

## WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

The Issue as Viewed by a Practical Farmer's Wife.

—To the Editor:—One of the objections to granting the ballot to women is that it will unfit them for the duties of motherhood and homemakers. It remains to be proved that such would be the case. A mere assertion carries no weight when testimony is required. A person's opinion must not be substituted for truth. As the right to vote has not yet been granted to women, it is out of our power to say positively what the effect will be when it is granted; but history gives us examples of illustrious women who were good wives, good mothers, good homemakers, who did not confine the exercise of these desirable qualities to the precincts of their own homes, but sent their influence throughout the world by their lectures, their sermons, their actions. They were the advocates of equal suffrage, with all that term implies. They were interested in moral and political reforms, in good legislation, in all phases of philanthropy—in fact, in all good works. Such lives as those of Lucretia Mot., Mary A. Livermore, Mary T. H. Willard (mother of the world-renowned Frances E.), Mary A. Woodbridge, Elizabeth Fry and a host of others, show conclusively that woman can perform all the duties the most ultra anti-suffragist would exact of them and yet be an interested worker in the wider fields of the world's need. Can anyone who has read the lives of these noble women, believe that had the ballot been granted them, they would have been one whit less lovely, less womanly?

"The noblest, grandest, most sacred mission of woman is true motherhood." The mere bearing and rearing of children, which, according to Webster, constitute "motherhood," do not convey the whole idea of true motherhood. Someone has said, "Motherhood is entirely independent of sex, marriage or child-bearing. A woman may be both childless and unmarried and yet be a more natural mother than the one who has borne children, and yet has not felt the unselfish tenderness that is real motherhood." Mrs. J. T. Lillard says, "The main thing to be insisted on is that motherhood should be magnified as the crowning glory of womanhood." If the previous quotation be correct many a woman has been a mother and a grand one, too, who has not had the blessed privilege of being a home maker for husband and offspring of her own.

Again she says, "Suffrage will unfit women for motherhood, and thus injure generations yet unborn," (physically) and the reasons given are that "women who are to become mothers should have strong, well-developed minds and bodies, and cool, quiet and steady nerves." Women have not had the ballot, have not had to mix in politics, yet it is a self-evident fact that the women of the last two or three generations have been a race of nervous invalids, suffering from all the ills attendant upon a depleted nervous condition, and what is the cause? Mingling in politics, voting, endeavoring to "manipulate the machinery of government!" Nay, Physicians ascribe it to late hours, excesses in eating and drinking, keeping up with the demands of fashionable society, etc., etc.

Your correspondent (Mrs. J. T. L.) pictures the wife of a poor man, toiling at her daily tasks of washing, scrubbing, cooking and mending, doing her part for the support of their children, teaching them as best she can, to love and serve their God and country, and calls her "as important a factor in the state as the most gifted senator in the senate chamber," and why? Because "we can preserve the integrity of our institutions without senators; we can do nothing if we lose the home." Granted, for if we do lose the home, we undermine the very foundations of our republic, and it is for the perpetuation of this republic by a fuller development of the home, that we plead, feeling sure that the widening of a woman's range of vision into the hitherto unseen, the deepening of her thought on subjects of vital importance to herself and family, thus preventing too great concentration of her attention on the latest style of gown or hat, will contribute to that end, rather than detract from it.

The editor of a certain Kentucky paper is reported to have said: "A question of great importance is how to improve the quality of the mother. Provide every child in the country with a good mother and the remainder of the work (the betterment of humanity) is comparatively easy." A magazine comments on this as follows: "What about those mothers

who have flung their lives, sacrificed youth, health, beauty, talents, all they could sacrifice, in order to bear and rear children, and who in the lives of their sons, have seen the follies, the vices and sins of their husbands repeated in spite of all that maternal love could give." Again, "this doctrine of the all-suffering motherhood in the salvation of the world, is part of a long out-worn creed, accepted without question, until a generation or so ago, one or two women set the fashion of thinking for themselves. This original thought resulted in the conclusion that more than a good mother was needed to make a perfect human being." Good fathers are a necessity also. There have been good mothers by the score in every generation, and let us hope, some good fathers, too, and yet the salvation of the world from evil, looks to be a long way off. Suppose in the case of the poor woman referred to, her husband was a drinking, worthless, immoral man, what prospect would she have to see the full fruition of her labors, when they would be frustrated by his example whose duty it is to help, instead of to hinder her, in her efforts to make a home for her loved ones?

Again, it was said, that if the ballot be given to women, they should be obliged to vote, under penalty. Granted, provided men are so restricted; but as they are not, and no prospect that they ever will be, why refuse it to women on that ground?

It was also said that women should not vote because they would have to mingle with the men who assemble at the polls, many of whom are low and vile, and it would debase and degrade them, and injure their fair name. Who has made politics so "dirty" that women can not take part therein? Not women themselves, for they have not had the chance. Let us understand the definition of "politics." Webster says it is "the science of government; that part of ethics (morals) which has to do with the regulation and government of a nation or a state, the preservation of the safety and peace of the nation, etc." Is not a woman concerned for these things? Now if this "science of government" has become so polluted without women that it is dangerous to their morals, and a menace to her femininity, to be exposed for a few minutes to the contaminating influence of the men who have so polluted it, it is high time these same men were making a strenuous effort to "clean up" a little. How many women live in daily contact for years, though, with such influences as she would encounter for a few minutes at the polls. But the question has recurred again and again, how much worse is it for them to go to the polling place and cast the ballot, than it is to push and to be pushed, among the crowds on the streets on a day of some political rally or ratification, as they be by the hour, or when Barnum's show comes to town, or on Carnival day, when the streets are filled with all sorts and classes of people? Yet there is no protest against this; no fears then expressed of contamination; oh! no! They are not voting! On consistency, consistency, thou art a jewel, indeed; especially when not too inconsistent.

Certainly the influence of woman is great, for either good or bad, according to her character, as many a man has found out, to his joy or sorrow. Perhaps if the husband would spend more of his evenings at home with his wife, reading with her the grave questions of the day, exchanging views and, if need be, enlightening her on many subjects instead of being at the club, the gaming table and the card party; he and his wife might think as one person, and thus avoid the danger of a "house divided against itself," and both be able to cast an intelligent vote, and this is what we want. And had the men always voted intelligently and conscientiously, without fear or favor, no doubt good women would not be so anxious to try the effect of their ballot. But when they see laws passed that threaten danger to their loved ones by the very men who ought to do better (they know better), what marvel that their desecrated womanhood, their outraged motherhood, rises up in indignant and righteous protest and demands that their right to vote be given them, that they may exercise it in behalf of the home, the security of which is threatened by many of the laws enacted by their husbands, brothers and fathers.

Holder, Ill. ELIZABETH H. COALE.