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# THE RELATION OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE — TO — THE HOME AND TO MORALITY

— BY —

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Published by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association,  
24 Ford Street, Hartford, Conn.

In this day of the world, when so many questions are being asked and answered regarding votes for women, the question as to why men vote is very seldom raised. The mere fact that men do vote, somehow settles the question in the minds of most people, for habit is a singularly strong guiding principle in the human race, and that which is, commonly presents itself as right to the average mind. This condition is, of course, due to the extreme provinciality of most people both with regard to time and place. Less than a century and a half ago the great majority of men belonged to the disfranchised class, and every reason, substantially, that is now advanced against woman suffrage was then put forth as proof that men should not have the right of franchise. That these reasons have once been proven false does not eradicate the necessity of painfully going over them again, for historic knowledge and sense have but little weight with the provincial masses. In the long struggle for manhood suffrage the democratic idea was evolved and the facts that "Taxation without representation is tyranny," and that "A just government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed," were supposed to be established. Now, however, when women demand the right that democracy has declared to be the inalienable right of every individual, the provincial mind revolts against the possible change and unwittingly denies the very principles upon which men based their demand for the ballot. Human beings are, after all, not so very reasonable when viewed in such a light.

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Provinciality with regard to place is perhaps even more striking in connection with the problem of woman suffrage, for in the nine States of the Union and in the many other countries where women now have full suffrage, it is taken quite for granted that women have as much right to the franchise as men have. The students coming from the suffrage States to our Eastern universities are shocked and amazed at finding sex still regarded as sufficient cause for disfranchisement.

The men in the suffrage States openly declare that they would resent any questioning of their wives' right to vote quite as seriously as if they themselves were involved. And yet removed only by a few hundred miles, people are insisting that to give women the vote would be to break up the home and disrupt the State. In Wyoming, where women have voted on an equality with men since 1869, there are fewer divorces in relation to the number of marriages than in any other State in the Union. Experience, though it be hard, must be repeated, until the vision of the average mind becomes wider. The fact that woman suffrage has worked well where it has been tried, and that no attempt has been made to repeal the laws enfranchising women, is unknown territory to most people, and so the provincial mind goes on theorizing inaccurately about already established conditions. For all that, and in spite of the fact that the democratic ideal urgently demands the enfranchisement of all normal, responsible individuals, the removal of the sex disability still remains to be accomplished in a considerable part of the world.

Most Americans admit that a democratic form of government is the best form of government humanity has yet evolved, and they further admit that the basic principle in Democracy is that the point of view of each normal adult citizen shall be directly represented in the government through the ballot. Business interests, social interests, educational and labor interests must all be directly represented in order to preserve the best balance among them in our government. Admitting then, alongside the democratic ideal, that the

sphere of woman is the home and that her chief duty is the rearing of the children, it becomes at once obvious that, with manhood suffrage alone, the home, the children and women themselves still lack direct representation. Even anti-suffragists confess that there is a natural division of labor between the sexes, and if that is so, surely it is unfair and unwise to ask the men to do their own work and then do women's work as well; for a careful supervision of governmental proceedings requires just as much work as the home of business does. The whole confusion about the matter arises from the lack of recognition of the fact that work, which was once carried on within the four walls of the home, has now gone out of the home and has become part of organized business. A century ago it was not necessary for the housewife to vote in order to keep the house well, but now it is. A century ago the woman, not the man, supervised the weaving of stuffs, the making of clothes, the water supply and the milk supply. It was the housewife who dictated as to the quality of food her family should eat and how much fresh air should be admitted through the windows. The collection of vast numbers of people in our great cities and the organization of the work formerly controlled entirely by women has made the vote essential to woman if she is to perform the duties naturally appertaining to her sphere. How can a woman provide pure air for her family if a smoke nuisance is permitted to exist in her neighborhood, or how can a woman maintain sanitary conditions for her family if the alleys are foul, the garbage is not promptly collected, and if, as in a recent case in Baltimore, a dead horse is allowed to lie for days in the street on which her windows open? And yet all of these matters are now controlled by the government, and only the voters control the government. It may be argued that the housewife can get what she needs in the government by her indirect influence, but conditions where women do not vote refute this argument. Moreover, if the woman could succeed, as she can not, in getting men to represent the needs of the home in the government, she would only be succeeding in shouldering off her own natural duties onto the already overburdened shoulders of men. Rightly ordered people desire to do their duty themselves,

and not by proxy. When we come to the problem of the rearing of children, the helplessness of the disfranchised mother is still more apparent. How can a woman be said to educate her child if she can not control the conditions under which he goes to school? The voters say how much money shall be spent on the schools, what the curriculum shall be, whether the schools shall be fire traps or not, and what kind



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of teachers shall be employed. In Baltimore there are not enough seats in the schools to enable all of the children of school-doing age to enjoy two sessions a day, and this condition does not exist in any State where women have the suffrage. But it is not only the school child, but the infant in arms also, that the men are now "minding" — men and not women legislate as to the quality of milk the babies may drink, and the result is that in Baltimore every summer

between 700 and 800 infants die as a result of impure milk. It is not in the least that men could not keep house and rear the children well if they would give whole minds to it; it is simply because it is women's natural business, and not men's, to attend to the home and the child; because women are doing it and men are not; that women need to have power enough to do it well. At the present time there are many little children held in our common jails as witnesses, or for petty crimes, and these little ones are forced into close companionship with common criminals, simply because the mothers of the State can not, through their votes, order a proper detention home for them. Judge Lindsey himself says that the women's vote in Colorado gave the children of the State the Juvenile Court and a proper detention home. The mother, and not the father, is the proper person to represent the child in the government, for the mother knows the needs of the child more accurately than the father does, and until she votes, the child in the home, the pitiful working child and the unprotected dependent child must pay for this injustice. It is just this fact — that the children are suffering and dying as a result of the disfranchisement of women — that makes women, and men, too, of the noblest sort, work with such fixedness of purpose for women's freedom.

Now, without going behind the fact that the sphere of woman is the home, it is evident that all women are not granted the privilege of being wives and mothers. In Maryland, where there are more women than men, all women can not marry. The last census showed that 6,000,000 women are engaged in gainful occupations in the United States, exclusive of those in professional fields. To insist that these women, many of whom are widows or deserted wives bringing up young children, do not need the protection men demand for themselves, is the height of absurdity. It was a recognition of the need of the worker, regardless of sex, for the ballot, that brought the National Federation of Labor and the Maryland State Federation of Labor to endorse the woman suffrage movement. The men were wise enough to realize, too, that, while women's labor lacked the direct protection which the ballot means, it would serve as a means of

undercutting their own wages. Fewer women would have to work if men got better pay; but while women are unable to legislate directly for the protection of their own labor, they will be forced to undercut men. In Colorado women have an eight-hour day, but in Maryland an employer can legally hire a woman for as many hours as he can get her to work; moreover, the average wage of women workers in Colorado is higher than it is in the non-suffrage States.

But while the foregoing arguments are sound and fully substantiated by actual experience in the States where women have full suffrage, the strongest argument for the enfranchisement of women lies in the relation of woman suffrage to morality. The fact that women are more virtuous than men is admitted by both men and women, suffragist and anti-suffragist. The reason for this greater morality is not far to seek. From time immemorial women have been paying the whole price of immorality — men have sown and women have reaped the whirlwind. The immoral woman has been punished so brutally and so inevitably that women have come to realize that unchastity on the part of a woman is the greatest of all sins. Men, on the other hand, have been permitted to go practically unpunished for the same sin, and have come thereby to consider it as a minor offense against an artificial code of morality. Men themselves admit that fully 90 per cent. of all men are immoral at one time or another, and this is true of less than 1 per cent. of all women. Precisely why, then, this more moral point of view should be kept out of the government while the baser point of view is admitted, the anti-suffragists must explain, for on a *a priori* grounds it would seem that the reverse even would be wiser.

Under the exclusive government of men, the degradation of women has become one of the most paying trades an unskilled woman can enter, and this hideous condition alone would be sufficient proof of the fact that women can not trust men wholly to protect them. In only one country in the world, and that in a country where women have voted for many years, has the social evil as an open trade ceased to exist. This is an achievement which the great majority

of men have declared to be impossible and which would be impossible where the point of view of women was not a direct power in the State. Women who are ignorant of the social evil often feel that the chivalry of men can be relied upon, but the unprotected daughters of the poor present a different picture. What sort of chivalry is it that bribes by the offer of money or amusement young and helpless girls to enter a life of infamy? And what sort of chivalry can it be that makes the streets of our own city unsafe places for our little girls? Does our revolting record of 1,000 cases annually of assaults by men upon little children under 14 years of age indicate that where women do not have the right to protect their children, their protection by men is assured? A thousand times no. Only recently many of the signatures on the Dawson pardon petition showed how men, even of the best repute, feel with regard to the seduction of little children. Dawson was charged with the ruin of 16 little orphan girls of ages varying from 8 to 14 years, and he himself admitted his guilt in two cases, but, in spite of the almost inconceivable horror of his crime, an ex-Congressman appealed to the Governor to have his sentence of 10 years in the penitentiary remitted to five years. Many men holding political office, including members of the General Assembly and City Councilmen, were found who put their signatures to the pardon petition. These men could hardly be said to represent the morality of women.

Our laws regarding morality alone indicate how imperative it is that women be given the franchise. It was men and not women who fixed the age of consent at the attainment of the sixteenth birthday, and it was men alone who passed the law making the maximum penalty for adultery in Maryland a fine of \$10. The bastardy law, which requires that the father of an illegitimate child in Maryland shall pay as a maximum \$30 a year for seven years for the support of his child, hardly took the woman's point of view into consideration, and the fact that there is absolutely no law on the statute books making immorality on the part of men illegal, shows how vain women's indirect influence really is. The fact of the matter is that women realize the true horror

of the social evil and men do not, and it is the duty of good women to impress upon men through the law their better morality. While it was still supposed that sexual license was essential to the normal health of men, no logical legal steps could be taken toward the prevention of immorality and its hideous train of disease; but now, when the medical profession declares that immortality is no more necessary for men than for women, the direct influence of women in our laws and their enforcement is imperatively required. The record kept in the Sheriff's office of immoral houses shows that at east 500 of these indecent places exist in Baltimore alone, and it is conservatively estimated that about 10,000 prostitutes ply their trade in our city. When the number of men necessary to keep these ignorant, and in many cases helpless, girls in degradation is considered, the chivalry of men begins to look like a mockery.

Under conditions such as these, is it any wonder that the women of the better sort, like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, are beginning to cry out against a government conducted solely by men? The only real wonder is that there are any women to be found to oppose the movement for the enfranchisement of their sex. As a matter of fact, there are only three classes of women who are opposed — those who are ignorant of social conditions; those who do not believe in the true worth of women, and those who do not believe in a democratic form of government. The first class is the only class numerically great enough to be a real detriment to the woman suffrage movement, and it is daily losing good women from its ranks to the other side. Every good cause in its infancy has been spurned and scoffed at; but there are martyrs nowadays, just as there were in the early Christian times, and it is to these noble men and women that the enfranchisement of women will ultimately owe its success. When the knowledge of true social conditions has been spread abroad and when the bitter cry of the children and the young girls has reached the ears of women, the mothers of the race will come together in the common cause of woman suffrage and will demand that their primal right to protect their young be given them again. The great hope is that that day may not be long in coming, for the delay is being paid for in the agony and degradation of the helpless and the young.



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