

Shall women have the right to vote?

No 1

Shall Women Have the Right to Vote? ADDRESS BY WENDELL PHILLIPS AT WORCESTER, MASS. 1851

LIBRARY CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT SUBJECT Section VII Suffrage Speeches & Records NO I (1)

Republished By The Equal Franchise Society of Pennsylvania 1910

PROPERTY OF COLLEGE EQUAL SUFFRAGE LEAGUE, 505 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY.

Shall Women Have the Right to Vote? ADDRESS BY WENDELL PHILLIPS AT WORCESTER, MASS. 1851

Republished By The Equal Franchise Society of Pennsylvania 1910

FOREWORD.

A CHINESE philosopher, a disciple of Laotse, once said: "Man is like a child born at midnight who when he sees the sunrise, thinks there was no yesterday." There are many persons in the community even today, who regard the present movement in favor of equal suffrage as a transitory, hysterical agitation of a demagogic nature, of which the impulse has been received in the United States from the outbreaks of militant partisans in England. In the minds of these persons, the movement in the past is vaguely associated with eccentric clothing and more or less ridicule; in the present, with the restlessness of what is regarded as an unwomanly demonstration.

While believers in equal suffrage in this country have taken advantage of the interest aroused in every part of the world by the news from the militant suffragists of England, the movement can claim a respectable history and a fairly long pedigree. If in the last century the pioneers in the demand for "Women's Rights" in England found strength in the support of such men as John Stuart Mill, their American sisters found among others an outspoken champion in another clear thinker—Wendell Phillips. While the progress made toward legal equality since he raised his voice against the unfairness and inconsistency of the law, has made a few of his remarks seem obsolete, it seems as though those very steps of progress were bringing forward at this time—if only to measure the ground covered since those days, thus pointing out a hope for the future. It took fifty-five years to establish the principle of equal guardianship of children in Massachusetts, and somewhat less time in Pennsylvania. In Maryland it does not yet exist. But the principle of equality has at last been

established to that extent. Progress is slow; the rate of its speed however is perceptibly increasing. The principle of equality is generally admitted—the question of expediency still faces us.

In reprinting Wendell Phillips' admirable address, the intention therefore, is to make clear the relation of the present movement to its historical background. While listening to the words of a strong man who, in 1851, had the courage to support an unpopular cause in the interest of justice and fair play, it is hoped that encouragement will be given to those who today are fighting in the ranks.

S. Y. S.

**EXTRACT FROM GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS' EULOGY ON WENDELL PHILLIPS BEFORE THE
Municipal Authorities of Boston, April 18, 1884.**

HIS powerful presentation of the justice and reason of the political equality of women, at Worcester, in 1851, more than any other single impulse, launched that question upon the sea of popular controversy. In the general statement of principle nothing has been added to that discourse; in vivid and effective eloquence of advocacy it has never been surpassed. All the arguments for independence echoed John Adams in the Continental Congress. All the pleas for applying the American principle of representation to the wives and mothers of American citizens echo the eloquence of Wendell Phillips at Worcester.

7

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

This speech was made at a Convention held at Worcester, on the 15th and 16th of October, 1851, upon the following resolutions, which were offered by Mr. Phillips:—

"1. *Resolved*, That, while we would not undervalue other methods, the right of suffrage for women is, in our opinion, the corner-stone of this enterprise, since we do not seek to protect woman, but rather to place her in a position to protect herself.

"2. *Resolved*, That it will be woman's fault if, the ballot once in her hand, all the barbarous, demoralizing, and unequal laws relating to marriage and property do not speedily vanish from the statute-book; and while we acknowledge that the hope of a share in the higher professions and profitable employments of society is one of the strongest motives to intellectual culture, we know, also, that an interest in political questions is an equally powerful stimulus; and we see, beside, that

we do our best to insure education to an individual, when we put the ballot into his hands; it being so clearly the interest of the community that one upon whose decisions depend its welfare and safety should both have free access to the best means of education, and be urged to make use of them.

"3. *Resolved* , That we do not feel called upon to assert or establish the equality of the sexes, in an intellectual or any other point of view. It is enough for our argument that natural and political justice, and the axioms of English and American liberty, alike determine that rights and burdens, taxation and representation, should be coextensive; hence women, as individual citizens, liable to punishment for acts which the laws call criminal, or to be taxed in their labor and property for the support of government, have a self-evident and indisputable right, identically the same right that men have, to a direct voice in the enactment of those laws and the formation of that government.

"4. *Resolved* , That the democrat, or reformer, who denies suffrage to women, is a democrat only because he was not born a noble, and one of those levellers who are willing to level only down to themselves.

"5. *Resolved* , That while political and natural justice accord civil equality to woman; while great thinkers of every age, from Plato to Condorcet and Mill, have supported their claim; while voluntary associations, religious and secular, have been organized on this basis,—there is yet a favorite argument against it, that no political community or nation ever existed in which women have not been in a state of political inferiority. But, in reply, we remind our opponents that the same fact has been alleged, with equal truth, in favor of slavery; has been urged against freedom of industry, freedom of conscience, and the freedom of the press; none of these liberties having been thought compatible with a well-ordered state, until they had proved their possibility by springing into existence as facts. Besides, there is no difficulty in understanding why the subjection of woman has been a *uniform custom*, when we recollect that we are just emerging from the ages in which *might* has been always right.

"6. *Resolved* , That, so far from denying the overwhelming social and civil influence of women, we are fully aware of its vast extent; aware, with Demosthenes, that 'measures which the statesman has meditated a whole ear may be overturned in a day by a woman'; and for this very reason we proclaim it the very highest expediency to endow her with full civil rights, since only then will she exercise this mighty influence under a just sense of her duty and responsibility; the history of all ages bearing witness that the only safe course for nations is to add open responsibility wherever there already exists unobserved power.

"7. *Resolved* , That we deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or of any individual to decide for another individual, what is and what is not its 'proper sphere'; that the proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest to which they are able to attain; what this is cannot be ascertained without complete liberty of choice; woman, therefore, ought to choose for herself what sphere she will fill, what education she will seek, and what employment she will follow; and not be held bound to accept, in submission, the rights, the education, and the sphere which man thinks proper to allow her.

"8. *Resolved* , That we hold these truths to be self-evident: 'That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed'; and we charge that man with gross dishonesty or ignorance who shall contend that 'men,' in the memorable document from which we quote, does not stand for the human race; that 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' are the 'inalienable rights' of *half* only of the human species; and that, by 'the governed,' whose consent is affirmed to be the only source of just power, is meant that *9 half* of mankind only who, in relation to the other, have hitherto assumed the character of *governors*.

"9. *Resolved* , That we see no weight in the argument, that it is necessary to exclude women from civil life because domestic cares and political engagements are incompatible; since we do not see the fact to be so in the case of man; and because, if the incompatibility be real, it will take care of itself, neither men nor women needing any law to exclude them from an occupation when they have undertaken another incompatible with it. Second, we see nothing in the assertion that women themselves do not desire a change, since we assert that superstitious fears, and dread of losing men's regard, smother all frank expression on this point; and further, if it be their real wish to avoid civil life, laws to keep them out of it are absurd, no legislator having ever yet thought it necessary to compel people by law to follow their own inclination.

"10. *Resolved* , That it is as absurd to deny all women their civil rights because the cares of household and family take up all the time of some, as it would be to exclude the whole male sex from Congress, because some men are sailors, or soldiers, in active service, or merchants, whose business requires all their attention and energies."

IN drawing up some of these resolutions, I have used, very freely, the language of a thoughtful and profound article in the *Westminster Review*. It is a review of the proceedings of our recent Convention

in this city, and states with singular clearness and force the leading arguments for our reform, and the grounds of our claim in behalf of woman.

I rejoice to see so large an audience gathered to consider this momentous subject. It was well described by Mrs. Rose as the most magnificent reform that has yet been launched upon the world. It is the first organized protest against the injustice which has brooded over the character and the destiny of one-half of the human race. Nowhere else, under any circumstances, has a demand ever yet been made for the liberties of one whole half of our race. It is fitting that we should pause and consider so remarkable and significant a circumstance; that we should discuss the question involved with the seriousness and deliberation suitable to such an enterprise. It strikes, indeed, a great and vital blow at the whole social fabric of every nation; but this, to my mind, is no argument against it. The time has been when it was the duty of the reformer to show cause why he appeared to disturb the quiet of the world. But during the discussion of the many reforms that have been advocated, and which have more or less succeeded, one after another,—freedom of the lower classes, freedom of food, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, reform in penal legislation, and a thousand other matters,—it seems to me to have been proved conclusively, that government commenced in usurpation and oppression; that liberty and civilization, at present, are nothing else than the fragments of rights which the scaffold and the stake have wrung from the strong hands of the usurpers. Every step of progress the world has made has been from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake. It would hardly be exaggeration to say, that all the great truths relating to society and government have been first heard in the solemn protests of martyred patriotism, or the loud cries of crushed and starving labor. The law has been always wrong. Government began in tyranny and force, began in the feudalism of the soldier and bigotry of the priest; and the ideas of justice and humanity have been fighting their way, like a thunderstorm, against the organized selfishness of human nature. And this is the last great protest against the wrong of ages. It is no argument to my mind, therefore, that the old social fabric of the past is against us.

Neither do I feel called upon to show what woman's proper sphere is. In every great reform, the majority have always said to the claimant, no matter what he claimed, "You are not fit for such a privilege." Luther asked of the Pope liberty for the masses to read the Bible. The reply was, that it would not be safe to trust the common people with the word of God. "Let them try!" said the great reformer; and the history of three centuries of development and purity proclaims the result. They *have* tried; and look around you for the consequences. The lower classes in France claimed their civil rights,—the right to vote, and to direct representation in the government; but the rich and lettered classes, the men of cultivated intellects, cried out, "You cannot be made fit." The answer was, "Let us try." That France is not, as Spain, utterly crushed beneath the weight of a thousand years of misgovernment, is the answer to those who doubt the ultimate success of this experiment.

Woman stands now at the same door. She says, "You tell me I have no intellect: give me a chance. You tell me I shall only embarrass politics: let me try." The only reply is the same stale argument that said to the Jews of Europe, "You are fit only to make money; you are not fit for the ranks of the army or the halls of Parliament." How cogent the eloquent appeal of Macaulay,—“What right have we to take this question for granted? Throw open the doors of this House of Commons, throw open the ranks of the imperial army, before you deny eloquence to the countrymen of Isaiah or valor to the descendants of the Maccabees.” It is the same now with us. Throw open the doors of Congress, throw open those court-houses, throw wide open the doors of your colleges, and give to the sisters of the Motts and the Somervilles the same opportunities for culture that men have, and let the result prove what their capacity and intellect really are. When, I say, woman has enjoyed, for as many centuries as we have, the aid of books, the discipline of life, and the stimulus of fame, it will be time to begin the discussion of these questions,—“What is the intellect of woman?” “Is it equal to that of man?” Till then, all such discussion is mere beating of the air.

While it is doubtless true that great minds, in many cases, make a way for themselves, spite of all obstacles, yet who knows how many Miltons have died “mute and inglorious?” However splendid the natural endowment, the discipline of life, after all, completes the miracle. The ability 12 of Napoleon,—what was it? It grew out of the hope to be Cæsar or Marlborough,—out of Austerlitz and Jena,—out of his battle-fields, his throne, and all the great scenes of that eventful life. Open to woman the same scenes, immerse her in the same great interests and pursuits, and if twenty centuries shall not produce a woman Charlemagne or Napoleon, fair reasoning will then allow us to conclude that there is some distinctive peculiarity in the intellects of the sexes. Centuries alone can lay any fair basis for argument. I believe that, on this point, there is a shrinking consciousness of not being ready for the battle, on the part of *some* of the stronger sex, as they call themselves; a tacit confession of risk to this imagined superiority, if they consent to meet their sisters in the lecture-hall or the laboratory of science. My proof of it is this: that the mightiest intellects of the race, from Plato down to the present time, some of the rarest minds of Germany, France, and England, have successively yielded their assent to the fact that woman is, not perhaps identically, but equally, endowed with man in all intellectual capabilities. It is generally the second-rate men who doubt,—doubt, perhaps, because they fear a fair field: “He either fears his fate too much, Or his deserts are small, Who fears to put it to the touch, To gain or lose it all.”

But I wish especially to direct your attention to the precise principle which this movement undertakes to urge upon the community. We do not attempt to settle what shall be the profession, education, or employment of woman. We have not that presumption. What we ask is simply this,—what all other classes have asked before: Leave it to woman to choose for herself her profession, her education, and her sphere. We deny to any portion of the species the right to prescribe to any other

portion its sphere, its education, or its rights. We deny the right of any individual to prescribe to any other individual his amount of education, or his rights. The 13 sphere of each man, of each woman, of each individual, is that sphere which he can, with the highest exercise of his powers, perfectly fill. The highest act which the human being can do, that is the act which God designed him to do. All that woman asks through this movement is, to be allowed to prove what she can do; to prove it by liberty of choice, by liberty of action, the only means by which it ever can be settled how much and what she can do. She can reasonably say to us: "I have never fathomed the depths of science; you have taught that it was unwomanly, and have withdrawn from me the means of scientific culture. I have never equalled the eloquence of Demosthenes; but you have never quickened my energies by holding up before me the crown and robe of glory, and the gratitude which I was to win. The tools, now, to him or her who can use them. Welcome me, henceforth, brother, to your arena; and let facts—not theories—settle my capacity, and therefore my sphere."

We are not here tonight to assert that woman will enter the lists and conquer; that she will certainly achieve all that man has achieved; but this we say, "Clear the lists, and let her try." Some reply, "It will be a great injury to feminine delicacy and refinement for woman to mingle in business and politics." I am not careful to answer this objection. Of all such objections, on this and kindred subjects, Mrs. President, I love to dispose in some such way as this: The broadest and most far-sighted intellect is utterly unable to foresee the ultimate consequences of any great social change. Ask yourself, on all such occasions, if there be any element of right and wrong in the question, any principle of clear natural justice that turns the scale. If so, take your part with the perfect and abstract right, and trust God to see that it shall prove the expedient. The questions, then, for me, on this subject, are these: Has God made woman capable—morally, intellectually, and physically—of taking this part in human affairs? Then, what God made her able to do, it is a strong argument that he intended she should do. Does our sense of natural justice dictate that the being who is to suffer under laws shall first personally assent to them? that the being whose industry government is to burden should have a voice in fixing the character and amount of that burden? Then, while woman is admitted to the gallows, the jail, and the taxlist, we have no right to debar her from the ballot-box. "But to go there will hurt that delicacy of character which we have always thought peculiarly her grace." I cannot help that. Let Him who created her capable of politics, and made it just that she should have a share in them, see to it that these rights which he has conferred do not injure the being he created. Is it for any human being to trample on the laws of justice and liberty, from an alleged necessity of helping God govern what he has made? I cannot help God govern his world by telling lies, or doing what my conscience deems unjust. How absurd to deem it necessary that any one should do so! When Infinite Wisdom established the rules of right and honesty, he saw to it that justice should be always the highest expediency.

The evil, therefore, that some timid souls fear to the character of woman, from the exercise of her political rights, does not at all trouble me. "Let education form the rational and moral being, and nature will take care of the woman." Neither do I feel at all disturbed by those arguments addressed to us as to the capacity of woman. I know that the humblest man and the feeblest has the same civil rights, according to the theory of our institutions, as the most gifted. It is never claimed that the humblest shall be denied his civil right, provided he be a man. No. Intellect, even though it reach the Alpine height of a Parker,—ay, setting aside the infamy of his conduct, and looking at him only as an instance of intellectual greatness, to the height of a Webster,—gets no tittle of additional civil right, no one single claim to any greater civil privilege than the humblest individual, who knows, no more than the first elements of his alphabet, provided that being is a man (I ought to say, a *white* man). 15 Grant, then, that woman is intellectually inferior to man,—it settles nothing. She is still a responsible, tax-paying member of civil society. We rest our claim on the great, eternal principle, that taxation and representation must be coextensive; that and burdens must correspond to each other; and he who undertakes to answer the argument of this Convention must first answer the whole course of English and American history for the last hundred and fifty years. No single principle of liberty has been enunciated, from the year 1688 until now, the does not cover the claim of woman. The State has never laid the basis of right upon the distinction of sex; and no reason has ever been given, except a religious one,—that there are in the records of our religion commands obliging us to make woman an exception to our civil theories, and deprive her of that which those theories give her.

Suppose that woman is essentially inferior to man,—she still has rights. Grant that Mrs. Norton never could be Byron; that Elizabeth Barrett never could have written *Paradise Lost*; that Mrs. Somerville never could be La Place, nor Sirani have painted the *Transfiguration*. What then? Does that prove they should be deprived of all civil rights? John Smith never will be, never can be, Daniel Webster. Shall he, therefore, be put under guardianship, and forbidden to vote?

Suppose woman, though equal, to differ essentially in her intellect from man,—is that any ground for disfranchising her? Shall the Fultons say to the Raphaels, "Because you cannot make steam-engines, therefore you shall not vote"? Shall the Napoleons or the Washingtons say to the Wordsworths or the Herschels, "Because you cannot lead armies and govern states, therefore you shall have no civil rights?"

Grant that woman's intellect be essentially different, even inferior, if you choose; still, while our civilization allows her to hold property, and to be the guardian of her children, she is entitled to such education and to such civil rights—voting, 16 among the rest—as will enable her to protect both her children and her estate. It is easy to indulge in *dilettanti* speculation as to woman's sphere and the female intellect; but leave dainty speculation, and come down to practical life. Here is a young

widow; she has children, and ability, if you will let her exercise it, to give them the best advantages of education, to secure them every chance of success in life; or, she has property to keep for them, and no friend to rely on. Shall she leave them to sink in the unequal struggles of life? Shall she trust their all to any adviser money can buy, in order to gratify your taste, and give countenance to your nice theories? or shall she use all the powers God has given her for those he has thrown upon her protection? If we consult common sense and leave theories alone, there is but one answer. Such a one can rightfully claim of society all the civil privileges, and of fashion all such liberty as will best enable her to discharge fully her duties as a mother.

But woman, it is said, may safely trust all to the watchful and generous care of man. She has been obliged to do so hitherto. With what result, let the unequal and unjust legislation of all nations answer. In Massachusetts, lately, a man married as heiress, worth fifty thousand dollars. Dying, about a year after his marriage, he made this remarkably generous and mainly will. He left these fifty thousand dollars to her so long as she should remain his widow! [Loud laughter.] These dollars, which he owed entirely to her, which were fairly hers, he left to her, after twelve-months' use, on this generous condition, that she should never marry again! Ought a husband to have such unlimited control over the property of his wife, or over the property which they have together acquired? Ought not woman to have a voice in determining what the law shall be in regard to the property of married persons? Often by her efforts, always by her economy, she contributes much to the stock of family wealth, and is therefore justly entitled to a voice in the control and disposal of it. Neither common sense nor past experience encourages her to trust the protection of that right to the votes of men. That "Mankind is ever weak, And little to be trusted; If self the wavering balance strike, it's rarely right adjusted,"— is true between the sexes, as much as between individuals.

Make the case our own. Is there any man here willing to resign his own right to vote, and trust his welfare and his earnings entirely to the votes of others? Suppose any class of men should condescendingly offer to settle for us our capacity or our calling,—to vote for us, to choose our sphere for us,—how ridiculously impertinent we should consider it! Yet few have the good sense to laugh at the consummate impertinence with which every bar-room brawler, every third-rate scribbler, undertakes to settle the sphere of the Martineaus and the De Staëls! With what gracious condescension little men continue to lecture and preach on "the female sphere" and "female duties!"

This Convention does not undertake the task of protecting woman. It contends that, in government, every individual should be endowed, as far as possible, with the means of protecting himself. This is far more the truth when we deal with classes. Every class should be endowed with the power to protect itself. Man has hitherto undertaken to settle what is best for woman in the way of education and in the matter of property. He has settled it for her, that her duties and cares are too great to

allow her any time to take care of her own earnings, or to take her otherwise legitimate share in the civil government of the country. He has not undertaken to say that the sailor or the soldier, in active service, when he returns from his voyage or his camp, is not free to deposit his vote in the ballot-box. He has not undertaken to say that the manufacturer, whose factories cover whole townships, who is up early and lies down late, who has to borrow the services of scores to help him in the management of his vast 18 estate,—he does not say that such a man cannot get time to study politics, and ought therefore to be deprived of his right to vote with his fellow-citizens. He has not undertaken to say that the lawyer may not vote, though his whole time is spent in the courts, until he knows nothing of what is going on in the streets. O no! But as for woman, her time *must* be all so entirely filled in taking care of her household, her cares must be so extensive, that neither those of soldiers nor sailors nor merchants can be equal to them; she has not a moment to qualify herself for politics! Woman cannot be spared long enough from the kitchen to put in a vote, though Abbott Lawrence can be spared from the counting-house, though General Gaines or Scott can be spared from the camp, though the Lorings and the Choates can be spared from the courts. This is the argument: Stephen Girard cannot go to Congress; he is too busy; therefore, no *man* ever shall. Because General Scott has gone to Mexico, and cannot be President, therefore no *man* shall be. Because A. B. is a sailor, gone on a whaling voyage, to be absent for three years, and cannot vote, therefore no male inhabitant ever shall. Logic how profound! how conclusive! Yet this is the exact reasoning in the case of woman. Take up the newspapers. See the sneers at this movement. “Take care of the children,” “Make the clothes,” “See that they are mended,” “See that the parlors are properly arranged.” Suppose we grant it all. Are there no women but housekeepers? no women but mothers? O yes, many! Suppose we grant that the cares of a household are so heavy that they are greater than the cares of the president of a college; that he who has the charge of some hundreds of youths is less oppressed with care than the woman with three rooms and two children; that though President Sparks has time for politics, Mrs. Brown has not. Grant that, and still we claim that you should be true to your theory, and allow to single women those rights which she who is the mistress of a household and mother of a family has no time to exercise.

19

“Let women vote!” cries one. “Why, wives and daughters might be Democrats, while their fathers and husbands were Whigs. It would never do. It would produce endless quarrels.” And the self-satisfied objector thinks he has settled the question.

But, if the principle be a sound one, why not apply it in a still more important instance? Difference of religion breeds more quarrels than difference in politics. Yet we allow women to choose their own religious creeds, although we thereby run the risk of wives being Episcopalians while their husbands are Methodists, or daughters being Catholics while their fathers are Calvinists. Yet who, this side of

Turkey, dare claim that the law should compel women to have no religious creed or adopt that of their male relatives? Practically, this freedom in religion has made no difficulty; and probably equal freedom in politics would make as little.

It is, after all, of little use to argue these social questions. These prejudices never were reasoned up, and, my word for it, they will never be reasoned down. The freedom of the press, the freedom of labor, the freedom of the race in its lowest classes, was never argued to success. The moment you can get woman to go out into the highway of life, and show by active valor what God has created her for, that moment this question is settled forever. One solid fact of a woman's making her fortune in trade will teach the male sex what woman's capacity is. I say, therefore, to women, there are two paths before you in this reform: one is, take all the laws have left you, with a confident and determined hand; the other is, cheer and encourage, by your sympathy and aid, those noble women who are willing to be the pioneers in this enterprise. See that you stand up the firm supporters of those bold and fearless ones who undertake to lead their sisters in this movement. If Elizabeth Blackwell, who, trampling under foot the sneers of the other sex, took her maiden reputation in her hand, and walked the hospitals of Europe, comes back the accomplished graduate of them, to offer her services to the women of America, and to prove that woman, equally with man, is qualified to do the duties and receive the honors and rewards of the healing art, see to it, women, that you greet her efforts with your smiles. Hasten to her side, and open your households to her practice. Demand to have the experiment fairly tried, before you admit that, in your sickness and in your dangers, woman may not stand as safely by your bedside as man. If you will but be true to each other, on some of these points, it is in the power of woman to settle, in a great measure, this question. Why ask aid from the other sex at all? Theories are but thin and unsubstantial air against the solid fact of woman mingling with honor and profit in the various professions and industrial pursuits of life. Would women be true to each other, by smoothing the pathway of each other's endeavors, it is in their power to settle one great aspect of this question, without any statute in such case made and provided. I say, TAKE your rights! There is no law to prevent it, in one-half of the instances. If the prejudices of the other sex and the supineness of your own prevent it, there is no help for you in the statute-books. It is for you but to speak, and the doors of all medical hospitals are open for the women by whom you make it known that you intend to be served. Let us have no separate, and therefore necessarily inferior, schools for women. Let us have no poor schools, feebly endowed, where woman must go to gather what help she may, from second-rate professors, in one branch of a profession. No! Mothers, daughters, sisters! say to husband, father, brother, "If this life is dear to you, I intend to trust it, in my hour of danger, to a sister's hand. See to it, therefore, you who are the guides of society and heads of those institutions, if you love your mother, sister, wife, daughter, see to it that you provide these chosen assistants of mine the means to become disciplined and competent advisers in that momentous hour, for I will have no other." When you

shall say that, Harvard University, and every other university, and every medical institution, will 21 hasten to open their doors. You who long for the admission of woman to professional life and the higher ranks of intellectual exertion, up, and throw into her scale this omnipotent weight of your determination to be served by her, and by no other! In this matter, what you decide is law.

There is one other light in which this subject is to be considered,—the freedom of ballot; and with a few words upon that, I will close these desultory remarks. As there is no use in educating a human being for nothing, so the thing is an impossibility. Horace Mann says, in the letter which has been read here, that he intends to write a lecture on Woman; and I doubt not he will take the stand which he has always done, that she should be book-taught for some dozen years, and then retire to domestic life, or the school-room. Would he give sixpence for a boy who could only say that he had been shut up for those years in a school? The unfledged youth who comes from college,—what is he? He is a man, and has been subjected to seven years' tutoring; but man though he is, until he has walked up and down the paths of life, until he receives his education in the discipline of the world, in the stimulus of motive, in the hope of gain, in the desire of honor, in the love of reputation, he has got, in nine cases out of ten, no education at all. Profess to educate woman for her own amusement! Profess to educate her in science, that she may go home and take care of her cradle! Teach her the depths of statesmanship and political economy, that she may smile sweetly when her husband comes home! "It is not the education man gets from books," it was well said by your favorite statesman, "but the lessons he learns from life and society, that profit him most highly." "*Le monde est le livre des femmes.*" Of this *book* you deprive her. You give her nothing but man's little printed primers; you make for her a world of dolls, and then complain that she is frivolous. You deprive her of all the lessons of practical out-door life; you deprive her of all the stimulus which the good and great of all nations, all societies, 22 have enjoyed, the world's honors, its gold, and its fame, and then you coolly ask of her, "Why are you not as well disciplined as we are?" I know there are great souls who need no stimulus but love of truth and of growth, whom mere love of labor allures to the profoundest investigations; but these are the exceptions, not the rule. We legislate, we arrange society, for the masses, not the exceptions.

Responsibility is one instrument—a great instrument—of education, both moral and intellectual. It sharpens the faculties. It unfolds the moral nature. It makes the careless prudent, and turns recklessness into sobriety. Look at the young wife suddenly left a widow, with the care of her children's education and entrance into life thrown upon her. How prudent and sagacious she becomes! How fruitful in resources and comprehensive in her views! How much intellect and character she surprises her old friends with! Look at the statesman bold and reckless in opposition; how prudent, how thoughtful, how timid, he become's, the moment he is in office, and feels that a nation's welfare hangs on his decisions! Woman can never study those great questions that interest

and stir most deeply the human mind, until she studies them under the mingled stimulus and check of this responsibility. And until her intellect has been tested by such questions, studied under such influences, we shall never be able to decide what it is.

One great reason, then, besides its justice, why we would claim the ballot for woman, is this: because the great school of this people is the jury-box and the ballot box. Tocqueville, after travelling in this country, went away with the conviction that, valuable as the jury trial was for the investigation of facts and defence of the citizens, its value even in these respects was no greater than as it was the school of civil education open to all the people. The education of the American citizen is found in his interest in the debates of Congress,—the earnest personal interest with which he seeks to fathom political questions. It is when the mind, profoundly stirred by the momentous stake at issue, rises to its most gigantic efforts, when the great crisis of some national convulsion is at hand,—it is then that strong political excitement lifts the people up in advance of the age, heaves a whole nation on to a higher platform of intellect and morality. Great political questions stir the deepest nature of one half the nation; but they pass far above and over the heads of the other half. Yet, meanwhile, theorists wonder that the first have their whole nature unfolded, and the others will persevere in being dwarfed. Now, this great, world-wide, practical, ever-present education we claim for woman. Never, until it is granted her, can you decide what will be her ability. Deny statesmanship to woman? What! to the sisters of Elizabeth of England, Isabella of Spain, Maria Theresa of Austria; ay, let me add, of Elizabeth Heyrick, who, when the intellect of all England was at fault, and wandering in the desert of a false philosophy,—when Brougham and Romilly, Clarkson and Wilberforce, and all the other great and philanthropic minds of England, were at fault and a dead-lock with the West India question and negro slavery,—wrote out, with the statesmanlike intellect of a Quaker woman, the simple yet potent charm,— Immediate, Unconditional Emancipation, —which solved the problem, and gave freedom to a race! How noble the conduct of those men! With an alacrity which does honor to their statesmanship, and proves that they recognized the inspired voice when they heard it, they sat down at the feet of that woman-statesman, and seven years under her instruction did more for the settlement of the greatest social question that had ever convulsed England, than had been done by a century, of more or less effort, before. O no! you cannot read history, unless you read it upside down, without admitting that woman, cramped, fettered, excluded, degraded as she has been, has yet sometimes, with one ray of her instinctive genius, done more to settle great questions than all the cumbrous intellect of the other sex has achieved.

24

It is, therefore, on the ground of natural justice, and on the ground again of the highest expediency, and yet again it is because woman, as an immortal and intellectual being, has a right to all the means

of education,—it is on these grounds that we claim for her the civil rights and privileges which man enjoys.

I will not enlarge now on another most important aspect of this question, the value of the contemplated change in a physiological point of view. Our dainty notions have made woman such a hot-house plant, that one-half the sex are invalids. The mothers of the next generation are invalids. Better that our women, like the German and Italian girls, should labor on the highway, and share in the toil of harvest, than pine and sicken in the in-door and sedentary routine to which our superstition condemns them. But I leave this sad topic for other hands.

One word more. We heard today a very profound and eloquent address as to the course which it is most expedient for women to pursue in regard to the inadequate remuneration extended to her sex. The woman of domestic life receives but about one-third the amount paid to a man for similar or far lighter services. The woman of out-door labor has about the same. The best woman employments are subject to a discount of some forty or fifty per cent. on the wages paid to males. It is futile, if it were just, to blame individuals for this. We have all been burdened long by a common prejudice and a common ignorance. The remedy is not to demand that the manufacturer shall pay his workmen more, that the employer of domestic shall pay them more. It is not the capitalist's fault. We inveigh against the wealthy capitalist, but it is not exclusively his fault. It is as much the fault of society itself. It is the fault of that timid conservatism, which sets its face like flint against everything new; of a servile press, which knows so well, by personal experience, how much fools and cowards are governed by a sneer. It is the fault of silly women, ever holding up their idea of what is "*lady-like*" as a Gorgon head to frighten their sisters from 25 earning bread,—themselves, in their folly, the best answer to a weak prejudice they mistake for argument. It is the fault of that pulpit which declares it indecorous in woman to labor, except in certain occupations, and thus crowds the whole mass of working-women into two or three employments, making them rivet each other's chains. Do you ask me the reason of the low wages paid for female labor? It is this. There are about as many women as men obliged to rely for bread on their own toil. Man seeks employment anywhere, and of any kind. No one forbids him. If he cannot make a living by one trade, he takes another; and the moment any trade becomes so crowded as to make wages fall, men leave it, and wages will rise again. Not so with woman. The whole mass of women must find employment in two or three occupations. The consequence is, there are more women in each of these than can be employed; they kill each other by competition. Suppose there is as much sewing required in a city as one thousand hands can do. If the tailors could find only five hundred women to sew, they would be obliged to pay them whatever they asked. But let the case be, as it usually is, that there are five thousand women waiting for that work, unable to turn to any other occupation, and doomed to starve if they fail to get a share of that; we see at once that their labor, being a drug in the market, must be poorly paid for. She cannot say,

as man would, "Give me so much, or I will seek another trade." She must accept whatever is offered, and often underbid her sister, that she may secure a share. Any article sells cheap, when there is too much of it in the market. Woman's labor is cheap because there is too much of it in the market. All women's trades are overcrowded, because they have only two or three to choose from. But open to her, now, other occupations. Open to her the studio of the artist,—let her enter there; open to her the office practice, at least, of the lawyers,—let her go there; open to her all in-door trades of society, to begin with, and let women monopolize them. Take from the crowded and starved ranks 26 of the needlewomen of New York some for the arts of design, some for the counter, some to minister in our public libraries, some for our public registries, some to keep merchants' accounts, and some to feel the pulse; and the consequence will be, that, like every other independent laborer, like their male brethren, they may make their own terms, will be fairly paid for their labor. It is competition in too narrow lists that starves women in our cities; and those lists are drawn narrow by superstition and prejudice.

Woman is ground down, by the competition of her sisters, to the very point of starvation. Heavily taxed, ill-paid, in degradation and misery, is it to be wondered at that she yields to the temptation of wealth? It is the same with men; and thus we recruit the ranks of vice by the prejudices of custom and society. We corrupt the whole social fabric, that woman may be confined to two or three employments. How much do we suffer through the tyranny of prejudice! When we penitently and gladly give to the energy and the intellect and the enterprise of woman their proper reward, their appropriate employment, this question of wages will settle itself; and it will never be settled at all until then.

This question is intimately connected with the great social problem,—the vices of cities. You who hang your heads in terror and shame, in view of the advancing demoralization of modern civilized life, and turn away with horror-struck faces, look back now to these social prejudices, which have made you close the avenues of profitable employment in the face of woman, and reconsider the conclusions you have made! Look back, I say, and see whether you are surely right here. Come up with us and argue the question, and say whether this most artificial delicacy, this childish prejudice, on whose Moloch altar you sacrifice the virtue of so many, is worthy the exalted worship you pay it. Consider a moment. From what sources are the ranks of female profligacy recruited? A few mere giddiness hurries to ruin. Their protection would be in that character and sound common-sense which a wider 27 interest in practical life would generally create. In a few, the love of sensual gratification, grown overstrong, because all the other powers are dormant for want of exercise, wrecks its unhappy victim. The medicine for these would be occupation, awaking intellect, and stirring their highest energies. Give any one an earnest interest in life, something to do, something that kindles emulation, and soon the gratification of the senses sinks into proper subordination.

It is idle heads that are tempted to mischief; and she is emphatically idle half of whose nature is unemployed. Why does man so much oftener than woman surmount a few years or months of sensual gratification, and emerge into a worthier life? It is not solely because the world's judgment is so much harder upon her. Man can immerse himself in business that stirs keenly all his faculties, and thus he smothers passion in honorable cares. An ordinary woman, once fallen, has no busy and stirring life in which to take refuge, where intellect will contend for mastery with passion, and where virtue is braced by high and active thoughts. Passion comes back to the *"empty,"* though *"swept and garnished"* chambers, bringing with him more devils than before. But, undoubtedly, the great temptation to this vice is the love of dress, of wealth, and the luxuries it secures. Facts will jostle theories aside. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, there are many women, earning two or three dollars a week, who feel that they are as capable as their brothers of earning hundreds, if they could be permitted to exert themselves as freely. Fretting to see the coveted rewards of life forever forbidden them, they are tempted to shut their eyes on the character of the means by which a taste, however short, may be gained of the wealth and luxury they sigh for. Open to man a fair field for his industry, and secure to him its gains, and nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of every thousand will disdain to steal. Open to woman a fair for her industry, let her do anything her hands find to do, and enjoy her gains, and nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of every thousand will disdain to debase themselves for dress or ease.

28

Of this great social problem—to cure or lessen the vice of cities—there is no other solution, except what this movement offers you. It is, to leave woman to choose her own employments for herself, responsible, as we are, to the common Creator, and not to her fellow-man. I exhort you, therefore, to look at this question in the spirit in which I have endeavored to present it to you. It is no fanciful, no superficial movement, based on a few individual tastes, in morbid sympathy with tales of individual suffering. It is a great social protest against the very fabric of society. It is a question which goes down—we admit it, and are willing to meet the issue—goes down beneath the altar at which you worship, goes down beneath this social system in which you live. And it is true—no denying it—that, if we are right, the doctrines preached from New England pulpits are wrong; it is true that all this affected horror at woman's deviation from her sphere is a mistake—a mistake fraught with momentous consequences. Understand us. We blink no fair issue. We throw down the gauntlet. We have counted the cost; we know the yoke and burden we assume. We know the sneers, the lying frauds of misstatement and misrepresentation, that await us. We have counted all; and it is but the dust in the balance and the small dust in the measure, compared with the inestimable blessings of doing justice to one-half of the human species, of curing this otherwise inmedicable wound, stopping this overflowing fountain of corruption, at the very source of civilized life. Truly, it is the great question of the age. It looks all others our of countenance. It needs little and from legislation.



Specious objections, after all, are not arguments. We know we are right. We only ask an opportunity to argue the question, to set it full before the people, and then leave it to the intellects and the hearts of our country, confident that the institutions under which we live, and the education which other reforms have already given to both sexes, have created men and women capable of solving a problem even more difficult, and meeting a change even more radical, than this.

PROPERTY OF COLLEGE EQUAL SUFFRAGE LEAGUE, 505 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY.