

WHY I BECAME A SUFFRAGIST IN B. C.

I have been trying to think out a simple answer to the question: Why I became a Suffragist? Somebody said to me the other day: "Why, you are the last person I should have thought was a Suffragette! You are married. Why should you be a Suffragette?"

Those are the kind of remarks which so plainly show the utter inability of a man to understand a woman's viewpoint. Such remarks are to my mind themselves proof that men cannot alone be successful legislators for the whole of humanity. Their ideas are warped by generations of false suppositions and the absolutely wrong and ridiculous attitude to women which the youth acquires in early manhood.

There have been many forces at work, many things that have gradually swayed me to sympathize with the Woman Suffrage Movement. I have always been a strong upholder of my own sex, as I was at an early age impressed by the nobility of character manifested in my feminine relatives, and to my critical young mind, they seemed finer and better than the men. My grandmother, particularly, was a woman of unusual intelligence and strength of mind, and I, even as a very young girl, recognized and resented the male attitude towards this brilliant and beautiful lady, based on the idea that she was "only a woman." Yet in spite of this strong feeling, and even after active and definite agitation for the right of franchise was forced on my notice, I remained apathetic. Like thousands of women in British Columbia to-day, my eyes were not opened to the significance and power of the vote. I did not realize that the right of franchise exercised by any class of people influences legislation which affects that class, and if a whole sex is unfranchised, that sex has very little chance of making its voice heard if it wants new laws made for its benefit, or to have old ones repealed. More

than this, I did not realize that there is a vast army of women without homes, without protection; women who have had to come to grips with the world attended by the manifold handicaps of their sex. It was one or two startling cases, when I learned the fate of some of these women, that made me rub my eyes, sit up and ask myself: What is the position of womanhood in the world? Where do we stand, we women, who shoulder so many burdens?

The world does not protect women, men do not protect them. Women's virtue is to a certain extent protected by the White Slave—the human sacrifice to the brute passions of men. We are told that if we do not allow prostitutes in our towns no decent woman will be safe. Does any decent woman want her virtue protected in that manner—by the sacrifice of other women's souls and bodies? I think not! And we will not have it so. The only real protection women have in their relations to men are their natural instincts with which wise Nature has endowed them. When a woman stifles or loses in any way her moral instinct, we know that she may fall. Man does not protect her; he preys upon her; he boasts of not having missed an opportunity, and no one regards a "fallen" woman with more contempt than the contemptible man who has ruined her, and who is too vain and illogical to realize the impertinence and absurdity of his attitude.

We see, therefore, that socially woman's only protection is her good instinct—the instinct for the preservation of her virtue. Then, what has the vote to do with it? We know that wickedness will never be legislated out of the world, but commercialized vice can, by laws, be made unprofitable (just as the African Slave Trade was), which means abolition. From whence comes this shameful demand? Is it from the every day man in the street, the men who are our lovers, husbands, fathers of our children. The truth is out, and we know it is.

It is that miserable, cowardly, dual standard of morality which is a men-