

Woman in Politics

"In some lines woman must lead, while in others man must lead and together . . . they will be the means of having new values placed on human life and labor"

By F. J. Dixon, M.L.A.

Ever since Eve of the Creation, woman has been an uncertain quantity in the realm of politics. According to the theologians, Eve won the first political debate when she persuaded Adam to partake of the apple. As a result of that first polemic victory we are now hoeing sow thistles and pulling mustard instead of basking under the palm trees eating bananas and bread fruit.



ANNE HUTCHISON

At least that is one interpretation of the story. Yet, in spite of all the sins the face of man is black with, any man worth his salt would rather be with Janey Canuck in the Canadian West than lolling in some Evesless Eastern Eden.

One would like to mention the achievements of woman in non-political fields, and her achievements are many, but with a glance at the women of history we must pass on to our main theme.

A wise boy when asked which was the most important date in history, replied: "Cleopatra's date with Anthony." Who can estimate the effect of that fateful date upon Roman politics? Whatever the time or clime of politics the influence of woman has been ever present. Eve and Elizabeth, Deborah and Delilah, Martha and Mary, Boadicea and Victoria, Marie Antoinette and Joan of Arc are only a few of the momentous names that stare at us from the pages of history.

Some Notable Women

In the politics of the immediate past some notable women have played their parts nobly and well. For example, Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dyer, Frances E. Willard, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Julia Ward Howe, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs. John Stuart Mill. Only a passing reference to some of them can be made, but their names, and others, are familiar to all who study the history of the human march to freedom.

Mary Wollstonecraft was not the first champion of her sex, but she was one of the staunchest pioneers of the modern suffrage movement. She was a woman of Britain, and in 1792 published a book entitled "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." Her book created a great sensation and started a discussion which is still going on.

John Stuart Mill's book on "The Subjection of Women" is still one of the classics of the suffrage movement, but it is not generally known that Mrs. Mill was an ardent feminist and a publicist of no mean order.

In the New World, Anne Hutchinson was the first to suffer for the right of woman to orate in public. Anne Hutchinson came over with the Pilgrim fathers. Those gentlemen of the olden time, altho seeking in a new land liberty of expression for themselves, would by no means allow Anne Hutchinson to deliver the religious message she felt called to give to the people. For her persistence in exercising her right of free public speech she was finally exiled from Massachusetts. Some years later she was murdered by the Indians, and may rightly be called the first American martyr for woman's liberty.

When Anne Hutchinson was banished from Massachusetts she was accompanied by her own family and a few loyal friends, including Mary Dyer, who later was hanged by the neck until she was dead for the heinous crime of espousing the cause of liberty and preaching the truth as she saw it.



JULIA WARD HOWE

While waiting for the death sentence to be executed she wrote "An Appeal to the General Court at Boston" on behalf of two Quaker friends who had been condemned to be hung, a quotation from which will show the spirit of the woman:

"Whereas," she writes, "I am by many charged with the guilt-

ness of my own blood; if you mean, in my coming to Boston, I am therein clear and justified by the Lord, in whose will I came, who will require my blood of you be sure, who have made a law to take away the lives of the innocent servants of God, who are called by you 'Cursed Quakers,' altho I say—and am a living witness for them and the Lord—that He hath blessed them and sent them to you. Therefore be not found fighters against God, but let my counsel and request be accepted with you, to repeal all such laws, that the truth and the servants of the Lord may have free passage among you, and you be kept from shedding innocent blood.

You will not repent that you were kept from shedding blood, tho it were by a woman. It's not mine own life I seek—for I choose rather to suffer with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of Egypt—but the life of the seed which I know the Lord hath blessed."

While she was mounting the scaffold she was informed that she had been reprieved. Carried back to jail she found that her reprieve was dependent upon her promising to leave Massachusetts forever. This she gently but firmly refused to do.

"My life," she said, "is not accepted, neither availeth me, in comparison with the lives and liberty of the truth and the servants of the living God, for which in the bowels of love and meekness I sought you; yet, nevertheless, with wicked hands have you put two of them to death, which makes me feel that the mercies of the wicked is cruelty. I rather choose to die than to live, as from you, as guilty of their innocent blood." And die she did. But her soul goes marching ahead of the army of women who are fighting for freedom. The seed of truth which Mary Dyer nourished with her heart's blood has been very fruitful, and many women are now participating in the struggle for greater freedom.

Little need be written here of present day women in politics. The daily press records their goings out and their comings in. The names of Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Mrs. Raymond Robins, Mary Fels, Senator Helen Ring Robinson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ella Flagg Young, Emma Goldman, the Pankhurst family, Mrs. Pethwick Lawrence, Mrs. Philip Snowden, Red Rosa of Luxemburg, and others, are as familiar in our mouths as household words.

General Status of Woman

Now let us leave the personal phase and consider the general status of woman in politics. Women enjoy the parliamentary franchise in Norway, Denmark, Finland, Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania; in eleven of the United States—Wyoming, Colorado, Washington, California, Idaho, Utah, Kansas, Oregon, Arizona, Nevada, Montana—and in Alaska, with partial suffrage in Illinois. It is estimated that nearly 4,000,000 American women will vote in the next presidential election. In addition women exercise the franchise in municipal and school matters in many other countries and states. In none of the suffrage countries—with the exception of Finland—have women displayed a keenness for parliamentary honors. They have generally been content to serve on municipal councils and school boards, and have rendered valuable service in those fields. For many years, however, from fifteen to twenty women have sat in the parliament of Finland. As a rule the women candidates have been re-elected, which is evidence that the Finlanders think their women are good legislators. In the United States several women have occupied seats in the State legislatures, and have proven their competence to make laws. A notable example is Senator Helen Ring Robinson, of Colorado.

Equal Suffrage in Canada

Coming to Canada. It is a far cry from 1690 to 1916. In the former year, and the years immediately succeeding, the King of France was engaged in the noble task of shipping young girls to Canada to provide wives for his most loyal subjects. It was stipulated that they should be "Strong, healthy and in every way suitable." Men also were shipped to Canada and told that they would be deprived of the privilege of trading and hunting if not married within two weeks of the arrival of the girls. Love at first sight was more than romantic in those days. Time passes. Customs change. Now, in the spring of 1916, the sun of equal suffrage rises in the West.

Splendid work has been, and is being, done by women's organizations in Canada. The W.C.T.U., the Women Grain Growers, the Home Economic Society, the Winnipeg Civic League, the Mothers' Club, the Council of Women, and similar organiza-

tions are having a great influence upon municipal, provincial and federal politics. The W.C.T.U., for example, had much to do with the creation of the temperance wave which is sweeping over this continent. In Manitoba, the Political Equality League, now converted into the Political Educational League, has been the vehicle by which the women of the province have gone into politics for the vote and got it. The new name of the league is significant and indicates that the women are taking their newly acquired political duties seriously, which is well for all of us.

In Saskatchewan and Alberta suffrage societies have prevailed upon their respective governments to grant the elective franchise to women. The government of British Columbia has promised to take a referendum vote on the question of equal suffrage in the near future. In Western Canada, at any rate, woman is in politics with both feet, and she is getting a toe-hold in the East.

Can Women Vote in Dominion Issues?

There seems to be some doubt as to just what will be the political status of the newly enfranchised women of the West in the next federal election. When the matter was being discussed in the House of Commons, at its recent session, Mr. Pugsley, who moved a resolution in favor of permitting provincially enfranchised women to vote at federal elections, stated that the Dominion Election Act expressly specifies that men only shall vote in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon. There is no such reservation with regard to Manitoba. What will the federal government do about it? Mr. Pugsley's resolution was defeated, but Sir Robert Borden said that, while he admitted telling a deputation of women in 1912 that they should go to the provincial governments, as the question of the franchise was controlled by them, the government reserved the right to decide upon the wider question of a women's franchise for the whole of Canada. It is to be hoped that the government will decide in favor of the women, and that quickly. If it does not, it is safe to prophesy that government candidates in the prairie provinces at the next election will find that the possession of the provincial franchise has not lessened the indirect influence of women in politics.

While we are dealing with the political status of women in Manitoba, it is interesting to note that while women have the right to sit on school boards and in the provincial legislature they have not yet the legal right to sit on municipal councils. Doubtless this legal disability will be removed in the near future. The right to act as school trustees is not of recent origin. It has not, however, been greatly exercised. So far as the writer is aware there are only four women school trustees in the province—two in Winnipeg and two in the rural districts.

Mrs. J. K. Brown, who has been on the Winnipeg school board nearly two years, is working to get women teachers equal pay with men for equal work. Also that women teachers should not be barred from the usual increase in salary simply because they are married. She has also been active in forming parent-teacher associations, which have for their object a better understanding between parents and teachers. It seems quite natural that the superintendent should ask a woman trustee to accompany him when inspecting the domestic science classes, yet some still ask, "What can a woman do on the school board?" This paragraph indicates what one woman is doing. In addition it must be obvious that women teachers,



SUSAN B. ANTHONY

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