

Homesteads for Women

The following letters have been adjudged the best of those sent in favor of homesteads for women. It seems to me, that while homesteads are evidently desired by many women, there is not the heart whole desire that would be necessary to bring about this reform. Taking all the points advanced, I think that they speak more strongly for a greater freedom for the women than this homestead law would give. There is a very good suggestion contained in one of the letters to form organizations for the women of the West, so that each town would be represented on the petitions which would eventually be presented to Parliament. The writer goes on to say that the women of these organizations would have the interests of the fair sex at heart, and that they would be able to accomplish much good for the women. This is a very good idea, and I will ask the women readers to vote on this question, and also on which letter they consider deserves the prizes in their order of merit, first, second, third, fourth and fifth. I would like the women readers of the home page to take an active interest in awarding these prizes. Each reader will be entitled to five votes, and I hope that they will help me in deciding which is the best reason, or reasons, given in these letters for the granting of homesteads to women. The first and second will be very valuable prizes, and very helpful. The first prize will go to the writer who has received the largest number of votes, and the other prizes will be awarded according to the number of votes in each case. All letters to be addressed to Mary Ford, Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg.

HISTORICAL REASONS

I have read with interest much of the discussion on Homesteads for Women in The Guide. Before stating my views on the subject let me say that I consider the Women's page in The Guide a unique one. It has none of the usual platitudes of a Women's Corner but is full of strong, sensible, helpful prose and poetry; every line worth reading.

Now to our question—"Why women should be granted homestead privileges." Why should they not? Not to allow them equal homesteading rights with men is an absurdity because:—

(1) Take it from a Biblical standpoint. God put both Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden. Evidently Eve had as much right there and on the land as her husband. Then we hear of Deborah who judged Israel and other women, who had equal power with men and knew how to use it properly, too, for the welfare of those around them.

(2) Stepping into secular history, what about Boadicea? Does anyone doubt that she owned her land, and later still what about our own queens? We say King George owns his country. Did

not Elizabeth own England? Were not William and Mary equal in ownership because Mary desired it? How about Anne and Victoria? Did their consorts own or even wish to own their land? How much more then should not an ordinary woman, man's equal, often his superior in morals, intellect and education, own a quarter section.

(3) If women were granted homesteads instead of the land being held by railway companies and speculators the thrifty minds of the former would utilize that one hundred and sixty acres instead of letting it lie waste which it is a sin to do. They would find some way of tilling it or using it for pasture for—

(4) No one objects to a woman owning horses and cows, etc. Why can she not have the right to provide cheaply for that stock and not be compelled to buy feed or land to grow it on?

(5) As I said above if she had the land she would find the stock to use it and more and finer animals would be raised in this country.

(6) If the women are using the land they must drive to market. Women dislike rough roads more than men do, so

they would see that good roads were made.

(7) This would put up the value of all property if men had sense to see it.

(8) To have good roads we must pay taxes and this women would do as they have a greater respect for "law and order" than men. Consequently municipalities would be in better shape and not suffer from arrears of taxes.

(9) Many a school district too would be thankful to have women tax-payers and many a lady school teacher would be glad of the chance to have "her own home", i.e., "homestead" and yet conduct the affairs of school.

(10) How short-sighted the men must be who would not grant homesteads to women. They grumble at the expense and trouble of supporting them be they wife or sister. Yet all we ask is a chance to support ourselves. Then if we do so before marriage will our homestead yield us any less because we take a managing partner to look after one department for us while we look after another department for him?

(11) Lastly, if we had the land we would have a right to vote, then hurrah for "sweeter manners, purer laws."

BONNIEBRAE.

WOMEN'S INDEPENDENCE

There are two aspects to this question which must be considered before an unbiased solution can be arrived at. First, the state as the donor; secondly, woman as the would-be recipient. The state holds land, which in its wild state, is valueless, and as population, with its attendant energy is the only thing that can invest it with value, the government agrees to give every man who will improve the land, a quarter section of same, with the consequence that the males are enormously in the majority, and the result is, in at least 50 per cent. of cases, as soon as patent is secured it is sold to some speculator, who takes advantage of the owner's keen desire to sell, brought about by the misery of a lonely life, as much as by the fact that it is almost impossible for a man to attend to all the household duties, and make farming pay. It would therefore, be extremely profitable for the state to alter all this by extending the homestead privilege to women, and so equalizing the sexes, with the natural

consequence that the new parts of the country would soon become a land of contented, prosperous homes, instead of a region of vacant farms, with only the ruins of bachelors' shacks (monuments to a short-sighted policy), to break the monotony of the view. The space at my disposal will only allow of the mention of a few of the numerous reasons which can be brought forward by the women, as being at least equally necessary to the building up of a nation, and in proportion to their physical strength doing an equal share of work with the men. They are equally deserving of any thing the state has to offer in the way of inducement or reward. In the older parts of the country, "What shall we do with our girls" is becoming a burning question, as it is now more than ever necessary that a large majority of women have to earn their own livelihood, and most of the methods of doing so tend to lower their intellectual and physical condition. The factory with its oft-times unsanitary surroundings, the store, with its long hours and sedentary occupations, and many others equally undesirable, when there is land enough for all, and an opportunity to live a healthy open air life, and at the same time confer a benefit on the country at large, to say nothing of the probable happiness of some lonely bachelor. The effect of modern education is tending to instil into our women folk, a very laudable desire for a degree of independence, and apart from all sentiment, a woman is legally, little more than an unsalaried housekeeper to her husband. What a satisfaction it would be to most women to know that they have some property of their own, so that in the event of a financial calamity befalling their husbands, or, let us hope in the very rare case of a man knowingly squandering his substance to satisfy some selfish vice, she, and those dependent on her, would be above the humiliation of seeking charity.

F. B. SULMAN.

Blackfoot, Alta.

SPEAKS FROM EXPERIENCE

While reading your worthy weekly Guide, the item caught my eye, "Why Women Should be Granted Homestead Privileges." I am not writing for a prize, but from experience. First, I

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