

Women in Politics

It seems very probable that the Suffrage Amendment will be ratified by the necessary 36 states before the conventions meet, but even if ratification is not completed before the conventions are held, it is quite certain that it will be completed before the election. But even if national suffrage should fail to be accomplished in time to admit all the women of the country to participate in the election, a considerable majority of them will vote this fall by virtue of state constitutions or state statutes, and the early enfranchisement of women is as certain as any future event can be. Tennessee is quite sure to vote for the national amendment next winter, although the state, because a special session is not authorized by the constitution, will be unable to write its name upon the roll of honor now. Florida too, is quite certain to ratify although immediate attention is prevented by a constitutional provision which denies to the legislature the right to ratify a measure that was submitted before the legislature was elected. Besides these there are several states which are certain to ratify if special sessions are called.

Assuming, therefore, that universal woman suffrage is a matter of less than a year if not a matter of a few months, it is worth while to consider the effect of women's entrance in the arena of politics.

Many well-meaning men have stoutly resisted the proposed enfranchisement of woman out of fear that the exercise of suffrage might in some way work to the injury of the home. This argument lacks force, first, because it is a prophecy with nothing in history to support it, and, second, because it is in line with similar objections that have been made to every advance step taken by civilization. There was a time when the education of the masses was believed by sincere people to threaten the destruction of society. That was the aristocratic notion that some had. They thought the Lord intended only a few to be educated—just enough to do the thinking for the people while the uneducated would devote their time to the drudgery of life. Now, universal education is the ideal of civilized countries and we wonder how any person could have brought himself to the point of condemning a large majority of his fellow men to the night of ignorance.

Even after the value of education for men was admitted, some good people were afraid to extend education to women for fear that it would make them mannish—unsex them, as it were. But now the young women of America, on the average, carry their school education to a higher point than the young men, as any one will realize who visits the high schools. And who now doubts the value of education for women? When I visited Mexico some twenty years ago, and noticed the girls in school with the boys, I mentioned the matter to President Diaz, and he promptly replied, "It is more important that the women shall be educated than that the men shall be, because the mother is the child's first teacher."

In like manner there are many good people in Asia who really believe that it would demoralize society if women did not veil their faces, although visitors to oriental cities soon begin to suspect that the thickness of the veil varies in inverse proportion to the woman's beauty—the fairer the face, the thinner the veil. Even in Asia the women are breaking away from this custom and who, in this country at least, will doubt that woman is better because of her acquaintance with society and that society is improved by her presence? In no country can there be found better mothers and wives than in the United States, and here we come nearer to universal education, and woman's face is not concealed.

The strongest argument in favor of suffrage is that it has been successful wherever tried. Four of our states have had woman's suffrage for more than 25 years and in none of these has there been a movement looking to a return to manhood suffrage alone. Why? If suffrage was a menace to the home would not the fact be discovered in 25 years of experience under that system? And if the test had shown that the home suffered because of woman's political activity, would not woman herself have been the first to ask for its abolition? It is a reflection on the women in the suffrage states to suggest that their interest in politics so outweighs their

interest in the home as to make them indifferent to the harm done by woman's suffrage, if it really does harm.

And the men in the suffrage states, how can their silence be explained? Have they no interest in their homes? If suffrage had actually injured the home might we not expect the organized husbands to protest against an institution destructive of domestic obligations?

Intelligence and morality are the qualities necessary to good citizenship. The men are in the majority in the penitentiary, while the women are in the majority in the church. If woman has sense enough to keep out of the penitentiary and morality enough to go to church, she is fit to go to the polls.

Woman enters politics at a time when the world has under consideration a number of problems which come very near to her, and for the understanding of which she has special fitness. Take, for instance, the subject of profiteering. Woman, being the financial manager of the household, has personal knowledge of the injustice done by the profiteer. No amount of fine-spun theory can combat the actual experience which she has had in trying to make the family income cover increasing expenditures. Having intimate knowledge of the labor necessary to create wealth, whether it is created on the farm or in the factory, she knows the injustice of allowing middlemen to impose upon both the producer and the consumer. When, for instance, a grocer buys cabbage from the farmer at 3 cents per pound and then turns the same cabbage over to the housewife at 6 cents per pound, making a profit of 100 per cent for handling it, the woman can not be deceived by any argument advanced in support of the ethics of the transaction. She knows that the man who raised the cabbage had first to invest money in the farm, then to raise the crop, taking all the chances that fall to the farmer, then he has to carry it miles and deliver it to the grocer. There is no equity in allowing the merchant to charge as much for handling it as the farmer receives for producing it. And likewise, in the matter of shoes. The production of the shoe requires industry on the part of the farmer who raises the animal that furnishes the hide, industry on the part of those who transport the hide to the tannery, industry on the part of those engaged in tanning, industry on the part of those who transport the tanned leather to the factory, industry on the part of those who convert the leather into a shoe, and industry on the part of those who transport the shoe to the store. The merchant who charges as much for passing the shoe from his shelf to the customer as is received by all the others engaged in producing the shoe, can not be acquitted before a jury of women. The illustrations might be continued indefinitely and the same rules applied to all. A New York paper recently gave a synopsis of a report made by the legislative representative—a polite term for lobbyist—to his employer, a wholesale grocery company. In the report the lobbyist rather boastfully narrates how he succeeded in killing 30 out of 31 bills introduced in the legislature for the regulation of business (which really means for the reduction of the profits of profiteers). One of these bills would have authorized the creation of public markets as a means of protecting those who reside in the cities. There was a good deal of chuckling over the ability of the organization to prevent such legislation. How long would such a lobbyist have been able to hold his ground before a group of women with market baskets on their arms?

The women know that regulation of profits is not a new idea. The money lender is usually quite an influential man in the community—much sought after by those who need financial accommodation—but the people long since learned that even so respectable a man as the money lender needs to have his profits restricted, and so we have usury laws. The amount of interest collectable range from 5 to 10 per cent with 6 and 7 per cent being more frequently the limit than 8 or 9 per cent. And remember that the banker's 6 or 8 per cent is for the use of the money for a whole year. Most of the women are good in mathematics and they can easily estimate the ratio between a banker's 7 per cent for a year and the grocer's 100 per cent

for a day, and it takes longer to make out a note than it does to sell a head of cabbage.

The war question is one upon which the women have a fixed opinion that is not likely to be changed by party platforms or speeches of candidates. None fight more strongly for their rights than women, but they shrink from the tragedies of the battlefield. They, rather than the men, have been the victims of war. The man who dies upon the battlefield, dies gloriously; he suffered but for a moment, and his name is written upon monuments, while the mother moves on to the grave with slow and unsteady steps instead of being supported by a stalwart son, and the wife, because of the husband's death, assumes a double duty to the child whom the soldier leaves dependent. We are hoping that the lessons of the awful war out of which the world has just emerged will be sufficient to shake even men out of warlike inclination. But it is the finger of woman, now being enfranchised thruout the world, that traces the bow of promise on the clouds of war. The women may be expected to throw the weight of their influence, now potent at the ballot box, against appropriations intended to continue the worn out theory that the world can be terrorized into peace. They know history well enough to understand that rivalry in armies and navies can have no other end but war; and instinct, if not logic, will warn them that compulsory universal military training is as antagonistic to the spirit of peace as it is burdensome to the producers of the country. Because of woman's implacable hatred of war, I am hopeful that she will be able to compel the League of Nations to provide for a referendum on war, except in the case of actual invasion. What preventive could be more effective than a referendum with women voting?

Woman is needed to stand at the ballot box and hurl to the revengeful champions of liquor the challenge, "They shall not pass." Mothers whose sons have been saved from the snare of those who would deliberately destroy them, and wives, whose husbands have been rescued from the net that the liquor traffic would throw over them—these are the impregnable wall that shall protect our fair land from the return of the brewer, the distiller and the liquor dealer.

These are only a few of the questions now before the country but others scarcely less important will come into view when these are settled. Civilization moves on; each generation rises to higher ground. Each new summit brings into view possibilities that had not been visible before, and these possibilities will involve questions which will appeal with irresistible force to the women's moral standards. Benjamin Kidd, in a beautiful book entitled "Science of Power," credits woman with a larger vision than man because she thinks of the future more than of the present and plans for the things that shall be while she deals with the limitations of today. Every righteous cause can hope for her aid; and those who profit by abuses that should be remedied may well be alarmed at her entrance into politics.

While many women will vote as their husbands do or as their fathers did, an increasing number will regard suffrage as a duty rather than as a privilege or even as a right, and will vote as they think—as witness the action of the women in the election of 1916. Woman, as a full fledged citizen, is here and, being here will make her impression on the institutions of the land and the policies of the government.

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2.75 PER CENT BEER INTOXICATING

Dr. Wiley, food expert, gives a scientific opinion as to the intoxicating effect of 2.75 per cent beer. Read it (on another page). The War department ruled that 1.04 per cent would intoxicate a soldier. But while these opinions fortify the dries in their contention, no expert opinion or scientific authority will weigh with the wets—they want liquor that intoxicates—the more it intoxicates, the better they like it.

SWITZERLAND STOPS GAMBLING

On another page will be found a report of the Swiss vote on gambling. The brave little republic puts the ban on one of the worst of vices—and the PEOPLE did it with their little ballots. While we take off our hats to this mountain leader in reforms let us also make our bow to the initiative and referendum, the people's law.