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Woman's Suffrage: [concluded]

The vote is the point at which public opinion takes hold on public action — where the soul incarnates itself in duty at the call of humanity. If woman is not intended for thought, action, heroism, why is she entrusted with the training of the race, with the education and bringing up of our children?

If mothers had any voice in the government of this country do you think our sons, the best and bravest of them, would be leaving our shores to found homes in a strange land under an alien Government, while millions of acres lie untilled in their own land, and their mother earth throbs with the mineral wealth entombed and untouched in her bosom?

If women had a voice in the management of our Parliamentary housekeeping, do you think that the stewards of our public exchequer would venture to tell us taxpayers, as at the beginning of last session, that the State accounts had not been audited for years? You protest against privileges conferred by the accident of birth. Have not we women a right to protest against privileges withheld by the accident of birth? You insist on rights conferred by mere malehood. I cannot help the accident of birth which made me a woman. I am not sure that you would not rather have me as I am. I might have protested at an earlier time had I been asked; but I am not at all sure that, with the present prospects of womanhood, I should do so now. "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son" said the Eastern princess Sarah. It is significant that God ratified her decision in Isaac. It was a protest on behalf of her posterity. With the blood of the cringing, obsequious slave in his veins, how could Ishmael be a fit progenitor of a great free nation, into whose hands were to be committed the purest, loftiest interests of the whole human race?

Does not habitual subjection breed moral evils and mental habits peculiar to itself — cringing, fawning, obsequiousness, dissimulation, cowardice, lying? I am convinced that those Orientals of a faraway time were far ahead of us in many things, notwithstanding our boasted of progress. The Rev. Roby Fletcher has presented to our Museum a mummy — an Egyptian princess. Her pedigree on the mother's side is carefully preserved; not a word is said about her father. No nation of antiquity attracts our modern scientists or furnishes such rich reserves for scientific interest as Egypt does today. Had the status accorded to the women of that wondrous people anything, and how much, to do with the marvellous scientific and general attainments of old Egypt?

Some say the vote to women would be a barren honor, and yet English constitutional history appears, to those who take note of those points in its pages which mark the epoch of achievement, one long battle for this very right of selfgovernment. If the vote is a good thing, why should not women participate in its benefits? If it is a bad thing, why should men have to bear its evils alone? They expect women to share their other troubles, why not this?

"Fair play is a jewel." I think I am right in saying there is no jewel which Britishers as a whole prize more dearly, and yet, while men contend for it themselves, they leave their



women out. "The woman's cause is man's. They rise or sink together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free." You place her beside the felon, outside the pale of citizenship. She has no vote. You tax her to support a Government which she has no voice in choosing or rejecting. She and her children must submit to the laws they make. Is this fair play?

My soul — if I have one — must be of the same essence as yours, derived from the same source; must have the same hopes and aspirations towards the same ultimate end. Is it not cruel to refuse it scope to reach out with all its powers, to the best those powers can achieve? Did Jehovah ask your counsel, or submit to you a plan, ere He filled with loves, hopes, longings, this aspiring soul of man. For your edict does the soul wait, ere it swing round to the pole of the true, the free, the Godwilled — all that makes it be a soul.

"Too many voters." Then winnow them, but do not exclude the very qualities which round out to perfectness those forces necessary to the right government of a humanity which consists of male and female. Is it consistent with this age of boasted freedom that onehalf the human race is severed from the other by a wall of inequality, and remains a relic of serfdom? Mona Caird says, "When we have succeeded in learning that women form part of the State, perhaps we may succeed in realising that a free State implies a free womanhood."

I believe that mind has no sex. I would challenge those who would argue to the contrary to look around and see what giant strides the womanmind has made in the few years since her higher education dawned. Surely the possession of any gift is God's own charter of right to use it.

I have here the opinions of some of the grandest, noblest minds of our age on this subject. Let me turn to them: —

"I think women are bound to seek the suffrage as a very great means of doing good." — Frances Power Cobbe

"Woman's suffrage is undoubtedly coming. and I for one expect a great deal of good to result from it." — Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

"I go for sharing privileges of the government among all who assist in bearing its burdens, by no means excluding women." — Abraham Lincoln.

"To have a voice in choosing those by whom one is governed, is a means of selfprotection due to every one. Under whatever conditions, and within whatever limits, men are admitted to the suffrage, there is not a shadow of justification for not admitting women under the same." — John Stuart Mill

"However much the giving of political power to women may disagree with our notions of propriety, we conclude, that, being required by that first prerequisite to greater happiness, the law of equal freedom, such a concession is unquestionably right and good." — Herbert Spencer



"It is very cheap wit that finds it so droll that a woman should vote If she wants, the passions, the vices, are allowed a full vote, through the hands of a halfbrutal, intemperate population, I think it but fair that the virtues, the aspirations, should be allowed a full voice as an offset, through the purest of the people." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Suppose, for the sake of argument, we accept the inequality of the sexes as one of Nature's immutable laws; call it a fact that women are inferior to men in mind, morals, and physique. Why should this settle or materially affect the subject of so-called Woman's Rights? Would not this very inferiority be a reason why every advantage should be given to the weaker sex, not only for its own good, but for the highest development of the race?" — Prof. Huxley

"One principal cause of the failure of so many magnificent schemes, social, political, religious which have followed each other age after age, has been this: that in almost every case they have ignored the rights and powers of one half the human race — viz., women. I believe that politics will not go right, that society will not go right, that religion will not go right, that nothing human will ever go right, except in so far as woman goes right; and to make woman go right she must be put in her place, and she must have her rights." — Chas. Kingsley

"I leave it to others to speak of suffrage as a right or a privilege; I speak of it as a duty. What right have you women to leave all this work of caring for this country with men? Is it not your country as well as theirs? Are not your children to live in it after you are gone? And are you not bound to contribute whatever faculty God has given you to make it and keep it a pure, safe and happy land?" — James Freeman Clarke

"I do earnestly hope that the day is not far distant when women also will bear their share in voting for members of Parliament and in determining the policy of the country. I can conceive no argument by which they are excluded. It is obvious that they are abundantly as well fitted as many who now possess the suffrage, by knowledge, by training, and by character, and that influence is likely to weigh in a direction which in an age so material as ours, is exceedingly valuable, viz., in the direction of morality and religion." — Earl Beaconsfield

"The more I think on the subject, the more difficulty I find in discovering any reason why women should not enjoy all the privileges of a free subject of the State. My sense of right is entirely with your movement." — Sir Henry Parkes to Mr. Munro.

Sir George Grey, R.A., in New Zealand many years ago tried to introduce women's suffrage into the electoral law, but failed. Last year Sir John Hall (Conservative) nearly carried the Woman's Suffrage Bill, defeated by a majority of two (Maories).

Mr. Gladstone — of women connected with the municipal franchise — "They have used the franchise without detriment and with great advantage to the country. Men have often been the most unfaithful guardians of woman's rights to social and moral equality."



"The civilised nations of the west, in steadily enlarging the personal and proprietary independence of women, and even in granting them political privileges, are only carrying still further a law of development which they have been obeying for many centuries." — Sir Henry Maine, in his "Early History of Institutions."

"This is in no sense a party question. Woman's interests must not be sacrificed to party exigencies. I trust that they may be the hope of each party, the prey of neither, the sport of none." — Sir A. Rollitt.

"The exclusion of the votes of women has been injurious to the best interests of the country." — Lord Beaconsfield

I would beg of you to bear in mind that there is not a home in all the State which is not contributing its quota to the honor and stability of the State, or to its discredit and unsafety. Consciously or unconsciously, with enlightened patriotism or blind reckless ignorance, woman is laying or loosening the foundations of the State. The men mould the State, but the women mould the men. Therefore, I say, give women the vote, the outward visible sign of her responsibilities, and tell her that her country expects every woman to do her duty. I never knew till this agitation commenced, that there was so much chivalry in the world. I am satisfied that men only require to be convinced of the wrong and it is sure to be righted. "Wherever a noble deed is done 'tis the pulse of a hero's heart is stirred. Wherever the right hath a triumph won, there are the heroes' voices heard." They are wrong who say that the age of chivalry is past. I say it is reborn, and here in our own South Australia. Yes, my brothers of this younger Britain, we find our knights everywhere. Brave, daring, and chivalrous as ever sat at British Arthur's round table. Although their faces are sometimes begrimed, and their hands hard with labor, they can, and do still, wear the white flower of a blameless life; still may prove a grand company "to serve as model for the mighty world, and be the fair beginning of a time." "Hitch your waggon to a star," fix your eyes on a noble ideal, and reach out and up to it for God and native land.

The British race is everywhere greatly governed by precedent. Thus we are told that England has not granted the franchise to her women; that Mr. Gladstone has recently spoken against it. Dear old England swathed and mummified in centuries of tradition and prejudice. Dear old Mr. Gladstone, born nearly 100 years ago. We all know something of how women were regarded 100 years ago.

Will not, cannot, a young vigorous nation create its own precedents?

"What constitutes a State?

Not highraised battlements or labored mound,

Thick wall or moated gate—

Not cities proud with spires, and turrets crowned—

Not bays and broadarmed ports,

Where, laughing at the storm, rich navvies ride—

Not starr'd and spangled courts,

Where lowbrowed baseness wafts perfume to pride.

Men who their duties know,

Mary Lee 1821 - 1909

by Elizabeth Mansutti



But know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain;
Prevent the longaimed blow
And crush the tyrant while they rend the chain—
These constitute a State."

Let us hope that the close of the coming session of our Parliament will find this Dagon of a false political creed — the headless trunk of a hideous anachronism — prostrate on the threshold of the noblest temple that was ever raised to liberty — the united hearts of a young brave nation determined to be truly free.