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## **FEMALE SUFFRAGE**

by

**Susan Fenimore Cooper**

(This e-text has been prepared from the original two-part magazine article, "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America," by Susan Fenimore Cooper, which appeared in Harper's New Weekly Magazine, Vol. XLI (June-November, 1870), pp. 438-446, 594-600. The author is identified only in the Table of Contents, p. v, where she is listed as "Susan F. Cooper.")

Transcribed by Hugh C. MacDougall [jfcooper@wpe.com](mailto:jfcooper@wpe.com)

{Because "vanilla text" does not permit of accents or italics, accents have been ignored, and both all-capital and italicized words transcribed as ALL CAPITALS. Paragraphs are separated by a blank line, but not indented. Footnotes by Susan Fenimore Cooper are inserted as paragraphs (duly identified) as indicated by her asterisks. All insertions by the transcriber are enclosed in {brackets}. For readers wishing to know the exact location of specific passages, the page breaks from Harper's are identified by a blank line at the end of each page, followed by the original page number at the beginning of the next.

{A Brief Introduction to Susan Fenimore Cooper's article:

{The question of "female suffrage" has long been resolved in the United States, and—though sometimes more recently—in other democratic societies as well. For most people, certainly in the so-called Western world, the right of women to vote on a basis of equality with men seems obvious. A century ago this was not the case, even in America, and it required a long, arduous, and sometimes painful struggle before the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified on August 18, 1920.

{Why then, take steps to make available through the Gutenberg Project an article arguing AGAINST the right of women to vote—an article written by a woman?

{There are two reasons for doing so. The first is that Susan Fenimore Cooper (1813-1894) was no ordinary woman. She was educated in Europe and extremely well read; she was the daughter and literary assistant of James Fenimore Cooper, America's first internationally recognized novelist; and she was a naturalist and essayist of great talent whose "nature diary" of

her home village at Cooperstown, published as "Rural Hours" in 1850, has become a classic of early American environmental literature.

{Yet Susan Fenimore Cooper argued eloquently, bringing to her task not only her deep religious feelings but also her very considerable knowledge of world history and of American society, that women should not be given the vote! Hers was not a simple defense of male dominion; her case is combined with equally eloquent arguments in favor of higher education for women, and for equal wages for equal work. "Female Suffrage," is thus of considerable biographic importance, throwing important light on her views of God, of society, and of American culture.

{At the same time, "Female Suffrage" demonstrates that no social argument—however popular or politically correct today—can be considered as self-evident. Those who favor full legal and social equality of the sexes at the ballot box and elsewhere (as I believe I do), should be prepared to examine and answer Susan Fenimore Cooper's arguments to the contrary. Many of those arguments are still heard daily in the press and on TV talk shows—not indeed to end women's right to vote, but as arguments against further steps towards gender equality. Unlike many modern commentators, Susan Fenimore Cooper examines these arguments in detail, both as to their roots and their possible effects, rather than expressing them as simplistic sound-bites. She asks her readers to examine whether gender equality is compatible with Christian teachings; whether universal suffrage can ever resolve social problems; whether the "political" sphere is as significant to human life as politicians believe. One need not agree with her answers, but one can only be grateful that she forces us to ask questions.

{Hugh C. MacDougall, Secretary, James Fenimore Cooper Society—August 1999}

## **FEMALE SUFFRAGE.**

### **A LETTER TO THE CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF AMERICA.**

[Part I.](#)

[Part II.](#)

#### **Part I.**

{Publisher's Note} [NOTE.—We have printed this Letter, which will be continued in our next Number, not as an expression of our own views, but simply as the plea of an earnest and thoughtful Christian woman addressed to her fellow-countrywomen.—EDITOR OF HARPER.]

The natural position of woman is clearly, to a limited degree, a subordinate one. Such it has always been throughout the world, in all ages, and in many widely different conditions of society. There are three conclusive reasons why we should expect it to continue so for the future.

FIRST. Woman in natural physical strength is so greatly inferior to man that she is entirely in his power, quite incapable of self-defense, trusting to his generosity for protection. In savage life this great superiority of physical strength makes man the absolute master, woman the abject slave. And, although every successive step in civilisation lessens the distance between the sexes, and renders the situation of woman safer and easier, still, in no state of society, however highly cultivated, has perfect equality yet existed. This difference in physical strength must, in itself, always prevent such perfect equality, since woman is compelled every day of her life to appeal to man for protection, and for support.

SECONDLY. Woman is also, though in a very much less degree, inferior to man in intellect.

The difference in this particular may very probably be only a consequence of greater physical strength, giving greater power of endurance and increase of force to the intellectual faculty connected with it. In many cases, as between the best individual minds of both sexes, the difference is no doubt very slight. There have been women of a very high order of genius; there have been very many women of great talent; and, as regards what is commonly called cleverness, a general quickness and clearness of mind within limited bounds, the number of clever women may possibly have been even larger than that of clever men. But, taking the one infallible rule for our guide, judging of the tree by its fruits, we are met by the fact that the greatest achievements of the race in every field of intellectual culture have been the work of man. It is true that the advantages of intellectual education have been, until recently, very generally on the side of man; had those advantages been always equal, women would no doubt have had much more of success to record. But this same fact of inferiority of education becomes in itself one proof of the existence of a certain degree of mental inequality. What has been the cause of this inferiority of education? Why has not woman educated herself in past ages, as man has done? Is it the opposition of man, and the power which physical strength gives him, which have been the impediments? Had these been the only obstacles, and had that general and entire equality of intellect existed between the sexes, which we find proclaimed to-day by some writers, and by many talkers, the genius of women would have opened a road through these and all other difficulties much more frequently than it has yet done. At this very hour, instead of defending the intellect of women, just half our writing and talking would be required to defend the intellect of men. But, so long as woman, as a sex, has not provided for herself the same advanced intellectual education to the same extent as men, and so long as inferiority of intellect in man has never yet in thousands of years been gravely discussed, while the inferiority of intellect in woman has been during the same period generally admitted, we are compelled to believe there is some foundation for this last opinion. The extent of this difference, the interval that exists between the sexes, the precise degree of inferiority on the part of women, will probably never be satisfactorily proved.

Believing then in the greater physical powers of man, and in his superiority, to a limited extent, in intellect also, as two sufficient reasons for the natural subordination of woman as a sex, we have yet a third reason for this subordination. Christianity can be proved to be the safest and highest ally of man's nature, physical, moral, and intellectual, that the world has yet known. It protects his physical nature at every point by plain, stringent rules of general temperance and moderation. To his moral nature it gives the pervading strength of healthful purity. To his intellectual nature, while on one hand it enjoins full development and vigorous action, holding out to the spirit the highest conceivable aspirations, on the other it teaches the invaluable lessons of a wise humility. This grand and holy religion, whose whole action is healthful, whose restraints are all blessings—this gracious religion, whose chief precepts are the love of God and the love of man—this same Christianity confirms the subordinate position of woman, by allotting to man the headship in plain language and by positive precept. No system of philosophy has ever yet worked out in behalf of woman the practical results for good which Christianity has conferred on her. Christianity has raised woman from slavery and made her the thoughtful companion of man; finds her the mere toy, or the victim of his passions, and it places her by his side, his truest friend, his most faithful counselor, his helpmeet in every worthy and honorable task. It protects her far more effectually than any other system. It cultivates, strengthens, elevates, purifies all her highest endowments, and holds out to her aspirations the most sublime for that future state of existence, where precious rewards are promised to every faithful discharge of duty, even the most humble. But, while conferring on her these priceless blessings, it also enjoins the submission of the wife to the husband, and allots a subordinate position to the whole sex while here on earth. No woman calling herself a Christian, acknowledging her duties as such, can, therefore, consistently deny the obligation of a limited subordination laid upon her by her Lord and His Church.

From these three chief considerations—the great inferiority of physical strength, a very much less and undefined degree of inferiority in intellect, and the salutary teachings of the Christian faith—it follows that, to a limited degree, varying with circumstances, and always to be marked out by sound reason and good feeling, the subordination of woman, as a sex, is inevitable.

This subordination once established, a difference of position, and a consequent difference of duties, follow as a matter of course. There must, of necessity, in such a state of things, be certain duties inalienably connected with the position of man, others inalienably connected with the position of woman. For the one to assume the duties of the other becomes, first, an act of desertion, next, an act of usurpation. For the man to discharge worthily the duties of his own position becomes his highest merit. For the woman to discharge worthily the duties of her own position becomes her highest merit. To be noble the man must be manly. To be noble the woman must be womanly. Independently of the virtues required equally of both sexes, such as truth, uprightness, candor, fidelity, honor, we look in man for somewhat more of wisdom, of vigor, of courage, from natural endowment, combined with enlarged action and experience. In woman we look more especially for greater purity, modesty, patience, grace, sweetness, tenderness, refinement, as the consequences of a finer organization, in a protected and sheltered position. That state of society will always be the most rational, the soundest, the happiest, where each sex conscientiously discharges its own duties, without intruding on those of the other.

It is true that the world has often seen individual women called by the manifest will of Providence to positions of the highest authority, to the thrones of rulers and sovereigns. And many of these women have discharged those duties with great intellectual ability and great success. It is rather the fashion now among literary men to depreciate Queen Elizabeth and her

government. But it is clear that, whatever may have been her errors—and no doubt they were grave—she still appears in the roll of history as one of the best sovereigns not only of her own house, but of all the dynasties of England. Certainly she was in every way a better and a more successful ruler than her own father or her own brother-in-law, and better also than the Stuarts who filled her throne at a later day. Catherine of Russia, though most unworthy as a woman, had a force of intellectual ability quite beyond dispute, and which made itself felt in every department of her government. Isabella I. of Spain gave proof of legislative and executive ability of the very highest order; she was not only one of the purest and noblest, but also, considering the age to which she belonged, and the obstacles in her way, one of the most skillful sovereigns the world has ever seen. Her nature was full of clear intelligence, with the highest moral and physical courage. She was in every way a better ruler than her own husband, to whom she proved nevertheless an admirable wife, acting independently only where clear principle was at stake. The two great errors of her reign, the introduction of the Inquisition and the banishment of the Jews, must be charged to the confessor rather than to the Queen, and these were errors in which her husband was as closely involved as herself. On the other hand, some of the best reforms of her reign originated in her own mind, and were practically carried out under her own close personal supervision. Many other skillful female rulers might be named. And it is not only in civilized life and in Christendom that woman has shown herself wise in governing; even among the wildest savage tribes they have appeared, occasionally, as leaders and rulers. This is a singular fact. It may be proved from the history of this continent, and not only from the early records of Mexico and Cuba and Hayti, but also from the reports of the earliest navigators on our own coast, who here and there make mention incidentally of this or that female chief or sachem. But a fact far more impressive and truly elevating to the sex also appears on authority entirely indisputable. While women are enjoined by the Word of God to refrain from public teaching in the Church, there have been individual women included among the Prophets, speaking under the direct influence of the Most Holy Spirit of God, the highest dignity to which human nature can attain. But all these individual cases, whether political or religious, have been exceptional. The lesson to be learned from them is plain. We gather naturally from these facts, what may be learned also from other sources, that, while the positions of the two sexes are as such distinct, the one a degree superior, the other a degree inferior, the difference between them is limited—it is not impassable in individual cases. The two make up but one species, one body politic and religious. There are many senses besides marriage in which the two are one. It is the right hand and the left, both belonging to one body, moved by common feeling, guided by common reason. The left hand may at times be required to do the work of the right, the right to act as the left. Even in this world there are occasions when the last are first, the first last, without disturbing the general order of things. These exceptional cases temper the general rule, but they can not abrogate that rule as regards the entire sex. Man learns from them not to exaggerate his superiority—a lesson very often needed. And woman learns from them to connect self-respect and dignity with true humility, and never, under any circumstances, to sink into the mere tool and toy of man—a lesson equally important.

Such until the present day has been the general teaching and practice of Christendom, where, under a mild form, and to a limited point, the subordination of woman has been a fact clearly established. But this teaching we are now called upon to forget, this practice we are required to abandon. We have arrived at the days foretold by the Prophet, when "knowledge shall be increased, and many shall run to and fro." The intellectual progress of the race during the last half century has indeed been great. But admiration is not the only feeling of the thoughtful mind when observing this striking advance in intellectual acquirement. We see that man has not yet fully mastered the knowledge he has acquired. He runs to and fro. He rushes from one extreme to the other. How many chapters of modern history, both political and religious, are full of the records of this mental vacillation of our race, of this illogical and absurd tendency to pass from one extreme to the point farthest from it!

An adventurous party among us, weary of the old paths, is now eagerly proclaiming theories and doctrines entirely novel on this important subject. The EMANCIPATION OF WOMAN is the name chosen by its advocates for this movement. They reject the idea of all subordination, even in the mildest form, with utter scorn. They claim for woman absolute social and political equality with man. And they seek to secure these points by conferring on the whole sex the right of the elective franchise, female suffrage being the first step in the unwieldy revolutions they aim at bringing about. These views are no longer confined to a small sect. They challenge our attention at every turn. We meet them in society; we read them in the public prints; we hear of them in grave legislative assemblies, in the Congress of the Republic, in the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain. The time has come when it is necessary that all sensible and conscientious men and women should make up their minds clearly on a subject bearing upon the future condition of the entire race.

There is generally more than one influence at work in all public movements of importance. The motive power in such cases is very seldom simple. So it has been with the question of female suffrage. The abuses inflicted on woman by legislation, the want of sufficient protection for her interests when confided to man, are generally asserted by the advocates of female suffrage as the chief motives for a change in the laws which withhold from her the power of voting. But it is also considered by the friend of the new movement that to withhold the suffrage from half the race is an inconsistency in American politics; that suffrage is an inalienable right, universal in its application; that women are consequently deprived of a great natural right when denied the power of voting. A third reason is also given for this proposed change in our political constitution.

It is asserted that the entire sex would be greatly elevated in intellectual and moral dignity by such a course; and that the effect on the whole race would therefore be most advantageous, as the increased influence of woman in public affairs would purify politics, and elevate the whole tone of political life. Here we have the reason for this movement as advanced by its advocates. These are the points on which they lay the most stress:

FIRST. The abuse of legislative power in man, by oppressing the sex.

SECONDLY. The inalienable natural right of woman to vote; and imperatively so in a country where universal suffrage is a great political principle.

THIRDLY. The elevation of the sex, and the purification of politics through their influence.

Let us consider each of these points separately.

#### FIRST. THE ABUSE OF LEGISLATIVE POWER BY MAN IN THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN.

In some countries of Europe much of wrong is still done to woman, at the present day, by old laws owing their existence to a past state of things, and which have not yet been repealed or modified to suit existing circumstances. But we are writing now to American women, and, instead of the evils existing in the other hemisphere, we are looking at a very different state of society. Let us confine ourselves, therefore, to the subject as it affects ourselves.

To go into all the details which might be drawn together from the statute books of the different States of the Union bearing on this point, and to do them full justice, would require volumes. Such a course is not necessary. The question can be decided with truth and justice on general principles—on generally admitted facts. We admit, then, that in some States—perhaps in all—there may be laws in which the natural and acquired rights of woman have not been fairly considered; that in some cases she has needed more legal protection and more privileges than she has yet received. But while this admission is made, attention is at the same time demanded for a fact inseparably connected with it; namely, the marked and generous liberality which American men have thus far shown in the considerate care and protection they have, as a general rule, given to the interests of women. In no country, whether of ancient or modern times, have women had less to complain of in their treatment by man than in America. This is no rhetorical declamation; it is the simple statement of an undeniable fact. It is a matter of social history. Since the days of early colonial life to the present hour—or, in other words, during the last two hundred and fifty years—such has been the general course of things in this country. The hardest tasks have been taken by man, and a generous tenderness has been shown to women in many of the details of social life, pervading all classes of society, to a degree beyond what is customary even in the most civilized countries of Europe. Taking these two facts together—that certain abuses still exist, that certain laws and regulations need changing and that, as a general rule, American women have thus far been treated by their countrymen with especial consideration, in a legal and in a social sense—the inference becomes perfectly plain. A formidable and very dangerous social revolution is not needed to correct remaining abuses. Any revolution aiming at upsetting the existing relations of the sexes—relations going back to the earliest records and traditions of the race—can not be called less than formidable and dangerous. Let women make full use of the influences already at their command, and all really needed changes may be effected by means both sure and safe—means already thoroughly tried. Let them use all the good sense, all the information, all the eloquence, and, if they please, all the wit, at their command when talking over these abuses in society. Let them state their views, their needs, their demands, in conscientiously written papers. Let them appeal for aid to the best, the wisest, the most respected men of the country, and the result is certain. Choose any one real, existing abuse as a test of the honesty and the liberality of American men toward the women of the country, and we all know before-hand what shall be the result.[1]

{FOOTNOTE by SFC} [1] There is an injustice in the present law of guardianship in the State of New York, which may be named as one of those abuses which need reformation. A woman can not now, in the State of New York, appoint a guardian for her child, even though its father be dead. The authority for appointing a guardian otherwise than by the courts is derived from the Revised statutes, p. 1, title 3, chapter 8, part 2, and that passage gives the power to the father only. The mother is not named. It has been decided in the courts that a mother can not make this appointment—12 Howard's Practical Reports, 532. This is certainly very unjust and very unwise. But let any dozen women of respectability take the matter in hand, and, by the means already at their command, from their own chimney-corners, they can readily procure the insertion of the needful clause. And so with any other real abuse. Men are now ready to listen, and ready to act, when additional legislation is prudently and sensibly asked for by their wives and mothers. How they may act when women stand before them, armed CAP-A-PIE, and prepared to demand legislation at the point of the bayonet, can not yet be known. {END FOOTNOTE}

If husbands, fathers, brothers, are ready any day to shed their heart's blood for our personal defense in the hour of peril, we may feel perfectly assured that they will also protect us, when appealed to, by legislation. When they lay down their arms and refuse to fight for us, it will then be time to ask them to give up legislation also. But until that evil hour arrives let men make the laws, and let women be content to fill worthily, to the very best of their abilities, the noble position which the Heavenly Father has already marked out for them. There is work to be done in that position reaching much higher, going much farther, and penetrating far deeper, than any mere temporary legislation can do. Of that work we shall speak more fully a moment later.

SECONDLY. THE INALIENABLE NATURAL RIGHT OF WOMAN TO VOTE; AND IMPERATIVELY SO IN A COUNTRY WHERE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IS A GREAT POLITICAL PRINCIPLE.

This second proposition of the advocates of female suffrage is of a general character. It does not point to particular abuses, it claims the right of woman to vote as one which she should demand, whether practically needed or not. It is asserted that to disqualify half the race from voting is an abuse entirely inconsistent with the first principles of American politics. The answer to this is plain. The elective franchise is not an end; it is only a means. A good government is indeed an inalienable right. Just so far as the elective franchise will conduce to this great end, to that point it becomes also a right, but no farther. A male suffrage wisely free, including all capable of justly appreciating its importance, and honestly discharging its responsibilities, becomes a great advantage to a nation. But universal suffrage, pushed to its extreme limits, including all men, all women, all minors beyond the years of childhood, would inevitably be fraught with evil. There have been limits to the suffrage of the freest nations. Such limits have been found necessary by all past political experience. In this country, at the present hour, there are restrictions upon the suffrage in every State. Those restrictions vary in character. They are either national, relating to color, political, mental, educational, connected with a property qualification, connected with sex, connected with minority of years, or they are moral in their nature.[2]

(FOOTNOTE by SFC} [2] In connection with this point of moral qualification we venture to ask a question. Why not enlarge the criminal classes from whom the suffrage is now withheld? Why not exclude every man convicted of any degrading legal crime, even petty larceny? And why not exclude from the suffrage all habitual drunkards judicially so declared? These are changes which would do vastly more of good than admitting women to vote. {END FOOTNOTE}

This restriction connected with sex is, in fact, but one of many other restrictions, considered more or less necessary even in a democracy. Manhood suffrage is a very favorite term of the day. But, taken in the plain meaning of those words, such fullness of suffrage has at the present hour no actual existence in any independent nation, or in any extensive province. It does not exist, as we have just seen, even among the men of America. And, owing to the conditions of human life, we may well believe that unrestricted fullness of manhood suffrage never can exist in any great nation for any length of time. In those States of the American Union which approach nearest to a practical manhood suffrage, unnaturalized foreigners, minors, and certain classes of criminals, are excluded from voting. And why so? What is the cause of this exclusion? Here are men by tens of thousands—men of widely different classes and conditions—peremptorily deprived of a privilege asserted to be a positive inalienable right universal in its application. There is manifestly some reason for this apparently contradictory state of things. We know that reason to be the good of society. It is for the good of society that the suffrage is withheld from those classes of men. A certain fitness for the right use of the suffrage is therefore deemed necessary before granting it. A criminal, an unnaturalized foreigner, a minor, have not that fitness; consequently the suffrage is withheld from them. The worthy use of the vote is, then, a qualification not yet entirely overlooked by our legislators. The State has had, thus far, no scruples in withholding the suffrage even from men, whenever it has believed that the grant would prove injurious to the nation.

Here we have the whole question clearly defined. The good of society is the true object of all human government. To this principle suffrage itself is subordinate. It can never be more than a means looking to the attainment of good government, and not necessarily its corner-stone. Just so far is it wise and right. Move one step beyond that point, and instead of a benefit the suffrage may become a cruel injury. The governing power of our own country—the most free of all great nations—practically proclaims that it has no right to bestow the suffrage wherever its effects are likely to become injurious to the whole nation, by allotting different restrictions to the suffrage in every State of the Union. The right of suffrage is, therefore, most clearly not an absolutely inalienable right universal in its application. It has its limits. These limits are marked out by plain

justice and common-sense. Women have thus far been excluded from the suffrage precisely on the same principles—from the conviction that to grant them this particular privilege would, in different ways, and especially by withdrawing them from higher and more urgent duties, and allotting to them other duties for which they are not so well fitted, become injurious to the nation, and, we add, ultimately injurious to themselves, also, as part of the nation. If it can be proved that this conviction is sound and just, founded on truth, the assumed inalienable right of suffrage, of which we have been hearing so much lately, vanishes into the "baseless fabric of a vision." If the right were indeed inalienable, it should be granted, without regard to consequences, as an act of abstract justice. But, happily for us, none but the very wildest theorists are prepared to take this view of the question of suffrage. The advocates of female suffrage must, therefore, abandon the claim of inalienable right. Such a claim can not logically be maintained for one moment in the face of existing facts. We proceed to the third point.

THIRDLY. THE ELEVATION OF THE ENTIRE SEX, THE GENERAL PURIFICATION OF POLITICS THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN, AND THE CONSEQUENT ADVANCE OF THE WHOLE RACE. Such, we are told, must be the inevitable results of what is called the emancipation of woman, the entire independence of woman through the suffrage.

Here we find ourselves in a peculiar position. While considering the previous points of this question we have been guided by positive facts, clearly indisputable in their character. Actual, practical experience, with the manifold teachings at her command, has come to our aid. But we are now called upon, by the advocates of this novel doctrine, to change our course entirely. We are under orders to sail out into unknown seas, beneath skies unfamiliar, with small light from the stars, without chart, without pilot, the port to which we are bound being one as yet unvisited by mortal man—or woman! Heavy mist, and dark cloud, and threatening storm appear to us brooding over that doubtful sea. But something of prophetic vision is required of us. We are told that all perils which seem to threaten the first stages of our course are entirely illusive—that they will vanish as we approach—that we shall soon arrive in halcyon waters, and regions where wisdom, peace, and purity reign supreme. If we cautiously inquire after some assurance of such results, we are told that to those sailing under the flag of progress triumph is inevitable, failure is impossible; and that many of the direst evils hitherto known on earth must vanish at the touch of the talisman in the hand of woman—and that talisman is the vote.

Now, to speak frankly—and being as yet untrammelled by political aspirations, we fearlessly do so—as regards this flag of progress, we know it to be a very popular bit of bunting; but to the eye of common-sense it is grievously lacking in consistency. The flag of our country means something positive. We all love it; we all honor it. It represents to us the grand ideas by which the nation lives. It is the symbol of constitutional government, of law and order, of union, of a liberty which is not license. It is to us the symbol of all that may be great and good and noble in the Christian republic. But this vaunted flag of progress, so alluring to many restless minds, is vague in its colors, unstable, too often illusive, in web and woof. Many of its most prominent standard-bearers are clad in the motley garb of theorists. Their flag may be seen wandering to and fro, hither and thither, up and down, swayed by every breath of popular caprice; so it move to the mere cry of "Progress!" its followers are content. To-day, in the hands of the skeptical philosopher, it assaults the heavens. Tomorrow it may: float over the mire of Mormonism, or depths still more vile. It was under the flag of progress that, in the legislative halls of France, the name of the Holy Lord God of Hosts, "who inhabiteth eternity," was legally blasphemed. It was under the flag of progress that, on the 10th of November, 1793, Therese Momoro, Goddess of Reason, and wife of the printer Momoro, was borne in triumph, by throngs of worshippers, through the streets of Paris, and enthroned in the house of God.

Beyond all doubt, there is now, as there ever has been, an onward progress toward truth on earth. But that true progress is seldom rapid, excepting perhaps in the final stages of some particular movement. It is, indeed, often so slow, so gradual, as to be imperceptible at the moment to common observation. It is often silent, wonderful, mysterious, sublime. It is the grand movement toward the Divine Will, working out all things for eventual good. In looking back, there are for every generation way-marks by which the course of that progress may be traced. In looking forward no mortal eye can foresee its immediate course. The ultimate end we know, but the next step we can not foretell. The mere temporary cry of progress from human lips has often been raised in direct opposition to the true course of that grand, mysterious movement. It is like the roar of the rapids in the midst of the majestic stream, which, in the end, shall yield their own foaming waters to the calm current moving onward to the sea. We ask, then, for something higher, safer, more sure, to guide us than the mere popular cry of "Progress!" We dare not blindly follow that cry, nor yield thoughtless allegiance to every flag it upholds.

Then, again, as regards that talisman, the vote, we have but one answer to make. We do not believe in magic. We have a very firm and unchangeable faith in free institutions, founded on just principles. We entirely believe that a republican form of government in a Christian country may be the highest, the noblest, and the happiest that the world has yet seen. Still, we do not believe in magic. And we do not believe in idolatry. We Americans are just as much given to idolatry as any other people. Our idols may differ from those of other nations; but they are, none the less, still idols. And it strikes the writer that the ballot-box is rapidly becoming an object of idolatry with us. Is it not so? From the vote alone we expect all things good. From the vote alone we expect protection against all things evil. Of the vote Americans can never have too much—of the

vote they can never have enough. The vote is expected by its very touch, suddenly and instantaneously, to produce miraculous changes; it is expected to make the foolish wise, the ignorant knowing, the weak strong, the fraudulent honest. It is expected to turn dross into gold. It is held to be the great educator, not only as regards races, and under the influence of time, which is in a measure true, but as regards individuals and classes of men, and that in the twinkling of an eye, with magical rapidity. Were this theory practically sound, the vote would really prove a talisman. In that case we should give ourselves no rest until the vote were instantly placed in the hands of every Chinaman landing in California, and of every Indian roving over the plains. But, in opposition to this theory, what is the testimony of positive facts known to us all? Are all voters wise? Are all voters honest? Are all voters enlightened? Are all voters true to their high responsibilities? Are all voters faithful servants of their country? Is it entirely true that the vote has necessarily and really these inherent magical powers of rapid education for individuals and for classes of men, fitting them, in default of other qualifications, for the high responsibilities of suffrage? Alas! we know only too well that when a man is not already honest and just and wise and enlightened, the vote he holds can not make him so. We know that if he is dishonest, he will sell his vote; if he is dull and ignorant, he is misled, for selfish purposes of their own, by designing men. As regards man, at least, the vote can be too easily proved to be no talisman. It is very clear that for man the ballot-box needs to be closely guarded on one side by common-sense, on the other by honesty. A man must be endowed with a certain amount of education and of principle, before he receives the vote, to fit him for a worthy use of it. And if the vote be really no infallible talisman for man, why should we expect it to work magical wonders in the hands of woman?

But let us drop the play of metaphor, appropriate though it be when facing the visions of political theorists. Let us look earnestly and clearly at the positive facts before us. We are gravely told that to grant the suffrage to woman would be a step inevitably beneficial and elevating to the whole sex, and, through their influence, to the entire race, and that, on this ground alone, the proposed change in the constitution should be made. Here, so far at least as the concluding proposition goes, we must all agree. If it can be clearly proved that this particular change in our institutions is one so fraught with blessings, we are bound to make it at every cost. The true elevation of the whole race: that is what we are all longing for, praying for. And is it indeed true that this grand work can effectually be brought about by the one step we are now urged to take? What says actual experience on this point? The whole history of mankind shows clearly that, as yet, no one legislative act has ever accomplished half of what is claimed by the advocates of woman's suffrage as the inevitable result of the change they propose. No one legislative act has ever been so widely comprehensive in its results for good as they declare that this act shall be. No one legislative act has ever raised the entire race even within sight of the point of elevation predicted by the champions of what is called the emancipation of woman. Hear them speak for themselves: "It is hardly possible, with our present experience, to raise our imaginations to the conception of so great a change for the better as would be made by its removal"—the removal of the principle of the subordination of the wife to the husband, and the establishment of the entire independence of women, to be obtained by female suffrage. These are not the words of some excited woman making a speech at a public meeting. The quotation is from the writings of Mr. Stuart Mill. The subordination of the wife to the husband is declared by Mr. Mill to be "the citadel of the enemy." Storm the citadel, proclaim the entire independence of the wife, and our feeble imaginations, we are told, are utterly incapable of conceiving the glorious future of the race consequent upon this one step. This is a very daring assertion. It is so bold, indeed, as to require something of positive proof ere we can yield to it our implicit belief. The citadel we are urged to storm was built by the hand of God. The flag waving over that citadel is the flag of the Cross. When the Creator made one entire sex so much more feeble in physical powers than the other, a degree of subordination on the part of the weaker sex became inevitable, unless it were counteracted by increase of mental ability, strengthened by special precept. But the mental ability, so far as there is a difference, and the precept, are both on the side of the stronger sex. The whole past history of the race coincides so clearly with these facts that we should suppose that even those who are little under the influence of Christian faith might pause ere they attacked that citadel. Common-sense might teach them something of caution, something of humility, when running counter to the whole past experience of the race. As for those who have a living belief in the doctrines of Christianity, when they find that revealed religion, from the first of the Prophets to the last of the Apostles, allots a subordinate position to the wife, they are compelled to believe Moses and St. Paul in the right, and the philosophers of the present day, whether male or female, in the wrong. To speak frankly, the excessive boldness of these new theories, the incalculable and inconceivable benefits promised us from this revolution from the natural condition of things in Christendom—and throughout the world indeed—would lead us to suspicion. Guides who appeal to the imagination when discussing practical questions are not generally considered the safest. And the champions of female suffrage are necessarily compelled to take this course. They have no positive foundation to rest on. Mr. Stuart Mill has said in Parliament, in connection with this subject, that "the tyranny of established custom has entirely passed away." Nothing can be more true than this assertion. As a rule, the past is now looked upon with doubt, with suspicion, often with a certain sort of contempt, very far from being always consistent with sound reason. The tyranny of the present day—and it may be just as much a tyranny as the other—is radically opposite in character. It is the tyranny of novelty to which we are most exposed at present. The dangers lie chiefly in that direction. There will be little to fear from the old until the hour of reaction arrives, as it inevitably must, if the human mind be strained too far in a new direction. At present the more startling an assertion, the farther it wanders from all past experience, the greater are its chances of attracting attention, of gaining

adherents, of achieving at least a partial and temporary success. In the age and in the country which has seen the development of Mormonism as a successful religious, social, and political system, nothing should surprise us. Such is the restlessness of human nature that it will often, from mere weak hankering after change, hug to its bosom the wildest theories, and yield them a temporary allegiance.

Let us suppose that to-day the proposed revolution were effected; all women, without restriction, even the most vile, would be summoned to vote in accordance with their favorite theory of inalienable right. That class of women, and other degraded classes of the ignorant and unprincipled, will always be ready to sell their votes many times over—to either party, to both parties, to the highest bidder, in short. They will sell their vote much more readily than the lowest classes of men now do. They will hold it with greater levity. They will trifle with it. They will sell their vote any day for a yard of ribbon or a tinsel brooch—unless they are offered two yards of ribbon or two brooches. They will vote over again every hour of every election day, by cunning disguises and trickery. And thus, so far as women are concerned, the most degraded element in society will, in fact, represent the whole sex. Nay, they will probably not unfrequently command the elections, as three colored women are said once to have done in New Jersey. A hundred honest and intelligent women can have but one vote each, and at least fifty of these will generally stay at home. If, which God forbid, it actually comes to female voting, a very small proportion of the sex will, at common elections, appear at the polls. Avocations more urgent, more natural to them, and in which they are more deeply interested, will keep them away. The degraded women will be there by the scores, as tools of men, enjoying both the importance of the hour, the fun, and THE PAY. Fifty women, known to be thieves and prostitutes, will hold, at a moderate calculation, say two hundred votes. And, as women form the majority of the resident population in some States, that wretched element of society will, in fact, govern those States, or those who bribe them will do so. Massachusetts, very favorable to female suffrage now, will probably come round to the opinion of New Jersey in former days. Great will be the consumption of cheap ribbons, and laces, and artificial flowers, and feathers, and tinsel jewelry, in every town and village about election time, after emancipation is achieved. We are compelled to believe so, judging from our knowledge of human nature, and of the use already made of bribery at many elections. The demagogues will be more powerful than ever. Their work will be made easy for them. It seems, indeed, probable that under the new era our great elections shall become a sort of grand national gift concerns, of which the most active demagogues of all parties will be the managers. Not that women are more mercenary, or more unprincipled than men. God forbid! That would be saying too much. We entirely believe the reverse to be true. But the great mass of women can never be made to take a deep, a sincere, a discriminating, a lasting interest in the thousand political questions ever arising to be settled by the vote. They very soon weary of such questions. On great occasions they can work themselves up to a state of frenzied excitement over some one political question. At such times they can parade a degree of unreasoning prejudice, of passionate hatred, of blind fury, even beyond what man can boast of. But, in their natural condition, in everyday life, they do not take instinctively to politics as men do. Men are born politicians; just as they are born masons, and carpenters, and soldiers, and sailors. Not so women. Their thoughts and feelings are given to other matters. The current of their chosen avocations runs in another channel than that of politics—a channel generally quite out of sight of politics; it is an effort for them to turn from one to the other. With men, on the contrary, politics, either directly or indirectly, are closely, palpably, inevitably blended with their regular work in life. They give their attention unconsciously, spontaneously; to politics. Look at a family of children, half boys, half girls; the boys take instinctively to whips and guns and balls and bats and horses, to fighting and wrestling and riding; the girls fondle their dolls, beg for a needle and thread, play at housekeeping, at giving tea-parties, at nursing the sick baby, at teaching school. That difference lasts through life. Give your son, as he grows up, a gun and a vote; he will delight in both. Give your daughter, as she grows up, a gun and a vote, and, unless she be an exceptional woman, she will make a really good use of neither. Your son may be dull; but he will make a good soldier, and a very tolerable voter. Your daughter may be very clever; but she would certainly run away on the battle-held, and very probably draw a caricature on the election ticket. There is the making of an admirable wife and mother, and a valuable member of society, in that clever young woman. She is highly intelligent, thoroughly well educated, reads Greek and Latin, and has a wider range of knowledge and thought than ninety-nine in a hundred of the voters in the same district; but there is nothing of the politician in her nature. She would rather any day read a fine poem than the best political speech of the hour. What she does know of politics reaches her through that dull but worthy brother of hers. It is only occasionally that we meet women with an inherent bias for politics; and those are not, as a rule, the highest type of the sex—it is only occasionally that they are so. The interest most women feel in politics is secondary, factitious, engrafted on them by the men nearest to them. Women are not abortive men; they are a distinct creation. The eye and the ear, though both belonging to the same body, are each, in a certain sense, a distinct creation. A body endowed with four ears might hear remarkably well; but without eyes it would be of little use in the world. A body with four eyes would have a fourfold power of vision, and would consequently become nearly as sharp-sighted as a spider; but without hearing its powers of sight would avail little. In both cases, half the functions of the human being, whether physical or mental, would be very imperfectly performed. Thus it is with men and women; each has a distinct position to fill in the great social body, and is especially qualified for it. These distinct positions are each highly important. And it is reasonable to believe that, by filling their own peculiar position thoroughly well, women can best serve their Creator, their fellow-creatures, and themselves. No doubt you may, if you choose, by especial education from childhood upward, make your girls very respectable politicians, as much so as the majority of

your sons. But in that case you must give up your womanly daughters—you must be content with manly daughters. This essential difference between the sexes is a very striking fact; yet the advocates of female suffrage constantly lose sight of it; they talk and write as if it had no existence. It is not lack of intellect on the part of women, but difference of intellect, or rather a difference of organization and affinities giving a different bias to the intellect, which is the cause of their distinct mental character as a sex. And, owing to this essential difference, the great majority of women are naturally disinclined to politics, and partially unfitted for action in that field.

## **FEMALE SUFFRAGE.**

### **A LETTER TO THE CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF AMERICA.**

#### **Part II.**

LET us now look for a moment at the actual condition of women in America, in connection with the predicted elevation. We are told they are to be elevated by the suffrage—and that by hanging on to the election tickets in the hands of their wives, the men are to be elevated with them. What, therefore, is the ground women now occupy, and from whence they are to soar upward on the paper wings of the ballot? The principal facts connected with that position are self-evident; there is nothing vague or uncertain here; we have but to look about us and the question is answered. We already know, for instance, from daily observation and actual experience, that, as a general rule, the kindness and consideration of American men have been great, both in public and in private life. We know that in American society women have been respected, they have been favored, they have been protected, they have been beloved. There has been a readiness to listen to their requests, to redress grievances, to make changes whenever these have become necessary or advisable. Such, until very recently, has been the general current of public feeling, the general tendency of public action, in America. If there appear to-day occasional symptoms of a change in the tone of men on this point, it is to be attributed to the agitation of the very question we are now discussing. Whenever women make ill-judged, unnatural, extravagant demands, they must prepare to lose ground. Yes, even where the particular points in dispute are conceded to their reiterated importunity, they must still eventually lower their general standing and consideration by every false step. There are occasions where victory is more really perilous than a timely defeat; a temporary triumph may lead to ground which the victors can not permanently hold to their own true and lasting advantage. On the other hand, every just and judicious demand women may now make with the certainty of successful results. This is, indeed, the great fact which especially contributes to render the birthright of American women a favorable one. If the men of the country are already disposed to redress existing grievances, where women are concerned, as we know them to be, and if they are also ready, as we know them to be, to forward all needful future development of true womanly action, what more, pray, can we reasonably ask of them? Where lies this dim necessity of thrusting upon women the burdens of the suffrage? And why should the entire nation be thrown into the perilous convulsions of a revolution more truly formidable than any yet attempted on earth? Bear in mind that this is a revolution which, if successful in all its aims, can scarcely fail to sunder the family roof-tree, and to uproot the family hearth-stone. It is the avowed determination of many of its champions that it shall do so; while with another class of its leaders, to weaken and undermine the authority of the Christian faith in the household is an object if not frankly avowed yet scarcely concealed. The great majority of the women enlisted in this movement—many of them, it is needless to say, very worthy persons as individuals—are little aware of all the perils into which some of their most zealous male allies would lead them. Degradation for the sex, and not true and lasting elevation, appear to most of us likely to be the end to which this movement must necessarily tend, unless it be checked by the latent good sense, the true wisdom, and the religious principle of women themselves, aroused, at length, to protest, to resist. If we are called upon for proof of the assertion, that American men are already prepared to redress actual grievances, we find that proof in their course at the present moment. Observe the patience with which our legislative bodies are now considering the petitions of a clamorous minority demanding the redress of a fictitious grievance—a minority demanding a political position which the majority of their sex still utterly reject—a position repugnant to the habits, the feelings, the tastes, and the principles of that majority. If men are willing to give their attention to these querulous demands of a small minority of our sex, how much more surely may we rely on their sympathy, and their efficient support, when some measure in which the interests of the whole sex are clearly involved shall be brought before them by all their wives and mothers?

And again: they are not only already prepared to redress grievances, but also to forward all needed development of true womanly action. Take, in proof of this, assertion, the subject of education. This is, beyond all doubt the vital question of the age, embracing within its limits all others. Education is of far more importance than the suffrage, which is eventually subject to it, controlled by it. This is, indeed, a question altogether too grave, too comprehensive, and too complicated in some of its bearings to be more than briefly alluded to here. But let us consider education for a moment as the mere acquirement of intellectual knowledge. This is but one of its phases, and that one not the most important; but such is the popular, though very inadequate, idea of the subject in America. Observe how much has already been done in this sense for the instruction of the woman of our country. In the common district schools, and even in the high schools of the larger towns, the same facilities are generally offered to both sexes; in the public schools brother and sister have, as a rule, the same books and the same teachers. And we may go much further and say that every woman in the country may already—IF SHE IS DETERMINED TO DO SO—obtain very much the same intellectual instruction which her own brother receives. If that education is a highly advanced one she will, no doubt, have some special difficulties to contend against; but those difficulties are not insurmountable. The doors of most colleges and universities are closed, it is true, against women, and we can not doubt that this course is taken for sound reasons, pointed out by good sense and true sagacity. It is impossible not to believe that between the ages of fifteen and five-and-twenty young men and young women will carry on their intellectual training far more thoroughly and successfully apart than thrown into the same classes. At that age of vivid impressions and awakening passions, the two sexes are sufficiently thrown together in family life and in general society for all purposes of mutual influence and improvement. Let them chat, walk, sing, dance together, at that period of their lives; but if you wish to make them good scholars, let them study apart. Let their loves and jealousies be carried on elsewhere than in the college halls. But already female colleges, exclusively adapted to young women, are talked of—nay, here and there one or two such colleges now exist. There is nothing in which American men more delight, nothing more congenial to their usual modes of thought and action, than to advance the intellectual instruction of the whole nation, daughters as well as sons. We may rest assured that they will not fail to grant all needful development in this direction. One female college, of the very highest intellectual standard, would probably be found sufficient for a population of some millions. The number of women desiring a full college education will always, for many different reasons, be much smaller than the number of male students. But there is no good reason why such colleges, when found desirable, should not enter into our future American civilization. Individual American women may yet, by these means, make high progress in science, and render good service to the country and the race. Every branch of study which may be carried on thoroughly and successfully, without impairing womanly modesty of mind and manner, should be so far opened to the sex as to allow those individuals to whom Providence has given the ability for deep research to carry them to the farthest point needed. But as regards those studies which are intended to open the way to professions essentially bold and masculine in character, we do not see how it is within the bounds of possibility for young women to move onward in that direction without losing some of their most precious womanly prerogatives—without, in short, unsexing themselves.

The really critical point with regard to the present position of women in America is the question of work and wages. Here the pocket of man is touched. And the pocket is the most sensitive point with many men, not only in America, but all the world over. There can be no doubt whatever that women are now driven away from certain occupations, to which they are well adapted, by the selfishness of some men. And in many departments where they are day-laborers for commercial firms they are inadequately paid, and compelled to provide food, lodging, fuel, and light out of scanty wages. Yes, we have here one of the few real grievances of which American women have a just right to complain. But even here—even where the pocket is directly touched, we still believe that women may obtain full justice in the end, by pursuing the right course. Only let the reality of the grievance be clearly proved, and redress will follow, ere long. Providence has the power of bringing good out of evil; and therefore we believe that the movement now going on will here, at least, show some lasting results for good. The "Song of the Shirt" shall, we trust, ere long become an obsolete lay in our country. Our women, twenty years hence, shall be better paid in some of their old fields of labor; and new openings, appropriate to their abilities, mental and physical, shall also be made for them. And here they are much more likely to succeed without the suffrage than with it. It is not by general law-making that they can better themselves in these particulars. Individual fitness for this or that branch of work is what is required for success. And if, by thorough preparation, women can discharge this or that task, not essentially masculine in its requirements, as well as men, they may rest assured that in the end their wages will be the same as those of their fathers and brothers in the same field of work.

And how is it with our homes—how fares it with American women in the family circle? To all right-minded women the duties connected with home are most imperative, most precious, most blessed of all, partaking as they do of the spirit of religious duty. To women this class of duties is by choice, and by necessity, much more absorbing than it is to men. It is the especial field of activity to which Providence has called them; for which their Maker has qualified them by peculiar adaptation of body and mind. To the great majority of American women these duties are especially absorbing, owing to the difficulty of procuring paid subordinates, well qualified for the tasks they undertake. The task of positive labor, and the task of close supervision, are both particularly burdensome to American wives and mothers. Thus far, or at least until very recently, those duties of wife and mother have been generally performed conscientiously. The heart of every worthy American woman is in her home. That home, with its manifold interests, is

especially under her government. The good order, the convenience, the comfort, the pleasantness, the whole economy of the house, in short, depend in a very great measure on her. The food of the family is prepared by her, either directly or by close supervision. The clothing of the family passes through her hands or under her eye. The health of the family is included within the same tender, watchful, loving oversight. The education of the children is chiefly directed by her—in many families almost exclusively so. Whether for evil or for good, by careless neglect or by patient, thoughtful, prayerful guidance, she marks out their future course. This is even too much the case. American fathers love their children fondly; no fathers more affectionate than they are; they pet their children; they toil ceaselessly for them; but their education they leave almost entirely to the mother. It may be said, with perfect truth, that in the great majority of American families the educational influences come chiefly from the mother; they are tacitly made over to her as a matter of course. The father has too often very little to do with them. His work lies abroad, in the world of business or politics, where all his time and attention are fully absorbed. In this way the American mother rules the very heart of her family. If at all worthy she has great influence with her husband; she has great influence over her daughters; and as regards her sons, there are too many cases in which hers is the only influence for good to which they yield. Is there so little of true elevation and dignity in this position that American women should be in such hot haste to abandon it for a position as yet wholly untried, entirely theoretical and visionary?

It will be said that all women are not married, that all wives are not mothers, that there are childless widows and many single women in the country. Quite true, but in a rapid sketch one looks at the chief features only; and home life, with its varied duties, is, of course, the principal point in every Christian country. The picture is essentially correct, without touching on lesser details. We pause here to observe also that almost every single woman has a home somewhere. She makes a home for herself, or she is ingrafted on the home of others, and wherever she may be—even in that wretched kind of existence, boarding-house life—she may, if she choose, carry something of the home spirit with her. In fact, every true woman instinctively does so, whatever be the roof that covers her head. She thinks for others, she plans for others, she serves others, she loves and cherishes others, she unconsciously throws something of the web of home feeling and home action over those near her, and over the dwelling she inhabits. She carries the spirit of home and its duties into the niche allotted to her—a niche with which she is generally far more contented than the world at large believes—a niche which is never so narrow but that it provides abundant material for varied work—often very pleasant work too. Let it be understood, once for all, that the champions of widows and single women are very much given to talking and writing absurdly on this point. Their premises are often wholly false. They often fancy discontent and disappointment and inaction where those elements have no existence. Certainly it is not in the least worth while to risk a tremendous social revolution in behalf of this minority of the sex. Every widow and single woman can, if she choose, already find abundance of the most noble occupation for heart, mind, body, and soul. Carry the vote into her niche, she certainly will be none the happier or more truly respectable for that bit of paper. It is also an error to suppose that among the claimants for suffrage single women are the most numerous or the most clamorous. The great majority of the leaders in this movement appear to be married women.

A word more on the subject of home life, as one in which the interests of the whole sex are most closely involved. It is clear that those interests are manifold, highly important to the welfare of the race, unceasing in their recurrence, urgent and imperative in their nature, requiring for their successful development such devotion of time, labor, strength, thought, feeling, that they must necessarily leave but little leisure to the person who faithfully discharges them. The comfort, health, peace, temper, recreation, general welfare, intellectual, moral, and religious training of a family make up, indeed, a charge of the very highest dignity, and one which must tax to the utmost every faculty of the individual to whom it is intrusted. The commander of a regiment at the head of his men, the member of Congress in his seat, the judge on his bench, scarcely holds a position so important, so truly honorable, as that of the intelligent, devoted, faithful American wife and mother, wisely governing her household. And what are the interests of the merchant, the manufacturer, the banker, the broker, the speculator, the selfish politician, when compared with those confided to the Christian wife and mother? They are too often simply contemptible—a wretched, feverish, maddening struggle to pile up lucre, which is any thing but clean. Where is the superior merit of such a life, that we should hanker after it, when placed beside that of the loving, unselfish, Christian wife and mother—the wife, standing at her husband's side, to cheer, to aid, to strengthen, to console, to counsel, amidst the trials of life; the mother, patiently, painfully, and prayerfully cultivating every higher faculty of her children for worthy action through time and eternity? Which of these positions has the most of true elevation connected with it?

And then, again, let us look at the present position of American women in society. In its best aspects social life may be said to be the natural outgrowth of the Christian home. It is something far better than the world, than Vanity Fair, than the Court of Mammon, where all selfish passions meet and parade in deceptive masquerade. It is the selfish element in human nature which pervades what we call the world; self-indulgence, enjoyment, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, receive, in that arena, their full development. Society, on the contrary, in its highest meaning, becomes the practical development of the second great commandment, loving and serving our neighbor. In every Christian country there are many individuals, especially among women, to whom social life practically bears that meaning. Public worship itself is a social act, the highest of all, blending in one the spirit of the two great commandments—the love of God

and the love of man. And whatever of social action or social enjoyment is not inconsistent with those two great commandments becomes the Christian's heritage, makes a part, more or less important, of his education, enters into the great stream of the better civilization. And it is here that we reach what may be called the more public duties of woman. From all duties entirely public she is now, or she may be if she choose, relieved by man. These more public duties of hers are still but the outgrowth of her home life, and more or less closely interwoven with it. They are very important, never to be neglected with impunity. The really unsocial woman is in great danger of becoming also un-Christian. Every friend crossing the threshold brings social life into the home. The genial smile, the kindly greeting, the cheering word, all these and a thousand other gracious impulses, are, of course, but the first instinctive movements of the social feeling. And from these we move onward over a vast field of action, to the very farthest point reached by the higher charities of Christianity. There can be no doubt that the charm, the grace, and the happy cheerfulness of society are chiefly due to women; and it is also true that the whole unwritten common-law of society is, in a great measure, under their control. The world is constantly encroaching here, enervating and corrupting social life. To oppose wisely, skillfully, and effectually these treacherous encroachments, these alluring temptations, is one of the most difficult tasks possible. To contribute her full share toward purifying and brightening the social atmosphere about her, in accordance with the spirit of true Christian civilization, such is one great and essential part of woman's work in life. It is a work more especially her own. Man, without his helpmeet, can do but little here. His faculties are absorbed by other tasks, not more important, but more engrossing and essentially different. The finer tact, the more graceful manner, the quicker wit, the more tender conscience, are all needed here. Every woman in the country has her own share of this work to do. Each individual woman is responsible for the right use of all her own social influences, whether for good or for evil.

To keep up the standard of female purity becomes emphatically one of the most stringent duties of every Christian woman. For her own sake, for the sake of all she loves, for the sake of her country, for the service of Christ and His Church, she is bound to uphold this standard at a high point—a point entirely above suspicion. This task is of importance incalculable. But, owing to the frivolity of some women, and the very loose ideas of many men, it is no easy task. Undoubtedly, the very great majority of women are born modest at heart. Their nature is by many degrees less coarse than that of man. And their conscience is more tender. But there is one temptation to which they too often yield. With them the great dangers are vanity and the thirst for admiration, which often become a sort of diseased excitement—what drinking or gambling is to men. Here is the weak point. Yielding chiefly to this temptation, scores of women are falling every day. Vanity leads them to wear the extravagant, the flashy, the immodest, the unhealthy dress, to dance the immodest dance, to adopt the alluring manner, to carry flirting to extremes. Vanity leads them, in short, to forget true self-respect, to enjoy the very doubtful compliment of a miserably cheap admiration. They become impatient of the least appearance of neglect or indifference, they become eager in pursuit of attention, while men always attribute that pursuit to motives of the coarsest kind. It is generally vanity alone which leads a married woman to receive the first disgraceful flattery of dissolute men. Probably nine out of ten of those American women who have trifled with honor and reputation, whose names are spoken with the sneer of contempt, have been led on, step by step, in the path of sin by vanity as the chief motive. Where one woman falls from low and coarse passions, a hundred fall from sheer levity and the love of admiration.

To counteract this fatal influence young women must be taught to respect themselves, to be on their guard against vanity and its enticements, to cherish personal modesty in every way. The married woman who is quietly working by example or by precept among the young girls nearest to her, seeking to cherish and foster among them this vital principle of pure personal modesty in dress, in language, in reading, in tone of voice, in countenance, in manner—the natural outward expression of true modesty of heart—is doing far more for her country than if she were to mount the rostrum to-morrow and make a political speech eloquent as any of Webster's.

Sensible women may always have a good measure of political influence of the right sort, if they choose. And it is in one sense a duty on their part to claim this influence, and to exert it, but always in the true womanly way. The influence of good sense, of a sound judgment, of good feeling may always be theirs. Let us see that we preserve this influence, and that we use it wisely. But let us cherish our happy immunities as women by keeping aloof from all public personal action in the political field. There is much higher work for us to do. Our time, our thoughts, our efforts may be given to labors far more important than any mere temporary electing, or law-making, passed today, annulled to-morrow, in obedience to the fickle spirit of party politics.

THAT WORK IS TO PROMOTE BY ALL WORTHY MEANS THE MORAL CIVILIZATION OF THE COUNTRY.

Toward this work legislation, the mere enacting of laws, can do but little. We have all heard of the shrewd mind who considered the songs of a people as more important than their laws. The moral condition of a nation is subject to many different influences—of these the statute book is but one, and that not the most important. No mere skeleton of political constitution can, of itself, produce moral health and strength. It is the living heart within which does the work. And over that heart women have very great influence. The home is the cradle of the nation. A sound home

education is the most important of all moral influences. In the very powerful influences which affection gives them over the home, by teaching childhood, by guiding youth, over the men of their family, women have noble means for working good, not only to their own households, not only to the social circle about them, but to the nation at large. All these influences they can bring into action far more effectually by adhering closely to that position which is not only natural to them, but also plainly allotted to them by the revealed Word of God. In no position of their own devising can they do that work half so well.

Political and social corruption are clearly the great evils to be dreaded for our country. We have already gone far enough in the path of universal manhood suffrage to feel convinced that no mere enlargement of the suffrage has power to save us from those evils. During half a century we have been moving nearer and nearer to a suffrage all but universal, and we have, during the same period, been growing more corrupt. The undisguised frauds at elections, the open accusations of bribery in legislative assemblies, the accusations of corruption connected with still higher offices—of these we read daily in the public prints. And these accusations are not disproved. They are generally believed. It is clear, therefore, that something more effectual than universal manhood suffrage is needed to stem the torrent. And it is simply ridiculous to suppose that womanhood suffrage can effect the same task. Who can believe that where men, in their own natural field, have partially failed to preserve a healthful political atmosphere, an honest political practice, that women, so much less experienced, physically so much more feeble, so excitable, so liable to be misled by fancy, by feeling, are likely, in a position foreign to their nature, not only to stand upright themselves, but, like Atlas of old, to bear the weight of the whole political world on their shoulders—like Hercules, to cleanse the Augean stables of the political coursers—to do, in short, all that man has failed to do? No; it is, alas! only too clear that something more than the ballot-box, whether in male or female hands, is needed here. And it is the same in social life. The public prints, under a free press, must always hold up a tolerably faithful mirror to the society about them. The picture it displays is no better in social life than in political life. We say the mirror is tolerably faithful, since there are heights of virtue and depths of sin alike unreflected by the daily press. The very purest and the very foulest elements of earthly existence are left out of the picture. But the general view can scarcely fail to be tolerably correct. Take, then, the sketch of social life as it appears in some half dozen of the most popular prints from week to week. You will be sure to find the better features grievously blended with others fearfully distorted by evil. There are blots black as pitch in that picture. There are forms, more fiend-like than human, photographed on those sheets of paper. Crimes of worse than brutal violence, savage cruelty, crimes of treachery and cowardly cunning and conspiracy, breach of trust, tyrannical extortion, groveling intemperance, sensuality gross and shameless—the heart sickens at the record of a week's crime! It is a record from which the Christian woman often turns aside appalled. Human nature can read no lessons of humility more powerful than those contained in the newspapers of the day. They preach what may be called home truths with most tremendous force. From this record of daily crime it is only too clear that universal suffrage has had no power to purify the society in which we live. If no worse, we can not claim to be better than other nations, under a different political rule.

This admission becomes the more painful when we reflect that in America this full freedom of fundamental institutions, this relief from all needless shackles, is combined with a well-developed system of intellectual education. We are an absolutely free nation. We are, on the whole, and to a certain point, intellectually, an educated nation. Yet vice and crime exist among us to an extent that is utterly disgraceful. It is evident, therefore, that universal manhood suffrage, even when combined with general education, is still insufficient for the task of purifying either social or political life. The theoretical infidel philosopher may wonder at this fact. Not so the Christian. Great intellectual activity, and the abuse of that power for evil purposes, are a spectacle only too common in this world. Look at the present condition of the most civilized nations. Of all generations that have lived on earth, our own is assuredly the most enlightened, in an intellectual sense; mental culture has never been so generally diffused as it is to-day, nor has it ever achieved so many conquests as within the last half century; and yet mark how comparatively little has this wonderful intellectual progress accomplished in the noble work of improving the moral condition of the most enlightened countries. To the mind humbled by Christian doctrine, living in the light of a holy faith, these facts, though unspeakably painful, can not cause surprise. We are prepared for them. We have already learned that no mere legislative enactment and no mere intellectual training can suffice to purify the human heart thoroughly. An element much more powerful than mental culture is needed for that great work. For this work light from on high is sent. A thorough MORAL EDUCATION is required, and the highest form of that education can be reached in one way only—by walking in the plain path of obedience to the will of the Creator, as revealed in Holy Scripture. We must turn, not to Plato and Aristotle, but to inspired Prophet and Apostle. We must open our hearts to the spirit of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. We must go to Sinai and to Calvary, and humbly, on bended knee, receive the sublime lessons to be learned there.

We should never have expected moral progress as an inevitable consequence of free institutions and mere intellectual education, had it not been that, like other nations, we indulge in idolatries, and among our "gods many" are the suffrage and mental activity. We are gravely told by philosophers that, with the vote in the hands of woman, the moral elevation of the race is secured forever! "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The feeling is common in America that to doubt the omnipotence of universal suffrage in its extreme development is not only treason, but a sort of blasphemy. And this feeling is now leading many minds, unconsciously, perhaps, to shrink from opposing the present movement in favor of womanhood suffrage. They bow the knee to the

common idol. They dare not believe it possible for the suffrage to be carried too far. For ourselves we have no sympathies whatever with idolatry. We fearlessly declare our opinion, therefore, that no political institutions whatever, neither despotic, nor monarchical, nor aristocratic, nor yet the most free, are capable, in themselves, of achieving moral education for a people. Neither do we believe it more possible for abstract intellectual culture to gain this most important of all ends. Institutions wisely free are a very great blessing. Let us be fervently thankful for them. Intellectual education is equally important and desirable. These are both noble and admirable means to work with, provided we still look above and beyond them for a further development of the race—for fullness of MORAL CIVILIZATION. In fact, if we wish for a vigorous, healthful, lasting development of republican institutions, we must necessarily unite with these not only intellectual teaching, but also a sound MORAL EDUCATION. This is a fact to which men, in the whirl of their political or commercial struggles, too often willfully shut their eyes. They are quite ready to acknowledge the truth of the assertion in a general way, but they choose to forget its vast importance in political or commercial practice. They recklessly lower the moral standard themselves, whenever that standard is at a height inconvenient for the attaining of some particular object toward which they are aiming. They are lacking in faith. Unlike women, who carry faith with them in private life, men act as if faith were not needed in everyday public life. At least the great majority of men, nominal Christians, fail to carry Christian principle with them into common business or politics. Faith, in the heart of women, is connected with love; consequently it is less easily stifled. They more frequently carry this principle with them in daily practice—not to the extent that they should do, but far more so than most men do. And here, Christian women, is your great advantage. It is the Lord's work to which we would urge you. The work of true faith, however lowly, is sure of a blessing. With faith unfeigned in your hearts, giving purity to your lives, you have it in your power to render most effectual service to the nation in your own natural sphere, far beyond what you could possibly accomplish by the path of common politics. You have never, as yet, done full justice to the advantages of your own actual position in this respect. You have overlooked the great work immediately before you. We have no magic talisman to offer you in carrying out that work. We shall not flatter you with the promise of unlimited success; we shall not attempt to gratify any personal ambition of public honors. We have no novel theories or brilliant illusions with which to dazzle your imagination.

FIDELITY TO PLAIN MORAL DUTIES—THIS IS THE ONE GREAT PRINCIPLE TO WHICH WE WOULD MOST EARNESTLY CALL YOUR ATTENTION.

There is absolutely no principle so sorely needed in the civilized world to-day as this. We live in an age of false and inflated ambitions. Simple moral truths fare badly in our time. Imposing theories, brilliant novelties, subtle sophistries, exaggerated development, arrogant pretensions—these too often crowd simple moral truths out of sight, out of mind. And yet, without that class of duties in healthful action, corruption more or less general is inevitable.

Truth of word, honesty of action, integrity of character, temperance, chastity, moderation, sincerity, subordination to just authority, conjugal fidelity, filial love and honor—these duties, and others closely connected with them, bear old and homely names. But, Christian women, you can not ask for a task more noble, more truly elevating, for yourselves and your country, than to uphold these plain moral principles, first by your own personal example, and then by all pure influences in your homes and in the society to which you belong. In no other mode can you so well forward the great work of Christian civilization as by devoting yourselves to the daily personal practice, and to the social cultivation, by example and influence, of these plain moral duties. Your present domestic position is especially favorable to this task. You have more time for thought on these subjects; you have more frequent opportunities for influence over the young nearest to you; you have more leisure for prayer, for invoking a blessing on your efforts, however humble they may be. It is not enough to set a decent example yourselves. You must go to the very root of the matter. You must carry about with you hearts and minds very deeply impressed with the incalculable importance of a sound morality; you must be clearly convinced of the misery, the shame, the perils of all immorality.

In this nineteenth century the civilization of a country must necessarily prove either heathen or Christian in its spirit. There is no neutral ground lying between these boundaries. Faith or infidelity, such is the choice we must all make, whether as individuals or as nations. Thanks be to God we are not only in name, but also partially in character, a Christian nation. Faith is not entirely wanting. We all in a measure feel its good effects. Even the avowed infidel living in our midst is far more under its influences, though indirectly so, than he is aware of. And where there is life, there we have hope of growth, of higher development. To cherish that growth, to further that higher development by all gracious and loving and generous influences, is a work for which women are especially adapted. They work from within outwardly. Men work chiefly by mental and physical pressure from without. Men work by external authority; women work by influences. Men seek to control the head. Women always aim at touching the heart. And we have the highest of all authority for believing that this last is the most efficient mode of working.

"Out of the heart are the issues of life." This, therefore, Christian women, is your especial task. Use all the happy womanly influences in your power to forward the moral education, the Christian civilization, of the country to which you belong. Be watchful, with the unfeigned humility of the Christian, over your own personal course, and the example connected with it. Aim at keeping up, on all occasions, a high practical standard of sound morality at all points. Cultivate

every germ of true moral principle in your own homes, and in the social circle about you. Let the holy light of truth, honor, fidelity, honesty, purity, piety, and love brighten the atmosphere of your homes.

What heathen civilization means we know from many sources, more especially from the records of Rome under the empire, in the days of St. Paul, when it had reached its highest development.

What Christian civilization means we learn from the Apostle: "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—think on these things."

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FEMALE SUFFRAGE: A LETTER TO THE  
CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF AMERICA \*\*\*

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