

operations is one presenting singular immunity from the evils which elsewhere might attach to it, the population being sparse and women in the minority."

Beside these and similar statements may be set the fact that no opposition was offered in the Convention of 1889, which drafted the present Constitution, to the enactment of woman suffrage for all purposes. The opinion of the people at large was not duly ascertained, because the question was not separately submitted to them at the polls, but there can be little doubt that it would have been favourable. The declarations of Wyoming officials may deserve no great weight, for they do not wish to offend any section of the voters, and every Western American feels bound to say the best he can and something more for the arrangements of his own State. But the whole proceedings of the Convention of 1889 leave the impression that the equal suffrage in force since 1869 had worked fairly, and the summing up of the case by a thoughtful and dispassionate British observer (Mr. H. Plunkett¹) is to the same effect. Moreover, had the results been bad in Wyoming, they would have been quoted against the adoption of the measure by Colorado in 1893. It deserves, however, to be noticed that in these new Western States women are in a minority. In Wyoming there were (1890) 21,362 women against 39,343 men, and in Colorado 80,000 more men than women, whereas in Massachusetts there were 63,000 more women than men.

As regards Washington, a gentleman of standing resident there writes me that "few women took advantage of the ballot privilege, and most of them were greatly relieved that the responsibility was removed."

No evidence has come in my way tending to show that politics are in Wyoming—there has not been time to test the results in Colorado—or were in Washington substantially purer than in the adjoining States, though it is said that the polls are quieter. The most that seems to be alleged is that they are no worse; or, as the Americans express it, "Things

¹ In the pamphlet already cited. He observes that his informants never attempted to connect the frequency of divorces in Wyoming with the political equality of the sexes, conceiving this to have exercised no influence on the family life, nor led to domestic discord. "Political differences constitute one of the few domestic troubles which no State or Territory (so far) recognizes as just cause for dissolution of matrimony."

are very much what they were before, only more so." The conditions of a small and scattered population such as that of Wyoming (60,705 in 1890) render its experience of slight value for such communities as the Eastern and Middle States.

Very recently it was proposed in the Convention which is now (August, 1894) sitting to draft a new Constitution for the State of New York, that a clause granting full suffrage to women should be inserted and submitted to the voters. Petitions signed by large numbers of women were presented both for and against the proposal. The Convention, however, by a vote of 97 to 58, refused even to submit the question, a result which is deemed to have seriously discouraged the movement so far as the Atlantic States are concerned.

Wherever the suffrage or any other public right has been given, it is given equally to married and to unmarried women.¹ No one dreams of drawing any distinction between the claims of the single and the married, or of making marriage entail disfranchisement. To do so would be alien to the whole spirit of American legislation, and would indeed involve a much grosser anomaly or injustice than the exclusion of all women alike from political functions. This point, therefore, on which much controversy has arisen in England, has given no trouble in the United States: and, similarly, the Americans always assume that wherever women receive the right of voting at the election to any office, they become as a matter of course eligible for the office itself. In some cases eligibility for the office has preceded the gift of the suffrage. There are States in which women have no school suffrage, but are chosen to school offices; and States (Massachusetts, for instance) in which they have no vote at municipal or State elections, but where they are placed on the State Board of Education or the Board of Prison Commissioners. It would be deemed in the last degree illogical to give women municipal suffrage, and not allow a woman to be chosen Mayoress, to give State (and therewith congressional)

¹ In a few States, however (*e.g.* Indiana and Oregon), school suffrage is limited to women who are heads of families, because these only are deemed to be interested in respect of children; and in a few (*e.g.* Michigan, Indiana, and Oregon) there are property qualifications of small amount attached to the school suffrage in the case of women which are not required in the case of men. In Kentucky school suffrage is granted only to widows who have children.

suffrage and not allow a woman to enter both the State legislature and Congress; to give suffrage at the presidential election and yet disqualify a woman for the Presidency of the United States.¹ And there is nothing now to prevent a woman being elected United States Senator from Wyoming (where five votes out of thirty-five were lately given for a woman candidate) or from Colorado.

"What," it will be asked, "are the forces by which the Woman's Rights movement is now pressed forward? What are the arguments used to support it? Are they of a theoretical or of a practical nature? Is it on the ground of abstract justice and democratic principle that the battle is being fought, or is it alleged that women suffer from positive disabilities and hardships which nothing but an equal share in political power will remove?"

Both sets of arguments are employed; but those of a theoretical order seem to hold the chief place. In all or nearly all States married women have complete rights to their property; in most, mothers have rights considerable, if not quite equal to those of fathers, in the guardianship of their children. Women enjoy the equal protection of the law and are admissible to professions and the training needed for professions, while the laws of divorce, whatever may be said of them in other respects, are not more indulgent to husbands than to wives. Although therefore the advocates of woman suffrage expect some tangible legislative benefits to woman from her admission to the franchise, especially in the way of obtaining better protection for her and for children, the case on this side is not an urgent one, and does not excite much strength of feeling. No one who observes America can doubt that whatever is deemed to be for the real benefit of women in the social and industrial sphere will be obtained for them from the good-will and sympathy of men, without the agency of the political vote. It is on grounds of abstract right, it is because the exclusion from political power is deemed in itself unjust and degrading, and is thought to place woman altogether on a

¹ Women are not unfrequently appointed to posts connected with legislative bodies. I found in Washington that they had been chosen to be clerks and messengers to one or other of the Houses of the then Territorial legislature. It appears to have been held in Connecticut that a woman may be appointed pension agent and in Illinois that she may be a master in chancery.

lower level, that this exclusion is so warmly resented. It seems to be believed that a nobler and more vigorous type of womanhood would be developed by the complete recognition of her equality, a wider and grander sphere of action opened to her efforts. Perhaps the commonest argument is contained in the question, "Why not? What reason can you give, you whose forefathers revolted from England because representation was not suffered to go with taxation, you who annually repeat the Declaration of Independence as if it were the Nicene Creed, you who twenty-five years ago enfranchised ignorant negroes, for excluding from the suffrage women who pay taxes, who are within the reason and meaning of the Declaration of 1776, who are far more intellectually and morally competent than the coloured millions of the South?" This appeal, which becomes all the stronger as an *argumentum ad hominem* because the American man is exceptionally deferential to women, and the American statesman exceptionally disposed to comply with every request which is urgently pressed upon him, is the kernel of the suffragist case. However, it derives no small practical aid from a practical consideration. The one question of current politics which heartily interests women is the question of restricting or prohibiting the sale of intoxicants. This is also the question which excites not perhaps the widest yet certainly the keenest interest in the minds of a great host of male voters. The enemies of the liquor traffic have therefore a strong motive for desiring to see their voting power reinforced by those whose aid would secure victory; and in fact Prohibitionist Conventions almost always declare in favour of woman suffrage. For a different reason, the Socialist and Labour parties, and to a considerable extent the Populists also, are disposed to support it, as indeed the Socialists usually do in Europe also.

Yet it must not be supposed that the sentimental arguments are all on one side. There is a widespread apprehension that to bring women into politics might lower their social position, diminish men's deference for them, harden and roughen them, and, as it is expressed, "brush the bloom off the flowers." This feeling is at least as strong among women as among men, and some judicious observers think it is stronger now than it was twenty-five years ago. I am inclined to think, though of

course this is mere conjecture, that the proportion of women who desire the suffrage is smaller in America than in England. Of the many American ladies whose opinion I inquired, the enormous majority expressed themselves hostile; and there has been formed a Women's Anti-Suffrage Association of America, which conducts an active agitation, whereas in England no similar organization has been ever created among either men or women. It is remarkable that the movement has in America found little support among what may be called the "upper classes." Woman suffragism has been, though perhaps less so now than formerly, thought "bad form," and supposed to betoken a want of culture and refinement. The same reproach attached forty years ago to Abolitionism. It has certainly been an injury to the cause that some few of its prominent advocates, disavowed no doubt by the great bulk of the suffrage party, have also advocated a general unsettlement of the relations between the sexes, and that a few others have been too masculine in their manners and discourse. The sentimental aversion to seeing women immersed in politics is all the greater, because "politics" have a technical meaning which is repellent to refined Americans; and the practical objection to doubling constituencies which are already enormous—a member of Congress represents more than five times as many voters as an English member of Parliament—is strongly felt by philosophic publicists. Even those who desire to see the sale of intoxicants restricted feel doubts as to the expediency of attaining their object by the votes of women, because the difficulty of enforcing prohibitory legislation, already serious where the drinking minority is strong, would be much greater if a majority of men in favour of keeping bars and saloons open were overborne by a minority of men turned into a majority by the votes of women.

It is commonly assumed that, in a democratic country, all changes are towards a further extension of the suffrage, that democratic voters are like the unjust judge in the parable, and will yield to importunity what they might refuse to justice, in short, that whatever an active section continues to press for will sooner or later be conceded. But this assumption may be too hasty. True it is that so far the agitation for the grant of suffrage to women has been met by comparatively little in the way of counter agitation, that abstract democratic doctrine

has still power over the American mind, that the support of the Prohibitionist party is an important factor in the problem. Yet who can tell whether the movement will evoke as much enthusiasm during the next thirty years as it has done during the last thirty? When the group of Abolitionist leaders, already sadly thinned by death, pass finally off the stage, will men and women of equal ardour arise to fill their places? Will the Abolitionist spirit, which insisted on giving full political effect to the conception of equal human rights, be as intense in the next generation as in that which saw the horrors of slavery? Will what may be called, in no disparaging sense, the sentimental tendency in politics be as strong then as it is even to-day? The liquor question may possibly be settled, or at least so far settled as no longer to dominate politics; and other questions may come up, thrusting female suffrage into the background. The remarkable progress which the movement has made in England cheers its American adherents; but it has some advantages in England which it wants in America. In England a section of the Liberal party, which is apt to be the party of theory and sentiment, has favoured it, because less afraid of change, and more disposed to admit every one to political power; while the Tory party has latterly much more generally, though not universally, favoured it, in the belief that women are conservative in their tendencies, and would support the Established Church and established institutions generally. It has thus had the rare good fortune of drawing support from both camps, though for different reasons. But in America most of the leaders of both the great parties seem unfriendly (though the Democrats are more frequently hostile than the Republicans), perhaps because the introduction of a vast mass of new voters might strain the party machinery, and bring in an incalculable and therefore disagreeable element. Both parties already dislike the Prohibitionists, because they cut across the legitimate party organizations and contests: the introduction of women would, it is thought, aggravate this mischief. Some one may say that this ought to commend the suffrage movement to the Reforming or Independent party, which attacks the so-called "Machine Men" of both Republicans and Democrats. In point of fact, however, very few of the reformers advocate woman suffrage, apparently because

they are opposed to "sentimentalism," and think that "politics," as now practised, would do more harm to women than women could possibly do good to politics.

These are some of the reasons which make an impartial observer doubt whether full political suffrage, as distinguished from school or municipal suffrage, is likely to be granted to women in many States of the Union within the next thirty years, for of the remoter future it would be rash to speak. Still it must be remembered that considerable advances have been made, and that where any form of suffrage has been once granted it has never, except in Washington and in the wholly exceptional case of Utah, been withdrawn. The suffragists have some grounds for the confidence of victory they express. If they can bring the public opinion of women themselves over to their side, they will succeed. To a European observer the question seems one rather of social than of political moment. If he sees no reason to expect an improvement in politics from the participation of women in elections and their admission to Congress and to high political office, neither does he find much cause for fear. The results of universal suffrage may not greatly differ from those of manhood suffrage. Such misgivings as he entertains are of a different nature. They are serious misgivings, and they are rendered not less serious by a study of the social changes which are passing upon the world in Europe as well as in America.

CHAPTER XCVII

THE SUPPOSED FAULTS OF DEMOCRACY

THE question which in one form or another every European politician has during the last half-century been asking about the United States, is the broad question, How does democracy answer? No other country has tried the experiment of a democratic government on so large a scale, with so many minor variations, for the State governments are forty-four autonomous democracies, or with such advantages of geographical position and material resources. And those who think that all civilized countries are moving towards democracy, even though they may not be destined to rest there, find the question an important one for themselves. The reader who has followed thus far the account I have tried to give of the Federal Constitution and its working, of the State Constitutions, of local government, of the party machinery, of the influence of public opinion as a controlling power over all the institutions of the country, will be content with a comparatively brief summary of the results to which the inquiries made under these heads point.

That summary naturally falls into three parts. We have to ask first, how far the faults usually charged on democracy are present in America; next, what are the special faults which characterize it there; last, what are the strong points which it has developed.

The chief faults which philosophers, from Plato downwards to Mr. Robert Lowe, and popular writers repeating and caricaturing the dicta of philosophers, have attributed to democratic governments, are the following:—

Weakness in emergencies, incapacity to act with promptitude and decision.

Fickleness and instability, frequent changes of opinion, con-