

NATIONAL WOMAN'S PARTY

PAPERS

1913 - 1974

SERIES V: PRINTED MATERIALS, 1850-1972

III. MISCELLANEOUS PRINTED MATERIALS, 1850-1972

A. PAMPHLETS (AMERICAN), 1850-1971

No. 43

PERMANENT
CONGRESSIONAL UNION

FILES
DO NOT TAKE
CHIVALRY
versus
JUSTICE

Why the Women of the Nation
Demand the Right to Vote

By
GEORGE CREEL

*Reprinted by Permission from
Pictorial Review from March, 1915*



NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE PUBLISHING COMPANY, Inc.
505 Fifth Avenue, New York

APRIL, 1915



Chivalry *versus* Justice

THERE is no good quarrel with honest opposition to equal suffrage. Not only is the right to disagree guaranteed by the Constitution, but it is highly essential that every important political change should encounter antagonism in order to guard against hasty and ill-considered action.

The woman who has no need of the vote herself, and resists it as an added and unwelcome responsibility, may be selfish but she is frank. The man who holds that the opposite sex is not sufficiently intelligent to use the ballot wisely may be prejudiced but he is courageous. Men and women alike who feel that equal suffrage does not contain any effective remedy for admitted injustices and evils, may lack faith but they are sincere. Such as these are straightforward fighters who do not fear the open, and they are entitled to all the amenities of well-tempered debate.

There is neither frankness, courage nor sincerity, however, in those controversialists who deny that the American woman is touched at any point by wrong, oppression or wretchedness, and whose implacable enmity to her enfranchisement is masked by glowing hyperboles that paint her as a peach-cheeked, rose-lipped queen buried to the dimpled chin in love and homage. In America today there are about nine million women who work, many of them engaged in the pleasant professions and wholesome industries, to be sure, but the large majority engulfed in dismal and degrading drudgeries. In the face of this economic revolution that has leveled so many protective walls, how is it possible to grant good faith to the continued insistence that "woman's place is the home?"

The platitude, in effect, contends that these weary millions are not working from any real necessity, but possess homes in which they could remain did they but have the proper spirit and desire. According to its reasoning, the sea of bended backs is caused by nothing more vital than discontents and unrests.

Look where one will, women may be seen creeping across the icy floors of office buildings, night in, night out, scrubbing up the dirt of a man's day; toiling in mills and factories ten and twelve hours a day; plying swift needles in fire-traps; breathing the stifling air in steam laundries; making gowgaws in darksome tenements at an average wage of two cents an hour, or tearing fingers in the damp shucking sheds of the Gulf Coast States.

Does any one honestly believe that these driven souls are doing these things because they like it? Or that their presence in such employments is adequately explained by the assumption of "marital unrest," or "dissatisfaction with the humdrum of domestic life," or the "desire to obtain pin-money for vanities?"

An equal measure of just resentment is aroused by the twin declaration that suffrage will entail "the disintegration of the American home." Here again there is the bland theory of vine-clad cottages and dense walls of fragrant honeysuckle behind which every right-thinking woman sits in security surrounded by her babes.

What of the squalid holes in the thirteen thousand licensed tenements, of New York City alone, where whole families and boarders often sleep, eat and work in a single room, toiling long, weary hours for incredible pittance? What of the old dog-houses, dilapidated carriage sheds and noisome barracks in which padrones herd the cannery workers of Delaware, Maryland, Louisiana and Mississippi? Or the ragged tents of miners on the bleak hillsides of the coal mining states? Or the sickening hovels of the coal and steel districts in Pennsylvania? Or the paperwalled shacks of the cotton mill towns where sleep waits on terrible exhaustion?

What greater "disintegration" can come to these "homes" where families rot in despair, and boys and girls grow to maturity stunted in mind and body?

There is no intent to cry down chivalry or desire to repress a single poetic impulse. It is well indeed that men should hold the mother sex in tender, reverent regard, and it is to be hoped that love will never lose its romance and idealism. It is asserted, however, that true chivalry must have justice as its firm foundation. The kind that ignores crying evils and patent

wrongs in favor of high-sounding periods is nothing more than venerated hypocrisy.

There can be no denial of the imperative nature of the equal suffrage issue. Eleven states and one territory have granted woman the ballot, and in all others it is the principal agitation and demand. Why, then, is it not a high duty to free the discussion of all falsities, smugnesses and obvious claptrap so that honest, sincere argument have a clear field.

What is more fair, for instance, than the demand that men who grow maudlin in praise of the "American queen," must be prepared to show that in their particular city and state, the women are treated fairly and decently? Or that those who insist that the "fair sex" does not need the vote be called upon to prove that the women in their sections are without grievance?

In plain words, let chivalry be arraigned and made to justify itself. Is it the thing of perfect honor and protective tenderness, deep-rooted in adequate laws, or only buncombe designed to cloak prejudice, sordid motives and evil privileges? There are many cases, the citation of which will not only make the point clear, but may also lead to a better understanding of the bitternesses and ugly resentments that are clouding and confusing the entire equal suffrage question.

Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, for instance, bases his opposition upon the belief that the ballot will "mar the beauty and dim the luster of the glorious womanhood with which we have been familiar," and prefaces all of his attacks by the insistence that his "known reverence for good women" will prevent him from being understood.

The slightest inquiry into this beauty and luster, however, develops almost unspeakable conditions. In South Carolina women work sixty hours a week in the cotton mills, and there is no prohibition of night work for women or girls over 16. The father is the sole and despotic owner of the children, being able to deed them away from the mother if he wishes, and there are no laws that permit a wife to control her own property or her own earnings.

No matter how drunken, worthless or brutal a husband may become, divorce is practically impossible, and if the woman fees the roof that such conditions have made unbearable, the state regards her almost as a fugitive slave who may not be fed or sheltered.

South Carolina is one of the few commonwealths that still permit children of twelve to be worked ten hours a day (eleven hours may be worked in exceptional cases), and as if this did not give sufficient opportunity to the robbers of cradles, birth certificates are not required, and the entire appropriation for factory inspection is but three thousand, five hundred dollars a year.

It also stands almost alone in refusing to declare prostitution an outlaw industry, nor is the loathsome business of procuring frowned upon by an act of any kind. The one protection against lust is the Unwritten Law, which, says the state's foremost citizen, "is the best law to protect woman's virtue that I ever heard of."

Why bother about prevention when the guilty men may be "shot down like dogs?" There are, to be sure, many women without the necessary father or brother, but it is assumed that such as these would merely mention their needs to any chivalrous gentleman that happened to be passing. A simple matter, a trifling courtesy, since it has been loudly declared that the slayers would be acquitted "without the jury leaving the box."

Nor is this all that is done for the American queen in the "glorious state that smiles under the moral rays of God's blessed sunshine." Education is not permitted to unsettle her placid contemplation of the beauties of her special brand of chivalry, for all the efforts of the women have not been able to secure the passage of a compulsory school law. This, too, in defiance of statistics showing South Carolina to be the second most illiterate state in the Union, possessing two hundred and seventy-six thousand, nine hundred and eighty illiterates over ten.

Senator Martine of New Jersey is another statesman who seeks to establish a chivalric base for his open hostility to equal suffrage. These excerpts from a speech may serve as an example of his oratory:

"Personally, I am frank to say, with love and admiration for woman not surpassed by any man on God's footstool, I believe it would not tend to enhance or advance the well-being of women, nor do I believe that it would accrue to the well-being of this loved land of ours. It makes me feel sad

when I hear this plea of women demanding their rights. I know of no country, and there is none, where women has more of her rights than she has in free, democratic America."

There is no need of allusion to South Carolina; his own state will do as well. Every Autumn a bannerless army of women and children moves across the cranberry bogs of New Jersey.

In California, by way of contrast, the voting women have forced laws that bear particularly upon seasonal employments, calling for housing inspection, decent sanitation, a proper working day, and the payment of wages in the presence of a commissioner in order that rascally contractors may be defeated. Senator Martine is challenged to show one single step that his state has made in the direction of such a wise protective measure.

In New Jersey, as in South Carolina, there is no state law against the keeping of houses of prostitution.

Saddest thing and most savage of all, however, is the fact that in New Jersey children born out of wedlock may not be legitimized even though the parents are married afterward. A bill to lift this curse from the heads of innocents was introduced in the 1913 legislature, but failed of passage!

Mr. Lodge and Mr. Weeks, the senators from Massachusetts, are two others equally firm in the belief that woman has no need for the ballot owing to man's chivalrous willingness to grant her smallest wish. It took exactly forty years of begging for the mothers of Massachusetts to get a joint guardianship law, and even then it was secured only through the horrid compulsion of tragedy. A despairing wife, driven mad by the certainty that her worthless husband meant to scatter the six children in institutions and apprenticed employment, killed herself and the little ones. Then the legislators took action.

Massachusetts' boasted laws for the protection of working women are without teeth. Twenty-four inspectors are provided for five thousand manufacturing establishments, and although forty thousand of the toilers are women and children, only four women have been made inspectors.

The state possesses a drastic eight-hour day for all men paid from the public treasury and all men employed by contractors doing work for the state, yet a nine-hour day is the best that the wage-earning woman has been able to win. Even this has a loophole that permits the women to be worked excessive hours, and does not apply to stenographers, or women in clerical work, chambermaids in hotels or domestic servants.

The penalty for violating the eight-hour law for men is a fine of one thousand dollars or six months' imprisonment or both, while the nine-hour law for women may be violated for one hundred dollars and no imprisonment.

Senator O'Gorman of New York is also one whose pinnacle of chivalry lifts him above the sordidness of facts. Almost at the very moment he declared against equal suffrage as unnecessary, a New York judge was fining a factory owner twenty dollars for locking in one hundred and fifty girls, the very act that caused the death of one hundred and forty-seven, one short year before.

It is also a fact that until 1915 the New York legislature had steadfastly refused the request of the women for a mothers' pension law, and that the shame of the tenement workers still rests as a blot on the commonwealth that loves to call itself the Empire state, while just recently one Supreme Court judge has decided that a wife has no right to whatever money she may have saved out of her household expenses, and another, that a husband is entitled to services and earnings of his wife.

Then there is Mr. Heflin, a member of Congress from Alabama. At a recent meeting in Birmingham, Mr. Isadore Shapiro challenged Heflin to point to the enactment of any piece of legislation due to his efforts that in any way tended toward the promotion of the welfare of Alabama's women, and scourged him with these words:

"What has his fattery accomplished? Pretty phrases do not purchase meal tickets. Whitewash will not buy clothing. He boasts of our sun-kissed hills and fair-faced maidens, but what of the thousands of pale-faced toilers, both men and women, who are drudgingly eking out a one foot in the poor-house existence in Alabama's mines and factories? What of the blushing illiteracy of Alabama's people? What has Heflin done to wipe out this blackness from the map of enlightenment? What of the weak-framed elves who sweat for a crumb a day in Alabama's cotton mills?"

Alabama possesses no joint guardianship law; has within its borders

three hundred and fifty-two thousand, seven hundred and ten illiterates over ten, and boasts of a so-called compulsory education law that requires only eight weeks of school attendance each year, of which only six weeks need be consecutive.

The elevation of property rights above human rights seems to be an inevitable accompaniment of the chivalry buncombe. Louisiana spends one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the protection of game birds and fish, yet the Gordon sisters, after years of effort, were only able to obtain an annual appropriation of nine hundred dollars for factory inspection. Mississippi—home of Senators Vardaman and Williams—can devote one hundred and sixty-two thousand dollars to replanting depleted oyster beds, but refused to provide one cent for inspection of the factories in which boys of twelve are permitted to labor.

Vice-President Marshall, who opposes equal suffrage on the ground that woman can have anything she wants—"God bless her"—resides in Indiana, a state that gives fifteen thousand dollars annually for better bees and fruits, but whose legislature voted down an appropriation of two thousand dollars for better babies.

Congress, which rejected the request of the Commissioner of Education for three thousand dollars with which the investigate certain phases of child life, gave fifteen thousand dollars for the study of clam shells at the insistence of the pearl button makers. It is also the case that woman is discriminated against at every turn in the government service. Four women pass civil service examinations to three men; yet the appointments are at the ratio of two men to one woman. Men are also paid a much higher annual wage than women for identical work.

Sweeping as the assertion may seem, it is still easily demonstrable that practically every public man who insists that "lovely woman" does not need the ballot, hails from a state that persists in the outworn feudal attitude toward women. New Mexico, home of Senator Catron, names the father as sole guardian of the children, entitled to all their earnings during minority, and to all damages in event of death and disability. Between his declarations against the uselessness of equal suffrage, it is to be hoped that the Senator will find time to give his views on the following incident:

A deserted wife, armed only with the dauntless courage that flows from mother-love, took in washing, cooked, sewed, and successfully carried her brood to the point where the three boys could commence to help. The oldest, at the very outset of his wage-earning career, had both legs cut off in a railroad accident.

The mother sued, and just when things looked bright for a verdict in her favor, the father appeared upon the scene and compromised the suit for three thousand dollars. The frantic woman killed herself; after a time the drunken father dynamited the house in which two of his sons were sleeping, and the remaining portion of the three thousand dollars came in quite handy as a defense fund.

Senator James A. Reed, an orator of the good old, histrionic type, and a formidable rival of Martine and Heflin in describing woman's beauty, charm and chastity, hails from Missouri, where the court records are full of verdicts based upon the same feudal denial of joint guardianship that obtains in New Mexico and South Carolina.

In Maryland, the same legislature that refused to submit equal suffrage to the voters, lowered from twelve to ten the age at which children may work in the canneries. This action was taken over the protest of every woman in the state, and in the face of one of the most remarkable public meetings ever held in Baltimore.

The eight-hour law for working women is possessed by Colorado, California, Washington and Arizona; and Utah and Idaho, also equal suffrage states, have the nine-hour day. The best that Chivalry can show is the toothless nine-hour law in Massachusetts, won by the women after a twenty years' battle.

Only in those commonwealths where Chivalry reigns is the mother regarded as a brood mare. With only two exceptions all the equal suffrage states have joint guardianship laws, and all have statutes protecting the woman in her earnings and her property. Georgia, Florida, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Tennessee constitute the father sole guardian of the children, and allow him to will them away from the mother if he so desires.

It is in the equal suffrage states that the most decisive victories are

being won in the campaign against Commercialized Vice and the ancient, horrible theory of "necessary evil." California, Washington, Utah, Kansas and Oregon have adopted the effective injunction and abatement law.

The two Carolinas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Jersey have no state law against disorderly houses.

Every equal suffrage state has an effective child labor law backed up by efficient inspection. It remains for Chivalry to rest material prosperity upon the backs of the little ones. Alabama, South Carolina, New Mexico and Mississippi permit children of twelve to work long hours for small wages, and in many another state, lack of factory inspection nullifies a seemingly good statute.

Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Utah and California have enacted minimum wage legislation for women, while only four of the non-suffrage states have done as much.

"Mothers' Pensions" is an admittedly admirable plan for taking poverty-stricken motherhood out of the list of crimes, for it continues the home in its natural relation, and does not rob the widow of incentive or children of love. Eleven of the equal suffrage states possess this law—Illinois, Colorado, California, Idaho, Utah, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Kansas and Wyoming. In Arizona the law, adopted by the people at the polls, has been declared unconstitutional.

In such densely populated states as Connecticut and Indiana, the legislatures voted down "Mothers' Pensions," and in less than half of the thirty-seven non-suffrage states does the plan obtain.

It is in the vital matter of education, however, that there is opportunity for the most effective comparison between Chivalry and Justice. The eleven most illiterate states in the Union are Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas are without compulsory education laws, and those of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana and Virginia are practically worthless. Alabama, for instance, demands eight weeks of school attendance in the year, only six of which need be consecutive.

There is no equal suffrage state without a compulsory education law. In seven, the percentage of illiteracy over ten is less than one per cent. and in three from one to three per cent.

So runs the record in the great case of Chivalry vs. Justice. It is not meant, nor should it be inferred, that in this showing there is any indictment of the American man on the charge of premeditated cruelty or even cold-blooded selfishness. More than the men of any other country in the world, those of the United States hold women dearest and highest, and are the most generous in every attitude of their relation to the mother sex. The equal suffragist who attacks them as a whole is guilty of injustice as well as unwisdom.

As a matter of fact, the trouble flows from a very understandable exaggeration of the protective impulse. The average man does not want women to do things for herself because of his intense willingness to do them for her, and out of this recognition of his own honest intent he feels that the demand for equal suffrage is in the nature of unjust criticism.

The sudden substitution of an industrial civilization for one largely agricultural, the concentration of the population in cities, the enforced influx of women and children into the world of work—these are changes that have taken place since the Civil War, and the vastness of them is still a matter of statistics rather than personal knowledge. The average man not only fails to grasp the new needs of the nine million women who are working, but he fails to grasp the fact that nine million women are working.

The home itself has undergone changes that still defy his comprehension. What were once personal matters are now communal matters. Granted that woman's place is the home, how can she look after the interests of that home and her children without the vote? It is at the polls that the questions are decided that affect education, morals, health and the social justice that, after all, is only motherhood on a large scale.

A huge percentage of feminine opposition to equal suffrage is based upon this selfsame lack of comprehension. No better illustration can be had than the following speech made at an anti-suffrage club:

"We shall meet yelling with music, and parading with high-class entertainments. We mean to make this a place where may be found the fine

and beautiful, the things that suffragists are crowding out of life. We shall have exquisite music on the harp and stringed instruments. We shall have delicate French comedies and speakers of lofty ideas. Life is not all politics, you know. There are more important things to do than to clean streets and collect garbage. It does a woman more good to hear a nice harp concert than to listen to a discussion of white slavery. If women would pay more attention to the fine and noble things of life, the evil things would cease to exist."

Abolish slums with selections from Keats! Bring the eight-hour day with lectures on Etruscan pottery! Handel's "Largo" for mill women, factory drudges, stogy makers and scrubbers! When a factory catches on fire and all the doors are locked, a verse from Browning! If word comes that the wine-room and the cadet have snatched a daughter, make no outcry against Commercialized Vice, but buy a harp! Should pestilential fevers strike down loved ones, do not complain about garbage or an infected water supply, but read a French comedy!

Such a person simply does not understand, that is all! Surely, though, for the facts stand so grim and plain, there will come a day when the loved and sheltered women will soften with comprehension of the despairs and injustices that burden their less fortunate sisters, and cease an opposition that is at once so selfish and so cruel.

Honest men, too, coming to realize the changed environment of the home, and their inability to legislate wisely and protectively for the nine million women in industry, will surrender an antagonism that perpetuates unhappiness and gross inequalities. It is not with such as these, however—the honest ignorant—that the real struggle comes. More accurately than any other, Chief Justice Walter Clarke of North Carolina has segregated the deep, underlying causes of the bitter resistance to equal suffrage in these words:

"Women bear the burdens of bad government even more than men. Had they possessed the right of suffrage, the liquor traffic and cognate evils would long since have been abolished by law and the law enforced. With the aid of women's votes, we should have had a better educational system, laws against child labor, better sanitation and other enactments for the betterment of the conditions of the home and the more helpless part of society. It is certain that the main force which has opposed the adoption of equal suffrage has come from the whisky trust, the vice trust and the political machines."

It is the only possible explanation of the malignant and lavish expenditure that marks the fight against the spread of equal suffrage. Where does the money come from to pay for the costly literature with which the country is deluged? Why are the offensive pamphlets almost invariably anonymous?

It is inconceivable that decent men and women, even though bitterly prejudiced, would brand the leaders of the equal suffrage movement as "masculine creatures" and "mistakes of Nature?" Or circulate the charge that equal suffrage means free love and the abolition of marriage?

Think of the women smeared with these vile accusations! Mrs. Florence Kelley, that splendid champion of the woman and child wage-earner, Jane Addams of Hull House, Mrs. Raymond Robins of the National Women's Trades Union League, Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, the famous educator, Julia Lathrop, head of the Children's Bureau, Dr. Katherine Bement Davis, Commissioner of Correction of New York City, Mrs. Charles Farwell Edson, motive power behind so many of California's humane laws, Mrs. Helen Ring Robinson of Colorado, the Gordon sisters who brought factory reform to Louisiana—these and every other woman doing the big and tender things in the United States today, are leaders in the equal suffrage movement!

The issue is clean cut. Here are nine million women, forced out of their homes into industry, and asking for a voice in the establishment of conditions under which they work; a host of others who, through spinsterhood or widowhood, are the heads of families; thousands within homes who feel that those homes cannot be safeguarded without the vote, and, most splendid of all, a growing group of world mothers who are fighting to remove the ancient stones that block the upward climb to equal justice—one and all asking for simple justice and fair play.