

## EQUAL SUFFRAGE

[Below will be found the line of argument followed by William Jennings Bryan in the speeches delivered by him in behalf of woman suffrage in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, during the campaign of 1915.]

All the presumptions are in favor of woman suffrage. That means that the burden of proof is upon those who oppose woman suffrage; not upon those who favor it.

The first presumption is to be found in the fact that man trusts woman everywhere else; why not at the polls? When a man marries he gives to woman the highest possible evidence of his confidence; he trusts himself and his future to her. Upon her more than anyone else depends his happiness and success. A man must think very little of himself or a great deal of the ballot to be willing to give himself to a woman and yet withhold from her the right to vote.

A man entrusts to woman not only himself but his children, who are dearer to him than himself. The wife has almost entire charge of the physical welfare of the child during the early years of its life, and she exerts a controlling influence over the child during its intellectual development. She looks after its attendance upon school and helps it with its lessons; and who doubts the mother's influence in the moral training of the child? At whose knee does it learn to lisp its prayer? From whom does it receive the early admonitions which lay the foundations of its character? From whom does it derive those ideals of life which so largely determine its weal or woe?

If, as a rule, the mother's influence rather than the father's predominates in the moral and religious development of the child, why should the husband doubt his wife's capacity in dealing with matters of government?

Man trusts woman in society as well as in the home; and he trusts her in business. His money is generally safer in her pocket than in his own; it is the exception where she is more extravagant than he, or spends more money foolishly.

Is it not a strange inconsistency that leads a man to put such confidence in his wife's judgment in every other sphere of life and yet permits him to distrust her in the use of the ballot?

I remember a story which an Irishman told on an Irishman in 1896 to illustrate a political situation which then existed. The story runs like this: The Irishman's wife was about to die and the husband, family and friends were gathered around the bed. As the wife felt her strength departing she called her husband, and said, "Pat, when I am dead, don't forget to collect \$2.00 that Mr. Murphy owes us for chickens and eggs." "I'll attend to it, Bridget," he replied. After a little while she called him a second time, and said, "Pat, when I am dead, don't forget to collect \$4.00 that Mr. O'Neil owes us for milk and butter." "I'll attend to that," replied Pat, and addressing himself to the assembled friends he said, with great emphasis, "Hear the woman, will you, sensible to the very last." The wife grew weaker and finally called him to her a third time, and said, "Pat, when I am dead, don't forget to pay the \$30.00 we owe at the corner grocery." "Hear the woman raving, will you, hear her raving!" exclaimed the husband.

Why should a husband consider his wife sensible at all other times, but think her "raving" if she expresses a desire to share with him the responsibilities of government?

A second presumption in favor of woman is found in the fact that a majority of our school teachers are women, especially in the graded schools. A large majority of the boys do not go beyond the graded schools, and, therefore, all that they learn from books on the subject of government, they learn from women teachers. If the women are competent to teach boys the science of government, does it not create a presumption in favor of woman suffrage?

A third presumption in favor of woman suffrage is to be found in the fact that in none of the states has the vote been taken from women after it has once been given to them. The conclusion to be drawn from this is not only strong, but irresistible. On most questions with which

the government deals sentiment sways to and fro. Take, for instance, the tariff; it has been a matter of dispute in this country for over a century. Some times the advocates of a high tariff are in control; sometimes the advocates of a low tariff are in control. But no matter which is in the majority, there is always a political minority opposing the theory of the dominant party.

WHY IS IT THAT THERE IS NO EBB OF THE TIDE WHEN ONCE WOMAN SUFFRAGE IS SECURED?

The women who oppose equal suffrage are in the habit of contending that the women do not want to vote. Is it not strange that they do not put this proposition to a test in some of the states where women do vote? If suffrage has been forced upon women in the states which now have woman suffrage, why do not the women of those states organize and demand relief from the burdens put upon them by suffrage? On other matters women do not hesitate to express disapproval if their wishes are disregarded: WHY DO THEY NOT SPEAK OUT AGAINST WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN THE SUFFRAGE STATES, IF THEY REALLY OBJECT TO IT? One state in which woman suffrage was rejected after trial would be a more powerful argument against woman suffrage than any arguments now used. Why do the anti's fail to avail themselves of this potent argument, if they are correct in saying that women do not want to vote? Why do they prefer to make their fight in the states which do not have equal suffrage? In other words, why do they try their case before men instead of trying it before women? Why do they prefer to rely upon the help of the brewer, the distiller and the saloonkeeper to defeat woman suffrage IN THE STATES WHICH HAVE NOT YET SECURED IT, INSTEAD OF MAKING THEIR PLEA IN THE STATES WHERE WOMEN CAN, BY THEIR VOTES, SETTLE THE QUESTION FOR THEMSELVES?

But, suppose some women do not desire suffrage, is that a sufficient reason for denying suffrage to those women who do desire to vote? What man would be willing to have his right to vote withdrawn because some men seem to have no desire to vote? If it were proposed to compel all women to vote, the anti-suffragists might have just reason to oppose the law, but their unwillingness to assume the burdens of the franchise does not justify them in demanding that the right be withheld from women who are willing to take upon themselves such additional burdens as suffrage would impose.

But the case of equal suffrage does not rest upon presumptions alone, although all the presumptions support the cause. The two essential needs of the voter are intelligence and morality; unless it can be shown that woman lacks one or both of these qualities, it will be difficult to question her capacity for voting. Does she lack either intelligence or morality? If you will examine the statistics you will find that the men are in an overwhelming majority in every penitentiary in the land; in the Nebraska penitentiary more than 98 per cent of the inmates are men,—less than 2 per cent women. If, however, you take the statistics of the churches you will find that in them the women are in the majority. Now let me ask you a question: IF WOMEN HAVE SENSE ENOUGH TO KEEP OUT OF THE PENITENTIARY AND MORALITY ENOUGH TO GO TO CHURCH, ARE THEY NOT FIT TO GO TO THE POLLS?

A cause is known by the company it keeps, just as the individual is. Go into any community where woman suffrage is an issue and you will find that the evil elements of society are opposed to enfranchising women. Every man who profits by vice and makes money out of sin is against woman suffrage—why? There is not one among them but knows that woman's conscience is against their business, and they therefore fight desperately to prevent woman suffrage.

Why do the good people divide while the wicked unite? If all who traffic in immorality know that woman is their enemy, why should not all the high minded, right thinking, and well intentioned recognize that woman's conscience is on their side?

One of the arguments frequently used against

woman suffrage is that, if given the franchise, woman will not use it. This argument comes quite inconsistently from the people who think that, if she does vote, she will vote wrong. If one opposes woman suffrage on the ground that he thinks she would not wisely use the ballot it would seem that such a one would find consolation in the hope that she might not vote; but the very ones who are most sure that she will vote wrong, if she votes, are the ones who are most alarmed for fear she will not vote.

Two answers to this argument readily suggest themselves. In the first place, all the MEN do not vote. If you will examine the returns you will see that the largest vote is polled at presidential elections; that a smaller vote is polled at the biennial elections when congressmen are elected; and that the smallest vote is cast at special or off year elections. This shows that it is only when great issues are at stake that the vote approaches a full vote, and never, even in the most exciting campaigns, do anything like 100 per cent of the male voters exercise the right of suffrage. If after we have had manhood suffrage in this country for over a century, men do not appreciate the ballot enough to cast a full vote at every election, why should objection be made to woman suffrage on the ground that some women may not vote?

But there is another answer, namely, that it is important to have a reserve force that can be called upon in times of emergency. When the present war broke out in Europe we began to hear of the "reservists," the European citizens who were not in the regular army, but were subject to call in time of need. As soon as the need was announced the returning ships were crowded with reservists who went home to join the colors. Suppose some of the women do not vote at ordinary elections; suppose they are willing to leave the voting to the men except when great issues are at stake; may we not use to advantage these women reservists who can be called to the colors whenever a question arises which directly affects the home, or the welfare of society?

I shall not attempt to enumerate all the arguments which may be employed in support of the extension of the franchise to women. People differ as to the relative emphasis which should be placed upon these arguments. Some base their claim to suffrage on the ground of right; they claim it as a right pertaining to citizenship. Some build their argument upon the fact that women have taxable property, and point to the objections which have always been urged to taxation without representation.

While recognizing the strength and the force of all other arguments I have been inclined to give the greatest weight to what may be called The Mother's Argument—the mother's right to a voice in determining the environment that is to surround her children. While man and woman share many of the burdens of life in somewhat equal proportion, woman bears by far the larger portion of the burden of rearing the children. The major part of the time of the average woman is devoted to her children. Her life trembles in the balance at each child's birth. She expends her nervous force and energy upon them; she endows them with the wealth of her love. Her very existence is invested in her children, and, as the heart is to be found where the treasure is, the mother's heart is ever with her children, and the happiness of her latter years depends largely upon their conduct and success. As her children approach maturity she sees snares set for them and traps laid for them by those who are base enough to seek to profit by their destruction. Is it fair to tie a mother's hands by denying her the ballot and then give the ballot to those who conspire against the welfare of her offspring?

If the father and mother agree upon a policy of government, the children will have two political guardians; if the father and mother differ as to what environment is best for the children, who will say that the presumption is in favor of the father and against the maternal judgment?

I will not question the sincerity of these good people who fear that woman's entrance into politics will degrade her, but the fear is answered by history. Throughout the ages the same argument has been made every time woman has endeavored to take a step in advance. In Europe and even in the United States girls, until quite recently, had less educational opportunities than boys, and in the Orient woman is still far behind man in intellectual progress. In India, for instance, less than 1 per cent of the women can read and write. In Japan, schools for girls are of recent origin and China is just entering