

Woman's Suffrage

By Daniel De Leon

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE.

An Address Delivered By DANIEL DE LEON

Under the Auspices of the Socialist Women of Greater New York

Mary Papelsky, Presiding

COOPER UNION, MAY 8, 1909

Ladies and Gentlemen:—

The Socialist Women of Greater New York have invited you to this meeting for the purpose of presenting to you the position they take in the matter of Woman's Suffrage, and the reasons for their position. And the organization has asked me, it has done me the honor to ask me, to be its spokesman on this occasion.

It has been said that a distinctive feature of the days we are living in may be gathered from the circumstance that there is no subject which may come up for discussion, or even spring up incidentally in the course of conversation, however trivial the subject, even if so trivial as a clambake, but will inevitably drift into the Social Question. It is not supposable that, at such a season as the one we are traversing, a subject that calls itself "Woman's Suffrage," and even broader still, the "Woman Question," or the "Woman Movement," can escape the fate of other lighter ones—land plump into the broad issue of the Social Question. If trivial subjects do to-day find their rootlets in the Social Question, how much more inevitably Woman's Suffrage. Indeed, Woman's Suffrage is itself a product of and has its ramifications in the scores of issues that go to make up the burning question of to-day—the Social Question of our generation.

It may be said that to merge Woman's Suffrage with the scores of other issues that are agitating us to-day could only create confusion, promote "entangling alliances" and be the surest way, first, to dwarf, and then to lose

Woman's Suffrage

sight altogether of the issue itself. The warning is not wholly without its justification. Common is the attempt to get rid of a subject, if felt to be thorny, by coupling it with, and drowning it in many others. Nevertheless, if taken absolutely, the warning works harm. The veins of a body surely are not the body's heart. All the same, heart and veins are so intimately connected that neither can be thoroughly understood without understanding both. Specialists ever are prone to impute exclusive importance to their own particular specialty. The part of wisdom is to escape both horns—the horn of confusion and the horn of exclusive specialty. This can be done only by the systematic treatment of a complicated subject—by first analytically considering its several parts, then synthetically bringing them together.

To this method of treatment the Socialist Women of Greater New York invite you to submit the question of Woman's Suffrage—a question in which they, also, along with all other enlightened human beings, feel deeply, but to which the application of any method of treatment other than the one here outlined can have for its practical effect only to play into the hands of the enemies of Woman's Suffrage by leading the movement away from the fruitful channels to which it rightly belongs, into channels that fruitlessly wear out its energies.

“Woman's Suffrage,” as the very etymology of the name indicates, is a branch of the trunk of *Suffrage*, not of the trunk of *Woman*. Woman is only one-half the human race: the suffrage is for the whole human race. The name itself of the issue—“Woman's Suffrage”—points to that domain of investigation to which attention must be first directed—the *Suffrage Question*.

No sooner, however, do we step upon this domain than we realize that back of it lies another, a vast one; vaster than that of the Suffrage itself; more comprehensive; embracing the Suffrage Question, and from which Suffrage itself is one of the issues—the domain of *Class Rule*.

The line of investigation must begin with the history of Class Rule.

Luminous as the history of Class Rule is to all the issues that go to make up the modern Social Question, it is especially aidful to the investigating of that particular issue known as the Woman's Movement, or Woman's Suffrage. The history of Class Rule throws its light before the feet of the Woman's Movement; it explains the errors, accounts for them, that the Movement slips into; the emotional vagaries with which the Movement is often marred; its futile tears;

its frequently barren efforts. Above all, the history of Class Rule, together with its derivative, the history of Suffrage, marshals the movement the path that it must follow in order to achieve the triumph it is so richly entitled to.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

He who raises the curtain of the history of the Class Struggle is immediately struck with the figure of woman as a leading figure on a tragic stage, herself a tragic victim—at first sight, *the* tragic victim. The portentous tragedy with which the drama of Class Rule opens superinduces two errors:

First, that woman was smitten down because of sex. She was not.

Second, that some Imp prevailed in a contest for rule over the destinies of the race, hurling it from Arcadian happiness into sorrow.

Curious, even luminous, is the circumstance that the anarchist, that element, among those in revolt against modern society, which is most boastful of its enlightenment and mental freedom from “ancient mystifications” is, in this respect, at one with all the known systems of superstition. With these, the anarchist prates of a Fall of Man—“Once there was freedom; there is none now,” with them he holds a language, which, if it means anything, is pivoted on the theory of the existence of an “Evil Genius.” There is no such fiend: there was no such fall.

Man—meaning mankind—is, in the sense-laden language of Carlyle, “a tool-using animal.” When man first made his appearance upon earth he was of all animal beings the most abjectly helpless. Nature’s foot was planted upon his neck. She scourged him with droughts and with floods; with heat and with cold; a toy of her caprice, now she overwhelmed him with abundance, then afflicted him with dearth. The birds that flew over his head, the beasts that prowled around his cradle—all were self-sufficient. They came into being equipped with the tool requisite to carve their living out of Nature—the lion his fangs; the spider his pouch of mucilage and thread; the eagle his beak and talons; the beaver his wonderful tail; the tiniest wren his bill. Man alone is born toolless, hence at the start of his career, inferior to all others.

The weapon by which man turned the tables upon brute creation and upon Nature herself, rising to Princeship over the former and overpowering the latter till she has become his obedient hand-maid, was the tool of production, which he at first painfully fashioned; which in his hands improved, becoming more

Woman's Suffrage

powerful, that is, fruitful of results, and the development of which marks the milestones of his onward and upward march. Though in the nature of things the steps in this evolution are not “recorded,” no historic fact is more authentic. From the scientific point of view, the Fall of Man is an idle nursery tale; from the moral viewpoint it is a slander on the race. Man rose; he did not fall.

In the course of the onward process in the perfection of the tool, the discovery of the secret of smelting iron ore marks an epoch—the first great epoch—in the annals of man. From that time on society undergoes a radical change. The secret of smelting iron ore begets the edged tool—none of the dainty ones known to-day, but the ponderous ones that required muscular strength to wield. Remorseless as the law of gravitation, the imperious and ultimately benevolent law that propelled mankind toward the ever more perfect, the ever more powerful, the ever more fruitful tool of production, wrought its effect upon early society with the advent of the iron tool. Those physically powerful enough to wield the then most fruitful tool became an aristocracy; those who could not, fell below. The line of cleavage was, accordingly, not sex, but physique. Of course, sex qualities contributed to mark the female sex the weaker. Nevertheless, it was not as woman that she was subordinated. The proof is found in the fact that woman shared the new subjection with the males, who, sex disregarded, were unequal to the demands made by the new apparition—the Iron Tool.

Poets have indulged the quaint conceit of a race of Amazons—muscularly vigorous viragoes, the peers of men. The conceit was not the product of poetic insight. It was the child of the infant mind's delight in the phenomenal. The Amazon is twin sister of the one-eyed monsters of Homer, the headless men of Herodotus, the four-armed beings of Hindu mythology, and other such antique impossibilities. The Amazon never was. She is a physical impossibility—except, of course, in the case of those exceptional instances in which Nature seems to delight in sporting with her own laws.

The appearance of iron in the development of the tool was, however potent, not the sole factor in the birth of the classes. The iron tool imparted to that development a powerful accelerating impulse; it did not create the Class Struggle. Interwoven with the racial impulse to supply man's deficiency by straining after the ever more perfect tool of production, is another sociologic law, a law that, given certain material conditions, may be said to dictate the Class

Struggle as an early racial necessity. This leading law may be condensed in a plain arithmetical formula.

Given a society of, say, one hundred persons, in which, work as they may, all they can produce is one dollar's worth of wealth, while five dollars' worth of wealth is the minimum each would require for comfort—given such a society, then its people are upon a level with brute creation: compelled to devote their whole existence to the supplying of their animal needs; ever on the brink of want; hence, dogged by that worst, most demoralizing of all specters—the specter of want; and, of course, deprived of leisure—that boon without which no room is left for mental and spiritual expansion. In such a society there would be equality, but the equality would be that of pauperism, with all the ills that that implies. This is no imaginary picture. It was the actual condition of our savage ancestors—it is the condition that the ripping of society into classes, with the consequence of the Class Struggle, had the instinctive purpose to pull us out of.

Of course, there was no “town meeting” called to consider the subject as a special order of business; there was no motion made, seconded, debated and carried. The race marches obedient to certain laws; the more backward it is, the less of a hand does it take in the application of these laws. Early man marched unconsciously in unconscious obedience to the laws that underlie his progress, much as a river flows to its destiny. Only when far advanced, with a fund of past experience that gives him prescience, does man take evolution by the hand, so to speak, and perform an active part in the process.

Early society, accordingly, faced unconsciously the alternative—either, equality—and then remain rooted in brutish and brutifying poverty; or, pull out of the rut—at the price of equality.

Unconsciously, instinctively, society took the latter alternative—instinctively, unconsciously striking the route of the valley of the Class Struggle.

It is a plain arithmetical proposition that, given a social state where the one hundred persons composing it, work as they may, can produce only one dollar's worth of wealth on an average, five dollars' worth being the minimum for comfort—it is a plain arithmetical proposition that under such material conditions, if only as few as five members of the community secure to themselves the amount of wealth necessary for freedom from toil, with the resultant freedom from want and the fear of want, and the leisure required for

Woman's Suffrage

mental and spiritual expansion—it is a plain arithmetical proposition that the consequence must be intensified evil conditions for the large majority. The Ninety-five will then have to feed the Five. Each of the Ninety-five being unable under the then conditions to produce more than one dollar's worth of wealth, it follows that out of the ninety-five dollars' worth producible by them will have to come the twenty-five needed by the Five. Thenceforth the Ninety-five cannot even enjoy the pittance of their own individual one dollar's worth of the fruit of their toil. Thenceforth their share would be seventy dollars' worth of wealth—less than their product. In short, slavery arises.

The appearance of the Iron Tool may, perhaps, not have sufficed to rip up society into a master and a slave class—perhaps not. The appearance, however, of the Iron Tool as an incident in the law that propelled society towards the perfection of the tool, coupled with the law of progress that urged society, at whatever cost, to pull out of the deep rut of universal brute conditions—with the two laws operating together, the appearance of the Iron Tool accelerated and placed its decisive stamp upon the course of events. A new institution—Private Property in the necessaries of production, land and tool—crystallized into being as the logical reflex of the altered industrial system. The Communal System was overthrown, or rather cast off. A majority fell below, a minority rose above where it was before. Yet there was no fall—no evil genius tempting. On the contrary. Mankind is one—whatever the sex, color, or race of its component human atoms. The Impossibility of Progress, under material surroundings of equality of brute conditions, was a doom upon the whole race; on the other hand, the Possibility of Progress, under material surroundings destined to lead up from the depth of universal brute conditions, was a boon universal.

Thus arose, such was the process, together with its orchestration, that shaped the Classes—Master and Slave. Thus did Woman lose the position of pre-eminence which the unquestionable evidences of the “Mother-Right” period in earlier gentile society attest she once enjoyed. The process, together with the reasons therefor, point unerringly to the conclusion that Woman's social downfall was not incurred as sex, but as a weaker vessel, being a downfall shared by her fellow weaker humans of the male sex. Each of the previous discoveries or inventions, marking the lower rungs of the ladder by which the race ascended—such, for instance, as the great discovery of the use of fire, and the subsequent and equally great invention of pottery—were discoveries and

inventions that called for skill only, vigor of muscle not at all. While those discoveries and inventions were a-making, Woman's sex qualities readily enough won and preserved for her the seat of honor she then enjoyed. The appearance of the Iron Tool, swung, moreover, by that social law that drove mankind to escape at any price from the social blind-alley of universal equality in poverty, cleft society in twain, the line of cleavage being Strength—the strength requisite to render the newly conquered tool available. The event wrought a veritable tragedy. Seeing the tragedy was one in which a whole sex, woman, was engulfed, a tragedy, moreover, which had for its sequel, and speedily and successively bore the fruits of specific sex hardships and indignities, that sex appears, naturally enough at first sight, as the sole victim in a catastrophe, and the singled-out objective of a conspiracy. Though appearances justify the conclusion, closer inspection, fuller information, rejects it.

The subjection of Woman is an incident in that primal social convulsion, the outlines of which, though veiled in the mist of the far distant past, are clearly discernible—the primal social convulsion that ripped society into classes, a Master and a Subject class, along the line of muscular strength. Woman, physically weak—weak, that is, in point of muscular fiber—shared, as a matter of course, the physical disabilities, hence the social disqualifications of the muscularly less favored males.

With the birth of the classes the Class Struggle springs up—the struggle between the upper and the lower class, the former to maintain, if possible, extend its authority; the latter to cast off, or, at least, ease its yoke.

From that day on, the history of the human race, all that is important in that history, is threaded by the line of the struggle between the two Classes, conducted with varying results, under varying aspects.¹

THE SUFFRAGE.

A weapon in the arsenal of the Class Struggle is the Suffrage.

¹ Lewis H. Morgan's work *Ancient Society* is recommended as indispensable to the understanding of the origin of the Class Struggle, and, thereby, to the understanding of the various manifestations of the Struggle. The work wrought a veritable revolution in the science of Ethnology. It is not the least of the glories of the Socialist Labor Party that the demand it created for this work rescued it from the oblivion to which the Ruling Class of America sought to relegate this, the gift to the world of one of America's greatest geniuses.

Woman's Suffrage

It will not be necessary to go into the details of the Suffrage with the fullness I have just done when considering the sources of the Class Struggle. In the matter of the Class Struggle, its beginnings, a valuable guide to the understanding of all modern social manifestations, are, with regard to Woman's Suffrage, particularly important, aye, indispensable. It is not so in the matter of Suffrage, especially not so with an eye to Woman's Suffrage. The origin itself of Suffrage throws no special light on the matter in hand—except in so far as Suffrage is a product of the primal social revolution which subjugated Woman.² The history of Suffrage grows in interest to the Woman's Movement, and it becomes essential to the proper handling of the political issues which the Movement raises, only after Suffrage begins to play its role in modern history, that is, when the Class Struggle itself has undergone marked changes. It is from that later date on that Suffrage gains step by step in significance and importance to the understanding of the Woman's Movement.

Folks, who, conscious of the vaporousness of their pet theories regarding the tactical treatment of the modern Social Question, feel constrained to manufacture facts to square with and thereby prop up their own vagaries, are fond of sneering at Suffrage as a “concession of the bourgeois.” The Suffrage is no “concession”—least of all by the bourgeois. Suffrage existed before the bourgeois himself, and long before the bourgeois had power to “concede” anything. The Suffrage is a conquest of advancing civilization, wrung from the clutches of Tyranny.

In the line of succession of tyrant classes, we encounter the feudal lord; in the line of succession of tyrannized classes, we encounter the bourgeois; in the line of succession of Class Struggles, we encounter the struggle conducted between the feudal lord and the bourgeois. Our inquiry into the history of the Suffrage may safely begin with the bourgeois revolution, when Suffrage played a more extensive and effective role than ever before.

One would hardly recognize in the pharisaic, pietistic, “law-abiding,” “peaceful,” conservative, in short, in the Philistine Capitalist of to-day the iconoclastic, revolutionary bourgeois who summoned to his bar all institutions

² To the militant in the Socialist Movement—whose mental fiber protects him against the allurements of increasing the volume of the Movement's literature with literature that is mainly a rehash of principles already plentifully and brilliantly set forth—the suggestion is thrown out that the history of Suffrage from its inception still awaits treatment; and when it appears will be a valuable contribution to the literature of the Social Question.

“human and divine,” called upon them “to justify their existence,” and fought and won the battle of Capitalism against Feudalism. Previous social revolutions had been long protracted affairs. The bourgeois sustained long protracted struggles; he went through a long period of preparation; that is all true; but his revolution was swift, sharp, drastic. This was markedly so in France and America. The history of the Suffrage is peculiarly interesting in its instructiveness as it deploys here in America, the leading country of triumphant bourgeoisdom, or pluto-capitalism; hence a rapid sketch of its career will give material aid in grasping the political issue presented by Woman’s Suffrage.

The American Revolution, the name that our bourgeois revolution goes by, was the most liberal until then experienced. Dry-as-dust dogmatists, whose Socialism goes by rote, deprive the gorgeous Morgan-Marxian theory regarding the materialist conception of history of much of its splendor, incisiveness and many-sided luminousness by denying the Revolutionary Fathers of America all sincerity in their fervid proclamations of freedom. Not only is the materialist conception of history nowise done violence to, on the contrary, it receives marked demonstration from the sincere, however fatuous, belief of the Revolutionary Fathers that they had established freedom on permanent foundations.

Surrounded by vast, seemingly inexhaustible natural opportunities ready at hand for the taking—besides, if not above all, with the implements of production so manifoldly developed that most of them could be readily fashioned and used by all—under such conditions involuntary poverty was, as a matter of fact, out of question. The young male American did hire himself to another—but he had the certainty of eventually enjoying independence as a master mechanic himself; the young American girl might be seen taking service in some other household—but she served with dignity, certain one day to be mistress at her own hearth. Under such conditions each could be said to be the architect of his own fortune, modest, yet sufficient. Under such conditions the one-time reason for classes seemed no more. Accordingly, when the American Revolution took place, Suffrage, now become a necessity to large communities, is found in force as a universal right, enjoyed without distinction of sex, by those who chose, neglected by those less politically active,—*and restricted only by a property qualification*, which, being small, so far from savoring of former times’ class distinction, only emphasized the revolutionary sincerity in the declaration that

Woman's Suffrage

the American Republic had removed the ground from under slavery and was a guarantee of Freedom.

Of course the belief was fatuous. The economic social laws that underlie the private ownership of the necessities for production—land and tools—and which started into activity since that great primal revolution which overthrew the Communal System, could not choose but be latent in the young bourgeois American Republic. Nor were these laws slow to assert themselves, and, in so asserting themselves, to shake and then shatter, the card-house of the Revolution's illusions concerning Freedom. The institution that was a necessary accompaniment and logical reflex of the ripping of the old Communal System into warring classes—the private ownership of the necessities for production—could not survive without fatedly reacting back and re-introducing the social conditions which, originally, had given birth to the institution itself, and which the institution was, in turn, meant to safeguard. The inevitable happened. The events that followed, the changes that were wrought, thrill, step by step, with significance to Woman's Suffrage. Our own Empire State of New York, the pacesetter for the land, is classic ground for study on this head.

The institution of private ownership of the necessities for production carried out its mission with marvelous dexterity—all visions of the permanence of Freedom and all the Jingoism of the freedom-promoting inexhaustibleness of our natural opportunities to the contrary notwithstanding. Indeed, it turned out that both the visions of Freedom and Jingoism concerning our natural resources, only furnished ready-made and desirable material for conversion into dust, wherewith to fill confiding eyes. Under the dust, raised in ever thicker clouds and almost suffocating us to-day, a complete transformation took place in the social conditions, in the very foundation of the Class Struggle—and, as the inevitable consequence, in the angle of vision within which Suffrage fell. A few manifestations of the transformation will throw light across the path of our endeavors to understand and promote Woman's Suffrage.

The property qualifications which, in the days of the American Revolution, only added dignity to Suffrage, soon became a bar to its exercise. Small as the property qualification was, and one time easily attainable, it became unattainable, within half a generation, to increasing numbers. By the time the century of the Revolution was rounded, the property qualification became a political disability to still larger numbers. Poverty spread apace; bankruptcies

multiplied to a point that bankruptcy laws—a sort of belated Jubilee of olden Hebrew legislation—were demanded with a view to cancel indebtedness, and give creditors a new start; the unemployed sprang up like mushrooms in all the large cities;—in short, all the evidences were visible of a Class Struggle under modern conditions. The classes had re-risen, and were at it.

A second manifestation of the transformation, and leading consequence of the first, was the onslaught, generally successful, against the original property qualification. The State of New York was the chief battlefield. During the second decade of the Nineteenth Century, a little over a hundred years ago, the move came to a head. In vain did the eminent Chancellor Kent warn against the innovation. He cautioned that the move was not in the interest of a broadened democracy, but in that of the already powerful employers' class—the employer who had twenty employees would thenceforth control one and twenty votes, instead of the single vote he then wielded—it was simply a move whereby the employer could multiply his political voice by the number of votes in his establishment. It was all to no purpose—and fortunately so. The Chancellor was only partly right, and mainly wrong. He was no more right than those who today seek to brace up against the concentration of wealth—a necessary, useful process in the promotion of the Socialist Revolution. Moreover the Chancellor was wrong in his premises. The move though, perhaps, abetted by some of the then larger employers, was not of their initiative, and must have been positively distasteful to most. The move was the issue of a political uprising of the New York working class, and it had a decidedly revolutionary ring, as proved by its nomination for Governor of Thomas Skidmore, the author of a book, which, however crude in its economics and sociology, consequently in its program also, nevertheless contained utterances of lasting value; for instance:

“Inasmuch as great wealth is an instrument which is uniformly used to extort from others their property, it ought to be taken away from its possessors, on the same principle that a sword or a pistol may be wrested from a robber, who shall undertake to accomplish the same effect in a different manner.”

The move was of proletarian initiation; and was, as I shall presently show, made in obedience to a keen instinct. It was successful. The property qualifications to the Suffrage were abolished in this State.

A manifestation of another order, and to which attention can not be too strongly called, was the appearance of women among the Ruling Class. As you

Woman's Suffrage

will remember, when the primal communal society was first split into classes, Woman took her place in the lower, the class of the ruled, along with those males, who, like herself, were physically disqualified to wield the Iron Tool. As you will remember, the characteristic of the Ruling Class then was strength to wield the Iron Tool. As you may judge, it was not property that imparted power to rule; it was power to rule, because of exclusive capacity to render needed social service, that imparted property. A Ruling Class makes its first appearance upon the stage of history as a useful service-rendering minority. It is in this capacity that the Ruling Class, down to the bourgeois revolution, assumes and becomes owner of the necessaries for production, and, as a consequence, of the wealth produced. Sole capacity personally to wield the needed or leading tool of its times is the foundation of a Ruling Class from its inception and down to the bourgeois revolution. With the advent of the bourgeois revolution the foundation is radically changed. Property ceases to be the attribute of rule; rule becomes the attribute of property. The reason is obvious—the radical change wrought in the tool of production, coupled with the consequences thereof, altered social conditions. As Marx tersely put it: “It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist.” The capitalist does no manner of useful work; he renders no manner of social service; he could not, if he would. Soon as that transformation is perfected the Hetty Greens³ appear abreast of the J. Pierpont Morgans, the Harriet Fishers turn up beside the James W. Van Cleaves in National Manufacturers’ Associations. Thus once more the pregnant fact is made manifest—sex is not, as it never was, the line of class cleavage.

A fourth manifestation of the transformation that came over the conditions of the land; one that constitutes a landmark in the evolution of Suffrage; moreover, one that vies in importance to Woman’s Suffrage with the manifestation just considered, in which women appear as members, active ones, at that, along with men among militants in the Ruling Class,—that

³ How thoroughgoing a revolution is marked by the appearance of the Hetty Greens on the social stage is illustrated by a recent remark of the lady: “Let others own the land. I take mortgages upon the land.” Not only is the original foundation of the Class Struggle so completely changed, from what it was originally, that Woman steps into the Ruling Class but also the subsequent accompanying foundation—land—that became a characteristic of feudal supremacy has been removed. The capitalist woman sees no attraction in land; what charms her is the capitalist claws with which to transform the land into profits-yielding capital.

manifestation is the discredit into which the franchise has fallen in the estimation of the Social Masters.

You will remember how the bourgeois revolution, surpassing all others in the revolutionariness of its aspirations and in the liberality of its program, proclaimed and established universal Suffrage. Then, in Whittier's language,

The crowning fact

The kingliest act

Of Freedom was the freeman's vote!

When the private ownership of the necessities of production had done its work, and the latent bourgeois quality of Tyranny in Idleness matured to full bloom, all that changed. Suffrage, a rung of the ladder by which the bourgeois climbed into capitalist power, lost its fascination—even worse.

The ballot, with regard to themselves, male as well as female capitalists now look at it—at the onetime prized weapon and proud badge of citizenship—as an unclean thing to handle. The sentiment is kin to that other sentiment which despises work. Once a worker, despised by his feudal lord for being a worker, and proud of being one, the capitalist, the modern full-blown bourgeois, now, in turn, despises work upon the same principle as did his feudal lord of old—work, under Class Rule, means unrequited toil, and that is a badge of servitude. Precisely as the feudal lord justified his sovereignty with the mystification of “by the grace of God,” the capitalist—through his official mouthpieces, of professors, politicians, press and pulpiteers—justifies his pre-eminence with language, which, though not literally so, nevertheless is equivalent to the principle, “Idleness is the source of all wealth.” Naturally enough, such a standard of ethics can have no liking for the active use of the ballot. The mills, mines, factories, railroads, shops—from top to bottom, all the plants of industry and of useful service are now superintended and run by proletarians, by wage slaves. They run to perfection in the interest of the capitalist master. Why should not the political shop—that buttress to the industrial shop—why should not it also be run likewise? Royalty does not vote. Is it dignified for the Monarch Capitalist Class to vote,—and hustle, aye, perchance be jostled about on the political field by sweaty toilers? It is well worth the while to watch the legislative devices of the Capitalist Class to be saved the annoyances of political activity, and bring the ballot box to their beds and bathtubs.⁴ Woman, in the meantime, had been

⁴ Another subject deserving the research of serious Socialists who would enrich the

Woman's Suffrage

constructively, perhaps surreptitiously, disfranchised. If to the male members of the Capitalist Class the use of the ballot is repulsive, to the female members of the same class the ballot is, to say the least, no more attractive. They sneer at, where they do not despise it.

But the social transformation which the country has undergone finds its manifestation, with regard to Suffrage, in something more active than dislike by the Capitalist Class for political activity by himself. It finds its manifestation also in a dread, on the part of the Capitalist Class, for political activity exercised by the proletariat.

The capitalist is not in the dark as to what Suffrage implies. The capitalist is well aware that, if Suffrage began and ended with the ballot, the peacefully blissful continuance of the Reign of Capital would be an assured thing. Whatever the system of voting—whether old style; or Australian style, so-called; or machine;—the capitalist is safely entrenched politically. A hostile vote that endangers his reign can to-day be deftly counted out, and safely, too.

Furthermore, as an incident in their struggles with one another, one set of capitalists has often found its account in setting up a “Labor Party,” a sort of decoy duck to draw votes away from the other set. Hardly a State, north of Mason and Dixon’s line, but has seen, some time or other, the apparition.⁵ But the trick is falling into disuse. For one thing, with the stupendous development of the Trust the “Labor Vote” to-day, is, as Chancellor Kent’s partially correct opinion predicted, ever more plainly a tail to the Trust magnates’ kite. For another thing, the trick is costly. The psychologic counterpart of the physical quality of the drunkard never to be satisfied is the capitalist’s mental quality, never to feel rich enough. The English economist, T.J. Dunning, stated with witty profundity that, with a 300 per cent profit in sight, there is no crime at which capital will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. For parity of reason, the Capitalist, female or male, while prone to lavishness for purposes of ostentation, eschews expenses in business. They lower profits. Decoy-duck Labor Parties are mercenary armies, and expensive. For a third reason, the trick is fraught with danger. If decoy Labor Parties are free to spring up, then bona fide ones cannot be prevented.

[literature of the Social Question with solid information, comprehensively presented.](#)

⁵ A third subject worthy of the attention of serious Socialists, and awaiting comprehensive historic treatment.

That is the rub—and the specter it raises in the capitalist’s mind’s eye is one that Woman’s Suffrage must reckon with.

If Suffrage began and ended with voting, the worst inconvenience that the capitalist could suffer from it in the hands of the proletariat would be that of a gravel in the shoe—a nuisance, but nothing fatal. Suffrage, however, does not begin and end with the ballot. The ballot is only an incident, the least important, at that, in the franchise. The franchise, Suffrage, implies propaganda; propaganda educates; education crystallizes into organization. A revolutionary propaganda against Capitalism is unfeasible except in the open. Too numerous is the Class interested therein; too many even the minimum number needed for the resultant organization that the times demand. These numbers can not be reached and brought together in midnight gatherings in cellars, or attics, or groves, nor can the propaganda be conducted in whispers, or veiled language. The revolutionary propaganda against Capitalism can be conducted only over-and-above-board, in language that is clear in sound, and clear in sense. There is no field other than that offered by Suffrage for such a propaganda. What is known as “Political Action”—that alone can preach the Revolution in the way it must be preached.

Now, then, we have seen, on the one hand, the ballot-holding proletariat fastened to-day as a tail to the political kite of the Top Capitalist Class; on the other hand, we have seen the utter futility of the proletarian ballot alone. To escape being impaled on one horn or the other of the dilemma there is but one path—to use the opportunity afforded by Suffrage to preach the Social Revolution; in other words, to carry on the propaganda that will educate, and, so doing, crystallize in that organization which is the only physical force available to the proletariat; the all-sufficient physical force; withal, the very physical force, the mold of which is furnished by capitalist society itself, in that the mold foreshadows the construction of the Socialist Republic—the *integrally industrial organization of the proletariat*. The industrial organization of the proletariat, on the one hand, cuts the bonds of economic superstitions that frighten the proletarian ballot into Top-Capitalist support, and thereby gives a chance to a peaceful solution of the Social Question; on the other hand, the industrial organization of the proletariat is the ready physical force to frustrate a capitalist electoral crime.

Though deep thought is not a capitalist virtue, instinct is a virtue of the

Woman's Suffrage

dullest beast,—pre-eminently so of Usurpation. No wonder the Capitalist Class now sees in Suffrage a source of danger to its existence.

Finally, there is a fifth manifestation of the transformation that came over the land, due to the economic laws that underlie the private ownership of the necessaries for production—a transformation that can be overlooked only at the peril of Woman's Suffrage. It flows as the direct consequence of the one just considered—the, at first bold, now devious devices adopted to disfranchise the proletariat, at least hamper it in the exercise of Suffrage.

The chapter of the story I now enter upon has never yet received that fullness of treatment that it is entitled to.⁶ I can here give only its roughest outline.

The attempt of Capitalism to rid itself of the danger that Suffrage is fraught with for its rule may be said to have started with the scheme of President Grant's ex-Secretary of the Treasury, Benjamin H. Bristow, conceived barely ten years after the close of the Civil War, to overthrow the Republic and replace it with a monarchy. Bristow was too headlong. The scheme was smothered. Less headlong than Bristow's, but still too bold for execution, was the next, the scheme of which Simon Sterne of this State became a leading expositor a few years later—the scheme to re-establish a property qualification. That scheme also was scotched. Its weakness also lay in its frankness. Then came the third epoch in the move, when the same purpose was to be pursued in devious and surreptitious ways. That epoch we are now in.

In several states of the South the scheme has been tangled up with the false pretense of "preserving the purity of the white race." The pretense is transparent. Concealed under it is the throbbing Labor Problem. The tanglefoot Suffrage legislation, while aimed at the Negro ostentatiously as a Negro, in fact aims at him as a wage slave, seeking to keep him focused to the traditional standpoint, and, along with him, the rest of his class. In most other States, the North leading, the scheme is pursued under the colors of the "Australian Ballot."

The term "Australian Ballot" suggests the idea of a move democracyward. The "Australian Ballot" presupposes the impossibility of, at least much curtailed opportunities for ballot-box frauds; it diminishes, aye, removes the item of

⁶ A fourth subject that bespeaks and awaits special treatment by serious Socialists, who would enlighten the movement with original work.

expense—a serious obstacle to the ease of political expression under the former private ballot system. In short, the “Australian Ballot” presents itself as a promise of a more efficacious, because more liberal, Suffrage. Under color of the promise, suggested by the name—”Australian Ballot”—exactly the opposite goal is pursued, and is being accomplished. Out of the forty-six States of the Union only three—Georgia, North and South Carolina—have retained the old system. In these three States, it would seem, the alleged “Anti-Negro” ballot laws are deemed sufficient for the purpose. In all the remaining forty-three States the “Australian Ballot,” *modified*, has been introduced. What the modifications purport may be judged from a few of the most striking ones:

The Virginia sample “Australian Ballot” that I have is fit to superinduce delirium tremens in choosing one’s candidates. The names of the offices are so contrived as to run into one another. A mistake in marking, by all but the most expertly prepared, is easily incurred. A mistake renders the ballot null.

In the States of Washington and Minnesota, a money contribution is demanded from each candidate. In Minnesota, a fixed sum; in Washington, a percentage, a tall one at that, of the salary attached to each office.

Here in New York, where we have nearly sixty counties, at least fifty signatures are now demanded in each, besides a total of 6,000. Slip on one county and you have slipped on all.

In Ohio and other States the percentages are being raised.

In short, all the modifications hamstringing more or less the “Australian Ballot;” they are intended to render free Suffrage expression difficult, and more and more so—all obedient to that sentiment of the capitalist, female and male, that to-day causes the Ruling Class to scent danger in Suffrage, and to strain for its abolition as a proletarian weapon.

Surveying the field of the Woman Suffrage Movement from the elevation of the historic development that I have just rapidly sketched—the splitting of the primal Communal System into classes; the metamorphosis undergone in the foundation of the Ruling Class; the rise of Suffrage; the changes Suffrage has undergone; finally the present posture of the capitalist mind toward the ballot in its own and then in the hand of the proletariat—we are in condition to pass in review the arguments of the Suffragist Specialists, and the arguments of their Antis.

Woman's Suffrage

ARGUMENTS OF ANTIS.

I have jotted down a few of the representative arguments made by the leading male and female opposers of Woman's Suffrage.

Here they are:

“Woman's Suffrage would break up the home;”

“Woman has no experience or knowledge of political matters;”

“The ballot would degrade woman;”

“Woman is mentally unfit for questions of State;”

“The ballot would render woman sordid;”

“The disfranchised status of woman may work evil here and there; on the whole, what is their loss is society's gain.”

These will do. They are types of the mass of Anti-ammunition fired into the camp of the Suffragists.

Not one of these arguments but sounds as a deliberate insult to the human intellect. To dispose of them, however, as such would be to miss the point. With the exception of the Richard Watson Gilders—beings that are atavistic manifestations of the oyster stage in biology, the stage of mentality that, clinging to the seaweed-covered rock of the Present-Past, perceives not the changes that are going on in shore formations and in the current of the tides—with the exception of such oyster antediluvianists, whose occasional poetical vein, instead of promoting Progress, would retard it by making the apotheosis of the Past, at the shrine of which they worship, veritable pagans—with the exception of such mentalities, to whom I am surprised not yet to have seen the talented Charlotte Perkins Gilman dedicate a geologic poem, matching the one with which, nearly twenty years ago, she disposed of Francis A. Walker, the unenviable author of the dictum: “Socialism is a vagary”⁷—with the exception of such exceptional personages, all others who raise their voice against Woman's Suffrage utter the sentiments of the Ruling Class. Theirs is not a purpose to insult: theirs is the purpose to preserve their class supremacy, instinctively felt to be imperiled by a Movement, which, so far from restricting, as they are seeking to do, would tend to add fresh recruits to the political army of the proletariat. How truly an exhalation of capitalist-class instinct the Antis'

⁷ Francis A. Walker's dictum was hurled at the Nationalist Movement which was given birth to by Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward*. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's brilliantly satirical poem, dedicated to Mr. Walker and compeers, appeared in *The Nationalist* at the time.

arguments are appears from their being exact counterparts of the agonized arguments that proceed from the same source against Socialism.

Let us consider them separately:

“Woman’s Suffrage would break up the home”—exactly what they say against Socialism—a doubly untrue charge. For the home to be threatened with destruction by Woman Suffrage, or Socialism, the home must be safe and pure to-day under the shield of capitalism. The home is broken up to-day. Mothers, in increasing numbers, are torn from their homes in search of a living in factories and shops, while their babes are “charitably” left to the “charitable” care of “charitably” instituted “nurseries;” husbands have to leave their homes in search, far and wide, for the illusive job; children, who should be under the softening influence of the home are forced into the hardening influence of child labor. Nor is this all. The percentage of marriages declines; the percentage of divorces increases; while the domestic scandals that are in perpetual outbreak among the topmost branches of the tree of the Top-Capitalist Class allow more than peeps into what is up in those “homes”—all this under the shield of Capitalism. The home is pivoted upon material well-being. Whatever tends to promote the solidity of the pivot makes for the solidity of the home. Nor can it be doubted that to place in the hand of the members themselves of the home the power to control its destiny must make for the welfare of the home. It is but natural that, with the opposite principle in force, the home is to-day on the rocks.

“Woman has no experience or knowledge of political matters”—exactly what they say of the Working Class—exactly the language of King George and his Parliament toward the American colonists in revolt—exactly the language of the Oeil de Boeuf anent the bourgeois who demanded a voice in the affairs of the France of the Old Regime—exactly the recent language of Abdul Hamid towards his people tired of autocratic rule. In short, exactly the language that Usurpation ever holds, and that regularly is disproved, soon as its yoke is cast off. The resources a people hold within themselves are vast soon as the bars are thrown down and opportunities are open to all.

Upon that history is eloquently conclusive.

“The ballot would degrade woman”—though not literally, yet substantially what they say of the effect that Socialism would have upon the race—a purely ruling-class conception of what the race is. To a Ruling Class, *it* is the race.

Woman's Suffrage

What is good for *it* is good for *the race*; what harms *it* is harmful to *the race*. Once, as we saw, the conception had a color of justice. It had a color of justice with the initial ruling class whose useful efforts society then needed; it had a color of justice even with the bourgeois, whose efforts, though essentially criminal in methods, served the needed purpose of organizing labor co-operatively—so long as he performed that needed social mission, the bourgeois could consider himself *the race* with a color of justice. But its mission has been performed by each successive Ruling Class. To-day the last descendant of the long line of social masters, the capitalist, lingers on the stage only as a scab clings to the wound that healed under it. To-day, accordingly, not only is the present ruling class not *the race*, it has become a husk formation upon the race—benefited only in the measure that it injures the race; harmed by aught that would promote the race. No wonder the Capitalist Class apprehend the effect of Woman's Suffrage upon their *race*.

“Woman is mentally unfit for questions of State”—exactly the charge they bring against the proletariat, and for exactly the same purpose—to justify the continuance of their own privileged position. In both cases, to the extent that there is truth in the charge it smites the charger. The ethic principle that none shall profit by his own wrong rejects a plea that seeks to justify the continuance of a wrong with the wrong itself.

“The ballot would render woman sordid”—who does not recognize in this charge the familiar ring of the admonition to the Working Class, issued from Falstaffian “capon-lined bellies,” to give no heed to Socialism with its “materialistic” and “unspiritual gospel,” but turn their thoughts to heaven, and there lay up treasures for themselves where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal?

“The disfranchised status of woman may work evil here and there; on the whole, what is their loss is society's gain”—drop the words in the sentence, which allude to Woman exclusively, and substitute for them “condition of the Working Class,” and the whole sentence, literally and in spirit, is identically the self-satisfied phrase with which some official sociologists of the Capitalist Class have sought to reconcile the proletariat to their martyrdom—“the condition of the working class may work evil here and there; on the whole what is their loss is society's gain.” Slavery ever debases the slave and pollutes the master. The debasement on the one side, the pollution on the other may be extenuated as

transitory social necessities whereby ultimate and greater benefits are to be gained to all. We saw such to be the case when the first Ruling Class, the wielder of the Iron Tool, arose; social science recognizes the force of the argument even in the instance of the bourgeois when his mission was still to be fulfilled; with the fulfillment of the mission of the bourgeois the social mission, if the term may be allowed, of the injuries inflicted by Class Rule is completed. So thoroughly completed is it that the whole basis of Class Rule stands transformed. Not Effort but Idleness is now the badge of the modern social ruler. The goal, which to attain, society submitted to the ills of Class Rule, has been reached. The tool and mechanism of production have matured to such perfection, that to-day, without arduous toil, abundance is possible to all. The double-headed Wolf of Want and Fear of Want need no longer throw his shadow across the threshold of man. Leisure is possible to all; with Leisure its long train of blessings. In short, the first task of the human race has been accomplished. The problem of its material wellbeing is solved. We now stand at the gate of the higher problems, the mental and spiritual problems of our existence. Slavery, at such a ripened season, has no longer any place in sense or reason. To seek to justify it in any form is to seek to sacrifice the race to the interests of a superannuated class. It is to act as a drag upon Progress.

In short, Suffrage is not being denied to Woman as a sex; it is being denied to her as a proletarian. The women who are not proletarians care not for the ballot themselves any more than the male members of their class, and realize full well, with their male fellows, that by foregoing this, to them, indifferent privilege, they bar out the overwhelming members of their sex who are proletarians. I have yet to hear an argument from the Antis that does not proceed from Ruling-Class interests—consequently, that does not help to light the movement for Woman Suffrage the road that it should tread.

ARGUMENTS OF PROS.

Have the Suffragists—and when I say Suffragists Suffragettes are included—have the Suffragists caught the note of the Antis' opposition? The regrettable fact must be recorded that, as a body, they have not. Far otherwise. Had the Antis deliberately meant to lead the Suffragists to the wrong track, the Suffragists could not, as a body, have suited the Antis more completely.

Let me take up some of the arguments made by prominent Suffragists on

Woman's Suffrage

leading occasions—especially arguments that are favorite ones, and deemed powerful by them.

“With the disfranchisement of woman,” it is a favorite argument with Suffragists, “society has been limping on only one foot.” This is a historic error involving a serious error in sociology. It is not on a whole foot that society has been limping. Society has been “limping” on only the hundredth part, or even less, of a foot. The episode in the history of Suffrage, comprised in the era of the old Republic of Rome, for one, not to mention other striking episodes in the history of Suffrage, is conclusive of the fact that it is by virtue of Class Rule that society has done the “limping.”⁸ The members of the estate consisting of the poor classes in Rome were qualified voters. But their vote was, constitutionally, of no importance if the two upper classes—patricians and knights—were agreed, and, consequently, their vote was not required in such cases, which was the rule. It was, accordingly, not by reason of its being divided between qualified and unqualified voters that the Roman Republic “limped.” It “limped” because of being divided into economic classes—a Ruling and a Ruled class. The latter being the vast majority, there was no whole foot, but only a fraction of a foot to “limp” upon. We have seen that, with the very first appearance of Classes, symmetry ceased in the anatomy of society. From that time on there was “limping,” but the lame limb comprised the large majority, and the majority comprised males as well as females.

It suits the Ruling Class to have Woman's Suffrage presented as a sex issue. As such an issue the source and present foundation of Woman's social inferiority are kept dark, and thereby the inferiority is perpetuated.

Take this other argument:

Olive Schreiner, a brilliant advocate of Woman's Rights, is the framer of the pathetic sentence, “We have carried the race within our body, and we have carried it on our arms and our back,” on account of which she pleads for the Suffrage for Woman *as a matter of Justice*.—Justice is not the moving force of the race. Justice has meant different things to different men at different times. Idle is the speculation whether there is an Abstract Justice, or not. The question will appear differently to different men of different temperaments—*but all will*

⁸ The episode comprised in the era of feudalism in France, after the bourgeois had obtained the suffrage; likewise in Spain; also in the medieval republics of Italy and the German Hansa towns, are all illustrative of the same fact.

act alike. The practical fact is that, granting the theory of Abstract Justice, its practice depends upon material possibilities. It is a “working maxim” that, whether a man hold to the theory of Abstract Justice or not, he must begin by encompassing the material conditions to render feasible the Justice that he aims at, and which he seeks to substitute for some other principle in force and held to be Justice by others. It follows that, guided by the Torch of Human Experience, which does not lose force or dignity by being designated as “Sociology,” he who would introduce the “Justice,” whose light he strives after, must do what he does who would introduce light into his room—begin by providing the lamp. Only in the measure that lamps improve has illumination gained in brilliancy. He who would illumine the house social with the added brilliancy of Woman’s Suffrage must begin by providing the material lamp to shed that improved light. Sociology teaches how the voice of Woman was originally silenced, and the reason why it is wished that that voice be continued silent to-day. The Social-material lamp that is to shed the light is the abolition of Class Rule. The demand for “Justice” is a cry in the wilderness.

No Ruling Class fancies this reasoning. With each succeeding Ruling Class the mystification of “Abstract Justice” is a palladium. Logically so. If there is “Abstract Justice,” then, what is must be just. If what is is just, then the respective Ruling Class is just; its existence, as a consequence, a perpetuity; and, as an ultimate consequence, to attack or raise a rebellious hand against it is sacrilege. Hence we see no Ruling Class fond of History. History overthrows the pretense, and, along with it, the theory of “Abstract Justice.” The plea for Justice takes Woman’s Suffrage before the very tribunal that its foe, the Ruling Class, would wish.

Take this third argument:

It is of more recent date, but has become a veritable pet.

With the recent revolutions in Finland, Russia, Turkey and Persia—in all of which the demand for Woman’s Suffrage has figured more or less conspicuously—the argument became frequent at Suffragists’ meetings that “Finland extended the Suffrage to women; the Russian revolutionists demanded it for her; even in the ‘land of veiled women’ the veil is being cast aside, and women, abreast of men, have begun to claim the ballot for both.” The argument is intended as a reproach to the government of the United States. Indeed, the reproach is often expressly made. “Other countries,” so runs the reasoning,

Woman's Suffrage

“countries that have waked up long after our own to the call of democracy, immediately established Woman’s Suffrage, while others promptly demanded it. America alone lags behind.” So far from the reproach comparing Finland and these other lands favorably, it compares them unfavorably with this government—that is, from the sociologic standpoint deliberately chosen by the Woman’s Suffrage Movement itself. A Social Movement can not, in these days, remain neutral in the issue between the Proletariat and the Capitalist Class. Neutrality, at such times, is, at least, implied consent that the social system, as it is, continue in force. A movement that, accordingly, raises no objection to the Capitalist System of society, accepts capitalist evolution as legitimate. Now then, we saw how the bourgeois revolution starts ultra-radical. We saw the evidence of this in the American Revolution with regard to the very subject of Suffrage.⁹ The Revolution saw no classes; could conceive of none; accordingly, Suffrage was universal, as a matter of course,—unqualified, as a matter of course, by sex. Such was the American Revolution at its inception—such it is in Finland to-day; such would the Russian Revolution have been if successful—and for identical reasons. The revolution we see taking place, and those attempted in Eastern Europe, even in Persia, are bourgeois revolutions in their nature. Being such, their present democracy is not an evidence of advance beyond capitalist thought in America; it is an evidence of immaturity compared with American bourgeoisdom. So far from the Bourgeois Rule of America proving itself behind the Ruling Class in those other countries, by reason of its withholding Suffrage from Woman, the Bourgeois Rule of America attests by its posture the long distance it has traveled since the time when it was at the Finland stage.

When the Suffragists twit the American government, to which they appeal, with not being abreast of Finland, they cause the government no shame; on the contrary, they make it feel proud of being so far beyond the youthful age when itself was subject to “infant diseases,” as the professional mouthpieces of Capitalism arrogantly and self-complacently term the early democratic pulsations of the class of their paymasters. When the Suffragists twit the American government, to which they appeal and from which they fatuously

⁹ The recognition of chattel slavery in the Negro race by the Revolutionary Fathers does not affect the principle. For reasons that are parallel with those upon which the establishment of a property qualification for Suffrage cannot be considered to detract from the genuineness of the revolutionary spirit of 1776, Negro chattel slavery, not then the national institution it developed into later, must likewise be discounted.

expect help, with being behind Finland, they do not weaken the government's arm, they strengthen it.

Take, again, this other and also favorite argument, one that was condensed in a short sentence by Mme. Sarah Grand at the International Woman's Congress, held this very year at London: "Modern civilization is to be saved by woman."—As there is but a step from the tragic to the ridiculous, the posture of the tragically fatal argument is being carried to a laughable extreme. At the Suffragist meeting held in Carnegie Hall on last December 4, with no less distinguished a personage than Mrs. Philip Snowden as the principal speaker—there, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, the Rev. Charles F. Aked and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise rang the changes of the principle which Mme. Grand condensed, and so many others enlarge upon. In two lengthy elocutions, that were the most absurd and undignified twaddle it ever was my misfortune, or, perhaps, my fortune to listen to (it may be fortunate to witness, personally, certain scenes: they might otherwise be deemed impossible), the two reverend gentlemen performed a distressing feat of self-effacement. Listening to them one would imagine that male creation was a sort of "appendix," good only to produce social "appendicitis," and fit only for amputation—and that none too soon.

A few years ago, on the occasion of the annual dinner of the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, the toast list being exhausted and the Pilgrim Fathers having been extolled, as usual, a longheaded, witty descendant arose and of his own motion proposed a toast "To our Pilgrim Mothers, without whom our Pilgrim Fathers would not have been of much account." I do not intend to make the apotheosis of Woman. She does not need it. But after the full and due meed of honor is bestowed upon her, only one-half the sex tale is told. Whether biologically or sociologically viewed, without male creation, woman creation is not of much account.

Wrong enthroned can wish for nothing better than for its assailants to turn freaks. Upon these the subtle warning is lost conveyed by Artemus Ward in his "ferocious he-females," armed with "bloo-cotton umbrelers," and the grotesque "she-males" that danced attendance upon them, and both of whom inveighed against "proud and domineerin' man."

Still another argument, closely connected with the one just considered, and which I have heard advanced by more than one Suffragist, notably by a woman

Woman's Suffrage

speaker who dispenses in particularly emphatic language some of the most startlingly original ideas, is this: "Woman invented industry."—Industry is no invention. It is an absurdity to call it that. As we saw, industry is the result of the race's striving after the Tool of Production to supply the deficiency of its birth. Industry slowly evolved with the slow evolution of the tool. That no sex in particular contrived the first tool, and that there is no historic data upon which to base the theory that the contrivance was the work of any one sex, are conclusions that flow inevitably both from man's primal Communism, and from the subjection that males, along with females, have been held under ever since the rise of Classes. No good can accrue to a Movement whose arguments partake of the nature of pleas "by lawyers with endless tongues," or of the nature of blind fanaticism that adjusts facts to theories, instead of theories to facts. The Movement that attracts and gives prominence to such supporters betrays the fact, either that it is impossible; or that it has not yet found solid ground upon which to plant itself, and from which to draw logical reasons for its existence and triumph.

Less frequent than any of these arguments, but, whenever advanced, advanced with uncommon intensity, is the argument that the Movement for Woman's Suffrage is one in which it is physically and morally impossible for man to feel as Woman does. This argument places the Movement more expressly and exclusively upon the terrain of sex than any other. "Man," declare those who advance the argument, "cannot possibly realize the deep sense of personal indignation felt by Woman at the infamous state of sex subjection to which man-made law lowers her." Being so entirely a sex argument, the argument is advanced particularly to Woman, whose support is demanded to join in a "revolt"; some Suffragists even use the word "revolution."—This argument sounds sentimental. Scientifically, it does not fall and may not be placed under that classification without missing the point. The sentimental argument, as I shall show, has, in its place, a legitimate function to perform: the argument that attacks effects only, while it partakes of the sentimental, has no function other than to lead into a blind alley.

The sense of sex indignation, at the infamous state of sex subjection to which man-made law lowered Woman, probably was the first impulse that launched the Woman's Movement. Its earliest manifestations were probably "domestic scenes." Probably, also the Lycurgan law, or Spartan ethics, with

regard to “adultery,” are suggestive of the weapon early seized by Woman in revenge—”revolt” or “revolution” being then unthought of. The spirit of this early sense of sex indignation was caught by a work quite popular a generation ago in this country, and still thought much of among “radicals,” entitled “The Strike of a Sex”—a heels-over-head concept. Few must be the women endowed with the exceptional vigor of mind and at the same time afflicted with the exceptional physique required to carry out such a program. The latest manifestation of the same sense of indignation is the modern outcropping of an extensive literature of the kind that Elinor Glyn of England and Mrs. Herbert Parsons in this country are leading producers of, with the brilliant and sympathetic divorced woman “George Sand” as their prototype. From first to last, the indignation, together with its manifestations, ran into a blind alley.

It could not be otherwise. The “infamous state of sex subjection” can be considered a “cause” only in the remote sense that all effect reacts back and stimulates its cause. The “infamous state of sex subjection” is essentially a result—a result of Class Rule. Marriage, as an institution, has ever been a reflex of material social surroundings. To tug at “marriage” with the intent to remove the ills that flow from it and that are but thorns on the tree of Class Rule is to tug at a chord that can give no response. The woman who bitterly preaches a “sex revolt” or a “sex revolution” only consumes fires worthy of more practical material to work upon.

In justice to truth it must be said that the note of protest is already heard in the Suffragist camp against the sex accentuation. The distinguished Suffragist Henrietta Crosman uttered a sentiment that Woman’s Suffrage can only profit by, the moment the sentiment becomes dominant with the Suffragists—“There is too much of the sex business in ‘Votes for Woman.’”¹⁰

I now come to a set of Suffragist arguments of a different order of harmfulness—harmful because blind to what Woman Suffrage is actually up against.

Ida Husted Harper—a Suffragist “of international reputation,” as she is described—had, on the 10th of February of this year, an article in the *Evening Post* of our city entitled “Australia’s Women Vote.” I wish to call your attention to the following passages and reasoning.

¹⁰ Another work that derails the Movement into the false issue of sex is Alice Stone Blackwell’s otherwise readable book, *Objections to Woman Suffrage Answered*. This Suffragist considers woman and man so fundamentally different that neither can represent the other even civically.

Woman's Suffrage

After stating that “opponents in the Legislature and the press [of Australia] declared that polygamy in Utah and *the strikes in Colorado* were wholly the result of woman suffrage,” the lady proceeds to say: “But after the women of the whole country began voting *and nothing that was predicted happened* these [objections] became too ridiculous for further service,” and she closes the passage with: “Australia has thoroughly tested woman suffrage.”

Transparently, this is an attempt to recommend the Movement to the Ruling Class. Language that amounts to a condemnation of Labor's revolts against the employer's despotism, as evils that threaten the desirable peace of the master, has the transparent purpose of ingratiating the Movement with the Master Class. Conclusions that represent the “thorough test” of Woman Suffrage in Australia as approving Woman Suffrage a promoter of bourgeois “Law and Order” are transparent efforts to allay the apprehensions which the Movement instinctively arouses in the mind of the modern bourgeois. Equally transparent is the blunder of such tactics. It is a double blunder—a blunder, because Ruling-Class instincts are not to be trepanned; a blunder, because the tactics tend to convict the Movement of double-dealing, or of itself not knowing what it is after, hence, contradicting itself. I shall in a minute take up that aspect of the blunder which consists in convicting the Movement of contradiction. Let us give our first attention to the blunder of attempting to seem “good.”

If Woman Suffrage in capitalist countries is anything it is a breath of the Social Revolution. Revolutions do not always start consciously, 'tis true. Even the keen-minded Franklin made no less than three trips to England in the sincere belief that peace could be patched up between Crown and Colonists. What at first escaped the keen mind of a Franklin did not at all escape the dull mind of a George III. Instinct is the most active element with a Ruling Class—precisely as with brute creation. Long before its foe has realized his mission, is a Ruling Class sufficiently aware thereof, and deports itself accordingly, to the best of its capacity. The practical consequence of this socio-biologic fact is of priceless value. A Ruling Class is not trepannable. All that is accomplished by the attempt to trepan a Ruling Class, on the part of a Revolution, is to forfeit the support of forces that are the Revolution's natural allies—forces which the Revolution has to count with, and which, their eyes opened by the sight of a banner plainly unfurled, would otherwise flock to its support. When the hard

facts taught Franklin better, he acted accordingly, and he became the, by England, best hated leader of the American Revolution. Woman Suffrage has, by this time, stumped its nose and toes too long against facts too hard to be ignored. By this time the Movement should know itself—and what is up. The season for fatuity is over. To continue longer on the “diplomatic” tack only redounds to the advantage of the foe. The Ruling Class is gaining time.

The second argument I wish to take up of this same order is the obverse of the medal, the reverse of which we have just considered. It consists in the attempt to ingratiate the Woman Suffrage with the Labor Movement. This line of argument consists in lyric attempts to contrast the four “Suffrage States” of the Union, frequently Australia also, with the other States where woman is disfranchised. To mention only one Suffragist meeting and speaker, of the many I could cite, at that same Carnegie Hall Suffragist meeting of last December, I heard Rabbi Wise exclaim rapturously: “In Colorado there is no child labor!”; at the London International Woman’s Suffrage Congress which I referred to before, the delegate from Australia reported: “Australia is a paradise for workingmen and workingwomen.”—What are the facts?

Let us take up first the four Suffrage States—Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming. On this subject of child and woman labor I have collected a few figures from the Census that are conclusive.

During the single decade of 1890-1900 woman labor rose in the land from 3,712,144, or 18 per cent of our population, to the relative and absolute increased number of 4,997,415, or 20 per cent of our population—woman being found in all pursuits, except as telegraph liners and pole climbers.

Woman labor, in the manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, unsexes; child labor cripples the rising population. In the instance of Woman labor there is the aggravation that she is paid less for equal work; with consequences that are truly infamous. It would seem that where woman has the ballot, wherewith, as Mme. Grand tells us, she is to “save civilization,” all these evils would be swept away. At least one would expect to see a beginning made of the sweeping-away process by a somewhat favorable contrast with the non-Suffrage states. The facts are exactly the reverse Here are the figures:

In Colorado, the Census reports for 1905 give 1,343 women of 16 years and over engaged in the manufacturing and mechanical industries, and 306 children under 16.

Woman's Suffrage

In Idaho, the Census reports for 1905 give 90 women of 16 years and over engaged in the manufacturing and mechanical industries, and 40 children under 16.

In Utah, the Census reports for 1905 give 1,017 women of 16 years and over engaged in the manufacturing and mechanical industries, and 195 children under 16.

In Wyoming, the Census reports for 1905 give 33 women of 16 years and over engaged in the manufacturing and mechanical industries.

Nor do these figures convey the real picture in the case. Comparing the Census figures of 1900 and 1905 the following facts are uncovered:

First, that woman labor increased in Colorado, from 1,081 in 1900, to 1,343 in 1905; that it increased in Idaho, from 32 in 1900, to 90 in 1905; that it increased in Utah, from 173 in 1900, to 195 in 1905.

Second, that child labor increased in Colorado, from 203 in 1900, to 306 in 1905; that it increased in Idaho, from 22 in 1900, to 40 in 1905; that it increased in Utah, from 577 in 1900, to 1,017 in 1905.

Third, that in Colorado, the difference between the average woman's wages and the average man's wages was \$286 in 1900, and \$356 in 1905; that, in Idaho, the difference was \$276 in 1900, and \$343 in 1905; that, in Utah, the difference was \$317 in 1900, and \$456 in 1905.

In short, the picture that the figures throw upon the canvas is—woman labor, and woman labor on the increase; child labor, and child labor on the increase; finally also lower pay and an increasingly lower pay to women than to men in the “Suffrage States”,—precisely the same as in non-Suffrage States—and this notwithstanding “Suffrage States” are near to the bottom on the list of our industrial States and territories.¹¹

Taking a peep across the Pacific to Australia, the following historic incident will serve to sum up a mass of details, even the detailed consideration of which could not convey so complete an idea of the state of things. A few years ago, seeing petitions pouring into Parliament with relief propositions for the unemployed of the land, a capitalist member of the Australian Parliament pooh-

¹¹ The Census figures are so meager for Wyoming that they furnish no basis for a comparison between present conditions and conditions in 1900. Since the delivery of this address much confirmatory light has been shed by Colorado. All efforts to stem the exodus of school children from school, and their rush to the beet fields, have dashed against the economic necessity of the parents to turn the little ones into breadwinners.

pooched at the petitions, their plans and those in behalf of whom the plans were proposed, and he sought to dispose of the whole matter with the international capitalist Pecksniffianism that “only the lazy and shiftless, who have nobody but themselves to blame for their poverty, are idle.” Unfortunately for the gentleman he rashly went further. He agreed to give remunerative work to all who would apply to him. The next morning the worthy found it impossible to reach his office. The street was packed with a solid mass of applicants for a chance to earn a living.

In Suffrage Australia, as in our own four “Suffrage States,” the identical dehumanizing struggle for existence is found. Nor could it be otherwise. Where identical results are found in countries with different Suffrage systems there must be a cause common to all. The common cause in this instance is wage slavery, or capitalism, or the Class Struggle of modern days, upon which Australia, “the paradise of workingmen and workingwomen,” along with all our States, is pivoted.

A policy, or tactics, of ingratiating amounts practically to attempting to carry water on both shoulders. The attempt to perform the feat, never glorious, is, in the instance of Woman Suffrage, peculiarly inglorious. It drives the Movement simultaneously into three fatal errors—the error of pursuing the will-o’-the-wisp of setting the Ruling Class at ease; the error of being guilty of a contradiction; and the error of such a looseness of statement as to make the Suffragists who attend to this side of the propaganda look more like romancers than like people engaged in a serious issue.

In making “the four Suffrage States” and the Australia argument Suffragists betray a weakness that is typical of movements that either have no foundation, or the foundation of which has not been grasped by their sponsors. I may illustrate the point with a story told by John Swinton. It is suggested to me by the circumstance that the dry bones of the Single Tax have been set rattling this very week by a rich bourgeois who, seeking to advertise a soap that he manufactures and that bears his name, has donated a sum of money for “the promotion of the Single Tax.”

Swinton relates that, having been told by Single Taxers here in New York that, however insignificant the Single Tax Movement was in this city, it was powerful in England, when he made a trip to Great Britain and arrived in London he inquired from some Single Taxers after the Single Tax Movement

Woman's Suffrage

there. "There is none of it here," he was told, "but in Scotland it is quite strong." When he reached Scotland and inquired from Single Taxers concerning the Single Tax Movement, the answer was again: "There is none of it here, but in Ireland it is very strong." Arriving in Ireland he again inquired after the Single Tax Movement, but again the Single Taxer to whom he applied informed him there was none of it in Ireland, but that it was remarkably powerful in Brooklyn. On his return to America, Swinton says he hastened across the river to Brooklyn to satisfy his curiosity concerning the Single Tax; but all he could learn from the Single Taxer whom he was referred to was that "there is no Single Tax in Brooklyn, in Australia, however, the Single Tax is carrying everything before it."

It is a symptom of weakness in a movement to seek to recommend itself by alleging popularity somewhere else. The act is instinctive. It is the result of a desire to avoid the difficulty of argumentative proof by substituting therefor success at a distance. As a matter of course, the "success" ever is a case of the wish being father to the thought. A strong Movement, strong in the consciousness of its soundness in premises and conclusions,—such a movement cares not if it is successful here, there or anywhere. It knows it must prevail. Movements of the dignity and import of that of Woman Suffrage, not being in their nature "reforms," are not, like patent medicines, dependent upon the recommendation of having been "tried and found to cure." A Revolution fights its own battles, and the battle is fought out in each country by dint of the Revolutionary Movement's own vitality.

Finally, the Suffragist argument with which the examination of the favorite Suffragist arguments may be profitably completed is one rarely made in public. It is usually made in private, though not secret, conversation with Socialists. It is this: "Socialism is very popular with Suffragists, but it is so much easier to put through one demand than a whole lot." Upon the principle herein implied Suffragists aim at one thing—the Suffrage—first. This is a perfectly legitimate conclusion from the premises of the Suffragist theory that the demand by Woman for the ballot, at this season, is a reform.

One thing at a time may or may not be easier to secure than a whole lot. That depends. It is easier to secure one dollar than a million; it is, however, harder to secure a railroad piecemeal than to secure the whole line. Where the thing to be secured is part of an organic whole, then the one-thing-at-a-time

theory is an optic illusion. From the optic illusion that Woman Suffrage can, today, be obtained separately from the Socialist Republic flows every move made by the Suffragist Movement—and great must be the comfort of the illusion, together with its brood of false steps, to the intelligent Antis.

These instances will suffice to illustrate the point. Blind to the origin and development of the classes; blind to the history of Suffrage; blind, accordingly, to its intimate connection with the great Social Question of our generation—the Suffragist Movement imagines itself not a separate planet merely, revolving in an orbit all of its own, but imagines itself a planet that is wholly disconnected from the social planetary system. Laboring under this fatal error the Woman Suffrage Movement—as the typical arguments it delights in indicate—mainly wastes its ammunition in a cannonade of dialectics against the phantom targets raised by the arguments of the Antis—a wild display that causes most of its shots to fall wide of the real mark, and not a few to break over its own head.

The clock behind me runs fast. I notice it has grown late. I must wind up. Much more is there to be said. I trust I have said enough to indicate what I have no time left to add, and much, besides, that may now occur to yourselves. I trust I have established a foundation deep and broad enough upon which to plant the principles that the issue dictates. Taking, then, a “cut across lots,” I shall hasten to the conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS.

Woman’s disfranchisement is an incident in the division of society into classes, the consequent Class Struggle, and the rise of Class Rule.

The civic disqualifications that smote Woman, having had their origin in the social system of classes, can be ended only with the ending of Class Rule.

The very reason that prompted the birth of classes and Class Rule now demands the ending of them. The system of classes and Class Rule was a means to an end—a means to the end of pulling the race out of the ruts of universal, savage poverty. The end has been reached. Civilized conditions, born of amplex of wealth producible without life-long and arduous toil, are now possible to all. The end having been reached, the means no longer have any justification. When means survive the attainment of the goal for whose attainment they were adopted they lose their pristine beneficent character; they are transformed into impediments to the fruition of the goal itself. With the

Woman's Suffrage

possibility for universal well-being, the bulk of society remains submerged, virtually at the old savage stage of brutish toil and poverty. Social ripeness demands the casting off of Class Rule.

The social pulsations that make for the ending of Class Rule imply a revolution—a social revolution. They imply the SOCIAL REVOLUTION of our generation.

The program of the Social Revolution is determined—

First, by the race's imperative striving to regain the good it temporarily let go in order to escape the bad that burdened it;

Second, by the race's unerring instinct to save the means, which, being developed in the course of its march to the civilized goal, are either conducive towards, or necessary for, the preservation of the goal itself;

Third, by the race's common sense which distinguishes between means that are of temporary and those that are of permanent utility; and which, while preserving the latter, causes it to discard the former, when obsolete; and

Fourth, by the race's perception of the new means which it must institute in keeping with the revolution itself.

As to the first principle that determines the program of the Social Revolution, the race let go the democracy of Communism, a social system, or call it government, whose main, if not sole, function was the direction of production,—the only legitimate, because the only necessary, *object* of social organization; the only legitimate because the only necessary *function* of a central directing authority. Back to Communistic society, with its equality of rights without distinction of sex, there being no distinction of class;—back to Communistic society, whose instinctive motto, “All for each, and each for all,” caused it unconsciously to practice without preaching the morality subsequently, and down to our own days, preached but never practiced;—“Back to communism, and regain the olden good!” is an imperative watchword of the Social Revolution.

As to the second principle that determines the program of the Social Revolution—the race, on its march to the material possibilities for civilization, invented or discovered, perhaps it was a combination of both, that social tool, or contrivance now known by the name of “Representative Government.” Olden communities being small, direct legislation was possible. The communities, which enlarging production demanded as a consequence of broadening

cooperation, rendered the old system of direct legislation impracticable. Representative Government became a necessary social tool, a tool that is indispensable to the preservation of the material means for civilized life, and which, as such, all anarchist vamping to the contrary, the Social Revolution will save.

As to the third principle which determines the program of the Social Revolution—the race, on its march to the material possibilities for civilization, in part reared, in part submitted to, a social contrivance now known as “Political Government.” Political government was the unavoidable consequence of the rupture of society into classes. It is the weapon of the Ruling Class to keep the necessarily restive Ruled Class in harness. Political Government is an evil, but a necessary evil so long as the evil of class was necessary. “Political Government” entwined itself with “Representative Government.” It entwined itself so closely that to the superficial they are undistinguishable. The Social Revolution distinguishes. It recognizes the permanent utility of Representative Government. It knows that, without cooperation on a large scale, the material foundation for civilized life—affluence for all without life-long toil—is unproducible; it knows that, without organization, the requisite cooperation is unattainable; it knows that, without a central directing authority, no organization is imaginable; finally it knows that while 500 persons may personally gather together and direct themselves, 50,000,000 can not meet and argue. The Social Revolution, accordingly, knows that the vast cooperation, which requires millions of beings, imperatively demands “Representative Government,” and that the same is an institution of permanent utility. On the other hand, the Social Revolution perceives with equal clearness that “Political Government,” though necessary at a time, is never other than mere social scaffolding, to be discarded as soon as the building is reared. Ripeness for the Social Revolution denotes the completion of social building. The Social Revolution disentangles “Political Government” from “Representative Government” and discards the former.

Finally, the fourth principle that determines the program of the Social Revolution combines the experience that is back of the first three. As a consequence, the Social Revolution carries in its folds a social system, which, arriving at the democratic equality of the Communism of old, plants itself upon the elevation of ripened experience. It reconstructs society in the integrally

Woman's Suffrage

organized useful occupations of its people, governed by a central directing authority, the Representative Government of all.

Class rule began with the rendering of useful services as the badge of the Ruling Class. In the course of time, till the final decay of Class Rule that we witness to-day, the badge of the Ruling Class has become idleness. The cycle of class rule is completed. The present utter idleness of a class, the justification of whose origin lay in useful activity, marks the period for its root-and-branch abolition—the restoration of the old Communist democracy, with Woman, of course, as of old, taking her honored place beside her fellow male citizens, emancipated, along with her fellow male slaves of all these centuries.

Such is the issue.

Can it be met by Woman with appeals for the ballot directed to the government of the ruling class?

Since the birth of a Ruling Class, government has been the special prop of that very class. The more vigorous, because more useful, the Ruling Class was, all the weaker was and could its Political Government afford to be. The weaker, because more useless, the Ruling Class became, all the more strength and alertness did and does its political prop require. To-day, when the ruling class has become most useless, its government is, accordingly, alertest. On exceptional occasions the spectacle may be presented of the governmental agents of the Ruling Class seriously together by the ears, as we see them to-day over the tariff. The spectacle is exceptional. The main function of the Government of the Ruling Class of to-day, apart from the continuous and increasingly difficult function of keeping the Ruled Class under, is to act as a breakwater against legislation that threatens danger to Capitalism, or is at all distasteful to it. The women public school teachers of this city are making some experience on this head. Their bill for the equalization of salaries has to run the gauntlet, not of the Legislature and Executive only, but of the Mayor in addition, with the courts as a reserve force against possible emergencies. Constitutional provisions are framed for the express purpose of rendering “undesirable” legislation next to impossible. In short, the whole machinery of Government is constituted, not merely as a breakwater, but on the principle of a barbican to repel a foe. Whose foe? The foe of the Ruling Class. What foe? Why, the Ruled Class.

How the Ruling Class, female and male, feel about the ballot I have shown. Themselves despising the ballot as an unclean thing, and fearing it in the hands

of the male proletariat who now hold it, they seek to restrict the latter in its use. Are they likely to enlarge the mass of the qualified voting proletariat by extending the Suffrage to the women wage slaves? Hardly. The fisherman in distress will throw tubs to the whale: himself never. To-day, Top-Capitalism drags the qualified voting male proletariat after it, lashed to the chariot wheels of its political car—and it proportionally despises them for it. For Top-Capitalism to concede the Suffrage to Woman would be to denote an even greater contempt for the woman wage-slave than it silently, yet uneasily, entertains for her brother.

The male bourgeois will oppose Woman Suffrage “gallantly,” “theologically,” “judicially,” “sociologically,” “biologically”—according to the angle of his mental strabismus. The female bourgeois will immolate her own civic rights, “self-sacrificingly,” upon the altar of “Sex Morality.” The government gate is barred.¹²

Can the issue be met by Woman with sentimental appeals to “the public”?

No Socialist will deny the power of Sentiment—in its place and due proportion. What gunpowder is to the bullet, that Sentiment is to Sense in a social movement. Without the gunpowder to impart to it motion the bullet would be inert, inoffensive matter; but, without the load of the bullet, the gunpowder would be a flash in the pan. It is so with Sentiment and Sense. Without Sentiment, Sense would drop and lie on the ground, barren of result; on the other hand, without the load of Sense, Sentiment, however thrilling, would be sound and no substance. Jeremiads are very beautiful. But since the days of Jeremiah, who gave them his name, they have never been otherwise than fruitless wails.

Here is a striking illustration and instance of Sentiment out of place, particularly striking being furnished within a month by a Suffragist of distinguished gifts and mental training—a lawyer, Harriette M. Johnston-Wood.

Answering on last April 27 a flippant fling against Woman Suffrage, made by the *New York Times*, in which, with its usual lack of information, the paper, after pronouncing Woman Suffrage a fad, stated that women now enjoy all the

¹² A further serious evil, that flows from the Woman Suffrage posture of totally ignoring the Class Struggle, is the inciting of the Anarchistic feeling of total derision of the ballot, a feeling which the excessive importance Woman Suffrage attaches to the ballot alone incites, naturally enough, in some quarters. Extremes not only meet, they stimulate each other.

Woman's Suffrage

rights which they would enjoy if they voted, Harriette M. Johnston-Wood quoted a case decided only a few weeks before in the Supreme Court that completely and effectively refuted the *Times*. It was the case of an 18-year-old lad, who was killed while at work, and on account of which the father brought an action for \$15,000 damages. Before the case came up for trial the father died, whereupon the case was continued by the widow and mother, who was left, moreover, with six children to support. Based upon a law which provides that if an unmarried child dies, the father, as next of kin, inherits all the property, and upon another law which provides that damages can be recovered only by the one who was next of kin at the time of the death, and in case of the death of the next of kin the action abates, the court decided that the mother had no right of action, and awarded her \$50, that being the amount of the lad's wages from the time of his death to the death of his father. So far, this answer is sense. It was a shot that ripped up the *Times's* false contention. Unfortunately, the effect of the shot is marred by just two short sentences—the sentences that the case “should make a Suffragist and a revolutionist of every mother in the United States,” and “What say the mothers?” This is sentiment out of place.

Sex is not Class. Class is sexless. Class is amorphous in point of sex. The iniquity perpetrated upon the mother of the slain working lad was not an iniquity perpetrated by one sex upon another sex; it was an iniquity perpetrated by one Class upon another Class. So long as there is one mother, whose class interests promote and are subserved by the enactment of such laws, and are promoted and subserved by their enforcement—just so long will the appeal to “mothers” remain a responseless bit of sentimentalism, aye, harmful sentimentalism. On the one hand, as it dislocates the class solidarity of the proletariat by dividing it into sexes, the appeal strikes a chord that can only twang a cracked note; on the other hand, the appeal leaves the bourgeois mother cool. If it at all sets her pulse beating higher, it is with satisfaction at not being herself a proletarian, exposed to such financial and heart-rending trials as was the mother of the slain lad—a satisfaction that will cause her to cling all the more fondly and tenaciously to Capitalism and its laws, consequently also to the disfranchised state of mothers.

Sentimentalism, out of place, is moreover, fraught with other, and no less serious dangers to a social Movement. It invites the blasé of both sexes—women and men of the elite, in search of fresh sources of excitement. Ominous figures

have already made their appearance in “reserved seats” at Suffragist meetings—figures from whom Woman Suffrage can expect as little strength, and will derive as much discredit as the Socialist Movement can expect and has derived from the Countesses of Warwick, who, when asked with much curiosity by some of their fellow noble ladies to explain Socialism to them, say they “go slumming once a month, and don’t look with contempt upon the lower classes.” Nor is this all. The blasé from the Ruling Class who condescend to dabble in a Revolutionary Movement against their own class, may, probably will, desert the Movement at the hour of danger. They do not join it for purposes of betrayal. They, however, act as entering wedges for others of their class whose only motive is treason, whose only expectation is to steer the Movement into the breakers. Such figures also have already appeared in the Woman Suffrage camp.

Sentimentality does not, can not, crystallize a movement into an organic factor for deeds. On the contrary, sentimentality alone is a dissolvent. Not all the floods of sentiment, bestowed upon the Negro slave, brought him an inch nearer to his emancipation. Not even the lyrics of Whittier, nor the magnetic verse of Lowell, accomplished the feat. When the material conditions had gathered sufficiently to a head, and were sufficiently understood, then the solid hull of the ship was launched, whose sails sentiment could then fill to a purpose.

Woman Suffrage may disregard these conclusions only at its own peril. The least evil result of such disregard is the fate which the venerable Suffragist Lilly Devereux Blake humorously depicted with a story about a little niece of hers. The little girl, wishing to make a bookmark with the motto “Hope on, hope ever” for an aunt who was about to visit the family, but not having e’s enough to go around, turned the motto into “Hop on, hop ever.” To hop on, hop ever, trying as the ordeal may be, would not be the worst affliction that could befall the Suffragists. There is worse. The Movement may be utilized as a feint to re-establish a property qualification, whereby to *disfranchise the male proletariat, leaving, of course, the female proletariat just where they are to-day*. This is no idle fear. Symptoms of such a move already loom above the horizon. Writing from the camp of the Suffragists themselves, the British Suffragist Mrs. Fawcett expressed emphatic opposition to the Geoffrey Howard Bill, the effect of which would be to enfranchise the twelve million women now disfranchised in the United Kingdom, and expressed her own, together with the approval of 71

Woman's Suffrage

societies comprising the National Union, of another, the Stanger Bill, which *would leave the basis of the franchise untouched, and only remove the disability of sex*, thereby adding, to the present British electorate of seven and one-half millions, only from one and one-half to two million Woman voters—that is, such as have the necessary property qualification.

We see the Capitalist Government enact insidious class laws to the tune of “No Class Legislation!”; We see it enact laws in promotion of Trusts to the tune of “Down with the Trust!”; We see it enact laws that craftily hamper the freedom of political expression under color of the “Australian Ballot”; We see one set of capitalists, aiming at a reduced cost of labor through lower prices, aiming, accordingly, at higher profits for themselves under the pretence of helping Labor, rapturously declaim in favor of “Free Trade and Lower Prices for the Workingman’s Breakfast Table,” while another set, likewise aiming at higher profits for themselves through higher prices, as rapturously declaim in favor of “Protection for American Labor.” In short, the capitalist maneuver of legislating against the proletariat and against progress under the colors of “Labor” and of “Freedom” is common. “Woman Suffrage” is a term that denotes liberalism. In the cards is the manoeuvre of female and male capitalists availing themselves of the sound of liberalism, and, wrapping themselves in the colors of “Woman Suffrage,” throw a tub to the whale; grant the Suffrage to property-holding women; and, under the glow of such a seemingly liberal act, change radically the basis of the franchise reactionward. Supposed to be enlarged, the electorate will have been curtailed; supposed to have been liberalized, the franchise will have been restricted. A property qualification will have been established. Not only will the female proletariat be then left out in the cold by “Woman Suffrage,” but “Woman Suffrage” will have served as a lever to thrust the male proletariat out in the cold, where their sisters have all along been. The excessively sentimental, therefore, thoughtlessness-promoting, propagandistic methods of Woman Suffrage are preparing the way for this affliction. There is a worse sorrow than to hop on, hop ever. I can think of no Suffragist, of the many whom it has been my privilege to meet, whose heart would not feel like breaking at finding herself and her cherished Movement so cruelly tricked.

All the facts—all the reasoning focus into one conclusion. Woman Suffrage must take its place as an integral splinter in the torch that lights the path of the Social Revolution.

Self-effacing male, and sex over-fond female suffragists would do well to light their tapers at the torch held aloft by a woman whose life and writings are a priceless contribution to the treasury of the race's wisdom. George Eliot gave to the race the guiding maxim that the difficult and useful thing to do is not to find differences in things that look alike, but to discover the likeness that may be between things that look different. There is nothing easier, nor yet more useless, than to discover differences between two peas, their proverbial likeness notwithstanding. The difficult, withal useful thing, is to discover the likeness, for instance, between the humble strawberry and the stately pear tree, thereby the identity of their botanical family. The principle should be of inestimable value to Woman Suffrage.

There is nothing easier, nor yet more useless to the Movement, than to perceive differences between Woman and Man—for the same reason that there is nothing easier, nor yet more useless to the Movement, than to discover the difference there is between a Negro and a white man; a carpenter and a teacher, etc. More difficult, withal useful to the Movement, is the discovery of that which may be identical in all—their proletarian character. This is a creative discovery. No more than carpenters, teachers, Negro laborers, etc., can successfully agitate for their separate emancipation as carpenters, as teachers, as Negroes, etc.; for the same reason that carpenters, Negroes, teachers, etc., must unite upon the status that is common to all—their proletarian status—for precisely the same reason the stand that Woman must take for her emancipation is the stand she shares in common with her fellow slaves—her proletarian character. The sex line—like craft, color, creed or nationality lines—disrupts; the class line solidifies the revolutionary forces of our generation.

Summing up this summary I may close with the principle—at revolutionary periods the blinking at one wrong extenuates the wrong protested against: it is a feature of revolutionary periods that kindred wrongs, all the wrongs rooted in the central wrong that the Revolution is up in arms against, are blended into one, and are jointly attacked.

It is for Woman Suffrage to recognize the principle, and thus to gain in strength by imparting strength to the body that it is a part of—the Movement that drills for the Social Revolution.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

Uploaded December 2003