that such further injustice as they complain of may be similarly remedied without making the great constitutional change some of them seek. In the present condition of affairs, women are the friends and co-workers with men; should they become voters we fear they would become opponents and work against each other. While women are respected and treated with so much consideration in our own country that all foreigners remark it, they cannot with truth be said to be degraded simply because they do not vote. To surrender this position and enter into political strife seems to me the most stupendous folly the world has seen since Esau sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage. It is claimed that the voting of women will purify the morals of the world, but it must be remembered that while women use influence only, a good woman is much more powerful, but should they vote a corrupt woman's vote counts for just as much as that of the best and purest of women. It is a notorious fact that it is very difficult to get the best men of our country interested in public affairs, and it will be much more difficult to induce our best women to enter the political field. We fear therefore that Woman Suffrage would only add another element of corruption to politics. It is sometimes stated as an injustice that the ignorant and corrupt men are allowed to vote. The remedy for this seems to us to be to limit the right of suffrage among men, not to add to it the vote of ignorant women also.

Should it become necessary for a woman to earn her own living in the world of business, she will find no law in America

to prevent her doing whatever she is capable of and we believe a woman will have a larger measure of success in business under the present state of affairs than if she had equal political rights. But the crowding of women into the world of business has, we think, already produced a disastrous effect in taking work from the men and in lowering wages, making it more and more difficult for men to marry, who desire to support their families themselves as all honorable Americans do.

Let us now look for a moment at the women of other countries and times. In England the women take an active part in political affairs. They canvass the country for votes from cottage to cottage. In the towns they invade bachelors' apartments, visit the alleys of White Chapel, and the savages of Lambeth, being often insulted and personally abused. Some of the best class of women have been struck with eggs, stones and dead fish, and in a late election the wife of one of the candidates had her eye put out and her sister lost all of her front teeth. What seems strangest of all these same English girls would not give a man they knew a cup of tea in their own drawing-room, unless their mother was present to protect them.

Perhaps there is no country in the civilized world where women have done so much work outside of their homes as in France. What has been the result? Says a writer: "The First French Revolution presented one of the most striking illustrations of the social mischiefs resulting from a neglect of the purifying influence of women. Morals, religion, virtue, were swamped in sensualism. The character of the woman became depraved, conjugal fidelity was disregarded, maternity was held in reproach, family and home were alike corrupted, France was motherless, and the Revolution burst forth amid the yells and fierce violence of women."

Gibbon tells us that after the Punic triumphs the matrons of Rome aspired to the common benefits of a free and opulent

Republic. "Their wishes were gratified by the indulgence of their fathers and lovers, and their ambition was unsuccessfully resisted by Cato the Censor. When the Roman matrons became the equal and voluntary companions of their lords, a new Jurisprudence was introduced,—that marriage, like any other partnership, might be dissolved by the abdication of one of the associates. In three centuries of prosperity and corruption this principle was enlarged to frequent practice and pernicious abuse. We believe that the agitation and partial success of the movement for female suffrage in our own country is having the same result, and as we believe that pure well ordered homes are the foundation of all good and stable government, we feel it our duty to resist the advance of this movement as wives, mothers and lovers of our country. We believe the proper work of woman is educational, benevolent and in the home. This work has been assigned to her, not by men but by God, who has endowed her with the qualifications necessary for her position. It is a position that will call forth all of her ability, and is an exalted, ennobling one. As Thomas Carlyle has so beautifully expressed it, "I have never doubted but the true and noble function of a woman in this world was, is, and forever will be that of being a wife and help-mate to a worthy man, and discharging well the duties that devolve upon her in consequence as a mother of children, and a mistress of household,—duties high, noble and silently important as any that fall to a human being, duties which if well discharged constitute woman in a soft, beautiful, almost sacred way—The Queen of the World.

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Tacoma,

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