[Women's Suffrage as I See It]

During the last year and a half the American Magazine has been publishing a series of articles by Miss Tarbell under the general head of the "Business of Being A Woman". These articles have brought from her readers many suggestive letters. Some of them sympathetic with the pointsMiss Tarbell was making and some of them protesting against these points. In looking over the answers to those letters it seemed to the editor of this magazine that it would be of interest and value to make up from them a series of what might be called "composite letters.

The first of these is here published. It deals with the question of Suffrage. It is most significant of the interest in that question that in spite of the fact that the articles only indirectly touched upon it, it was that which the majority of the readers seemed to be lookeng between the lines.

My dear Mrs: A:-

You congratulate me on seeing nothing in Woman's Suffrage. You misread me. I see a great deal in it. True it is not that which its advocates benerally claim for it, but on the other hand I do not see those dangers which those who protest against it hold up. I look upon it as one of the manifestations of a mighty spirit which is stirring the whole world to-day. I do not see how any one can look out on the exhibits which humanity is making in all countries of the earth, those of the Orient as well as those of the Occident without realizing that something portentous is going on. Men and women seem to be grasping almost for the first time in history t the spupendous fact that it is not necessary that they should be crippled as they always have been, that it is humanly possible so to master outward conditions that all shall be freer, more hopeful, more effective. What I mean is that I think that there is the country over a growing conviction that poverty is unnecessary, that war the chief cause of poverty is unnecessary, that privileges to a few which is the cause of war is unnecessary. That in putting an end to these things we strip off our heaviest handicap. Get such an idea as this working in the mass of humanity and everwhere you are going to find men and women tugging at the bonds they feel. You are

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going to find them strongly realizing that they have far greater force, understanding and experience than they had ever dreamed -and if they have these powers they are determined to have a chance to use them. Everywhere in the world men and women are taking something, asking for something, refusing to consent that this and that hateful thing should be endured, that this and that limitation should be supported.

The particular thing asked for by a large number of women in this country to-day - serious women who are deeply affected by this world spirit is unquestionably the ballot. They say they want it because with it they can do this and that thing. I do not believe myself, that they are going to do with it the things that they think. I believe that it will hamper them in ways they do not see - that is, I t think none of the immediate concrete results which t hey prophecy will be forth coming, but as I said above that is not saying I see nothing in it, for I do.

I see education in it - slow, questionable and discouraging but still education. You cannot take hold of new things in new relations without an educative result, in fact you cannot do anything in this world, get your hands into any real issue of life that you are not developing. This view has been admirably put by Professor Henry R. Mussey of Columbia College.

"The ballot for women is important fundamentally, not because of what they will accomplish with it, but because of what it will do for them, and what it will do, not immediately and directly, but in the course of generations and as an indirect result of the demands it will make on them. The indirect educational results constitute the one irrefutable argument for women suffrage, and by comparison all others are of third-rate importance. The idea that women's voting would purify politics has well-nigh disappeared into the limbo of discarded notions, where it belongs. Such an idea never had any reason behind it, but unchastened optimism. Now the industrial consequences are emphasized - the raising of wages, shortening of hours and improvements of work for women that may be expected from their obtaining the ballot. These expectations will probably in large part be disappointed. Industrail conditions are determined chiefly outside the

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the political sphere. High wages, short hours and good conditions of work do not hang primarily on acts of Legislature. To enfranchise women will not remove their economic handicap, though help a little. Any class of people, given the ballot, use it for their economic advantage as opportunity offers. But estimate the industrial advantage of suffrage at their full value - and there is no question that they are in g general grossly exaggerated. The chief gain to come from it is its steady educational pressure on women."

And this is George Meredith's view:- "After some taste of active life, their minds would enlarge - that is all we want: their hearts are generally sound." Meredith who prophecied a mauvais quart d'heure,"a horrible time" as a first fruit of suffrage - I think he puts it too strongly.

I have a tremendous sympathy myself with ~~these~~ women who want the ballot because they feel that with it they will be freer.- more fully in the stream of life. With a great many women practically the whole cry is that they do not want anything going on in the world in which they are not sharing. They are willing to trust themselves in the full current of things, feeling that the rush, confusion and resistlessness of that current is more desirable than the steadier seat they might have on the bank watching the current go by. They do not ask to be in a safe place, they want the tumult of natural life and they have the courage to attempt it.

In the same mail with your letter came one from such a woman - " a happy woman" she describes herself, who protests strongly against my contention that the American Women has given an imitative character to her new activities and that by so doing she has failed to keep her natural business and the asperation of her day.

> "It is not to be"like men" - strange notion - that we are fighting; it is to be free women. It is not to shirk the responsibilities and labor that confront us, but with adequate tools in our hands to make, for the first time our labors, truly effective for the upfringing of the race. It is not the uneasiness of those who work and would be idle that is manifesting itself; it is the unessiness of those who thwarted in opportunity, would find the work for which God - nature - has designed them."

There is another argument for Suffrage which has been put strongly to me by a wise man who is one of the editors of this Magazine, the "Responsible Editor of the Interpreter's House. He sees "in the ballot for women something

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which will help in a degree which we in no way exaggerate and in a time which we in no way over-estimate to break down the wicked barriers which separate women from women. Something which will give the poverty-stricken, helpless, cringing women a sense of being somebody - of possessing something in common with those more fortunate women she sees from afar and must but too often dimly hate for their happiness, their ease, their fullness of opportunity. Here will be one point at least where she is as good as they - where she counts as much as they - where they need her - seek her - respect her. She is the more of a human being because of this value in herself. It gives her courage, self-respect, freedom. "Trade with it? of course she will as men do;" the wise man says, "as she does with her person today." But having this legitimate value which brings her nearer the more fortunate she will sometimes use this value to save herself and her sisters from baser trading.

It is not only she, the unfortunate, who will get from a ballot a new sense of her value as a human being which she so terribly needs. It is the fortunate who will get a new sense of the value of other human beings which she quite as much needs. Women may discover women, too, in this operation. It is a discovery many of us need to make. You remember Lady ? clever remark - "The only reason I am glad that I am a woman is that I will not have to marry one". The ballot, perhaps, would help us reconcile us to one another.

These are things I do see in the suffrage but I see none of those immediate results which you enumerate is equally true.

Very truly yours

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