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The Conversion of Ald. Murphy

"Pardon me, madam," she asked with the air of a professional questioner, "I came to inquire whether you believe in equal suffrage?"

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Florence Woolston

HAVING scrubbed the kitchen floor, Mrs. Schwind put the turkey-red cushion over the window sill and leaned out. She had few pleasures, and it was a diversion to look into the street. She liked to watch the heavily laden trucks on the way to the river; she enjoyed calling a greeting to her neighbors as they passed; and, above all, she could keep an eye on the several little Schwinds distributed throughout the alley. Hardly had she taken her place, when there came a loud rap at the door.

"Mother of Pearl," she said, "I bet it's one of them settlement teachers."

The woman who stood without, however, was a stranger.

"Pardon me, madam," she asked with the air of a professional questioner, "I came to inquire whether you believe in equal suffrage?"

"If you mean that sufferin' should be equal, I guess I do," replied Mrs. Schwind hesitatingly.

"I think you do not quite get my point. By equal suffrage I mean the political enfranchisement of women. Do you believe that women should vote?"

"I ain't hardly thought much about it yet," said Mrs. Schwind. "You see, I've got twelve children livin', and one that died on me, and it keeps me pretty busy. Won't you come in?"

ever there was trouble. It was due to him that Jim had his new job. The possibility of doubling these benefits was very alluring.

"I suppose," she mused, "they'd have 'Monster Ladies' Outings,' and little Tom could ride in the tallyho in my lap. Maybe I could get to go to the 'Red Men's and Lady Squaws' Masked Ball,' too."

After supper, when the older little Schwinds had gone to the settlement clubs, and the younger ones were asleep, she remarked with obvious nonchalance, "There was a lady here to-day, Jim, askin' me to vote."

Jim looked up from his newspaper and exclaimed: "Here! Here! Where won't them suffragette women folks go next? You'd better look out, Ma, they're a sporty lot."

"Maybe they be; but I'm goin' to the meetin' to-morrow, anyhow. It kinder seems as though they might be somethin' in it," she replied half wistfully, as she hung up the dishcloth.

"Well, all I got to say is you'd better look out, Ma," replied Jim, as he resumed his paper.

Mrs. Schwind was one of the first arrivals at Solenski's the next day. She followed the speakers with eager interest. It was all so new, so different. The chairman concluded her speech by saying:

"Now, ladies, we have done with theory. To accomplish this thing, we must go into politics. We have begun by opposing every local candidate who is against 'Votes for Women.' Mr. Thomas Murphy, the alderman of this district, is most unfavorably disposed toward us; in fact, he was distinctly rude to us. No lady could well repeat his language. Does anyone here know him?"

Mrs. Schwind was filled with conflicting emotions. She had known Tom Murphy for years. She could easily guess what epithets he had hurled at his callers, and she was ashamed for him. She remembered, nevertheless, that he was kind. He paid their rent when Jim was sick, and it was he who gave little Mabel a funeral which was still the talk of Pearl Alley.

When the chairman a second time impressively demanded, "Does anyone here know him?" she faltered, "I do; but he ain't never done anything to me."

"I should say," answered the chairman, "that any man who opposed your enfranchisement had done something to you. We must look at this thing impersonally, as men do."

After some further discussion, it was voted that six residents of the district be appointed a committee to see what effect militant tactics would have on the Honorable Tom Murphy. Mrs. Schwind did not know what militant tactics were, but her bosom swelled with pride when her name was announced as one of the six. A wave of nervousness succeeded the rush of joy, however, when the chairman explained the duties of the committee.

"What they say's all right," she thought, "but they ain't never seen Tom mad."

When Jim came home that night he was very curious about the meeting, and his greeting was: "Well, Ma, I suppose you've got things all fixed up. But you're gettin' pretty fat to be a sandwich. I seen one of them in the streets to-day, with a lot of printing about voting."

Much experience had taught Mrs. Schwind the art of omission in family life, and she replied carelessly: "Oh, I had a good enough time."

She was far from feeling the unconcern that her manner bespoke, however, and that night she dreamed that they were dispossessed. While she sat on the sidewalk, her children and her furniture

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"Do you believe that women should vote?" asked the caller.