

# WOMAN SUFFRAGE

## ESSENTIAL TO THE TRUE REPUBLIC.

BY SENATOR GEO. F. HOAR.

This seems to be a season of reaction in our politics. After the sublime heroisms of the war, after all that has been gained for civil liberty in our national constitution, after the establishment of republics in France and Spain, and the extension of suffrage in England, there seems to be a little retrogression. I hope it is but the advancing and receding of the wave while the tide is rising.

I think the American Woman Suffrage Association is to be congratulated, that it is the only one which has in charge the defense of the principles of republicanism [applause], that among the associations for political ends in this country, this and kindred associations organized for the same end, are the only ones which have the full logical right to take to themselves the august name of Republican.

We have driven our leading opponents from one position to another, until at last there is not a thoughtful opponent of Woman Suffrage to be found, who is not obliged to deny the doctrine,—which is affirmed in our Declaration of Independence, in our National Constitution, and in every bill of rights on the American continent,—of the natural equality of human beings.

There are two propositions confronting each other.

The first, that while there may be natural inequalities of mental, physical and moral constitution, yet they are such as in the nature of things are incapable of being defined by law, and the right of every person is equal to that of every other person, in governing the State. The State is to be the expression of the deliberate choice of the whole people, counting their votes head for head, with the exception of persons disqualified by nature.

Does woman come within any exception to the general proposition? Is there anything in the nature of woman which unfits her for a share in the government of the Republic? Our proposition is just this, that the wish of the women of America as to the measures and the persons that shall govern this Republic, shall be counted in making up the collective will of the whole, just as the wishes and the desires of men are counted. And that is all. Is there anything in the nature of woman which will make it either worse for the State or worse for her, that her will in regard to the administration of the government of the State shall find its expression at the ballot-box? Now even here our opponents seem to me to concede to us a good deal. They say, most of them, that they are perfectly willing that woman should have the ballot if she wants it, that when we will satisfy them that the women of America wish to vote, all opposition shall be withdrawn. This is a pretty serious concession, of the force of

which, our friends who make it are perhaps unaware. They admit that on the vital, fundamental question, whether the institutions of this country shall be so far changed that the number of persons in it who take a part in the government shall be doubled, that woman knows enough, and is capable enough of understanding the true interests of the State, to decide it; and they are perfectly willing to leave that question to her. Do you think that after she has decided that question so left to her, any other question of equal importance will ever be likely to be left to her decision?

A person to be entitled to share in the government of the State or country ought to love the State, ought to desire its welfare, and ought to be capable of judging of the characteristics of the persons presented for their suffrage, and of the wisdom or folly of the measures which are proposed from time to time before the people. Can you think of any other qualification than interest in the Republic, love of the Republic, capacity to choose its servants, and capacity to judge of the measures upon which its welfare is to depend? Now is there any one of these qualifications that woman does not possess? It used to be said of a candidate for office, who was a man of property, that he had a "stake" in the country. Is there any stake in the country like that of the mother's interest in her children? Do not the mothers, the wives, the sisters, love the Republic as well as their husbands, or sons, or brothers? Is there any doubt about that? Does any man claim that in whatever other respect he may excel woman, that in the capacity of affection she is not his superior? Man values the objects of his affections for the comfort and dignity and benefit they bestow upon him. Woman values herself only for the comfort which she can be to the objects of her affection. [Applause.]

Then in regard to the capacity to judge of character. Is not that woman's peculiar forte and characteristic and trait? How often does it happen that the husband receives his word of warning from the wife, or a brother from the sister, in regard to the character of a person in whom he is likely to place undue confidence. I wish you would let me read to you a statement from one of the acutest observers of our time, Rufus Choate. In a speech made to the Whigs in 1848, at Salem, he said: "I do not suppose I enter on any delicate or debatable region of social philosophy, sure I am that I concede away nothing which I ought to assert for our sex, when I say that the collective womanhood of a people like our own, seizes with matchless facility and certainty on the moral and personal peculiarities and character of marked and conspicuous men! and that we may very wisely address ourselves to her to learn if a com-



petitor for the highest honors has revealed that truly noble nature that entitles him to a place in the hearts of a nation. We talk and think of measures; of creeds in politics; of availability; of strength to carry the vote of Pennsylvania, or the vote of Mississippi. Through all this, her eye seeks the moral, prudential, social and mental character of the man himself—and she finds it!"

Then the final consideration. The capacity to judge of the measures which are for the advancement and welfare of a Republic.

Well, now in order to consider that, we ought to bring before our minds an adequate conception of what the Republic itself is for. What is the purpose and object for which the nation exists, and for which all these vast forces are created? What is a nation for? Different nations answer this question differently, and the answer of each is the key to its history. Had you asked an ancient Greek he would probably have told you that a nation was itself an end. The nation, he would have told you, was the ultimate end, and that the citizen was made for the benefit of the State of which he was a member. Plato proposed to breed children as he would have bred dogs, or horses, with reference to their making soldiers or citizens. If you were to ask an Englishman, and you had got from him his exact opinion on this subject, he would probably tell you that a nation was intended for the development of the character of a gentleman. I have no doubt the Englishman is learning something. He has learned much since our Fathers shook off the dust of their feet as they left England, since they baffled his attempt to subject us unrepresented to his will, and since at a later day we made it uncomfortable for him to bully us on the high seas, or since he has found the cost of too active sympathy with rebel attempts at our destruction. The English gentleman, to do him full justice, will be a brave and honest man, and means that England shall be a brave and noble nation, and so a fitting country for the English gentleman to govern. He will, it is quite likely, be interested in social questions, perhaps in the labor question. But he will expect that his ancestral hall and stately trees will go down in his name from eldest son to eldest son, though a thousand paupers starve in their hovels, and it is for this, to his mind, that England exists and is great by land and by sea.

If you were to ask a Frenchman he would tell you the State exists for glory—for military glory. "The cock of France," says the song, "is the cock of glory." When the French soldier is wounded or sick in the service of France he is flung aside to die like a weed by the wall. I heard a distinguished surgeon say, a year ago, that France had not improved in her care for the wounded of her armies for a hundred years.

If you were to ask a German he would tell you that the object of the State was strength, not military strength merely, but strength. He considers the end of human

life to be the building up of a strong empire. For this has Germany introduced her admirable systems of education, general and technical. When somebody complained to Bismarck of the destruction of life in the late war, he said, "Who ever heard of making an omelette without breaking the eggs?"

The object of the Republic differs from all these. The object of the Republic is not strength, not wealth, not glory, not empire, it is the aggregate worth of the people. [Applause.] It is personal, not material. You value your neighbor not for his money, not for his physical strength, not for his genius, but for the qualities of courage, generosity, love, honor, truth; and you value your State just so far as it is an aggregate of persons possessing these qualities, and just so far as it is the means to promote and increase them. Now will anybody deny that it is woman on whom we depend to educate and foster the moral qualities of children, and who possesses the faculty of fostering and educating children so largely, that it is admitted that it is rarely that a child who loses his mother in early life, grows up possessing them? The loss of a father is unimportant in comparison with that of a mother, who instils all these qualities into the child. Will anybody deny that she is equally capable, with the husband and father, in determining what measures and what policy in the State will result in the increase and promotion of these qualities in the aggregate of families and individuals that go to make up the Republic?

So I say, judging by these tests,—and no other or better test has ever been stated by philosopher, statesman or jurist,—that the womanhood of America should have its choice recognized and weighed just as that of the manhood of America is recognized and weighed in governing the State!

It is said there are many offices in the State for which woman is unfit; if this be so, all you have to do is not to elect her to them when she has the ballot. "What sort of Chief Justice do you think you would get if you had a woman on the bench?" That is a question which is put as a difficult and an impossible question to answer. A great part of my life has been spent in studying and watching the administration of justice in this Commonwealth and trying to learn, if I could, something of the qualities which fit men to take a part in the administration of justice, and I declare that the longer I live the more thoroughly I am convinced of the superiority, in arriving at the truth, of what we call the intuitive and instinctive judgment, which is the faculty of women, over the logical method, which is the quality of the masculine intellect. The training and discipline our lawyers go through, in my judgment, tends, after a time, to unfit a man for an accurate determination upon the fact. The value which you place upon the institution of the jury is not merely or chiefly because the judge is not supposed to be as honest, or as impartial, or as just, as the twelve jurymen, but it is because the experience of men has found that the gift of



the practical man who looks into the witness' face, though he can never tell you why he believes or disbelieves him, is often better than all the reasoning of a Parsons or a Marshall in getting at the truth. I was surprised some time ago to think how the relation of women to the administration of justice has manifested itself in some of the most important events of history. Shakespeare, the great delineator of human character, when he desired to introduce into that matchless scene which the world knows by heart, the judgment which cut the knot which had puzzled the lawyers and doctors, placed a woman upon the judgment seat. I think when slavery demanded of us that pound of flesh secured to it in our national constitution, that some of us would rather have had Portia than Taney on the bench. D'Aguesseau, the consummate Chancellor of France, to whose tomb pilgrims from afar have travelled, in the one important and turning point of his life, when he was sent for by Louis XIV., to Versailles, who demanded of him an unjust judgment against his conscience, was about departing from his house trembling and preparing to submit, when his wife laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said to him, "When you appear before the King, forget your wife, forget your children, forget everything but your duty and your God," and the counsel of that woman it was that saved that matchless judicial reputation, among the treasures of mankind.

In the great case between Charles First and John Hampden, Judge Croke gave the opinion of the minority in favor of the liberty of the subject. He was however about to determine in favor of the crown. He was reproached for his baseness by his wife. Says Nugent: "This noble lady cast the shield of her feminine virtue before the honor of her husband to guard it from the assaults equally of interest and fear; and with that moral bravery which is so often found the purest and brightest in her sex, she exhorted him to do his duty at any risk to himself, to her, or to their children; and she prevailed."

I think perhaps some or all of you will remember in this connection a more famous judgment and a case of a more august defendant even than John Hampden. When Pilate ascended the judgment seat, on that famous morning, you remember the message that his wife sent him, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." I should like to have our opponents tell us whether they think the judgment of the man or the woman on the whole was the most to be commended in that case. So you see that Scripture, history and literature alike concur in recognizing the superiority of the instinct of women, both in recognizing and declaring truth, when it is brought in issue before the judgment seat.

Then it is said that the exercise of this function of voting by the women will destroy her purity and innocence, that it will expose her to the mob and the ruffianism and vice of great cities. We are asked, "How we would like to have our wives and

daughters go down to the Battery in New York and try to put their ballots in the midst of one of those crowds, through a hole in the shutter of a beer shop?" I do not see that this method of voting, which men have, after their own fashion, adopted, is the essential thing. I think the ingenuity of the Yankee nation can contrive methods enough of voting, rather than to go down into those crowds and put their votes through a window of a New York beer shop.

I was much interested, a year and a half ago, with a debate at the great convention of the Episcopal Church in this country, which is published in the Jubilee number of the *Episcopal Spirit of the Times*, in which that most conservative and timid of the religious bodies was proposing to inaugurate an order of deaconesses. Dean Howson, the famous and accomplished author, with Conybeare, of the life of Saint Paul, took part in that debate, and gave the result and experience of the English Church on this subject, and there are a few sentences which I should like very much to read. He says, "Without troubling you with any egotistical and tiresome account of the mode in which I have been brought to the conviction which I hold very firmly, I may mention what that conviction is, and then just allude to three grounds upon which it rests. The conviction to which I have been led is briefly this, that a church has no right to attempt to work without a systematic and authorized ministry of women. I do not at all say that it is necessary that such ministry should be organized always in the same way, in all parts of one church, or in the same way at all periods of history; but I do honestly believe that if we attempt to work in a church without such ministry of women, that church has one hand tied up. It may be said by some that it is the left hand. To that I should not demur; but I should venture upon this rejoinder, that, after all, the left hand is nearest the heart."

"So far for a general abstract view of the question *a priori*; and now to turn to the practical exigencies of the times in which we live. If ever there was a period when a well-organized, diffusive ministry of women was required, it is the age in which we live. A very high civilization produces great contrasts in society. Side by side with great wealth and great culture—but still in the same period of time—are the utmost misery, degradation and distress; and I do not think that any one, calmly reflecting upon the condition of our large towns, can come to the conclusion that the mere accidental overflow of the feminine zeal of Christian families will ever suffice to grapple with the squalor and wretchedness and vice of the worst parts of these large communities. I am not in a condition to speak of New York; if I were to attempt to do so, I should probably make great mistakes; but I can speak of a large town in England where I resided nearly twenty years, a town which I remember very well, used to be spoken of as of about the size of New York. Now it is no longer the case that Liverpool is of the



same size as New York; but this I can say of Liverpool, that an interval of three or four miles separates on the one hand, a region peopled by families of high culture, of great wealth, with a considerable amount of Christian zeal, and on the other hand, streets and alleys full of the most miserable, degraded, and wretched people, among whom the very aristocracy consists of small shopkeepers. Now, what is it that this latter part of the community needs? It needs especially the presence of Christian women, and Christian women of the best kind, and Christian women, too, who are able to be continually within reach of this misery and degradation. No one looking at these two contrasted sides of Liverpool can possibly believe that the zeal and culture and Christian refinement of the one section can be brought in contact with the other, unless it be by some such new machinery as at present exists only on a very small scale. This, then, is a practical view of the subject.

"Now what is it that this latter part of the community, which I refer to, wants; these streets and alleys that are filled with the most miserably wretched and degraded? It is this influence and especially the presence of Christian women, which will be most effectual in remedying this misery and degradation."

The church, baffled and beaten in her long warfare with the squalor and wretchedness and vice of these great communities,—a warfare begun before Saint Paul fought with wild beasts at Ephesus,—having tried in vain the cunning of her Jesuits, having tried in vain logic and exhortation and eloquence, having tried in vain the attractions of art and architecture and music, having tried in vain the secular power of this world, and appealed in vain to the hope of heaven and the fear of hell in the next, stretches out its arms to the women. When woman goes forth to conquer and tame those wild beasts, the State says to her that she is not fit to be trusted with the ballot which it gives to the beasts.

No, my friends, this is prejudice and not reason with which we are contending. We must carry out our Republicanism to its logical results. Women must stand by your side in the church, equals, or the church must go back to the time of the Inquisition. She must stand by your side in the family, or you must go back to the times when she was a companion only for the beast that was in you. She must stand by your side, an equal in the school or college, or you must go back to the days of the Jesuit school and the monastery. She must stand by your side an equal in the State, or you must go back, or, what is worse than going back, you must remain where you are.

The worst foe we have to contend with, is timidity,—failure to trust the Republic, and the ideas which are its strength and safety. The preacher, in that sublime passage in Ecclesiastes which describes the failure of manhood, typical also of the de-

cay and decline of States, tells us of "the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and they shall be afraid of that which is high." How many good persons there are who meet every attempt to carry out the sublime idea of the Republic with a cry of alarm,— "It isn't safe to extend the franchise, it isn't safe to give education and power to the people, it isn't safe to free the slave, it isn't safe to lift the giant Labor to his feet, it isn't safe to count the vote of the woman."—Have these people ever considered what it is to be safe—what is the meaning of the word safety? Suppose one of your soldiers in one of the great battles which decided the fate of the country, when the bullets came thick, had been tempted to quit his place in the ranks and skulk out of danger in the rear. Would he have been safe. His carcass might have got off without a wound, but courage, manhood, self devotion, love of country, everything in him that was worth saving, would have been in danger at the thought, and if he had yielded would have perished in that hour. When John Howard went to Bedford jail in England, on his humane errand of mercy, suppose he had been frightened by the jail fever as he crossed the threshold, and turned back. John Howard would have died miserably in that moment. A commonplace coward and sneak would have walked away in his stead. John Howard was only safe when he braved the malignant jail fever by the bedside of the men, sick and in prison, whom he relieved. The safest place for the hero is in the thickest of the fight. What is animal in him may be safer where his soul will rest with ease and security. But that which makes him a hero is safe, the heroism in him burns and glows while the body and the life are in danger. So it is with the Republic. You may swell its wealth and its farms, its commerce and its factories. One dough-faced President or Governor may succeed another, the population may increase and multiply in a time of quiet and stagnation, while the aggregate of virtue, intelligence, loyalty and courage is dwindling away. So far as the Republic devotes all its instrumentalities to secure the rights,—liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness,—to all its people, therewith and thereby securing the highest aggregate of moral worth, so far it is safe; so far as it fails to do this or substitutes other ends, so far and so far only is it in danger.

All that is of value in this Republic—courage, manhood, womanhood—are safe when the Republic is pressing on to some loftier plane of virtue.

Plato, the greatest genius of antiquity, meditating on these themes, composed in his old age that wonderful dialogue, the *Politicus*, which he left as a legacy to the ages. Failing, undoubtedly, to comprehend woman, to which the experience of the Christian household can alone render man adequate, he yet saw as in a dream—as in an inspired dream—her participation in the perfect State.