

**How it feels to be the husband of a suffragette, by him ; illustrations by May Wilson  
Preston**

HOW IT FEELS TO BE THE HUSBAND OF A SUFFRAGETTE By: HIM

LIBRARY CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT SUBJECT Section VII Woman Suffrage Campaign No 24

HOW IT FEELS TO BE THE HUSBAND OF A SUFFRAGETTE

***How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette By Him*** ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAY WILSON PRESTON  
NEW YORK GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

Copyright, 1914, By The Ringway Company

Copyright, 1915, By George H. Doran Company

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

PAGE

Please visualize the gentleman "Occasionally explaining" to Grandmama 15

"Oh, Mr. Blank," she said, "Do you think women should vote?" 23

For some odd reason the Wholesale Liquor Dealers' Association doesn't happen to like the idea of female suffrage 34

Before she dares approach the distressing fact that the grocer's bill was fiercer than usual this month. 47

Now and then at odd intervals she slides up in a bashful way and asks your help in working out an investment 59

7

**HOW IT FEELS TO BE THE HUSBAND OF A SUFFRAGETTE**

You are the party aimed at. You who stood on the side-walk and urged passionately that we who marched go home and wash the dishes or mind the baby.

Nobody answered you then. To be frank, you didn't say much that sounded worth 8 considering; besides, it's not good form for a procession to indulge in acrimony. But don't you think for a moment that the forlorn little corporal's guard marching at the tail end of the first suffrage parade down Fifth Avenue didn't feel acutely every hostile taunt. It takes a good deal better man than I've met yet to face the mirth of a mob without some of it getting under his hide.

Out in the middle of Fifth Avenue's width we felt a heap isolated; it even went farther than that—we felt ostracized. Tagging after the girls—that's what we were doing; and nobody would let us forget it.

9

If you can go back to your kid days and remember how the gang at some time sat in judgment on you and, for alleged failure on your part to shine in the full glory of a budding male, rounded up on you, called you "cry baby," and callously bade you "go play with the girls," you'll get a little of the sensation we had out there, unchaperoned, entirely surrounded by empty asphalt, with two or three hundred thousand people earnestly cracking their larynxes calling us "sis" or "henpeck."

I don't want to be misunderstood—this is not going to be a defense, an apology, or a confession—merely a 10 frank statement. After a man has lived in the same house with a suffragette for a number of years, he is likely to have a severe disesteem for all forms of excuse or apology.

Some one said once: "It's far more important that a man *make* good than *be* good, and this applies with special force to husbands."

You can safely add that to the husbands of suffragettes it applies clear through, and buttons down the back.

For while the suffrage lady has been reading, she has also been observing. She has a fuller and franker knowledge of the motives that move 11 the world than her grandmother ever let on to have had.

Grandmother had it pounded into her, from the cradle to the finishing-school, that it would be money out of her pocket if she ever confessed to knowledge of any human mystery deeper than the compounding of custard-pie.

Here, by way of proof, is a quotation from a time-honored volume pertaining to women:

A lady should appear to think well of books, rather than to speak well of them. She may show the engaging light that good taste and sensibility always diffuses over conversation; she may give instances of great and affecting passages because they show the fineness of her imagination or the goodness 12 of her heart; but all criticism beyond this sits awkwardly upon her. She should, by habit, form her mind to the noble and pathetic, and she should have an acquaintance with the fine arts because they enrich and beautify the imagination; but she should carefully keep them out of view in the shape of learning and let them run through the easy vein of unpremeditated thought. For this reason she should seldom use and not always appear to understand the terms of art. The gentleman will occasionally explain them to her.

This gem of purest ray serene is from a work called "THE AMERICAN BOOK OF BEAUTY, OR FRIENDSHIP'S TOKEN," published in Hartford, Conn., in 1851, and given to grandmother by a very attentive young gentleman, who 13 accompanied it with one of those nice little, old-fashioned, lace-edged valentine letters, every word of which breathed his ardent and reverential devotion to grandmama.

Wasn't the editor grand? Can you see grandmama sitting at home alone, carefully cultivation the noble and pathetic, while grandpa hooted around town nights with the boys, finding the noble and pathetic utterly unnecessary in his business? And that little touch—"The gentleman will occasionally explain them to her"—isn't that delicate?

Please visualize the gentleman occasionally explaining some perfectly 14 immaterial proposition and fondly hoping that he is successfully diverting grandmama's mind from some of the basic facts of life?

There is still extant an extremely lovely daguerreotype of grandmama, *ætat* twenty-two, at the time of the presentation of the book; and, looking into the beautiful young face, sparkling with intelligence, you are almost tempted to think that possibly grandmama knew a thing or two not set down in the editor's prescription.

At any rate, granddaughter, the suffragette, refuses to fall for "the noble and pathetic." If she has attended

PLEASE VISUALIZE THE GENTLEMAN "OCCASIONALLY EXPLAINING" TO GRANDMAMA.

17 one of the big colleges for girls, she is likely to know just as much about art as her gentleman friend. She talks *some* before she is married, and *more* afterward, and she talks very much to the point.

Mr. Husband has got to be prepared to stand the gaff, and if he is indiscreet enough to com weaving in at three G. M., he might just as well talk straight. those diaphanous X-ray effects in excuses are out of style. His best chance is to look the judge right in the eye and announce that he stayed out because he didn't want to come home; that he thought a little cessation of domesticity would expand 18 his moral nature. He had better trust for protection to the fact that he has at one time rowed a boat or lifted weights—if it comes to actual physical violence; because if he starts to duck he is liable to get something for contempt of court.

So you can put it down as the first mile-stone to observe on the road to being a suffragette's husband, that a reasonable amount of frankness—just as ordinary quantity of common or garden truth-telling—is a healthful and exhilarating occupation, and will conduce, as the Good Book says, to “make your days long in the land,” although it may possibly shorten 19 up your “nights out” a trifle at times.

Getting a suffragette for a wife is no different from obtaining any other kind of a wife. The formula is the same in both cases. There's a certain excitement, though, in the fact that you don't always know she is going to be a suffragette until after you have got her. But that, happily, is getting rarer and rarer. The new crop is finding out that advertising pays, and it is pretty hard nowadays to pick out a discreet and docile suffragette who will absolutely refrain from confiding the fact 20 to you, if you sit up with her long enough.

Personally, we—I and mine—fell into suffrage together and practically made only one splash; but it was long after we were married. You notice that I said *mine* . I meant it. Sharing some common things in common doesn't necessarily prevent the lady from being all yours.

We had been at a nice little dinner-party in a smart suburban town. The dinner was all it should be, with one exception: the star guest refused to perform for the benefit of the company. He was a very clever Irish lawyer, with a name for wit. He 21 came accompanied by a rarely beautiful wife, and her efforts during the evening to have husband jump through the hoop and lie down and roll over and play dead were pathetic. Something had gone wrong business-wise during the day, and Melancholia had claimed him for her own. He would do nothing but grunt and grump.

After dinner, when all were comfortable in the smoking-room library, the hostess made a last stab to draw him out. The papers at that moment were full of the first despatches telling of the astounding performances of the English millitants 22 and the hostess said her sweetest coo:

“Oh, Mr. Blank, do you think women should vote?”

And in a voice that carried more grouch than any previous grunt during the evening, he answered: "Of course I do, course I do; and if they hadn't been such damn fools, they would have been doing it long ago."

On the way to the station the lady who controls my destinies repeated the hostess's question:

"Do you believe women should vote?"

It was an awful question to have put to one in the darkness and mystery

"OH, MR. BLANK," SHE SAID, "DO YOU THINK WOMEN SHOULD VOTE?"

25 of a station hack. It was so sudden that, I am ashamed to confess, I dived in the hope of avoiding it.

I went down like a mud-hen, deep enough, as I trusted, to let an ocean liner go over my head.

When I came up there was the same old question with both barrels trained full on me.

Did I believe that women should vote?

What did I know about it?

Had I ever given it a single second's thought?

Were the things I thought were my thoughts and liked to advertise as many ideas anything more than a hazy 26 blend of old cartoons, funny men's paragraphs, and an occasional squint at a set of spit curls on an elderly dame who seemed to be discontented with something?

I held my breath for half a minute and thought so hard that I could almost hear my mental processes.

"Yes," I said, "I do believe they should vote."

"Why?" asked the silent partner. Well, there was the Revolution—no taxation without representation; and there was the Rebellion—no slavery, political or economic. Big wars, both of them, mighty expensive, definitely deciding the questions involved 27 for all the people of these United States.

Then you get down to the proposition: "Are women *people*?"

I believe they must be, or they wouldn't act the way they do. Besides, it's discouraging to try to argue that women aren't people. After you've done your best, you are likely to wind up by merely proving that you yourself are either a Turk or an Ishmaelite. They are the only two varieties of humans who've ever been able to make it stick. They just say blandly that women haven't any souls, and as they believe it and convince their lady friends that they 28 believe it, the argument bogs down right there.

Then you've got the fact that about fifty per cent. of the population is feminine and that in the minds of the other fifty per cent. they certainly represent, at least half of the sweetness truth, and idealism of the nation.

Of course, there may be an odd Schopenhauer here and there who jumps sidewise and has a fit every time he sees a skirt; but most of us aren't nearly as timid as that.

Somewhere along here it became evident that the lady wasn't going to insist on any more reasons, but was 29 inclined to accept meekly the hereditary intellectual dominance of the male.

Lots of good men who have no intellectual objection to women's voting nurse at heart a timidity whenever they visualize the horrible results. You can see it in many a polite, genteel citizen's eye, the moment suffrage talk starts, as if he were wondering just what his own women folks would act like around the house if they knew they were as good as he was and could prove it legally.

Of course it is a false alarm. The percentage of divorces doesn't rise in 30 suffrage states because of suffrage; and logically there is no more reason why two domestic partners who are comrades, mutually acknowledging a pleasant equality, should separate, than there is for the separation of two people of opposite sex who, condemned to live together, are striving diligently to maintain an inequality.

And isn't it quaint that the states which have given suffrage to their women should be almost uniformly the "gun" states—states where the husky male not infrequently tops off his wardrobe with a cartridge belt and a gun or two? But there is a kind of logic in it, after all, because a man 31 with two guns ought not to be so much afraid of his wife as the man who is afraid of firearms. It is the man whose polite soul cleaves to gentle ways who is most likely to dread the possibility of being surrounded by women whom the law has pronounced his equals. To him the possibilities even of verbal rough-house seem appalling, and his gentle spirit quails.

For some odd reason the Wholesale Liquor Dealers' Association doesn't happen to like the idea of female suffrage, either. But this is largely, also, a case of false alarm. For in spite of the activities

of the 32 W. C. T. U., the average woman is quite prone to look on drinking largely as a masculine accomplishment, and as long as it is pursued in reasonable moderation is fairly content to have it that way; that is, she neither clamors for the booze herself nor is she insistent on wholly separating man from it; and you will find that few of the states with large feminine vote have made any determined wholesale assault on alcohol.

It is only when alcohol is arrogant and dictates politics or insidiously attempts to wreck homes or ruin young lives that the feminine vote comes across and lights on the alcoholic

FOR SOME ODD REASON THE WHOLESALERS' ASSOCIATION

DOESN'T HAPPEN TO LIKE THE IDEA OF FEMALE SUFFRAGE.

37 neck; and even then it is likely to be a measure tending to repress rather than to extirpate.

You may think that all of this is irrelevant. You may want more intimate details. But I was asked to tell "how it feels," and that's what I am trying to tell you—how it feels rather than the daily routine and whether the coffee was good this morning (which it certainly was), and whether she wears good-looking hats (which she most assuredly does).

But you have probably read in the English despatches that Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so were arrested for leading a mob to throw bricks at 38 Mr. Asquith's windows and had to spend the next two years in jail in separate cells; or you may have read in the American press that the distinguished Mrs. Blank, who lives in New York, is delivering a lecture in New Orleans, and immediately your mind conjures up Mr. Blank as a sad-eyed, lonesome, scared-looking tyke, with debilitated side-whiskers, who alternates being neglected most to death with being hustled around the house till he daren't peep.

From the outside, looking in, it may seem to you as if there isn't any inside to the home; but, honestly, there is.

39

Personally, I believe that a lady with a well-worn latch-key, who has healthy interests outside her home, is better company than one whose view of life is circumscribed by the four walls that the landlord refused to paper last spring. And that pretty clothes as an incidental habit are cheerier to live with than swell raiment as an engrossing topic of conversation and a financial holocaust at the end of the month.

My own pet boss doesn't know how to play bridge. When a friend urges her to learn, she always says she hasn't time. Mind you, she has time to study the economics of Australia 40 and the politics of China; she understands the workings of the Gutenberg liquor law, and she has gone pretty

thoroughly into street-cleaning problems with one of the engineers of the department. She also has time to go on long, lazy fishing trips with me, when we rustle our own grub and forget what day of the week it is. And she drives a car a lot better than the lad who draws pay for the job. But she hasn't time for bridge.

You'll say that she is either a remarkable woman or else she has me hypnotized.

All right, say it; get it off your chest.

41

But you are this far wrong:

She is only remarkable in this, that she didn't stop with the "finishing-school," as so many of them do: she went right on trying to learn things that were worth while, trying to get better acquainted with life, trying to economize the efforts spent in drudgery and utilize the time saved for better things, trying to stop waste in order to enjoy plenty.

I remember when her books were comparatively simple. Now I don't know where her reading is going to take her next. But I don't care. Like the bee, she brings back sweetness from every field. Solomon was 42 eminently correct when he said—speaking of her type of lady—"Her price is above rubies."

You can bet Solomon had a right to know. He perished in a gallant attempt to live with a thousand of the other kind simultaneously, and he surely had opportunities to garner experience that you and I are bound to pray will be forever denied us.

About the hypnosis—oh, well, I guess I'll plead guilty.

But the fact that your wife is striving every day to become better read and more intelligently able to discuss any human subject in no wise detracts from her charm as a companion. 43 The fact that she asks for her place in the world as a human being usually indicates a consciousness of ability on her part. And, having declared this consciousness to others, if she is any kind of a woman at all she is in honor bound to try to make good on the ability in her own home.

I will confess right here—and it may be a shock to some of you—that I do not wash the dishes in our home; nor does my wife, for that matter. I believe that something over 11,863 of you requested me to go home and wash them on the occasion of that first parade. But I never cared greatly for



dishwashing, and I doubt <sup>44</sup> whether my wife would let me wash them if I did. She values the dishes too highly: they are safer in the hands of a well-trained maid.

I'll make one exception. When we go camping I do it, just as I usually do the long end of the cooking; but that's because I can do things out of doors better than she can, and she knows it. In the same way, I sew on the most important buttons myself—not that she isn't a very dainty seamstress on frail and feminine fabrics; but I learned to sew on buttons on a coal-schooner, and any job of seamstressing that calls for sail twine and a three-corned needle <sup>45</sup> and a brass palm I arrogate to myself.

We share our family finances: she has her own income, bank accounts, and investments, quite independent of me. All you've got to do is to translate that into masculine terms to find out how it works. Which friend do you enjoy more—the one who is constantly coming to you begging for small sums of money and exhibiting unexpected bills, or the one who seldom discusses money matters with you, and yet who likes you well enough to go flat broke for you if the occasion arises? Lots of men and most women don't like to ask for <sup>46</sup> money; but lots of men who regard themselves as good spenders, and who fancy themselves as enjoying the special beneficence of that Higher Power who is credited with loving a cheerful giver, keep their wives on what amounts to a domestic bread-line, and remain blandly unconscious of the fact.

“Economic independence” is one of the watchwords of women nowadays. The lady who has to propitiate you with an extra-good dinner and spend an hour or two currying your favor the right way before she dares approach the distressing fact that the grocer's bill was fiercer than usual

BEFORE SHE DARES APPROACH THE DISTRESSING FACT THAT THE GROCER'S BILL WAS FIERCER THAN USUAL THIS MONTH.

<sup>49</sup> this month, hasn't got it. The lady who ALWAYS gives you an extra-good dinner, who only mentions her private finances as an occasion for mirth, and who now and then at odd intervals slides up in a bashful way and asks your help in working out an investment, *is* economically independent. She has a better time and she advertises it as such. I don't know whether it costs any more money (this is for the benefit of the hard-headed business man); but if it does, it is surely worth it.

Do you see how her declaration of principle commits her to a definite line of action in the household? She <sup>50</sup> has got to keep house better than any of her women friends who are not suffragettes. She knows that they would guy her if she didn't. She has got to have better-trained help, because she has formally announced that she has executive ability. She has got to be more reasonable with them than any other woman would be, because one of the planks in her platform is

that “woman is a reasonable being.” She has even got to be more reasonable with *me* —she knows *I’d* guy her if she didn’t.

The fact that she goes out of an occasional evening and makes a simple, logical little talk to a collection 51 of hard-headed, and often hard-handed, men does not break up our home life. I sometimes go out of an evening myself, and I don’t always have as much to show for it on my return as she does; nor am I always prepared to talk as interestingly as to where I have been and with whom I have conversed.

There is this, however, about living in the house with a woman who takes a kind, warm, vital interest in everything that is going on in the world—and you can, if you like, count it as one of the hardships of being a suffragette’s husband: you have at times to force yourself to seem more intelligent 52 than you really feel like being. There are times when the promptings of the baser nature would lead you to camp down on the sofa immediately after dinner and snore, when you’ve got to subdue that inclination and sit up and look bright-eyed and be just as near a nice fellow as lies within your power.

Otherwise, a certain look will come into her eye which you can’t afford to have there. It is a hardship at times, I will freely acknowledge, but it doesn’t leave any permanent bad results, and sometimes you are honestly surprised at how well you do behave.

### 53

There is a streak of vanity, or something like it, in most of us male persons that makes us piteously grateful for a kind word now and then. We are more sensitive than we are given credit for being. We all want a word of appreciation occasionally.

And when it gradually comes over you that your particular lady, in the course of her pursuit of proving that she is a reasonable being, is giving out more kind words than the average, it is calculated to put you have in a frame of mind where you don’t care a darn whom she wants for President as long as she continues to vote for you as a husband.

### 54

I suppose those English Militants stick in your crop more or less.

But they are running pretty true to form—only their petticoats get in their way now and then. They were not so much rougher than the last people who won the vote in England. You know the men of Bristol broke miles of windows, burned most of the public buildings in town, killed and got killed. That was eighty years ago, and all any one remembers of them now is that—

*They got the vote.*

And Mrs. Pankhurst:

She's a bit trying at times, isn't she? But, after all, she probably 55 hasn't been in jail any oftener than Saint Peter, and possibly no more than John Bunyan.

I once had the pleasure of sitting at dinner in her company. A mild little gentlewoman, sad with the sadness of too much experience with the hard ways of injustice, clever though, and with a most fascinating care-worn little smile flashing at intervals through her talk. Able and willing to chat gracefully and intelligently on any topic. And yet through it all ran an undercurrent that made you feel somehow that here might be one of the great women of history, brooding over her life-work. As 56 God sends, she sees it—mothering a race.

And it's a naughty bad lot of little boys she's trying to bring up.

Asquith has told the women things that if he were fifty years younger would get him spanked.

And the politicians *are* tricky, and not always truthful. For sixty long years they've been saying with fat, comfortable, delusive smiles: "Yes, yes, daughter, right away now. Next week. Next month. Next year."

Time after time the women of England have piled up majorities that would have carried any other question through with a yell, each time to 57 see them fade into the maze of politics. And Mrs. Pankhurst stood there sadly aloof from all the joy and comradeship, everything that makes life worth living, and said:

"Make good on your promises. Stop these lies! Or I will make your life intolerable to you from the ridicule and humiliation heaped on your heads. I can't fight you with muscle. But I will fight with my wits.

"I will spoil every sport and pastime you enjoy.

"I will keep this one subject—justice to women—always and eternally before you until you tell us the truth.

"I will stop at nothing but harm to human life. In all the turmoil and rioting *we* shall be the only sufferers."

Is it any wonder that the man who runs England feared her, that thousands followed where she led, that they subscribed seventy-five thousand dollars in a single afternoon?

Of course I'm glad my wife hasn't got her job.

But then I'm glad my wife hasn't got Moll Pitcher's job, either—she of Revolutionary fame. Mrs. Pitcher's work was rough—and besides, Mr. Pitcher is dead.

A great many people fear that giving a woman her honest equal rights

NOW AND THEN AT ODD INTERVALS SHE SLIDES UP IN A BASHFUL WAY AND ASKS YOUR HELP IN WORKING OUT AN INVESTMENT.

61 in the world's work is bound to make her act mannish, even if she doesn't go to the length of militancy. My experience is that so far as it has been tried out merely makes her act a little more like a gentleman.

Of course there will be occasions when a frank difference of opinion between equal partners will get animated. It may be conducted on both sides with what you might call "verve" and "vivacity," although at that it probably will not actually make more noise than when on similar occasions Mr. Domestic Tyrant issues a ukase to Mrs. Domestic Dove, or, God defend us, on those 62 other and worse occasions when Mrs. Henry Peck hands out the final word to Henry.

But, after all, it's only part of the rugged game of life and likely to be a mighty interesting part at that, as any one who has ever chummed with a wise lady will readily admit; and it isn't as black as your fancy would paint it, because, as hinted before, if you have ever lifted weights or pulled an oar, there is always back of any domestic disagreement the serene inner consciousness that if worse comes to worst, you can wind it up suddenly, take a handful of papers, and go down and explain to the judge just why the 63 officer has charged you with wife-beating.

Of course, if your early training hasn't fitted you for an active life, and you know that, if it comes down to brass tacks, the lady can lick you, you are up against it. All you can do, my brother, is to pray—pray fervently—that suffrage may never come; but with all due regard to Napoleon's remark about God being on the side that has the heaviest artillery, I'm afraid you lose.