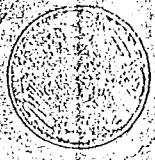


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WHICH JOURNAL?

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A MAN'S VIEW — OF — WOMAN SUFFRAGE

By B. P. BOWNE.

IT SEEMS that this matter has been pretty thoroughly threshed out. The arguments are in, and the verdict of reason has been reached, so that it looks like slaying the slain, further to discuss the question.

"ABLE-BODIED PREJUDICES."

On reflection, however, I find this was not the case. When I was very much younger, I used to think that the force of an argument depends upon its logic, and I suppose this is true of its rational value. But I soon learned that the actual effect of an argument has often little to do with its logic. A sound argument may be ineffective, and a bad argument may be accepted, for the psychological effect of an argument depends quite as much on the hearer's state of mind as it does upon its rational quality. Years ago, Ex-Governor Long said that he had never heard an argument against woman suffrage that would not be an insult to the intellect of a child twelve years old. And Mr. Howells has said that there are no arguments against woman suffrage, but there are many prejudices. It is this psychological fact that makes it necessary for us to keep on repeating familiar arguments, in the hope of finally winning a hearing and recognition for the truth.

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cannot afford to have matters further complicated by having women admitted, for then the community would be completely swamped in the great body of ignorance, which is now all too large for the public good. I may say that I do not agree with the objections to universal suffrage. They are really of a sort with which the student of political history is entirely familiar, and spring more from political sloth or from supposed superior classes which are neglecting their political duties, than from any real menace from the people. For myself, I believe that human nature when fairly treated can be trusted, and it seems to me that, historically, and even to-day, the great dangers to society do not come from the working classes, but from unprincipled and predatory wealth, or from indifference and bad example in higher quarters. But, in any case, arguments against universal suffrage are irrelevant against woman suffrage. Let the suffrage be limited, if need be, but let it be limited by some rational test, and not by mere accidents of sex, which have no rational connection whatever with the right of the moral person to express an opinion concerning the laws under which he lives.

THE MILITARY ARGUMENT.

There is little need to refer to the time-worn arguments against equal suffrage. It is said that woman cannot fight, as if fighting were the great service which society demands. The same consideration would apply to the clergy, to the men over forty-five, to teachers and to a host of invalids, but it is not meant to apply to them. In some occult way it applies only to women.

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anything so imposing as the "differentiation of function," but it is exceedingly difficult to connect the premise with the particular conclusion. Indeed, one with the same logic might get anything out of the phrase, and claim that the working classes should not vote because evolution proceeds through the differentiation of function, and this differentiation would lead to the handing over of government to a privileged few. With what impressiveness a defender of caste could appeal to the "differentiation of function!" Weakest arguments, strongest prejudices. The functions the sexes have to play in human life are different, and will take care of themselves, but they in no way affect the duty of every moral person to be interested in the well-being of the community, and the right of every moral person to have a voice in the matter.

I have often thought that some bright woman might turn the tables, and make a good point by considering what argument could be made against allowing men to vote, in case the question had to be decided by the women. Many and excellent reasons, at least from the standpoint of prejudice, could be given, quite as good as those from the other side. Thus the women might point out that the masculine sex is coarse and unæsthetic, that it is passionate, quarrelsome, and given to the use of bad words, that the lack of a shirt button often will set men into quite a rage. It might also be noted that the sex is falling behind in intelligence, and that women are fast becoming the conservators of scholarly traditions and scholarly investigations, while men are giving themselves more and more to commercialism. It might also be said that the sex is relatively irreligious. Three-fourths of the membership of our churches are said to be women. Now, how would it be possible to allow beings of such qualities

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It is doubtful if this argument would convince the men, but it is certainly quite as good as a great deal of the matter that is offered against equal suffrage.

These anti-suffrage arguments are meant to work only in one way, and when one points out that, if good for anything, they are good for much more, he is told that they are not to be used in that fashion. It is somewhat racking to logic to limit to men's property only the denunciation of taxation without representation on which our Revolutionary fathers depended.

WHAT GOOD WOULD IT DO?

But what's the use of equal suffrage after all? Would society be any better for it, and if it would not, it seems at best a matter of indifference. Moreover, suffrage is not a right in any case, but only a privilege, and may well be withheld unless something good is to come out of it. This is more of the philanthropist's talk. When he is opposed to equal suffrage, he claims it as a right. When others demand it as a right, he says it is a privilege and a matter of no great importance. The insincerity of all this appears from the fact that he would never consent to have it denied to himself, while he is very willing to have it denied to others. A distinguished U. S. Senator is opposed to equal suffrage as he wishes to love and regard his wife, etc.; but why he should not love her if she had a voice in social affairs does not appear.

I insist upon the vote for women as something that ought to be done for the removal of a great injustice; and I believe it is always safe to be just, and that in the long run justice will vindicate itself by its results.