

against it. Then acknowledging that the time is to come when this restriction will be removed, let us see if any limitations should be placed upon the ballot and of what nature these should be. Of course no one will be so absurd as to suppose, when I say equal suffrage for all, that I mean this absolutely; for that would include every human being. There must be some distinct line drawn between youth and maturity; for voters should, undoubtedly, be sufficiently matured and, I was going to say, intelligent before the ballot is placed in their hands. Neither will I omit this word intelligent, for it is exactly what I am aiming at. Every person should possess the requisite intelligence to vote understandingly, and the law should enforce some such provision.

When the stability of our government depends upon the intelligence of the voters and we allow a person to deposit a ballot, when he could not, to save his life, make out a single word or letter on his ticket, it is the height of absurdity. It would be just as reasonable to give the ballot to the infant, for what else is such a person in most cases but an infant in intelligence, and in this case physical strength has no effect. By so doing we say that an inequality is an equality. How absurd this would appear in Geometry! yet, really, is it not just as absurd in politics? Instead of elevating the ignorant, we are degrading the intelligent. It is giving a prize to the ignorance. If a person has not the patriotism, say nothing of the common sense, to learn to read and reason—or to have his children do the same—sufficiently to think for himself in politics, he has *no right whatever* to cast a ballot. The ragged street urchins of our cities have an equal right, and the intelligent youth of both sexes, before reaching maturity, have a far better right. There are thousands to-day, in this country, who are annually casting their votes for a glass of liquor—too ignorant to read and consequently indifferent as to the result. Many of these are intelligent

enough to read and reason somewhat, you say. Admitted. But then they are few when compared with the ignorant. The tendency of education is to eliminate this class, of ignorance to increase it. We have allowed this system long enough. It is now time to make some restriction and save the ballot from the extreme degradation this system is surely bringing upon it. I would not advise, neither would it be practicable, to disfranchise any who are now voters, but make it take effect at some future date, for those who come in after said date. This would be no injustice to anyone—either Americans or foreigners, while on the other hand it would be doing simple justice to the majority. If this were done, I believe that all agitation of compulsory education would be silenced. It will be far better to offer some incentive to the people to gain an education than to impose a fine or penalty upon them for not acquiring it, or rather for not giving their children the requisite amount. It may be claimed that the incentive would not be strong enough, but there are comparatively few Americans who do not possess patriotism enough to give their children the rudiments of an education. This will not apply so well to foreigners. But, in general, before many years, to be unable to vote would be a badge of disgrace, so clear and unmistakable that but few would desire to be subject to its rule. Many feasible plans could be given for carrying this into effect, but it is unnecessary to mention them now. It is not claimed that this plan would immediately cleanse our political machinery or destroy ignorance; but restrict the ballot merely by maturity and intelligence, and the gross elections, which we now so often have, will become fewer and fewer, and education—the corner stone of our Republic—will be more widely diffused and elevated higher and higher, until ignorance will be a disgrace and compulsory education will be one of the strange things of the past.

P. C. A.