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# THE APPEAL OF POLITICS TO WOMAN.

BY ROSAMOND LEE SUTHERLAND.

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IF there is truth in the theory that anything desired earnestly enough and sought with sufficient persistence in time becomes a fact the friends of women's suffrage should take heart. We easily remember when only a few devoted women espoused the cause. Now it has become an avalanche, crowded on by the thought force of millions—not of women alone, but of the most enlightened and level-headed men—the leading statesmen of the day, not only in America, but the wide world over—penetrating even the ancient shadows of the Orient. Whether the ballot—a voice in the political organization—is necessary to the women of America may be reasonably disputed. To my mind they are doing exceptionally well without it, but no man or woman cognizant of the facts and capable of giving serious consideration to them can reasonably deny that the voice, the mind, the influence of women, would be vastly helpful in the development, the preservation and material advancement of our country. In other words, it is becoming more and more apparent that woman in America is essentially desirable as a factor in the field of political activity.

Why men, however ignorant or feeble-minded, just because they are men, should be credited with exclusively possessing a Heaven-bestowed ability of governing, to which women, whatever their training or mentality, may never aspire, must forever remain one of the unexplained mysteries. That even men are not all qualified for the ballot or entirely beyond criticism in its use might be suspected by the unregenerate from a perusal of the newspapers, say, at the time of the recent election in New York City, or any other large city, for that matter. When the ballot shall be given to women—as it is sure to be sooner or later—is it thinkable that

any of them will make a worse use of it than some men are now doing? On the other hand, is it not quite possible, indeed, is it not probable, that there will be an improvement?

It has been argued adversely that to give the ballot to women would but double the vote without affecting the result, as most women would follow the party convictions of father or husband, but if danger of doubling the vote through a tendency to follow a husband's or father's footsteps is a valid objection to giving the franchise to women, then as a general proposition a man's sons should not be given a vote for the same reason. Our politics as well as our religion are, after all, largely matters of inheritance and environment, and if the objection is good there should be but one voter in the family—the head of the household. If death has removed the father, for example, the mother is, or should be, the head of the house and the property-owner. Why should she not then be the one to cast the vote? It might really be a better plan than the present system under which large property interests must often go wholly unrepresented, except on the tax list, until a son becomes of age.

The distinguished former Minister of China, Mr. Wu Ting Fang, said in effect that he believed in equal suffrage for this country because he had met so many educated and intellectual American women perfectly competent to exercise a voice in government, but he deplored the fact that it would be necessary to include so many ignorant and unintelligent women. What about the ignorant and unintelligent men who vote? Does that phase of the question trouble anybody? Well, incidentally we are arriving at a general impression that a qualified voter, regardless of sex, should be reasonably intelligent, should possess some education, perhaps be the owner of some property and a citizen interested in good government. If these general qualifications were required by law no one need care whether the individual qualifying was a man or a woman, and who can deny that the ballot would be immeasurably elevated and purified thereby, even though capable women were to take advantage of the opportunity and vote. On the other hand, that the entire question, with all the grave responsibility involved, should be simply one of age and sex is unjust and absurd.

Coming, as I do, from a State which conferred the dignity of the ballot equally upon its men and women citizens at the time

of its admission to the Union in 1896, I have seen some of the practical workings of the system and I feel sure that the men of that State whose opinions are valuable will agree with me that it has been a success. Very nearly as great a percentage of women as of men exercise the privilege. The Australian ballot is used and I venture to assert that the average woman votes quite as intelligently and often more conscientiously than the average man. Most men participate to some extent in political life, and they do so from motives as varied as their temperaments, many, of course, from a high desire to serve their State and country to the best of their ability. Others do a certain amount of perfunctory political work because it seems an obvious duty of citizenship, while altogether too many others exercise the right to vote without the slightest appreciation of the grave responsibilities involved. Women will enter the arena in the same serious, conscientious spirit with which they go about everything—their club life, for instance, which is solemn and earnest enough, Heaven knows. One woman by herself may be foolish and frivolous enough to please the most exacting man; but woman *en masse* is a different proposition. Let a number of women combine for any purpose—they rarely amuse themselves or accept events lightly, but usually proceed to make a life-and-death matter of everything. That very quality of earnest concentration might, however, prove a winning card in politics. Women possess, besides, qualities of patience and persistence to an almost alarming degree, as illustrated in this very struggle for a voice in their own affairs. It will never be necessary in this country to resort to the drastic militant methods of our English cousins. The women of America will win out by patience and persistence rather than by the resort to more spectacular methods, and they will carry these characteristics with them when the gates they now assail are opened and they enter the political arena.

Long centuries of enforced devotion to small affairs have developed in woman a genius for detail; a quality in which men are often deficient, but a talent obviously as desirable in governmental housekeeping as in the domestic household. Judge Grosscup, of Chicago, in a recent address to the Ossoli Club, the woman's auxiliary of the Highland Park Club, is reported to have said, among other uncomplimentary things about women, that they could never be successful in the manly professions, in

which he includes scientific research, because these professions require so much attention to minutiae, and, while declaring woman to be essentially a creature of detail, he deplored her inability to consider more than one detail at a time. Would it not be fairer to put the proposition the other way about—instead of condemning woman's inability to pay attention to more than one detail at a time, commend her ability to concentrate her mind upon one thing at a time, which has always been regarded as rather a valuable accomplishment? In the very professions in which he says women can never succeed, women have signally succeeded—who does not know of them except Judge Grosscup?—and in many instances that genius for detail was the secret of success. He admits that he knew one successful woman lawyer, but that, unfortunately, she began her career by throwing an ice-pitcher at an offending judge. If she rounded out a successful career, and only threw one ice-pitcher at one judge, does it not speak well for the forbearance of the individual and of the sex. He neglects to enlighten us as to the character of the provocation, or to furnish for comparison a list of the lawyers of the more self-contained sex who have been guilty of like turbulent conduct. Even in the austere halls of Congress great men have thrown things—epithets, books, canes, inkwells—at each other more than once or twice, as the Sergeants-at-Arms, who have removed the débris, can testify. Fights between men lawyers in our court-rooms find passing reference in the local columns of the newspapers and are forgotten, but if one woman lawyer throws an ice-pitcher at a judge—he was probably exasperating and deserved it—the incident goes down in history, not as the idiosyncrasy of an individual, but as a black mark against the sex. Even in her restricted sphere woman's talents have wonderfully beautified and enriched the world, and they will continue to beautify and enrich increasingly as her field of usefulness broadens.

According to Professor Heydeman, of London, women are morally, mentally and physically inferior to men and but a shade in advance of the chimpanzee. (I trust the professor is an orphan and a bachelor.) Further, he predicts that the difference is certain to increase, because men are bound to progress while women will not. He says this is a law of evolution. It is a law hitherto unknown to science, that one-half of the human

family should continue on the spiral path of progress while the other half remains undeveloped. All his wonderful discoveries have been made by the simple method of measuring a few skulls, and finding that, as a rule, the skulls of men measured more than those of women. He does not find it necessary to consider that men's bones are all larger, as a rule, than those of women, or that the matter of race might count. With all due respect to the learned professor with the tape-measure, I have seen some very dull men with large heads. Individuals of the human race are supposed to inherit their traits of character, their tendencies—moral, mental and physical—from their progenitors. This being true, is it not fair to imagine girls sometimes inheriting the mental strength of the father? It would be palpably absurd to say that girls inherit only the traits of their mothers, or that all the best and most brilliant in a father was always the birth-right of his son. Such a condition is not even approximately true, yet it would have to be wholly true to bear out Professor Heydeman's theory of man's development. While heredity is much, environment is perhaps more. During the impressionable plastic years of childhood every boy as well as girl is under the direct management and influence of some woman and subject to the atmosphere and environment she provides. The great and good men of the world are eloquent witnesses of the tender wisdom which moulded them and secured the environment necessary to their development. It is worthy of note, Professor Heydeman, that when a boy goes wrong, it is often said that he had the unfortunate example of a bad father before him, but when a great man is being eulogized the last word usually is, "He had a remarkable mother."

It has sometimes been suggested that it is not quite womanly for women to insist upon the right to vote, that women are too good for politics, that in some mysterious manner the exercise of the high and sovereign rights of citizenship at the ballot-box is degrading. If women are too good for politics, it might not be altogether illogical to suspect that politics need bettering even for men, and, as "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," may it not be just possible that, instead of women being brought down by contact with politics, politics might be lifted up a little by contact with women?

A recent article on the subject of equal suffrage objects to the

ballot being given to women because of their inexperience. Is there any way but one to gain that experience? The stress laid upon this argument might almost cause the frivolous to smile. As sensibly might a mother say: "As soon as my daughter can play well enough I shall allow her to begin using the piano. Never having tried, she is yet too inexperienced." How did men gain their experience? This, in reality, is precisely what woman wants—what she is asking for—the opportunity to gain the necessary experience. The same writer suggests as a balm and a bit of good advice that if the high-born women of England and the influential women of America would use their influence and prestige in quietly co-operating with men to effect remedial legislation much good might be accomplished. Again, the opportunity to do just that is precisely what women are asking. Unaided and against opposition or with faint encouragement, women have already secured many benefits to humanity through remedial legislation—or without it—but believing they can much more effectively co-operate with men, accomplish infinitely more for the race if standing upon an equal political footing, with a real voice and an effective vote, the "high-born and influential," or better, the earnest and intelligent women have determined that there is a place of greater usefulness for them in active politics to be satisfactorily filled by them only through the equal franchise. And is it not true? Are there not many ways in which the active voice, as well as the passive influence of women, is sadly needed in remedial legislation to-day? Does not the cause of working-women need serious attention? Would not schools, hospitals, charitable institutions, be better managed if women had a voice in their control? Men and women work shoulder to shoulder as teachers, clerks and in countless capacities as wage-earners, but the men almost invariably receive much better salaries, not because they do better work or are more trustworthy, but simply because they are men; which is unjust, illogical and all wrong. In the State of Utah, for example, where women have a right to vote, there is a statute requiring that women teachers in the public schools shall receive the same salaries as men teachers when of equal grade and standing. The crying evil of child labor would surely be eradicated were women instrumental in making and enforcing the laws. The fact that children from six years old and upward are allowed to work in cotton-mills,

that young boys spend their childhood in glass-factories and coal-mines, to be mentally and physically crippled and remain undeveloped, is a horrible blot on our national escutcheon. No cry of suffering childhood can pass a woman's heart unheeded. To safeguard the children is to insure the nation's future, but the protection and relief of children is a detail in the scheme of government which men often seem to avoid. The evils of child labor have been discussed on the floor of the Senate and in the press, but little has come of it. The making of tariff laws, the building of the Panama Canal, the regulation of railways, the establishment and opening of waterways, all matters of importance in themselves, absorb the attention of our legislators, while the welfare of thousands of helpless children, their health, their very lives, seem little things altogether too readily overlooked or ignored. Men know but do not always seem to appreciate the vital fact that the children of to-day are the men of to-morrow. In developing and realizing the mighty dream of perpetual, international peace, woman's voice is needed, and her active instead of passive co-operation would be productive of incalculable good. Men cannot realize as women do, through generations of effort from their obscured position, how hampered is their every word and act by their political inferiority. The wonder is that they have kept their courage and accomplished so much already without the recognition which they manifestly deserve.

Men have played a lone hand at government since the dawn of time. Since the days when they clubbed their mates, and dragged them to their caves by their hair, up to the still chaotic and imperfect conditions of to-day, with unsolved problems, with bad laws on some subjects and no laws on others, men have needed help and they still need it. This help the women are now proffering and wise men are recognizing the wisdom of accepting it.

To me the idea of the dominance of either sex is thoroughly repugnant. I deplore beyond expression the thought, too often advanced, that women desire to usurp the prerogatives of men. The fairness of women to men is as important as the fairness of men to women. Neither man nor woman should be thought of as superior. They are simply different. One is the complement of the other, and it takes both to compass, successfully, symmetrically and perfectly, the situations and problems of life. Men and women cannot work together successfully for the good



of the world so long as man insists upon standing on a pedestal of his own construction and keeping woman an appreciable step below him. But swift changes are taking place.

The emancipation of woman is a natural evolution which can no more be stopped than the tides of the sea. It is a thought-force sweeping the world. The women of Denmark and Sweden, France, England and Canada, are making determined efforts for recognition. President Fallière, of France, in a speech at Paris, October 30th, said that he hoped himself to see equality between the sexes fully realized; that he believed women should be on an equality with men in actual life, with the same laws for both. The women of New Zealand vote and have done so for years, but are beautifully feminine, nevertheless; they seldom speak at political meetings, but do no end of political work among themselves and in winning over doubtful voters. Lady Ward, wife of the Premier, says that, though the women are intensely interested and well informed upon all political propositions, they are exceptionally feminine, and the homes of New Zealand are ideally domestic. President Taft, in a recent speech in Alabama, said that he would advocate woman's suffrage when *all* women wanted it. We must persuade him to go a little farther than that, for the condition is obviously impossible. Why should we depart in this instance alone from the time-honored maxim that the majority rules? It is urged that all women do not want the ballot and would not use it were it granted. That of course is true. Not all the slaves of the South were able to comprehend emancipation, not all of them wanted it and some remained voluntary slaves to the hour of death, but that did not affect the principle. Many men also fail to appreciate the duties and privileges of citizenship and do not vote. They are drones in the political hive. Some women might also be in the same class. But that does not affect the real question.

We are told that women have other duties. True. So have men, quite as exacting and necessary; for while woman is the home-maker, man is the wage-earner. Of the two perhaps there are more women to-day not vitally bound by domestic ties, but free to live their lives as they will than there are men free from similar demands; and I see no good reason why their country should be deprived of their help solely because they are women. It is not many years ago that even here in America it was devout-

ly believed that only the boys of the family should be educated; that girls must simply be trained to the drudgery of the household. But the world does move and woman has ceased to be an automaton. Every day she is becoming a more important factor in the world's work. The gates ajar must be swinging wide indeed since the Royal College of Surgeons in England announces that from January 1st next it will admit women to examinations. One by one the barriers are breaking; and in some near day we shall have reached, through experience, a sane and civilized idea of the value of co-operation of the sexes in all questions of business and political economy. Our children's children will look back with wonder to the time when their mothers had to struggle and plead for justice and fair treatment from the men of their day.

Even so recently as in Jane Austin's time, it was considered indelicate for a woman to write a book. Her position in the journalistic field to-day speaks for itself. But in all this struggle for emancipation one pregnant fact appears: every step has been a step forward. No advantage gained has ever been relinquished. Woman is everywhere to-day in all the arts, the sciences and the professions; and her activities in every field of endeavor wonderfully illustrate her power and flexibility of mind and suggest that all that is needed for her ultimate success in whatever she elects to do is opportunity. *The opportunity!*

I am not a member of any suffrage association, but I had the honor to be asked by my home State to represent such an organization a year or so ago when a plea was being made by women for a constitutional amendment before the Senate committee whose *duty* it was to listen. The States were represented by carefully selected women; no one could for a moment have entertained any question of their equality in every way with the men they addressed. Yet those solemn Solons only "permitted" a limited number of the women to make their little speeches, to which they listened with an air of bored resignation, although the remarks were so bright, concise, even eloquent, and so unanswerably logical that men accustomed to listening from day to day to speeches made in the Senate Chamber might at least have shown a slight appreciation. It was a sight to wring tears from the gods to see such brilliant, educated, cultivated women pleading with those men for the privilege of standing on the same plane with them:

begging to be allowed an equal voice in the management of their own country with the ignorant riffraff of foreign nations scarcely able to read or write or speak the language—or any language. Of course the committee had no idea of taking any action in the matter, and when the allotted time was over it rose as one man and solemnly filed back into the Senate Chamber without a word.

At the same time when this committee was in session in the Senate Marble Room a similar committee of the Lower House was giving a hearing in the south wing of the Capitol on the same subject. Before this committee a bright little lady from Louisiana was presenting the views of the women of her State. In the course of her remarks she referred to the four States which had already conferred the ballot upon women. She was promptly interrupted by a member of the committee, who asked that she would “please confine herself to facts”; and assured her that no State had as yet committed the folly of which she spoke! *This* from a member of Congress, who evidently intended to use his vote and influence to withhold the franchise from women because they do not know enough to vote. *This* from a man considered sufficiently intelligent and well informed to be elected to Congress to pass upon all national problems, and who doubtless felt and still feels ably qualified to decide the question of woman’s inferiority. He actually did not know a fact of such political importance as that women were admitted to equal suffrage in Wyoming in 1869, in Colorado in 1893 in Idaho and Utah in 1896.

The demand for suffrage is not sectional. It has its adherents in every State and probably in every town in the Union. Even our conservative and clinging sisters of the South are flocking to the standard. Nor is there any class distinction. The cause is equally dear to the heart of the woman of wealth, the leader in exclusive society, the professional woman and the shop-girl. It is no longer true that a woman is looked upon as idle, eccentric or a faddist if she declares herself an adherent of the cause. The vital strength of the movement is that the intelligent, educated, refined home-loving women of America are behind it. That is the reason it must and will succeed.

Some excited utterances of the less rational have given the very false impression that woman has an ultimate desire to

dominate and assume the reins of government. This I know to be far from the truth. Few of those who give real strength to the movement have any sympathy with the methods of the "shrieking sisterhood." Woman is instinctively a home-maker, and where it is possible that is the life she chooses. But that vocation does not prevent her paying taxes if she has property. It does not exempt her from answering to the law if she commit a crime. It should not prevent her from taking an interest in the election of proper persons to make the laws she advocates and enforce them.

We are quite accustomed to having our grandmothers and their domestic perfections thrown at us as samples of what woman and woman's life should be. Incidentally I want to say that they probably had a very dull time of it and so did our grandfathers. How with all the wearisome, monotonous drudgery required of them, and little else in their gray lives, they ever survived long enough to become our grandmothers I cannot understand. They could and did spin, weave, knit and make all the apparel for the family. They had to prepare, preserve and cook all of the food and keep the larders and cellars stocked for summer and winter consumption. They were expected to wash, iron and churn and perhaps give the younger children a few daily lessons. For recreation they worked precious samplers with colored wools.

It is not the same Moloch of a world to-day which our grandmothers knew. We can buy our children's clothes infinitely better, prettier and cheaper than we can make them, not counting the cost of time and eyesight. We no longer stock our larders with a season's supply of comestibles of our own preparation. We have better methods of doing things to-day. Modern machinery has done inestimable service in releasing women from the treadmill of household labor. Grandmother's accomplishments would count for little even if one possessed them all. Even the cherished samplers have lost their charm.

The modern home-maker finds that with the aid of gas, electricity, the telephone, steam laundries, public markets, and the thousand conveniencies of modern life, her household machinery moves easily and rapidly, with a minimum of exertion to herself, so that with John's dinner ordered, the children safely off to school, she has plenty of time to read, to see her friends, attend

her clubs—to study politics and vote, if she has the opportunity—and still do vastly better home-making than grandmother ever dreamed of doing.

It is just possible that if political equality had been ours from the beginning in this country, without the long and bitter struggle for it, we might have prized it less keenly. So all the more for the effort, when it comes—and it is so right that it must come—suffrage will be held a dearer privilege and more sacred possession by the women of America than it ever has been, or ever can be by the men, born to the purple. It is because the women of America are loyal and patriotic citizens; because they know the necessity of having good men in office; because they want good schools and the children protected from every evil that they may become good citizens in the future; because they believe that they can do infinitely more toward attaining these things if they stand on the same plane with their husbands and brothers, with the same interests and hopes that they are asking to be treated like reasonable human beings and given the ballot.

No one claims that *all* women are thoroughly conscientious or that their judgment would never be at fault. Neither do I think that all women would be benefited by the privilege of the ballot. I do not think that all men vote honestly or that all men should have a vote. Yet they *do* have it, to the exclusion of women; a great majority of whom are thoroughly worthy and capable. I do think that women to-day have as much spare time as men have to devote to affairs of state; that they are as much interested, quite as patriotic and have as much genius for citizenship. It is possible that in time men might have to look to their laurels, but that would rest with themselves. All woman wants is the force of the ballot to put the proper men in places of power. The tremendous impetus which the power of combined thought and purpose has given to the movement in America means victory. The very energy and volubility of detractors show it. Everything indicates that its opponents are weakening and that the fight against equal suffrage is obsolescent.

“The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
 Moves on; nor all your piety, nor wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
 Nor all your tears, wash out a word of it.”

ROSAMOND LEE SUTHERLAND.