

26  
Pamphlets Printed and Distributed

by the

**Women's Anti-Suffrage Association**

of the

Third Judicial District of the State of  
New York.



Headquarters at Albany, N. Y.



1905

Pamphlets and leaflets may be obtained from the Association by  
addressing the Chairman of the Executive Committee,  
No. 9 Hall Place, Albany, N. Y.

## SHALL WOMEN BE BURDENED WITH THE BALLOT?

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Meeting a group of half dozen highly intelligent women, I frankly propounded to them the question, "Do you sincerely *desire* to be invested with the burdens and grave responsibilities of the ballot and of civil office?" One of the number replied in the affirmative; the others with a decided "*No.*" I suspect that those ladies fairly represented the opinions of thoughtful women in this commonwealth, where the very old question of female suffrage is under new and vehement agitation. Some of the reasons that influence solid and sensible women for refusing the burden of political duties are the following :

(1) This is not a question of woman's capacity in the domain of art, literature, science, etc., but of her *duties* in the domain of civil government. The Creator made man and woman to govern, but in totally different spheres and methods. To man He has entrusted civil headship, the administration of justice, the authority of magistracy with the *strong-arm power* to enforce obedience to authority when required. The burden of ballot and of baton is laid upon him. Woman has her equally important (perhaps more important) empire in which she is to rule—by persuasion, by captivities of love, by force of character, by a power as gentle as the beneficence of the sunbeam. She has quite enough on her hands now in educating herself and the young immortals committed to her care, in governing home and household, in exercising the gentle but mighty influence without which man would soon degenerate into domestic and social barbarism. Woe be to us *men* when our mothers, wives, and sisters weary of their beautiful sceptre and snatch after the ballot, the jury-man's seat, and the police baton of civil authority !

(2) When civil power has been entrusted to woman, she has not (with very few exceptions) been successful. For example, in England we find a mischievous Queen Margaret, a bloody Mary, a dull Queen Anne, and several other mediocrities; and even the splendid achievements of Queen Elizabeth's reign were largely due to the great *men* around her, and in spite of her arrogance, vanity, and frequent duplicity. Motley, Campbell, and other impartial historians have made sad havoc with her fame. The present noble and pure-minded occupant of the British throne reigns, but not governs. Parliament and Premier rule the empire.

(3) It is claimed that women need the ballot for self-protection. But every intelligent person knows how readily of late years legislation has been granting to women relief from former disabilities and injustice in the matter of property, and of her marital rights. What gallantry and justice to her sex have done, will continue to be done. Her strength is in remaining a woman and not striving to be a man. Homage to womankind is one of the best traits of American character. The grasp at the suffrage might destroy more than it could replace.

(4) There is something quite plausible in the assertion that as woman does so much to purify literature and society, she might also, by accepting the burdens of the ballot and office-holding (*for the two are inseparable*) do much to purify our unclean politics. But by the time they are through with the dirty job of "purifying" the primaries, the caucus, and the conventions, who shall purify the women? It might save some labor if the dresses of ladies were made long enough to sweep floors and sidewalks, but what about the dresses? I feel quite sure that womanhood would suffer more than political morality would gain.

Then, too, all womanhood is not angelic. The multitude of ignorant women and of depraved women would assuredly be brought to the polls by machine, politicians and demagogues; while the cultured, the quiet, and the Christian class would be reluctant to enter the political arena to out-vote the ignorant and corrupt. And so a new burthen

of responsibility would be thrust upon respectable womanhood. Some of my Prohibitionist brethren insist that female suffrage would shut up the saloons in Brooklyn and New York and other great cities. They forget what an army of beer-drinking women would swarm out of the slums and the tenement houses to reinforce the army of beer-drinking and whisky drinking men in favor of the dram-shop. We suffer enough now from the foreign *male* vote in our cities; what would it be if the foreign *female* vote were added likewise?

(5) There is one argument against imposing the burden of civil duties upon woman that delicacy allows us to hint at. It is that the Creator has put an interdict on the participation of a large number of our sister-sex in public affairs through certain physical disabilities which belong to wifehood and maternity. And let me also remind the zealous female suffragist that if perilous passions were to be introduced as an element into politics, it would furnish a new source of corruption and profligacy.

(6) If the ballot is to be imposed upon our mothers and daughters, then with it come office-holding, jury-duty and other political responsibilities. Then will come the necessity for them to study tariffs, currency problems, and all other civil questions in order to vote intelligently at the polls or in the legislative hall. Then will come sharp controversies between husbands and wives that will not minister to connubial peace. Then will come conflicts between the great sacred duties, which God has laid upon woman and the other duties which a false and foolish theory of government has piled upon her overloaded shoulders. For one, I love and honor the sex that gave me the best of mothers and the best of wives too well to be an accomplice in any such outrage.

(7) But, says the vehement female suffragists. "we claim the ballot and political office as a *natural right*," Madam, you are sadly mistaken. If voting were a natural right, then every young man might exercise it before he reached the age of twenty-one, and every foreigner as soon as

he landed on our shores. The ballot is a privilege delegated by the Constitution to certain persons under certain conditions. It is also a *tremendous trust*. It is a solemn and exacting trust. It involves a heavy burden of responsibility. Office-holding also becomes more vexatious and oppressive every year. Your Creator has laid heavy loads on woman's head and hand and heart; and the wisest of your sex are seeking more of divine grace to bear them. Beware how you rashly clamor for new burdens which would be "light" only to those who are too weak to understand them, or too wicked to respect their sacred responsibility!

(8) A recent correspondent who is opposed to female suffrage declares that he is "willing to see the experiment tried." If it fails, what then? He must remember that a suffrage once enlarged *can never be contracted*. We Republicans gave universal suffrage to the southern Freedmen, instead of requiring an educational qualification. It is too late to shut the door now. As long as the great majority of thoughtful and conscientious women do not desire to be voters, jurywomen, or office-holders, why force the burdens upon them?

Let the high endeavor of every good woman be to do her full duty to God, to society, to her family and to the commonwealth, in the great sphere in which God has placed her. Woman must do her work for her country as woman and not as a counterfeit man. We do not need her at the polls, but those who do go to the polls need a good mother's training and good home influence. This whole suffrage movement is what Dr. Horace Bushnell called "a reform *against nature*." There is full scope for a true woman's patience, power, purity, and prayers without attempting to override that divine arrangement which never fitted her to be a soldier, a sailor, a civil engineer, a juryman, a magistrate, a policeman, a politician.

May, 1894,

Published by the "Protest Committee."

Apply for more papers to Anti-Suffrage Association,  
13 Elk Street, Albany.