THOUGHTS
ON
FEMALE SUFFRAGE,
AND IN
VINDICATION
OF
WOMAN'S TRUE RIGHTS.

BY
MRS. MADELINE VINTON DAHLGREN.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:
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During the past week very nearly five thousand women have presented remonstrances to the Congress of their beloved country against the oppression of having suffrage forced upon them. Some have appealed to the United States Senate, but the greater portion to the House of Representatives. Among their number can be found every element which represents a common platform, a common stand-point, and a united sentiment on this subject. Here we find allied the Protestant and the Catholic, joining sisterly hands to meet the threatened danger. Here are scores of names of women who bear names honored and dear to the Republic—names that have helped to save the country in its hour of danger before now. And side by side with these, and fully co-operating, are the names of our sisters of toil, the brave working-women, who know how to strike a blow for the right.

These five thousand who timidly advance from the cherished retirement of their invaded homes to express their condemnation in a womanly way—by petition, not coercion—are but the advance-guard of that mighty host, not of Amazons, but of true women, which the happy homes of the country may readily give in this great moral battle, in which the peaceful security of those homes is endangered. Many of these true citizens have embodied their sentiments under the following form:

_The petition of the undersigned to the Congress of the United States, protesting against an extension of suffrage to women._

We, the undersigned, do hereby appeal to your honorable body, and desire respectfully to enter our protest against an extension of suffrage to women; and in the firm belief that our petition represents the sober convictions of the majority of the women of the country.

Although we shrink from the notoriety of the public eye, yet we are too deeply and painfully impressed by the grave perils which threaten our peace and happiness, in these proposed changes in our civil and political rights, longer to remain silent.
Because, Holy Scripture inculcates a different and for us a higher sphere, apart from public life.

Because, as women, we find a full measure of duties, cares, and responsibilities, devolving upon us, and we are therefore unwilling to bear other and heavier burdens, and those unsuited to our physical organization.

Because we hold that an extension of suffrage would be adverse to the interests of the working-women of the country, with whom we heartily sympathize.

Because these changes must introduce a fruitful element of discord in the existing marriage relation, which would tend to the infinite detriment of children, and increase the already alarming prevalence of divorce throughout the land.

Because no general law, affecting the condition of all women, should be framed to meet exceptional discontent.

For these, and many more reasons, do we beg of your wisdom that no law extending suffrage to women may be passed, as the passage of such a law would be fraught with danger so grave to the general order of the country.

While others again have adopted this stirring appeal:

"We acknowledge no inferiority to men. We claim to have no less ability to perform the duties which God has imposed upon us, than they have to perform those imposed upon them. We believe that God has wisely and well adapted each sex to the proper performance of the duties of each. We believe our trusts to be as important and sacred as any that exist. We feel that our present duties fill up the whole measure of our time and abilities; and that they are such as none but ourselves can perform. Their importance requires us to protest against all efforts to compel us to assume those obligations which cannot be separated from suffrage; but which cannot be performed by us without the sacrifice of the highest interests of our families and of society. It is our fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons who represent us at the ballot-box. Our fathers and brothers love us. Our husbands are our choice, and one with us. Our sons are what we make them. We are content that they represent us in the corn-field, the battle-field, and at the ballot-box, and we them in the school-room, at the fireside, and at the cradle; believing our representation, even at the ballot-box, to be thus more full and impartial than it could possibly be were all the women allowed to vote. We do, therefore, respectfully protest against any legislation to establish 'woman suffrage' in our land, or in any part of it."

' And yet others express the same wish in still different forms. But all in good, true, Christian words, show that our country
may yet depend upon the home virtue of the mothers, wives, and maidens of this great land.

The following articles have appeared from time to time, called forth by passing events, and have been published by several journals, under the signature of "Cornelia." The writer, entertaining profound and conscientious convictions, which they attempt to express—now presents them for consideration under her own name:

AN APPEAL FOR WOMAN.

We desire to present certain considerations which most readily suggest themselves to us, as adverse to the proposed 16th amendment asking for an extension of suffrage to women, and referred to the Judiciary Congressional Committee. It is said that the chief purpose of the proposed 16th amendment to the Constitution of the United States is to ameliorate the condition of the working women. We hold, on the contrary, that no greater evil could befall the masses of women who toil for a livelihood. At present the professions, as well as the various trades, are open to women. Divinity, law, medicine, shop-keeping, brokerage, musical and literary composition, painting, and sculpture. Women may make shoes, or work in wood, iron, &c. They may be chosen for many offices—post offices, and others of a public nature are held by them—if to no great extent, at least sufficient to show that no obstacles are laid in their way other than those which are natural and may be not removed.

But notwithstanding the free scope thus given, it is complained of, that in some matters pertaining properly to females men are preferred. Do women prefer female physicians? Obviously not.

Even behind counters, where it would seem that women would be most in place, and no law preventing, yet men are selected. Custom pays male cooks and other male domestics at a higher rate than women: and this is also the common appreciation of female labor, whenever it comes into direct competition with that of men. Will suffrage alter this state of things? Decidedly not. For, at present, the law protects the persons and the weakness of women to an extent far beyond anything they might legislate for themselves.

Public opinion, almost chivalric in its courtesy among Americans, goes even further, and gracefully yields privileges, which will be best understood when lost. Will suffrage preserve this? Deprive women of such protection, and place them on a sheer equality with men, to struggle for their rights at the ballot-box, and they cannot but suffer by a direct competition, which would create an antagonism.
As to property, the law extends to the single female, *femme sole*, all that the male owner has; if not, it can be made to do so, if desirable—without suffrage. The property of married women may be fully protected by trust, and in other ways.

But even the efforts in this direction hitherto made, have weakened the marriage tie, as the increased number of divorces show. Already, the frequency of divorces in this country far exceeds anything ever known in any other Christian community. Nor can there be any doubt but that the extension of suffrage, introducing a new element of discord into the family, and taking woman outside of the home life, must not only weaken but essentially change the present marital ties.

The proper sphere of woman we hold to be in no way inferior to that of man. That sphere is of the highest. As wife and mother she is queen of the most holy aspirations. When she moves in her own proper orbit she fulfills her true duties as a citizen; and while men are struggling with the battle of life for food and raiment she cares for the progeny—the future men and women of the country. Who shall guard our children when women seek the polls, and amid the haunts of men wear themselves and their better thoughts away? For the many unmarried women and widows who have to meet the struggle of life and toil for themselves we are especially solicitous.

These, our dear sisters of Providence, need of all women the present union of law which shields their physical weakness, and of the moral sentiment which protects their persons. The ballot will substitute for this tenderness equal rights; then must all else be equal and common, and our sisters of toil must be crushed.

We claim to be as earnestly and as sincerely concerned for the well being and well doing of our sex as any who assert that female suffrage is indispensable for the removal of the evils to which those who are less favored by Providence are subject. But it is our solemn conviction that far different remedies are needed in order to improve the condition of this class of women other than an abnegation of their natural duties, and an assumption of those which belong to men.

We would suggest, in the first place, an exclusion of male labor from those pursuits which are proper and usual for women. An equal remuneration for women in all vocations common to men and women. The proper educational training of female children, as well as efforts to procure them suitable employments and adequate wages.

In the transportation from crowded cities and unremunerative occupations to other localities where female labor is in demand, and, indeed, in various other ways in which organizations might be formed outside of legislative action, such as endowments of young
unmarried women sufficient to enable them to marry and relieve the first demands of married life. But if legislation is called for, let the incomes of single men be taxed more heavily than those of married men, as was the custom at some periods of the Roman Empire. If the women throughout the length and breadth of the land who have the time and the means to spare would devote a portion of both to these and similar good works, there will be no more talk about female suffrage. Establish the right of suffrage for women and it involves a common responsibility in the duty of bearing arms, for which we are absolutely unfitted. In the discharge of this severest of all masculine duties we cannot bear a share. If forced to do so, inferior size and strength must make inferior troops. We may therefore sum up these objections by the consideration that the present movement proposes to make the whole range of duties common to the sexes instead of the present division of the duties of life, which assigns to each sex those most appropriate.

Such an innovation upon the practice and experience of the world, and which reason, law, and religion alike condemn, would be at variance with the natural law. The advocates of female suffrage claim that if women had the right to vote they would purify legislation of many abuses. But, on the other hand, we hold that the new status will prove to be the worst kind of communism. The relations between the sexes, now so carefully guarded by religion and by parents, by law and by society, will become common and therefore corrupt. The family, the foundation of the State, will disappear. The mothers, sisters, and daughters of our glorious past will exist no more, and the female gender will vanish into the epicene. Involved in one common ruin from our present proud preeminence, we shall become a laughing-stock and a by-word to the nations of the world. We appeal to our women to be content that as mothers they control man in his early and impressionable years; and as wives they rule him not less surely in the riper hours, and share with him whatever of most worth life and the common lot bring. And we implore all women to avoid this subtle, dangerous, and fatal delusion held out to them. Life has its evils and its sorrows incident to humanity—nor man nor woman may escape the burden of duties assigned by the great Creator, nor may we hope to find in the ballot a panacea for every ill. For our own sex, for the coming generations who must fare badly at the hands of voting mothers, we appeal to legislation not thus to oppress us; not to throw down the time-honored barrier which religion and the universal voice of Christian civilization have raised to protect us. We appeal to your honorable committee to save us from the inevitable degradation that must follow the promiscuous mingling of the sexes, now advocated under this new phase of irreligion. We most earnestly protest against the contemplated wrong, and if our women will not
save themselves, we look to our natural protectors to save us and the future women of the country from the dread evil and curse which female suffrage will bring upon us.

The following article was written upon reading a beautiful little work, written by Mrs. Rebecca Harding Davis, under the title of Pro Aris et Focis: A Plea for our Altars and Hearths.

"PRO ARIS ET FOCIS."

How passing strange that in the midst of the rich blessings of this, our Christian civilization, it need be that women must write in defence of the home life!—nay, must ask for a hearing, because the sacredness of that home life is attacked! As we read the touching words, "A Plea for our Altars and Hearths," we cannot but ask ourselves why it is that Christian women need these beautiful lessons of instruction; and in what manner of shape the baleful shadow of evil hangs over us, that we must anew invoke the holy principles of religion to dissipate. This graceful book, such as only a woman could write, is replete with that indescribable charm which makes the thought, the sparkling fancy, the gush of sentiment so grateful. We call it feminine. We love the designation, for it implies neither more nor less, but that harmonious contrast which the great Creator loves; He who developed the equal laws, known by the philosophic term of variety in unity—unity in variety. So made He man and woman. The two form the crowning unit of creation—nor inferior, nor superior, the one to the other, but different—the one the complement to the other. This is the natural, the organic law. Therefore, we find, in whatsoever point of view we discuss this great social question, the difference of sex, God's barrier, must always be considered. Now, inasmuch as every departure from a divine law tends to produce confusion and leads to crime in just so far as we subvert the original plan, so do we find that to the precise extent that woman leaves her sphere, higher for her, and designed by God, just to this precise extent will the result of such departure be fatal to her, and subversive of her happiness and her true interests.

The wild doctrines of the European Socialists, calling loudly for a common life to man and woman, have found their way amongst us, and we are garnering some harvest of the bitter fruit in all this demoralizing agitation in favor of female suffrage.

Many of the advocates of these doctrines amongst us would consistently commence by a direct attack upon the inviolability of Christian marriage. This destroyed, and changed to a mere form of civil contract, similar to the old hand-festan of the Anglo-Saxon, the Christian family in its various relations also disappears. And
when our altars and hearths are rudely torn away by this iconoclastic fury, that proud fabric called the State, which now towers so proudly heavenward, being sapped in its very foundation-stones, will, Babel-like, topple forward to destruction. The good old idea that the safety of a country depends on the virtue of its women and the bravery of its men is not all poetry. There is more statecraft than the simple wot of in the truth. The chief function of woman in the State—and what a grand mission it is!—is as educator of the children. In the proper training of the future citizen she finds her best representation. The state is based on the idea of the Christian family, and none other—no pagan code for us! Here the father is the head, the representative. Nor does this imply that woman, who moulds the tender years of man and shares his riper hours of life, has no voice—no influence—in this representation. We know as a fact it is far otherwise. Her direct vote, hurled into the ballot-box, would be but a pitiful exchange for the power of influence she now wields by the proper exercise of her legitimate function. And we are asked to sell our birthright for this unsavory mess of pottage! One cannot but be amused to listen to the complaints of the clamorous discontented. They commenced by ignoring (Heaven forgive them the monstrous ingratitude!) the innumerable blessings and privileges we enjoy, until as women we have become the envy of nations. No, they will only enumerate all the possible evils which may or may not exist, which may be granted or not granted, and then, like some great quack doctor, with his universal nostrum, they would entice us to swallow their gilded pill of suffrage, labelled “Panacea.” But let us beware so fatal a snare and delusion. Eve disobeyed the Divine injunction. She plucked the glittering fruit, ate, and fell to her ruin; nor she alone, but with her the women of all time. Anew, redeemed, through blessed Mary’s Son, why need we renew the sorrow? Seeking to shine like suns, we lose the clear radiance of our more tranquil light. No, let us rather pray to God to assist us to reform whatever needs reform, to devise proper means to ameliorate the griefs of our sisters of toil and our lost sisters of sin. So may we become truly, and within the limits prescribed by God himself, the ministering angels of humanity.

This article treats of the rights of the future citizens of the country, of those who would be the first to suffer in the hands of voting mothers.

Children cannot speak for themselves, and it becomes the duty of parents to whom God has confided the protection of their innocence to speak for them.
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

In the consideration of this question of making the civil and political life common alike to man and woman, of granting to woman the right of suffrage, and thereby imposing upon her the entire obligations of citizenship involved, one interest, and that of paramount importance, has been overlooked: What is to become of the children? In the family relation, as at present constituted, the infancy and childhood, in fact, the entire early life of the future citizen, is placed in the hands of the mother. By the organic law, the infant not only must depend upon the mother for its very life, as well as nourishment, but, after having passed through the early period of infancy, during which nature provides that this intimate and sacred tie between mother and child shall exist, yet the mother is still called upon to continue her special watchfulness, and guard her child in every possible way. Through sleepless nights and toilsome days her strength is expended, and her utmost efforts cheerfully given to the helpless being thus confided to her.

A mother's love! The glory, the halo, sheds its lustre over the wide, wide earth. Poets have caught the theme as one full of inspiration, and mankind have, with a common acclaim, conceded that it is the most pure, holy, and unselfish love of earth. And shall we sit with folded hands and behold this shadow of dark temptation lure the mother from her heavenly office? Infancy passed, the mother moulds the awakening intelligence of the child, and so onward, step by step, until it is ready for the outside life. Then, instructed by her pious precepts, and physically trained through her never-ceasing care, with the full impress given by the mother upon both sons and daughters, they go forth—the sons guided by the knowledge the father is able to impart to them of the outside life, and the daughters, in their turn, to mould other citizens. And ever as he strives, amid the toil and struggle incident to the citizen's duties, does the son revert with grateful, nay, hallowed recollection, to the early life when he was fortified to meet these trials by a mother's care.

This picture repeats itself so constantly that it would seem unnecessary to recall truths so trite. Alas! these facts, a part of God's ordering, are set aside and ignored in the new life now sought to be presented to woman. But if woman is now so burdened by the obligations Nature imposes, and the multiplied cares and duties incident, how is she to meet other cares, and a new and wider range of duties in addition? And this under circumstances where Nature has made no provision to aid her in their proper fulfilment. On the contrary, in seeking to share with man the obligations of citizenship, at every step she must falter, totter, fall. Her organization, so entirely adapted for the functions intended for her by Nature, is as entirely at variance with the ruder life. Standing on the same plat-
form, shoulder to shoulder, to battle through life with man, she becomes but a little man; and to gain this inferiority she forfeits her higher attributes—a sovereign dethroned from her high estate by her own most wilful act; and, while she rushes forth into life's feverish turmoil, what is to become of the children thus sadly bereft?

This is a solemn question. One hears it said daily, even by our legislators, who must finally decide this great interest, "that whenever the majority of women wish to vote, it will be granted them." Now, while we do not for a moment believe such a wish to be cherished except by a small minority of our country-women, and in case it were otherwise, with all due respect for the principle that the majority must rule, yet when this sentiment is uttered the necessities of millions of children are overlooked. Have we this right? Was there ever a nation, however powerful and prosperous, that could afford to disregard the interests of its children—of those who are to perpetuate its institutions? Is it not, therefore, a narrow view to take, when the whim or wish of a mother is consulted, in case that wish is at variance with the well-being of her child?

Here are two rights: Woman's rights, children's rights. If they conflict, weigh them in the just balance. But they do not conflict. How can they, when we well know that harmony is the grand feature of the Divine plan, placing the mother in the home life, and placing the child there also, depending on her? It might be urged that children are deprived of their rights, because nature designs them to undergo this training for life's battle. Why, it may be said, deprive the boy of seventeen of the right to vote? Has he not attained the age of reason? Is he not already a man? Among the ancients the period of majority for attainment of citizenship was at times placed at twenty-five years of age; again, so late in life as thirty-five. The limit, clearly, is not one fixed by nature, but optional. Yet legislation, very wisely, does not indicate the earliest possible period, but grants some time for the judgment to ripen. Yet, as a question simply of right, the boy of seventeen might claim his majority, were we only to be guided by abstractions, and setting aside all concurrent circumstances, which must always go to form a ripe and sound decision.

This question of female suffrage is an outcropping of socialistic doctrines, and here we are answered by the many and confused voices of its teachers. Communism is an essential part of their grand scheme. "The family relation, the inviolability of marriage, the home-life," these, for them, are effete. The new heaven—the Shibboleth—is the State. Let all be made productive for her alone. It is a waste of material and a misappropriation of labor, for each woman to devote herself to the care of her own progeny. Let these, with various other children, be gathered into communities where
one or two women may perform the office for many, and let the many devote themselves to other objects. A grand utilitarian age this! We almost go back to Sparta of old; and when our women are allowed to encroach, as theirs were, upon the public and civil life, in the process of Pagan hardening for this Juggernaut state car, then will our women, maidens, and wives become as shameless and as dissolute as did theirs. Then Sparta fell!

Where children flourish in communities—for instance, our various asylums for foundlings and orphans—it is only as a relative good. These charitable institutions are the result of an evil, and intended, so far as may be, to repair the ravages of sorrow, sin, and the inscrutable dispensations of Providence. We do not encourage these asylums because we hold them to be superior to the family state for children. On the contrary, when the divine arrangement has, from whatever cause, been disturbed, we seek thus to repair the damage; and God blesses the attempt, because this is heaven-born charity, upon which His benediction ever rests. But this is far from being the normal condition upon which statesmen must predicate.

FEMALE SUFFRAGE OR SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION.

Peculiar mental and moral phases, however unholy, have been often noted, in the world's history, to occur like epidemics, and to rage unpressed as rages a fierce battle.

Communities are sometimes appalled by the sudden prevalence of some hitherto unknown crime, which has slumbered in its mental inception unheeded, until suddenly, like a long-subdued flame, it bursts forth with incendiary violence. Then shuddering people wonder how it has all happened; but moral pestilence, although more subtle in its origin than that which invades physical laws, is controlled by causes not less sure, and which may be fathomed. The terrible French revolution of the last century, which spared neither age nor sex in its fury, was presaged by the demoralizing sentiments of irreligious philosophers. Now, the present agitation on the question of female suffrage is so directly the result of a departure from certain fundamental principles which underlie Christian civilization, that cause and effect were never more clearly illustrated than here. Female suffrage—the mischievous aspiration of the hour—is the political cloak, the means to attain an end; but the clear end will be social disorganization. The proposed change, should it ever occur, cannot fail to prove the greatest curse that has ever visited any nation. It will be subversive of the family institution, and is antagonistic to the precepts and teachings of the Christian religion, to which we, as women, gratefully attribute the elevated condition of our sex wherever that holy religion sheds its benign influence.