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COMMON SENSE

AS TO

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

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BOSTON:

W. L. GREENE & CO.

49 CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE, CORNER OF BEACON AND SOMERSET STS.

1885

The following ten essays, which appeared Editorially in the Congregationalist, 5 February—9 April, have been reprinted thus, with slight revision, in response to many requests that the discussion of a subject of deep interest which they offer, may be made available for circulation in a cheap and compact form.

H. M. D.

9 April 1885.

[ONLY FIFTY COPIES PRINTED.]

I.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE—THE FACTS.



THE subject of the suffrage for women is one of very great importance to the welfare of the State. From the highest considerations it ought to receive the utmost intelligence and candor of treatment. And especially for the reason that the step once taken would, in all probability, prove irrevocable, even were its practical working found to be unfortunate, it should become our public policy only after the most abundant and satisfactory proof of its essential justice and wisdom.

Politeness toward the gentler sex is always alike a privilege and a pleasant duty, but it does not of necessity follow that because a particular thing seems to be polite to them, it is therefore kindest and best for them; since their welfare is inevitably and inextricably associated with that of society. What is most just, prudent, and wise on the whole, and in the long run, for the State as a whole, and for the family, must be best for their female members. That the drift of public sentiment and of legislation has for more than two hundred years been steadily to ameliorate woman's condition, and highten her privileges before the law, is undeniable. Whether that movement have gone far enough already, or, if not, whether the admission of women to the right of suffrage be among further bestowments which ought to be made, is a fair question to be decided on evidence; and which ought to be argued—and which surely can be argued—without predisposition or prejudice.

Let us first precisely understand the facts.

The Constitution of the United States ordains that those only may vote for representatives to Congress who are qualified in any State to vote for members of its House of Representatives; but each State Legislature may prescribe who shall vote for presidential electors. Now, in Massachusetts, the State Constitution limits to "male" citizens of twenty-one years and upwards, otherwise qualified, the right to vote for representatives to its General Court. So that a change in the Constitution of the United States, or of the State of Massachusetts, would be needful before women can acquire right of suffrage for representatives in Congress; while, as things are, the General Court could empower women to vote for presidential electors. So, also, under our State Constitution,

the General Court could authorize women to vote for county, city, and town officers—because that Constitution is silent as to the qualifications of voting for all officers other than Governor, Lieut-Governor, senators and representatives.

Acting under this power, the General Court has already given to women who pay a poll-tax of fifty cents, the right to vote for members of the school committee. It has also permitted women to practice as attorneys, and empowered the Governor to make any such attorney a special commissioner of deeds. It could go on to give women the power to vote for county, city, and State officers.

So, also, the State Constitution could be altered—it would take a two thirds vote of the General Court in two successive years, confirmed by subsequent majority vote of the people to do it—so as to give women the same power to vote for the higher State officers which male citizens now have. Or the Constitution of the United States could be altered—it would take a two thirds vote of both houses of Congress ratified by the legislature of three fourths of the States to do that—so as to empower women to vote for representatives and presidential electors. The practical question now is whether either of these possible things—and if so, which—ought to be attempted?

We do not regard it as of much consequence that choice be made between such alternatives. The question is broader than either. If women ought to stand on the same platform with men in the matter of voting, they ought to stand there fully and without discrimination against them of any sort; therefore if any then *all* barriers of legislation should be removed, and the two sexes be placed on an absolute equality, in this respect, before the law. Such must, inevitably, be the ultimate result of an acceptance by the community of the conclusion that both sexes should have identical legal position; for, once begun, there could be no stopping-place till the full end had been reached.

We propose as briefly and clearly as possible, to contribute what we can to the fair discussion and full understanding of the main question thus awaiting decision.

II.

AS TO WOMEN'S WRONGS.



WOMAN'S suffrage is advocated by some on the ground that women — in comparison with men — are seriously wronged by the law as it exists; and that the natural way to right such wrongs is to give them the ballot. The former plea might be true, without rendering necessary the truth of the latter; but it may not be unwise first to inquire how far women, as compared with men, are, in fact, now experiencing wrong before the law.

The old English common law underlies all New England legislation. It had gradually grown up from the slowly developing needs of society, beginning in the days when each man was obliged to hold himself at all times ready to render armed service to his local lord and the king, and when, in order to prevent this war-contingent on which the State depended from diminishing, the son, to the exclusion of the daughter, on the father's death inherited his lands — subject to his obligations of tribute and military service. Of course, in such circumstances, a man was worth much more to society than a woman. Therefore if a woman killed her husband — having slain a king's warrior — she was held to have waged war against the king, and accordingly was punished as if for treason; while, if a man killed a woman, it was simple homicide. It was a part of such a condition of things that the husband be held responsible for most of his wife's crimes, and owned her property — subject to her debts.

This common law, except as Parliament had superseded or modified it by special statute, was what our fathers lived under in England when they came hither; and, so far as they could make that home system apply to their changed position, it was natural that they should begin by standing on a like platform here. Gradually, as their new life developed new needs, they sought to meet them by their colonial enactments. Plymouth began, as early as 1633, with a law empowering the court to provide for the widow and fatherless in case a man "die banker-out." Three years after the same Colony declared that the widow shall have, during life, use of a third part of her late husband's lands, with a third of his goods absolutely for her own. The Massachusetts Colony a little later made similar provisions — the force of ancient English custom re-

receiving itself in the gift to the eldest son of a double portion, in dividing property among the family.

About forty years ago greater changes began. Wives were first allowed — by pre-marriage contract — to hold property to their separate use, and to receive and devise as if unmarried; only not in trade or commerce. Soon the married woman was empowered to carry on business on her own account, and hold her earnings; and her property was relieved from her husband's control, and from liability for his debts. But she must keep her property recognizably separate from his. Still further, she may make binding contracts, and enforce them at law, and sue and be sued, with and against all persons, her husband alone excepted. Either husband or wife can act as agent for the other in buying and selling. Both husband and wife stand on the same level before the law, in the right to dispose of all *personal* property without the other's consent. In the matter of real estate the wife has not yet quite as much freedom as the husband.

In this connection, however, it is fair to remember that in several particulars, as the laws stand, woman has advantage over man. She may contract a valid marriage at the age of twelve, while the "man" must wait till he is fourteen. She acquires a "settlement" in town or city by five years' continued residence without paying taxes, as men must. She is free of military and jury duty, and — except in actions for tort — is exempt from arrest previous to judgment and execution. She is obliged to pay no poll tax, with the exception of fifty cents, should she desire to vote for school committee. If a widow or a spinster over twenty-one she has advantage over man to the amount of \$500, in exemption from taxation. She can more easily than man acquire citizenship of the United States. Her property is to a certain extent relieved from the operation of the Statute of Limitations, and she has the advantage of man in regard to policies of life insurance. Her husband is still held liable for her support, although she may have more property, and be making money faster than he; while, on the other hand, if he be a pauper, and she a millionaire, she is under no legal obligation to support him. The husband is often liable for criminal acts committed in his presence by his wife — on the legal theory that she is acting under his influence and control; yet no counterbalancing liability exists on her part. A father is bound to support his children during their non-age, even when they have property of their own; a widowed mother is not under such obligation, unless she have sufficient means, and her children have none of their own.

We do not overburden these slight pages with foot-notes citing the authorities on which these statements are made; but chapter and verse can be given for every one. The same remark holds good for all kindred assertions following.

We submit, then, that times have changed in respect to this subject so far that it is not altogether an easy thing to say on which side the

advantage lies, and whether man's "wrongs," or woman's "wrongs," just now, preponderate.

But, however this may be, it is not at once apparent how the gift to woman of the right to vote, in cases in which she has not yet received it, can right any wrongs under which she may fairly be said still to suffer. Any just consideration of that involves some previous inquiry how far suffrage in itself is a right for man, or woman.

III.

REASONS FOR FEMALE SUFFRAGE.



It is urged that suffrage ought to be conferred upon woman, because she has a right to it; because she is now the subject of wrongs which would be redressed by it; and because the welfare of society demands it. If these claims are legitimate, they surely have conclusive force, and, in any event, they should receive candid examination.

Has woman a right to the suffrage? If so, it must be either one natural, or conferred. Has she natural right to suffrage?

A right that is natural to man is one which inheres in the very fact that he is human, and of which, therefore, so long as he remains human, he can neither divest himself, nor be divested. Thus the infant and the idiot have natural right to care, protection, and just treatment. Cruelty is wrong toward any creature, yet a kitten or a calf may be killed without blame when the general good requires it; but people may not blamelessly kill a baby, or a fool, under like circumstances. If, then, suffrage be a natural right, infants and idiots, in sharing human life, acquire it, which is absurd, and minors have the same claim to it before they come of age as after. Moreover, since criminals do not cease to be human in becoming criminals, if suffrage be a natural right they must retain it in the penitentiary and under the gallows-tree, which is against the public conscience and cannot be.

But we are told that "man's natural right to government for the common good carries along with it the right to the ballot, by which government is organized." Government for the common good, to which, on this supposition, every man is entitled, is good common government. But all government by ballot is not good common government. There are ballots and ballots. Some help. Some harm. Therefore, until it

first be made probable that, should he vote, a person's ballot will help and not harm, it cannot become evident on this theory that he has natural right to vote; inasmuch as it must be more for his welfare to go without suffrage himself, if so he can enjoy good government from others, than to suffer bad government by voting himself. The five hundred or one thousand passengers who throng on board of a Cunarder from the landing-stage at Liverpool, may be said to have a natural right to as speedy and safe a voyage as may be across the Atlantic; but very few of them would probably be disposed to insist that, by consequence, they acquire the duty of superintendence either of pilot house, engine room, or fore-castle, or the responsibility of charting and ordering the daily course. Good common government for that ship is best reached, on the one hand, by the action of those who have the requisite knowledge and skill, and by the cheerful acquiescence therein of the remaining portion of the company, on the other.

We are perpetually driven back, then, from every direction of inquiry, toward the position that only when and where human life is accompanied by suitable intellectual and moral capacity, does it take, or can it hold, right of suffrage. But that is simply the old philosophy of the subject, which necessarily involves the conclusion that nobody — and therefore not even woman — can have any *natural* right of suffrage. It may be added here, that the Supreme Court of the nation has again and again decided that suffrage is a civil and not a natural right; and this where [Anderson *vs.* Baker, 23 Maryland Rep. 531] many inhabitants of Maryland were disfranchised by the decision.

That no right of suffrage has as yet been conferred upon woman, is made evident not merely by the common interpretation of the language of the Constitution, but by the concession involved in the fact that the great contention of the woman-suffragists now is for an amendment to that instrument expressly to confer the right upon them — which would be surplusage did that right already exist.

But, if woman have no right, either natural or constitutional, to suffrage, is she the subject of wrongs which right of suffrage would most naturally and wisely redress?

We last week, with some care, examined the question whether, as legislation now stands, women are at disadvantage before the law, with result of discovering that — aside from this matter of voting — it is a little difficult to conclude on which side the balance of advantage in that matter between men and women now lies. The married woman ordinarily has not as much power in the conveyance of real estate as her husband; surviving, she usually holds a less share in his estate after his death than he in hers after her death; and her power over property by will is scarcely equal to his. On the other hand, the wife has advantage — in a facility to receive gifts from the husband which the law denies him from her; in a responsibility of his for some acts of hers which she has not for his; in a liability of his to support her, which does not hold con-

versely; in certain exemptions from taxation, fire, military, and jury duty, certain advantages in settlements, in naturalization, as to arrest, as to life insurance, as to homestead and burial, as to holding property after divorce, and in the matter of the widow's allowance.

If then — and so far as — woman is now behind man in the matter of rights before the law, the remedy for such "wrongs" would scarcely seem to lie through the indirect process of conferring suffrage upon her, so much as through the straightforward method of raising her, in these respects, by direct legislation, to a condition of substantial identity with man. Perhaps, on the whole, no good reason exists why such legislation should not be had — establishing both sexes as to all such matters upon a perfect equality. If creditors of either would be more likely to be defrauded then than now, with their eyes open they must proceed in some way to hedge themselves about with greater practical precautions.

But if woman have neither natural nor constitutional right to vote, and have no longer any civil wrongs which require the ballot for their wisest correction, we reach the third point of inquiry, to wit: does the welfare of society demand that the ballot be conferred upon her? Before discussing that, however, there are one or two exceedingly plausible arguments quite in the line of those we have been considering, which demand attention.

IV.

HOW ABOUT THAT HALF?



SAID a very intelligent person to us, "My instincts are conservative on this, as on most other questions, but I confess that it staggers me to see one half of the entire community — a half presumably not specially inferior to the other in general intelligence, and therefore fully competent to vote — simply by the accident of sex excluded from the franchise." And he went on to ask, "How, on the whole, does this strike you?" We replied, "On the whole, it strikes us that you have stated the case a great deal more strongly than the truth will warrant, and that, could one get down to the solid basis of the complete and exact facts, he would find matters looking somewhat other than as you have put them." It is our object now to seek for, and suggest, these facts.

1. Our friend assumed that one half of the entire population is female; could vote were it not for that circumstance; and so is disfranchised "simply by the accident of sex." Let us see how these assumptions bear examination.

In the first place, sex is not an "accident." It is part of the all-wise and beneficent plan on which human society is made possible, and by whose conditions it is shaped. It, and all which is naturally involved in it, is from God for man's good; and the wise will so regard it.

In the second place, one half of the entire population is not female. Of the 50,155,783 persons who when the last census was taken were inhabitants of the United States, only 24,636,963 were females. That is to say, the entire female population, native, foreign-born, white, black, brown, and red, including Chinese, Japanese, and Indians, lacked being equal to the entire male population by a number equivalent to the total inhabitants of the seven States and Territories of Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Washington, and Wyoming, with a few more than all the residents of twenty counties in Kansas, and of the city of Taunton, Mass., added to that total.

In the third place, less than one half of this actually existing female population was old enough to vote, so that it is not true of them that they are debarred from suffrage by the accident of sex, since they could not vote if they were males. Of the total female population, the number who were twenty-one, or over, was but 11,224,677 — or a number less than one half of that population, by more than the total inhabitants of the States of Maine, Rhode Island, and Delaware, and the Territory of Wyoming added together. It follows, therefore, that, so far as sex can be assumed to have any relation to the possession or non-possession of the franchise, those who fairly come into that category, so far from being fifty per cent of all the people, fall to the merest fraction over *twenty-two* per cent of the entire population.

2: But our friend further assumed that these excluded females not only equal the males in number, but also in intelligence. Dogberry insisted that "comparisons are odorous," and it would be very difficult to form any fair estimate, in this case, of the probable proportionate intelligence of the two sexes. But, as a question by itself, we can shape some just idea of the facts as to this twenty two per cent of women who might vote were they men, and did they satisfy the law. Speaking in round numbers, yet with approximate accuracy — of the less than eleven and a quarter millions of voting age, near a million and a half are negro women, and more than two millions and a half more are foreign-born, very largely Irish; reducing the white native-born female population, of voting age, to a little over seven millions and a quarter, or less than *fifteen per cent* of the whole. Furthermore, there is a large — though unassignable — proportion of this remainder, who only escaped being foreign-born by having been born after their parents landed in this

country; and whose mental and moral conditions cannot widely separate them from their kindred who first drew breath over sea.

We are not, let it be distinctly understood, here saying, or hinting, attack upon, or disfavor of, the colored women of the land, or of those Irish and other alien females, most of whom have brought to this country, as a necessary consequence of the misfortune of their previous condition, a low grade both of intelligence and culture. We are simply insisting that facts ought to be recognized as facts, and that when, with sweeping and tumultuous rhetoric, we are told that one half of the population of the land, fully competent to the suffrage, is arbitrarily excluded therefrom "simply by the accident of sex," it is important for those who are candidly in search of the real truth, rather than merely hankering for victory, to consider that, in reality, less than *fifteen per cent* are so excluded.

Of course, this does not in itself justify the exclusion of that largely reduced number. That is a question not of right — for we have demonstrated that suffrage is never a natural right, whether for man or woman — but of expediency, and of the general good. And that question — whether it be for the general good that those females who have not yet received the franchise because they were born women, and not men, should now be admitted to it — ought to receive the kindest, yet gravest, and most deliberate consideration.

V.

WHAT SUFFRAGE IS.



It has been confidently affirmed that to confer the elective franchise upon woman would be at once, and of necessity, to remedy the worst of our social ills; and, in the words of a chief advocate of the measure, beneficently to inaugurate "the broadest and most sweeping reform that the world has ever witnessed." If this claim be valid, woman suffrage demands immediate and universal acceptance. God knows, and men know, that there are in the world ills enough which need remedy; and if the enfranchisement of woman would bring that remedy, or even offer large help thereto, in the name of imperiled truth and righteousness let us have it without delay. But what if, instead, it should cause a bad matter to be worse? What, if, when too late, the

little finger of the new way should prove thicker than the loins of the old, and society be scourged with scorpions where before it had but been chastised with whips? Surely it is our right, and our duty, to ask for, and if possible to gain, beforehand, some reasonable security that to give the ballot to woman would make for righteousness.

The first consideration on our way to a full answer must naturally be: what is this suffrage which to confer upon woman is to bring at once to all so affluent a blessing? After we have seen precisely what it is, we can better judge if the public good will probably be promoted by inviting women to become participants of it.

Suffrage is the act by which a private individual takes part in the responsibilities of the administration of government. In every human society there is a determinate body — sometimes, as in an autocracy, consisting of one person; sometimes, as in an aristocracy, consisting of a few, supposed to be the wisest and the best; sometimes, as in a democracy, consisting of the whole body of citizens acting through a system of representation and delegation of powers — whose laws the community obey. This sovereign body — whether of one, more, or many — is popularly called the government; and its underlying peculiarity of constitution establishes the form of that government as being a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a republic.

How government first came about is not important to the inquiry before us. We may, with Hobbes, hold it to have been the result of an understanding among men to keep the peace; or, with Locke, regard it as the growth of a common agreement; or, as more broadly stated by others, as resulting from a social compact; or, with still others, may see in it the fruit of divine appointment; or we may rest content simply to trace it historically back to its earliest origins: in neither case shall we affect the conclusion to be reached that, somehow, it holds, and ought to hold, us in its grasp, and that we cease to be true to ourselves no less than to our fellows, in that moment when we ignore or pervert its sanctions.

But what especially concerns the thing we are now seeking to know is the fact that — however it came to be as it is — the Government under which we live does practically control the State, including largely the welfare of each member of the same. It makes conduct lawful or unlawful. It permits certain methods of action, and restrains from other certain methods. It digs or dams the channels of commerce. It orders the courses of trade. It compels education. It regulates labor. It defines the relations of individual liberty to public safety. It coerces for moral purposes. With a blunt and sharp-eyed jealousy for the public good it scans and scrutinizes every man's work, of what sort it is; never hesitating to prune a private right here, or lop off an individual privilege there, when it judges that to do so is to do what is best — perhaps is necessary — for all. There is absolutely nothing on which, directly or indirectly, it may not lay its peremptory hand; no consideration, whether of solitary welfare or social advantage, with which it may not presume, as an expert, to

deal. By statute it may indirectly double the cost of the food on the poor man's table, cut from under his feet the wage-platform on which he works, and corapel him to attempt a new trade, or starve.


Dealing thus with what touches human welfare at every point, two things become of immeasurable importance to good government — and therefore to every human being among its constituent subjects: that its administration be wise, and that it be steadily wise. It is needed not only that the most healthful courses be always taken, but that all sudden changes — almost invariably freighted with disaster — be, so far as possible, avoided. To these ends it becomes of first importance that both a pure integrity and a wise statesmanship be always in control. Nothing must be done through strife and vain glory. Nothing through local pride or class antipathy. Nothing through blind prejudice, or for purely selfish ends. That stream of pure, prudent, and wholesome legislation which is to fertilize and bless a broad people, cannot issue from the bitter and roiled fountains of fanatical, sectional, or pot-house politics.

To make this practical, we must remember that every ballot cast in the United States helps to govern us, and, considered simply as a ballot, helps or harms just as much as any other vote can do. So that Michael O'Shaughnessy, Hans Dummkopf, or Cæsar Plato Socrates Sambo, to neither of whom through his unkempt hair or wool has penetrated the first idea as to the difference between any one theory of government and another, and whose utmost notion of fidelity to duty at the polls is to cast the ballot which the "boss" bids; exerts as much direct influence upon public policy, to bless or to curse it, as does George William Curtis, or William Maxwell Evarts, or Theodore Dwight Woolsey. Nay, it is even true that the more disqualified for the franchise by shiftless and irresponsible poverty, ignorance, and vice, such a man may be, the more likely he is to be led, through bigotry, blind zeal, or bribery, to cast his vote. Thus, already, sections, parties and interests among us are so arrayed and imbittered against each other that one legislature has adjourned without being able to elect a Senator to represent its State in a seat just now vacant in the upper House of the nation, while another bids fair to follow suit. Moreover, the "lobby" manipulates Congress to that degree that more real law-making is done in committee rooms, and at champagne parties, than in the halls of legislation; while the Congress which has just expired — peace to its worthless ashes — has been so paralyzed by the pitiable fear lest any good deed done by it might redound to the praise of one party more than the other, as mainly to have refrained from good deeds altogether; not even daring to allude with healthy horror to the dynamite diabolism, lest, forsooth, the Irish vote might be "alienated!" The Irish vote!

This reminds us that it may help toward a just conclusion if we go back and glance at the history of suffrage here; that we may see in what manner, and from what causes, we have sunk to that deplorable position in this respect, which, as a nation, we now occupy.

VI.

WHAT OUR HISTORY SUGGESTS.

HE Plymouth men, although beginning with a self-made compact, signed by nearly all their adult males in the cabin of the *Mayflower*, as being, as Governor Bradford thought, "under their circumstances as firm as any patent, and in some respects more sure," so soon as they became fairly equipped with a General Court, admitted to their franchise but by that, and only those males of one-and-twenty, or over, whose neighbors gave them a good character as being sober, peaceable and orthodox in the fundamentals of religion, and who had at least £20 value of ratable estate in the colony. Full right of suffrage belonged to these freedmen alone, although in merely town affairs other residents also were allowed to vote. The Massachusetts men had received with their charter the right to make as many freemen under it as they liked, and on such terms as pleased them. But, when fairly launched upon their difficult experiment, they agreed upon a law at which it has been the fashion for later generations to sneer — restricting the condition of freeman to adult males, members of the churches within the Colony.

The simple truth comes out through these facts that the fathers of New England were soon convinced that it would be unsafe to commit the management of their dearest civil and sacred interests to the hands of indiscriminate, not to say incompetent, persons, and were driven to the conviction that their only safe course was, so far as possible, to make it sure that all whose votes controlled their public affairs should have something at stake in them of value to themselves, and possess at least some good degree both of intelligence and moral worth. The idea of securing this latter by requiring antecedent church membership was by no means for them either so intolerant, or so unwise, as certain sciologists have presumed to insist. Dr. George E. Ellis, one of the most profoundly learned living students of New England history, and who would be last to be suspected of any misleading tenderness towards the old dogmas, has put a pregnant question never as yet answered [*Lectures bef. Lowell Inst., 61*], viz. :

What else, what less, than this, *could* they have done for their own security?

And so Dr. Palfrey [*Hist. N. Eng.*, i, 345] alike free from every suspicion of favorable theological bias, says:

The conception [of a State made up of regenerate members], if a delusive and impracticable, was a noble one. Nothing better can be imagined for the welfare of a country than that it shall be ruled on Christian principles; in other words, that its rulers shall be Christian men — men of disinterestedness and integrity of the choicest quality that the world knows — men whose fear of God exalts them above every other fear, and whose controlling love of God and man consecrates them to the most generous aims.

John Cotton [*Answer to Lord Say and Seal, etc., Hutchinson*, i, 436] with great distinctness announced the philosophy of their action thus:

The liberties of the people of this Commonwealth are such as require men of faithful integrity to God and the State, to preserve the same. Their liberties, among others, are chiefly these: (1) To choose all magistrates, and to call them to account at their General Courts; (2) to choose such burgesses [used here in the sense of the modern word "representatives"], every General Court, as with the magistrates, shall make or repeal all laws. Now both these liberties are such as carry along much power with them, either to establish or subvert the Commonwealth, etc.

Our nation started, then, with the fundamental idea that its safety must depend upon restricting suffrage to those who — as the rule — should be presumably most competent to its exercise. And only gradually has that idea degenerated into the present license. When, ninety-seven years ago, the Constitution of the United States came to be framed and adopted, the conviction that it was unsafe to submit so grave a responsibility as the election of the chief magistrate of the nation to popular suffrage, even as then restricted, was so weighty and universal as to lead to that provision of the Constitution by which the people simply chose the electors, in the understanding that the electors would choose for President — not, as now, the man whom the people had designated beforehand — but the man whom their own better judgment should approve, whether the people had thought of him for the office or not. And we have the testimony of Alexander Hamilton [*Federalist*, No. LXVIII] that this section of the Constitution was almost the only one "which escaped severe censure, or which received the slightest mark of approbation from its opponents;" while he himself urged that "a small number of persons selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite."

In 1848, Mr. Webster said before the Supreme Court:

Virginia — how long is it since she gave up freehold suffrage? How long is it since nobody voted in New York without a freehold qualification? There are now States in which no man can vote for members of the upper branch of the Legislature, who does not own fifty acres of land. Every State requires more or less of a property qualification in its officers and electors; and it is for discreet legislation, or constitutional provisions, to determine what its amount shall be.

We cannot take space here to show in detail how the country has drifted as to all this since Mr. Webster's day. It is enough to know that there has been a strong and ceaseless current in the direction of larger license, until the demagogical demand for the removal of every limitation of suffrage has been so far yielded to, that now almost no alien can be so witless, so miscellaneously incompetent, or so utterly without that pledge of interest in the welfare of the State which the possession of a little property needing protection affords, that a ballot cannot in some way be managed for him. While, as the result of well-meant but reckless legislation consequent upon the war, the entire adult male colored population of the South—a mass left by slavery stranded in ignorance and vice—has been admitted to the franchise. Thus we have put ourselves in a position which leaves us with an amount of incapacity, perversity, and prejudice to be absorbed, digested, and assimilated, which, should success be realized, must tax our national constitution to its utmost capacity, and which, in view of frequent facts, often awakens gloomiest fears of failure.

As matters now stand, we place those dearest, most delicate and weightiest public interests, which our fathers felt could be safely intrusted only to a select few of the wisest and the best, into the hands of more than twelve and three quarter miscellaneous millions of adult males; of whom we know that more than three millions were natives of Europe, many of whom can be scarcely more familiar with the genius of our affairs than we are with the interior politics of Japan; and that at least a million and a half more were born and bred in a Southern slavery which has left the majority of them incapable of all useful discharge of the supreme duties of citizenship.

We are in the midst of hard times. Our manufactures stagnate. Our ships rot from the seas. Our farmers fail in the markets. Our railways earn scant or no dividends. Every industry languishes. Some people think it is because we have so much silver coined into lying dollars, which insult high heaven by declaring their "trust in God." Some say it is because we need free trade. Some are sure that a different tariff would relieve all. And, as in the theater at Ephesus, some cry one thing and some another—all agreeing only in the judgment that Congress must come to the nation's relief. It must "do something." Do what?

Ah, that is the precise question! And, in room of taking it as our fathers would, and as the genius of our institutions prompts, to a body of experts wise enough to form, and small enough to express and enact an opinion into a law, we have reduced ourselves to the pitiable necessity of taking it to twelve millions and three quarters of people, most of whom know little or nothing about it, and have no other idea of duty with regard to it than to "run in" to Congress whomsoever the "party" dictates.

And now we are urged to carry the matter still further, and to ask every woman in the country over one-and-twenty—if, indeed, that age be

not also "oppressive" — what shall be done as to the tariff and the silver coinage, and the other vital questions. And we are left to infer that, until all the Bridgets leave their brooms, and all the Dinahs their wash-tubs, to enlighten us, we must remain in our darkness and sorrow.

VII.

THE COMMON SENSE OF SUFFRAGE.



E have seen that, when a citizen votes, he assumes and discharges his part of the responsibility of the administration of the government under which he lives. The act is momentary, but its results may cheer, or curse, for centuries. It may be on his part essentially mechanical and unintelligent, yet it may precipitate consequences as to the wisdom of which the most sagacious publicists have been in doubt for generations. Some "prentice han" — as Burns phrases it — may, by the majority of his single ballot, elevate to a chief place of power in the Commonwealth a wily, scheming, unscrupulous, and consummately able demagogue, who, working adroitly with others, and plotting skillfully to combine into a single powerful body all restless elements of opposition to the good old Puritan ways, may end in forcing upon us the Continental Sunday, the Parisian system of inspecting and licensing houses of ill-fame, unlimited German beer-gardens, and Monte-Carlo gambling casinos — with their associated provocations to, and manifestations of, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Or — to bring the matter, we are afraid, a little closer than even thus to the business and bosom of the average citizen having a pocket — Mr. Henry George and his busy collaborators may succeed, some dark day, in inflicting the philosophy of Socialism upon us through all the forms of law, until the only way left in which the "divide-even" policy can be staved off, and reasonable rights of property conserved, may be through the violence and anarchy of a revolution — the communistic camel having followed his nose through the crack of the door until he has filled the house.

One of the ablest discussions of the subject of suffrage on record occurs in the argument of Daniel Webster before the Supreme Court of the United States, 27 Jan., 1848, in the case which grew out of the famous "Dorr Rebellion." He [*Works* vi: 223] says:

The right to choose representatives is every man's part in the exer-

cise of sovereign power; to have a voice in it, *if he has the proper qualifications*, is the portion of political power belonging to every elector. That is the beginning. That is the mode in which power emanates from its source, and gets into the hands of conventions, legislatures, courts of law, and the chair of the executive. It begins in suffrage.

Notice here how Mr. Webster expressly declares that this right of suffrage can belong only to those who have "the proper qualifications." He returns, moreover, to that view of the subject, on the next page [224], to add:

The people often *limit themselves*. They set bounds to their own power. . . . They limit themselves, by all their constitutions, in two important respects; that is to say, in regard to the qualifications of *electors*, and in regard to the qualifications of the *elected*. In every State, and in all the States, the people have precluded themselves from voting for everybody they might wish to vote for; they have limited their own right of choosing. They have said, We will elect no man who has not such and such qualifications [*e. g.*, the President must not be under thirty-five years of age, and must have been a natural born citizen; a senator must have reached the age of thirty, and have been nine years a citizen, and a representative the age of twenty-five years, and been seven years a citizen, etc.]. *We will not vote ourselves unless we have such and such qualifications, etc.*

This limitation of the elective franchise to those who are competent, must surely be the first dictate of common sense in relation to the subject. When a man wants his will drawn, so that his reasonable wishes may shape the disposal of his property after his decease, he does not apply to his apothecary, nor his butcher, nor his shoemaker, but to his lawyer, familiar with all conveyancing of property, and with the requisitions of the probate statutes. If his little child be sorely sick, he does not call in the grocer, nor the baker, nor the candlestick maker to prescribe for her, but that physician in whom he has most confidence as an expert in regard to the diseases of children. If, by the hardest, he have saved a few hundreds of dollars which he would fain invest so that he may yearly have a little help from the interest of the money, and be fairly sure of the principal should he need it in his sickness or his age, he seeks advice in its investment from the most prudent and sagacious man of affairs whom he knows. So, if he wants a house built, he goes to an architect, and not to a circus-rider; if a new suit of clothes, to a tailor, and not to a harness-maker; if a new wagon, to a carriage-maker and not to a confectioner. That is to say, common sense instructs him with regard to all ordinary necessities to seek in every department that his work shall be done by those who best know how to do it — and not by bunglers, who, however wise and skillful they may be about other things, know nothing, or next to nothing, about that which he needs. In the name of consistency how, then, can common sense fail to suggest to him that, in regard to that grand and inclusive need of government — within which all else that he is, lives, and moves, and has its being, and without

whose reasonable prosperity nothing can much prosper with him — it is requisite that, if not experts, at least the well-disposed and prudent, and not blank blunderheads, blazing bigots, or boozey brutes, have the shaping of it.

We grant, of course, that there must be necessary limitations to this view, and that it would prove impracticable under such a form of civil life as ours to confine the shaping constituency of the government altogether within the narrow limits of those who are experts in the science. But it ought not to be impracticable to confine it to those who have *some* fitness for doing their work as electors in a way for the common good. Two things, at least, are not unreasonable, as conditions precedent to the proper exercise of the elective franchise, viz.: (1) Some deposit — of property, or otherwise — in the State, of value sufficient to make the question of the best management of government one that shall deeply concern the elector, and (2) the possession by him of a degree of intelligence, and an amount of knowledge, which shall enable him to comprehend the difference between the well or ill shaping of national politics, and of the relation of practical affairs to them. With regard to the former we are reminded of a good story which has a direct bearing upon it. An employer, not long ago, said to one of his workmen, whom he had known to be a rather noisy advocate of communistic views: "It seems to me I do not hear you say so much in favor of communism as formerly." "No," was the answer, "I have changed my mind; I think communism to be a very bad thing." "What changed your mind?" "Well — if you must know — I have always been told that a divide-even all round would give each man one hundred dollars, and I have already *one hundred and twenty-five* in the savings-bank!"

Of course we shall be told that all this would have looked well in the moonlight nights of the generation before the present, but that, however important it might have been for consideration at that time, it is obsolete in this day, when impecunious aliens, who have hardly gotten off the sea-legs of their first importation, are marched in droves into our naturalization offices, and, by a corrupt collusion between the managers of the men and the managers of the offices, are empowered to vote — as they shall be directed to do by their priest, or their overseer.

To which we reply that *our* common sense tells us that the worse a bad matter may now be, the more important it becomes, if possible, not to add to the misfortune. And if this nation be now in grievous peril of absolute shipwreck from having, to a degree, weakly and foolishly put its helm into incompetent, if not unfaithful, hands, that fact cries out to us all the more plaintively, and piteously, not to repeat and enlarge the mistake. Such revolutions never go backward. It is unimaginable that any logic or rhetoric, whether of words or deeds, can persuade the millions now having the right to vote who are palpably unfit for its exercise, to disfranchise themselves, and relieve the nation of the incubus of their presence at the polls. Let then common sense at least warn us not to

endow with suffrage the additional millions of females — a few of whom are clamoring for it — until it first be made clear that they have “the proper qualifications,” and that the public good will in reality be promoted by such a procedure.

VIII.

THE FITNESS OF WOMEN FOR SUFFRAGE.



ONE further aspect of the general subject invites attention before we are prepared directly to consider whether it be for the public good that woman receive the franchise. It respects her innate fitness for the same.

In examining this it becomes us to remember that the question asks consideration in its usual, and not its exceptional, aspects. Joan of Arc in the fifteenth century may have done a work for the armies of France possible to few men in her place; as a captain's widow in our time may have safely navigated home the barque bereft of the skill and courage of her husband's presence; without demonstrating — without even suggesting — that it is commonly to be desired that women lead armies, or handle ships. People accustomed to every luxury, during the siege of Paris, made shift to sustain life on vermin; and some of our heroic arctic explorers have fought off starvation by the help of scraps of putrid fish and old boots; yet no sane mind thinks of arguing therefrom that such provender is really better suited to the human stomach than chops or steaks, and to be desired like them to make one strong. The exact question is — taking the ages through, taking her as she is when circumstances favor her perfectly natural development, and taking her as she is to be in “the good time coming,” and as the best good of man requires her to be — how does woman stand related to the subject under discussion.

1. On our way to more vital considerations, it can do no harm to remember that the enfranchisement of woman would involve inconveniences to the family often inconsistent with its best interests; and this to every woman; for it is idle to contend that those women only need vote who should desire to do so. That portion of the sex which is in league with the rum-seller and the gambler and the dance hall keeper, and their kindred foes to the best interests of society, would be sure to vote

every time; and this would compel every good woman to vote — sick or well, willing or unwilling — by way of antidote, or our last state would surely be worse than our first. But when it comes, in the city mansion, to the lady of the house and all her servants leaving it with no one perhaps to tend the door; and, in thousands of country homes, to shutting up the premises, or trusting little children for hours with the risk of themselves and of each other, in order that the father and mother may travel miles to a caucus, or to the polls, the business takes on a serious look. We say "caucus," because, if the women do not frequent the primary meetings to shape nominations, it can do little good for them to go afterward to another place to act upon them. It is surely of very doubtful utility that every department of household affairs be brought to a stand-still, every now and then, that a factitious duty may be done — which, if all think alike, is needless, and, if all do not think alike, may be perilous to family peace.

2. The intellectual peculiarities of women scarcely favor large expectation of the usefulness of her enfranchisement. If all end in her casting often, or habitually, a wrong vote, society must surely be the worse for it. But, as compared with man, she has less of that calmness of research, that completeness of investigation, and that unprejudiced coolness of judgment, which usually underlie wise political action. She is apt to jump at conclusions. Often she can see little beside the red rag of prejudice. While, at the same time, that she is illogical, incompletely supplied with facts, or wholly astray from all the cardinal points of a given subject, will be likely to make her more, rather than less, assured and persistent. Nor is this peculiarity certain to be removed by high culture, as a late occurrence may aptly illustrate.

On the 25th January last, in Washington, the president of the Howard University preached upon Woman and Skepticism. He argued that when a woman becomes an unbeliever, she pitifully severs herself from her own best friend, Jesus Christ. In the whole discourse there was, as we are informed, no word against woman suffrage, nor even covert allusion to the subject. But, so soon as the sermon was ended, Mrs. E. C. Stanton and Miss Susan B. Anthony — who are surely among the most highly cultured apostles of the new faith — rushed, in an excited manner, upon the platform; one to say to Dr. Patton — in tones which no true lady is accustomed to use — "that his mother, if he had one, ought to take him over her knee and spank him;" the other to blurt out her ironical "thanks for the discourse, as proving that — as she had always claimed — the bitterest enemies of the 'woman's cause' are to be found in the pulpit." After which the two flounced down and out. The entire procedure suggests how much of the quietness of candid good sense, and the truthfulness of a scrupulous regard for facts, it might be reasonable to expect even of fairly educated females, in the midst of the furious disputes and fierce prejudices of a hotly contested election.

Many kindred suggestions might easily be added here, were it wise

to expand these brief suggestions to the full consideration of the subject. But the real question does not turn upon such outward points as these, but rather upon the inward and eternal fitness of things. The fact that that "Lass o' Lowrie's" did, and did well, a man's work in the coal-pits, helps and in nowise hinders the exultation with which the absorbed reader of Mrs. Burnett's striking book regards the result by which the girl rises out of her unnatural mannishness into those higher regions of strong and pure femineity, which she is so fitted to enjoy and adorn as the wife of the plucky overseer.

3. We plead, then, that woman's nature is adjunctive and complementary, not self-complete, irrelative and independent. She was not divinely planned to do alone, or to be alone, but to be a help-meet for man. She is his other half. It takes both to compose that ideal human entity of the family, which, and not the individual, is the fundamental unit from which the construction of society starts, and which should vote. It is not affirmed to be every man's or every woman's duty, or privilege, to be married — exceptions occur under, and consort with, all rules — but it is to be insisted that, as the rule, marriage is the natural, divinely intended, and righteous estate of every human being of average gifts and capacities; that in a perfect millennial commonwealth those of either sex living single would be as anomalous as paupers, or the deaf, dumb, and blind; and that, of the communities of the present those where households are most abundant and their natural influences most predominate, where marriage bears children, and mothers esteem it their highest function, as well as dearest privilege, with prayerful, tender, and incessant diligence, to rear their little ones for usefulness and holiness — to be patriots and to be Christians — are those which palpably bear the most glorious fruits of all manner of prosperity. This view of woman's nature and functions — which esteems it her joy and crown to be the wife of one man, to be well reported of for good works, to have brought up children, to have used hospitality without grudging, to have relieved the afflicted and diligently followed every good thing — is infinitely nobler in itself, happier for her and more blessed for humanity, than that which would unwoman by seeking to make a sham man of her. Nor does it lose her influence from the ballot-box, inasmuch as the intelligence of the good wife usually has a part in her husband's vote.

Concerning all this we venture to quote a most effective passage from the argument of Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, the other day, before the committee of the Massachusetts Legislature, as to the movement under discussion. She insists that the question should be taken in behind all mere surface considerations, to be looked at in the light of the force and finality of the central fact. She then proceeds:

What is the law of woman-life? What was she made woman for, and not man? Take this for the starting point; it is the key.

Within, behind, antecedent to all result in action, are the place and office of the woman — by the law of woman-life. And all question of her

deed and duty should be brought to this test. Is it of her own, interior, natural relation, putting her at her true advantage, harmonious with the key to which her life is set? I think this suffrage question must settle itself precisely upon this ground-principle, and that a⁴ argument should range conclusively around it. Judging so, we should find, I think, that not at the polls, where the last utterance of the people's voice is given — where the results of character, and conscience, and intelligence are shown — is her best and rightful work; on the contrary, that it is useless here, unless first done elsewhere. But where little children learn to think and speak — where men love and listen, and the world is forming — is the office she has to fill, the errand she has to do. The question is, can she do both? Is there need that she should do both? Does not the former and greater include the later and less?

We deem it impossible to answer such questions faithfully in any manner which does not frown upon woman suffrage as an unnatural, and therefore unwholesome and really monstrous thing.

It might not, in some cases, in the least harm the tenderest womanhood. It might, now and then, furnish a grateful stimulus to a life covetous of opportunities to do good. Certain families might, for a time, thoroughly enjoy it. But, taken year by year, and with families as they average, and with women in the mass; being essentially a reform against nature, woman suffrage would first languish, then repel, and in the end prove a burden too grievous to be borne.

IX.

THE GENERAL GOOD.



WE have seen that, before the law, woman is already in some respects better off than man; and that as to anything in which she may still be behind in point of legal privilege, suffrage offers neither a necessary, nor the wisest, method of relief. We have seen that to vote is never a right natural to man or woman; always a matter of expediency, and the general good. We have seen that the claim roughly made that "one half of the intelligence of the nation is now arbitrarily excluded from the polls by the accident of sex" is founded upon misapprehension — in point of fact sex not being an "accident," and probably less than *fifteen* per cent being by it excluded. We have seen that with us suffrage lies at the base of good government, and that our fathers judged the vitality of this relation to be such that the only

safety of the Republic lay in strictly confining the ballot to the comparatively few who have a property stake in the general welfare, with those who by intelligence and culture are competent to the responsibility. We have seen that, under the stress of demagogism and civil war, we have so departed from their idea as to imperil our institutions by admitting to the polls a crude mass of millions of the alien-born, and the slave-born, so large as to render it uncertain whether our national constitution can prove equal to the amazing task of its digestion and assimilation. We have seen that, as to other matters, common sense instructs us to commit difficult work only to expert hands. And we have further found, while in many respects woman is poorly fitted for the duties of political life, that such life is likely to react harmfully upon her, and must be incongenial with, and damaging to, the divinely ordained and essential idea of the family.

Now, then, we front the exact main question: *Does the public good require that women vote?* If it does, then all prejudice should be yielded, all difficulties bravely invited, all opposition cease, and the franchise be granted them; since what is really best for society, and for all its members, should be done. But with our light, we are compelled to answer the question in the negative — among others, for the following reasons.

1. All considerations urged in behalf of woman suffrage break down when closely examined. At the risk of repetition here and there, we will glance at the chief points usually insisted on as conclusive in its favor.

We are told that suffrage is a natural right, and that it is therefore injustice, fraud, and oppression to withhold it from woman. But we have seen that suffrage is not a natural right, because infants, idiots, minors, and condemned criminals must then have it, in virtue of being human, which is absurd; while the most eminent publicists have uniformly regarded it as a matter of political expediency and not a connate prerogative of man. We are told that that progress in female education which is a marked feature of our time demands that woman acquire the franchise. But the majority of the most faithful friends and promoters of that higher female education — in the language of one of them — not only doubt this, but oppose the franchise as “imperiling the influence she already possesses.” We are told — vaguely yet confidently — that a majority of women desire the ballot; and, in proof, are assured that this year, in this State, for every thirty who have petitioned for it, only one has remonstrated against it. But — since those who want a thing ask for it, while those who are content as they are say nothing — a much more accurate way of reaching the facts would be to consider that, of the 443,091 women of Massachusetts who are over one-and-twenty, only 15,985 have asked that right of suffrage be granted them; whence it appears that, with all the stimulus of continual agitation through conventions many, and lectures many, and publications many, and “suffrage societies” without number, the sleepless stirrers up of this “reform” have succeeded only in procuring the signatures of but few more than three

and a half per cent of those women of Massachusetts who would be entitled to the franchise, to petitions asking that it be granted them.

We are told, as single women and widows possessing property are taxed for the same, that, without right of suffrage, they are wronged precisely in the manner in which our Revolutionary fathers were wronged, by "taxation without representation." But this is only a skin-deep resemblance, and covers a glaring sophism. In the beginning of the last quarter of the eighteenth century there were thirteen American Colonies, including hundreds of towns, with many thousands of inhabitants, all of whose political, civil, and commercial rights were at the absolute disposal of a king and parliament three thousand miles over sea; without the privilege, on the part of the colonists, of so much as a solitary representative to speak for them on the floor where took place those deliberations, and were reached those conclusions, which vitally affected their entire temporal welfare, and scarcely with even a next friend to plead their cause. It is foolishness to claim any honorable likeness between this and the condition of women among us whose property bears its fair share of the common expense of social self-preservation, although they do not vote. Reference was made at the State House to a woman who thus yearly pays \$11,000 in taxes in Brookline. But she is surrounded by neighbors and friends who do vote. She can make her desires known through them. And she receives from the town equitable returns for what she pays, like those around her who have the franchise. She is an exception, due to the fact that it is better for all, and therefore better for her, that her property be left without a direct vote, than that, to avoid it, all the ills of indiscriminate female suffrage be let loose to afflict society. Her case is precisely analogous to that of the male heirs of great estates during their minority; and it has been estimated that there are probably five, if not ten, such young men temporarily debarred from voting where there is one such woman. It is not, and never was, and probably never will be true, that every tax-payer acquires, from that circumstance, right of franchise. There are hundreds of great corporations in the country which, by the taxes they pay, contribute immensely to the expenses of the State, yet which have, and can have, no vote. It is indeed said that this parallel with the case of male minors is unjust, because they will soon emerge into voters. But this overlooks the fact that—with the continued growth of the State—for every minor who thus emerges, more than another takes his place. The *condition of minority* is as permanent among us as the condition of womanhood, and if not to vote be a hardship in the latter case, it must be also in the former.

Perhaps there never was a more plausible utterance of folly than that famous *dictum* of Garibaldi on this subject, when, in April, 1880, he told the Italians that, "Those who obey the laws ought to make them." Fancy the gambler, the pickpocket, the prize-fighter, the liquor-seller, and all their carrion tribes, who, for society's good, must be held to strict

obedience to the laws, for society's good summoned to make them! Fancy a local congress — for convenience — held in a State's prison!

Again we are told that the presence of woman would purify the polls. This is sheer assumption. Nobody knows it. Many of the best of the gentler sex fear a vastly greater probability that politics would contaminate woman, than that woman could disinfect politics. We predict that, were women admitted to the polls, the danger of what is known as "repeating" would be immeasurably enhanced; since, disguised by different bonnets and veils, a shrewd woman might safely risk detection in voting a dozen times under different names, where a man could risk it once. Mrs. Stone and Mr. Blackwell blandly insist that if all the good mothers and female teachers and church-members could only add theirs to the votes of the good men, it would perpetuate "a vast and safe majority" for goodness. But there is no proof of this. It is a fallen world, and women are no more unanimous for goodness than men are, while they are peculiarly exposed to deterioration from the abrading influences of political life; and there are many who not only fear but believe that thus to extend the franchise would prove — take the country through — the re-enforcement of the worst, rather than of the best, elements of our politics. And, even were the issue to be in some places helpful to the success of legislation, in favor of the restriction of liquor-selling and other forms of vice, it can never be wholesome to overturn the foundations of society, and subvert the divine order of things, to meet a temporary exigency. It is not, surely, self-evident that society as now constituted could be expected to rest quietly under galling legal restraints known to be due to the vote of one sex as against the other.

2. While the reasons commonly urged in favor of granting the franchise to woman thus break down when examined, the reasons against it have a substance of truth which cannot be set aside. It is an objection to woman suffrage which cannot be set aside that the vast majority of thinking women do not want it, and that many of the wisest and best women protest against it. It is an objection which cannot be set aside that to give woman the ballot would be to break up the natural and harmonious gradations of our form of deputed government — in which the husband and father represents in the town meeting the individuals who compose the fundamental corporation of the family; next, the representatives, duly chosen by those towns, act in the State Legislature for the corporations of those towns with their constituent families and their constituent individuals; and last, the Representatives and Senators duly chosen in and by those States, act in the National Congress for the corporations of those States, with their constituent towns, families, and individuals. No good reason has yet been given why this well-graded, symmetrical, and coherent system should be shattered in that very foundation resting upon which it has securely done its work so well for, substantially, more than two hundred years.

It is an objection against woman suffrage which cannot be set aside

that it would tend to subvert that wise division which centuries have sanctioned of the labors common to humanity, which assigns the lighter work of the kitchen and the nursery especially to women, and the heavier and more public toils of farm, forest, ocean, battle-field, town meeting, and legislative hall to men. It is an objection which cannot be set aside that woman has not the physical power — should need require — to defend and secure the execution of her vote, by those police or military arms of strength, which, in exigent moments, stand savingly between society and anarchy. It is an objection which cannot be set aside that it is needless to risk overturns and harms in order that women may vote, since, as the rule, their interests are fairly and even tenderly represented by men — all of whom are born of women, and bound to them by the sweetest and holiest ties; and, if there be occasional exceptions to this, better ways can be found for their remedy than to overturn society from its foundations. It is an objection against woman suffrage which cannot be set aside, that she can do a more useful work for the welfare of the State without voting, in the quiet training of young citizens at home, than she can hope to accomplish by unsexing herself in the rough and tumble of clashing interests at the polls. It is an objection which cannot be set aside, that, were she to vote, her influence would be all too apt to be thrown in such manner as to increase those often well-meant but unconsidered and in the end pernicious class laws, and sectional legislations, which already sufficiently threaten the steadfastness of the Republic. Can any person in his senses for one moment believe, for example, that, under the skillful pilotage of the Romanist priests, the more than 200,000 votes of Irish women that would be made possible in Massachusetts by giving woman the franchise, would not be so cast as to pay the bills of Romanist schools from that public treasury which is filled most largely by Protestant taxation?

Still further, it is an argument against woman suffrage which cannot be set aside, that the experiment of it where tried has never yet so resulted as to convince the world of its beneficence. Much is said of its assumed success in Wyoming and Washington Territories, but it is fairly to be remembered that, when the last census was taken, the entire population of both those Territories only exceeded by 172 persons the aggregate population of *five* only out of the twenty-five wards of Boston, and that civil arrangements often work well in the beginnings of a new and small community, which experience demonstrates to be perilously inappropriate to the mature conditions of older ones. An egg-shell may float triumphantly for a week upon the calm surface of a sheltered pond, while, at the same time, the captain of a steamer of ten thousand tons may be straining every nerve to prevent her from foundering in the far stormy Atlantic. Furthermore, we quote from a debate in the Senate of the United States, as to the success of this movement in another Territory:

If female suffrage is to be incorporated into the laws of our country, with a view to the amelioration of our morals or our political sentiments, we stand aghast at the spectacle of what has been wrought by its exercise in the Territory of Utah. There stands a power, supporting the crime of polygamy through what they call a divine inspiration, or teaching from God, and all the power of the judges of the United States, and of the Congress of the United States has been unavailing to break it down. Who have upheld it? Those who in the family circle represent one husband to fifteen women!

And, once more, it is an argument against woman suffrage which cannot be set aside, that to grant it would involve a step in our legislation which however disastrous might be its results, could never — short of revolution — be retraced. Only a popular vote could reverse it, and it is inconceivable — human selfishness remaining as it is — that a majority would ever rise to that sublime height of goodness which should disfranchise themselves for the public good.

3. And, finally, we respectfully urge upon the most earnest consideration of every thoughtful person, and especially of every Christian of either sex, the consideration that to give the suffrage to woman would be to aim a blow in danger of being fatal at that chief safeguard of society — the family. Everybody knows that late agitations for "women's rights," as matter of fact, have harmed it. That agitation creeping into houses and leading captive silly men and women laden with sins, and tempted by divers lusts, has already broken up thousands of happy homes by the wicked and disastrous divorce mania, with that preliminary reckless entrance upon the married state which it favors and furthers. What is needed now for the public welfare is not enhancement of that malignant centrifugal force which tends to whirl society apart into individuals laden with separate responsibilities, but rather all possible endeavor to highten that wholesome centripetal tendency which shall lead husbands and wives benignly to sit together under their own vines and fig-trees, with children around them whom they are training for the State and for heaven — all with trustful affection looking toward the husband and father as their strong one to act, and their wise one to vote, for the household; and all ever filled with a spirit which would say of the subject before us, as an eloquent Senator said in Congress:

If there is any revolutionary claim in this country, it is that of woman suffrage. It revolutionizes society. It revolutionizes religion. It revolutionizes the constitution and laws. And it revolutionizes the opinions of those so old-fashioned among us as to believe that the legitimate and proper sphere of woman is the family circle, as wife and mother, and not politician and voter — those of us who are proud to believe that:

*' A woman's noblest station is retreat;
Her fairest virtues fly from public sight;
Domestic worth that shuns too strong a light.'*¹⁰

THE BIBLE INDORSES COMMON SENSE.



Nine articles we have examined the question of woman suffrage from various sides, and been led to the conclusion that common sense is against it. The discussion would, however, be in no sense complete, did we not glance at the aspect toward it of the Word of God. We are painfully aware that many are indifferent to the views of revelation concerning it; and that some, who, in general, look upon the Scripture as having divine authority over human life, accept its teachings in a sense so vague and timid that they are easily overridden and neutralized by human fancies. There still remains, however — let us hope — a considerable number of thoughtful, conscientious, and influential people who have not yet bowed the knee to Baal, and with whom the distinct teaching of the Bible is the end of all strife. To such persons, especially, we now appeal, and with the more confidence because the case is so perfectly clear, and the result so impossible to be misunderstood by a reverent mind. And that we may do the fullest justice to the views of the suffragists on the question, we will be guided in our examination by an address of a certain reverend gentleman before the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, whose object it was to prove that the Bible favors that "cause." Three points were made: first, that that subordination of woman to man which seems involved in [Gen. iii: 16] "and unto thy husband shall be thy desire, and he shall rule over thee," was due to sin, and the fall, and does not, therefore, set forth the divine ideal of the relation of the sexes. Second, that all said by Paul in his Epistles which apparently suggests the subordination of woman to man is to be put aside and made of no account, on the assumption that the apostle was writing, "not from the platform of rights, but from the higher platform of love," and cannot, therefore, really mean what, confessedly, he seems to mean. The third is, that, in general, the fundamental principles of the Bible assert and maintain the sacredness and responsibility, in all cases, of *individual* rights. This remarkable reasoning let us a little examine, in detail.

1. As to the beginnings. Man had been created. He had become

acquainted with his Maker. His intellectual faculties had passed from the passive and receptive to the active and responsive state. He had had a first lesson in speech, when God spake to him of the trees of the garden and his right relations to them and their fruit. He had had a second, when, at God's suggestion and by His help, he had given names to all the cattle, the fowl, and every beast. And now he stood erect, complete, the essential unit and representative of the human race; in this original unity the counterpart of the divine unity—monarch of all that he surveyed, as God was monarch of him. But speech suggested somebody to speak to. And so God says: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a *help-meat* for him." Here is struck—before the fall, before the creation of Eve, even—the key-note of the divine intent as to the female nature. The word used is significant. It is *ezer*, coming from the verb to "bring aid, or succor, to." We submit that it involves a certain natural implication of secondariness and subordination. Thus [1 Kings 1: 7], when Adonijah exalted himself to be king, Joab and Abiathar, his inferiors, "aided, following him." Calvin says:

One thing is to be noted, that, when the woman is here called the help of the man, no allusion is made to that necessity to which we are reduced since the fall of Adam; for the woman was ordained to be the man's helper, even although he had stood in his integrity.

Adam had seen by actual survey the ranks of created beings below him, and, while he had named them, had observed that none rose to capacities with which he could have rational fellowship. And so he was prepared to feel the need of what the Lord was about to do; when, causing deep sleep to fall upon him, He builded a woman from one of his ribs. As to this transaction Dr. Murphy says:

The original unity of man constitutes the strict unity of the race. The construction of the rib into a woman establishes the individuality of man's person before, as well as after, the removal of the rib. The selection of a rib to form into a woman constitutes her, in an eminent sense, a *help-meat* for him. . . . At the same time, the after-building of the part into a woman determines the distinct personality and individuality of the woman. Thus we perceive that the entire race, even the very first mother of it, has its essential unit and representative in the first man.

All this in the primeval innocence. When God came to pronounce judgment for the first sin, he said to the woman who had led off in transgression, "The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee."

Now it is quite needless to inquire in what degree the consequences of this may be removed by redemption, inasmuch as we have seen that the original unit was the first man, and that the conception of a certain inferiority, secondariness, and subordination entered into the fundamental and unfallen idea of the helpfulness of woman to man; which no subsequent fall, or rising again, can reasonably be expected essentially to modify.

2. We are told that Paul's language cannot be taken to mean what — he says, because it is the "apotheosis of love." But what does Paul say? He speaks directly upon this to three different churches, and to Timothy and Titus.

To the Corinthians [1 Cor. xi: 3-9, 13-15; xiv: 34, 35], aside from all specific directions as to conduct, he lays down the general principle that "the head of the woman is the man," which he supports by the two considerations: (1) that woman was secondary in origin, and (2) ancillary in intent. He therefore explains that their female members should keep silence in the churches, for "it is not permitted unto them to speak." Some of the best New Testament critics judge this to mean more than "I do not permit," namely, "I forbid;" and the use of the same Greek verb in John xix: 38, Acts xxi: 39, xxvi: 1, xxvii: 3, and xxviii: 16, lends indorsement to that view; while the reference which he adds here ["as also saith the law"] to the fact that the Old Testament, by its general tenor dating from the creation, and by not allowing women to do any ministerial office in the Temple, prescribed silence on their part in the Church, has surely a special significance.

To the church at Ephesus [v: 22-24, 33] he confines himself to the single suggestion that Christian wives should recognize the fact that their Christianity, so far from releasing them from obligation of due subjection to their husbands, rather indorses and vitalizes the same, from the high consideration that "as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." In this connection it is noticeable that the Greek verb with which the chapter is closed — "let the wife see that she [*phobētai*] fear her husband" — naturally expresses the feeling with which an inferior regards a superior, and this not merely in its classical use by Æschylus, Sophocles, Plato, Xenophon, and others, but in its New Testament employ — in Luke xviii: 2; xxiii: 40; Acts x: 2, 22; Col. iii: 22; 1 Peter ii: 17; Rev. xiv: 7, xv: 4, and the like.

To the Colossians the apostle condensed his counsel on this subject into the single precept [iii: 18]: "Wives be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." This "as is fitting" [*ὡς ἔσται*] is used only twice beside in the New Testament [Eph. v: 4; Philemon 8], and, in the connection here found, most emphatically expresses the sense of "that which is suitable to, and congruous with, Christianity."

When Paul came to give Timothy general directions for the future guidance of the Christian churches, he repeated, as to this [1 Tim. ii: 11-15], his former precepts of silence and subjection ["I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness"], supporting the same by the two arguments: (1) That woman was secondary in origin; and (2) was first to fall. To Titus [ii: 1, 5], the same apostle named as a part of the "sound doctrine" which was to be taught, and to which obedience was to be required, that women be "in subjection to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

Now, when a man argues concerning these and their kindred pas-

sages that they were written "not from the platform of rights, but from the higher platform of love," we admit his premise, but deny the conclusion which he would draw from it. Paul in these texts meant just what he said. His teaching of the subordination of woman, under both law and gospel, was founded as much in love as in right; and the plea, when to the Galatians (iii: 28) he declared that "there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus," that he meant to affirm the equality of the sexes under the Christian dispensation, vanishes into thin air when it is seen that he is not talking about "rights" of any kind, but of the absolute identity of all classes and conditions of men as sinners before the cross.

But we must not forget — although the reverend gentleman forgot — that Peter teaches on this subject, as well as Paul. He says [1 Pet. iii: 1-7] that wives ought to be in subjection to their husbands. What this means can easily be ascertained from the use of the same Greek word [1 Cor. xiv: 26] to express the mediatorial subordination of Christ to the Father, and [1 Pet. ii: 18] the natural relation of the servant to the master. And Peter further says that women ought thus to be subject to their husbands because the holy women of old were "in subjection to their own husbands. . . . As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." Entirely in sympathy with this is his direction, in the next verse, to the husband to give honor to the woman, as "the weaker vessel;" or, as the marginal rendering of the Revised Version puts it, "unto the female vessel, as weaker."

We do not know how to interpret language justly and reverently, if all these passages taken together — and it is to be remembered that there are none of an opposite spirit — do not affirm that woman stands in the relation of a certain inferiority and subordination to man; a relation no more derogatory to the woman than the condition of minority through seven eighths of the average life of man is derogatory to the child; a relation which, when dignified and beautified on gospel principles, insures the happiest possible family life.

3. The general plea that the teachings of the Bible emphasize the rights of the individual is but partly true, but might be granted without affecting the question under discussion. The Bible principle simply is, give to each the rights which to him, or to her, belong; and, as there is no commensuration either in the social justice or benevolence of the gospel, so neither is there in it any hint that God made a mistake when He so created Eve and her daughters that [Eph. v: 23] "the husband is the head of the wife."

But the New Testament has two lessons more on this general subject.

The first is that remarkable declaration of Paul [1 Tim. ii: 15] that the noblest and most perfect realization of woman's possibilities [her "salvation"] is not to be looked for, or found, in an imitated manhood,

but through the truest fulfillment of her motherly function and duties in her allotted sphere of home.

The second is in the use of that very peculiar term [*gunaikdria*] which Paul [2 Tim. iii: 6] applies to some women. It is used but once. It is in the neuter gender, and it is an attenuative; both facts suggesting degradation and degeneracy. The term is translated "silly women." It suggests in what manner error has often spread—the errorists creeping into houses, and taking captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; and these *gunaikdria*, by their zealous plausibilities, tempting others. Jerome [*Epist. ad Ctes.*] calls attention to the fact that Simon Magus had his Helena; Nicolas of Antioch and Marcion of Rome their man-womanish helpers; Apelles his Phumena; Montanus his Prisca and Maximilla; Arius the sister of Princeps, and Donatus his Lucilla. Contrast these unwholesome and malarial doings with the normal Christian work of such women as Lydia and Dorcas, and Priscilla, and Phebe and Persis, and the later Blandina, and Perpetua, and Monica and Paula, and their sainted sisterhood, who, in their place as helpers, have washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work within the lines of the divine subordination of the sex; and we shall find history joining her voice with the voices of reason and Scripture, to plead with our mothers and daughters and sisters not to unsex themselves by spoiling good women to make bad men, of whom there are enough already.



