

SHOULD WOMEN VOTE ?

At the outset let me say that under the present abnormal condition of society the writer has no objection to women using the franchise. With the present low state of manhood in the sterner sex ; with the present attitude of man not caring much how the country is governed so long as he can succeed in what he is striving for with might and main, namely, money ; with his present willingness to part with his vote for a consideration ; with the degraded position many have sunk to through social vices, the drink habit notably as one ; it would seem that some other element needs to be incorporated into the body politic ; it would seem that a desperate remedy is required to effect the cure of a desperate malady. But if the cure is a desperate one it is also dangerous, perhaps so dangerous that it will leave evils behind worse than those it is sought to cure. The couplet of

“ Better to bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of,”

although often quoted, contains almost inexhaustable food for thought.

Often when radical changes are made, with all our owl-like wisdom of forethought, effects flow from those changes that the greatest flights of imagination did not dream of. So it might be with women exercising the right of franchise, although it might take ages to unfold the evil effects of such a step. The three-score-years-and-ten of one man's life are often too short to weigh, comparatively, the incipient and later stages of a movement and note the changes, either of good or ill, which have been developed.

The right to the suffrage is only a half-way step in the direction it tends—the right to sit in the legislative halls to make the laws of the nations, is the other ; the only reason why the claim

to the law-making power should at present be kept in the background—although, indeed, it can scarcely be said to be kept there either—is the resorting to political methods to gain the desired end—the saying “let us get one thing at a time ; let us enter the thin end of the wedge ; when we have gained the franchise, then will be time enough to agitate for the second claim.”

What does the law-making power involve ? What are the duties of legislators ? In the popular consideration of this point, at least, the full duties of the law-making body are obscured. The “ways and means” part of the business—the yearly gathering and expenditure of the finances—is often magnified out of all proportion to its importance—important though it is. It is true, too, that in the annual quota of laws sent out from our legislatures very few of them there are which do not involve the taxation of the people, either directly or remotely, yet there is another branch of their work of, at least, equal magnitude—that is, the laws which regulate the moral and intellectual side of society, the criminal laws and such like. To this it will be replied that woman is equally concerned in both these duties, that she has property the state taxes and so she has a right to a voice in the economic expenditure of it, and she is also concerned—deeply so—in the laws which govern the actions of men and women in the social fabric. It could be urged further that, as all women—those who do not own property as well as those who do—are concerned in the laws pertaining to the morals of a nation, the franchise should be extended not only to those having property in their own right but also to those who desire that just laws should prevail—laws which are of much more importance to us than those that simply involve money. But this leads