

Henrietta
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Readings

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FOUNDATION

A Plea for Extension of Women's Influence

One can hardly realize that it is only within the last half century that so much has been accomplished for women. We take for granted our many privileges, often forgetting those brave women and noble men, who, against ridicule and contempt, worked hard to educate and elevate all women.

The higher education of women, their organized efforts to ameliorate the condition of the poor, raise the fallen and benefit in various ways the community, their position in the labor market-necessitating laws to protect their interests, and welfare have all taught our women that it would be well to have a direct influence upon those who govern. Personal influence, of which we hear so much and which, in certain cases is powerful, is very slow in action.

If we are to accomplish what we see necessary to be done, we need a more direct way than individual personal influence. We ought to express an opinion and what more direct and powerful way of expressing an opinion is there than by the ballot? We women have too much to do with our home duties, our care of the sick and helpless-and-the many claims upon our philanthropy, to be running round with petitions, trying to exert a personal influence on voters, in order to induce them to make or amend laws that will protect our children when they have the shelter of our homes. Yet there is no other way open for us. Year after year we have to go over the same ground, spending time and energy that might be saved if we had the influence of the vote.

... We do not ask for the vote because we are antagonistic to men-far from it-we do not want the vote in order that we may vote against the men, the men are our fathers, husbands and brothers, their best interests are ours. We want

the vote that we may strengthen their hands in all that stands for right and justice. As Miss Willard has said, "The whole intention of the woman movement is not to declare the rights of women, or to usurp power, or to alienate men, but on the contrary-it is to unite men and women on the most enduring plan; to study the harmonies between them, to prove that their interests are indissolubly linked, and it is a far more scientific, sensible, and Christian way of dealing with one half of the human race, because it is equally in the interests of the two halves."

If women had the vote there would be no need to come twice asking for better legislation for women and children, no need to come again and again for the appointment of women inspectors where women and children are employed; we would not ask in vain for the raising of the wage or consent. We do not want to vote as men, we want to vote as women-the more womanly the better.

... We are quite startled when we mothers are told we are not "parents" by law. The inconsistencies of the law and the law makers are certainly very amazing to the feminine mind. We are not to have the vote because our duties and responsibilities as parents are so arduous that casting one vote in four or five years would seriously interfere with them, and then we find the same law makers making a law that a mother is not a parent as long as the father is alive. No wonder it is hard for a woman to understand politics!

... A husband says to his wife: I will go and vote for you and me. You must not have anything to do with politics-there are men in politics and you would have to mix with them. The wife opens her eyes-men-are men such dreadful creatures? She thinks men are nice, she thought she had mixed with them all her life, in the home, in the street, in the market and shops, in society, at balls, at dinner parties, at church, at prayer meetings. But she is told she must not argue; she does not understand; women are so unreasonable-clearly the reason why she should not vote is that she would have to mix with men and the contact with these dreadful creatures would rob her of her charm, degrade her character and worst of all unsex her; so that she would no longer love her children nor her home. How brave her husband must be to go to that dreadful place, the "polling booth." He, of course, is not a man, what he is she does not know; she is unable to understand; she had always thought

him to be a man, but she is quite sure he never would do any of those dreadful things to women. So she stays at home on voting day or goes to market in the morning, where she is pushed and jostled about by men carrying quarters of raw beef or sacks of potatoes, or dead pigs; or perhaps she may spend the morning at the bargain counter, the afternoon at a bridge party, and the evening reading a novel, so much more refined, elevating and womanly, than if she had gone with her husband to vote, and discussed with him the character of the man they were going to vote for. The husband goes alone and votes to send a man to make or keep a law that makes everything in the home he is supposed to represent belong to him, the children, the house, the furniture, and all his wife may claim is board and clothing suitable to her children. This is not an imaginary story-it is an absolute fact. Are we willing to be so represented? As a matter of fact there is no such a thing as representative voting at the ballot box; one man, one vote. It has been urged that giving the married women the vote would mean simply doubling the married men's vote against the one vote of the bachelor; and why not if it represents two people?

... Another argument brought forward against giving votes to women is "If women were to vote they would want to run for Parliament." Why would they? Our Canadian widows and spinsters from the Atlantic to the Pacific, have for years been voting for mayors and aldermen. The idea that women, having the right to vote, would destroy the home has proved incorrect. It has not been found to work that way in our towns and cities. Women have been admitted to municipal franchise without any disturbance of the home, deterioration of her character, or interference with her higher functions. There has not been the slightest change in our social and domestic sphere by so great an innovation as our mothers and sisters casting their votes at a municipal election. Can any reasonable man explain why he fears disaster falling on his home and society if his mother should cast a vote for a parliamentary candidate as well as for a municipal officer?

But one says it is not the time in casting the vote, it is the time qualifying to cast it, getting the information on public questions necessary to cast an intelligent vote. The great educator of the mass of voters today is the newspaper; women, good wives and mothers, spend as much time reading the newspapers as men do.

The only difference the right to vote might make is, that perhaps they would read the editorials and articles rather than the advertisements and social items-might take more interest in the passing of a bill and less in the details of smart gowns worn at fashionable "At Homes."

WCTU Convention Edmonton
Journal 12 Oct. 1907: 9.

Motherhood, Gods Greatest Gift

Dear Readers:

I am not rushing into print, I have been invited in. Your Managing Editor has asked me to speak to the 150,000 readers of the Canadian Home Journal a few words on "Looking Back on Life".

My lines have fallen in pleasant places. All my life God's Banner over me has been love. Looking back I see that some of the tragedies and hard things of my life have been my greatest blessings. I have travelled a long way on the Road of Life, always up, and in looking back find myself in a world of beauty and full of nice people. Does it not thrill one to see the crowd? Billions! Of every colour; every costume; every creed; every land. They are passing through the happy land of childhood, the land of adolescence and are entering (often suddenly), the land of maturity. We know where they came from. Do they all know where they are going?

Life has three distinct periods: Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity. Life begins in the happy protected land of childhood, in the valleys, a land free of care and responsibility. There the children toil not, rather they do spin. They laugh and play, wander in the meadows and gather flowers. Unconsciously one enters the land of adolescence, that enchanted land of dreams and visions, to pass on to the third and last stage of human life where one enters the University of the Road of Life. On the threshold one is met by two Powers: the Law, in cap and gown, who gives each one freedom and responsibility. The other Power is Experience, who is the teacher and guide who accompanies each one to the end of the earthly journey.

I have learned that God is Love; that every one is dealt with under the Absolute Law of Compensation. What makes me so sure of this is that of the great number of people whom I have asked: "Have you met one person with whom,

if you could, you would change places—not change one or two things—not take the cream off their pan of milk and add it to the cream on your pan—but change places in every particular, change husband, children, homes, wealth, health and happiness?" and I have not found one person.

I have learnt, like Sir Oliver Lodge, that: "Existence is the most magnificent thing that can be conceived." I thank God each day that I am, that I live, and that I always will, for I am sure there is no death, only a passing on to things more wonderful and more beautiful of which man has not even conceived.

I firmly believe that Right is Might and will ultimately prevail.

The most precious thing I have learnt is that Motherhood is one of the greatest of God's gifts. A mother is a co-worker with God in a way that no man can ever be, in the building of a temple for a human soul, a soul that is immortal for it is the breath of God. In Genesis is stated that God made a body out of matter and breathed his breath into it and man became a living soul.

"Going down the Hill of Life," is a heathenish expression. We are not going down, we are climbing up. When we reach the end we leave our mortal part and take flight into the Ocean of Eternity.

Canadian Home Journal May 1931: 28.
Courtesy of City of Edmonton Archives.

Thoughts on the Privy Council's Ruling

This decision marks the abolition of sex in politics. . . . Personally I do not care whether or not women ever sit in the Senate, but we fought for the privilege for them to do so.

We sought to establish the personal individuality of women and this decision is the announcement of our victory. It has been an up-hill fight.

Newspaper report, 19. Oct 1929
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