

A Woman's Place

By

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A WOMAN'S PLACE

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For many years the right of women to vote on an equality with men has been urged by women of advanced thought. These leaders have in the past been tagged with the label "strong-minded," or they have been called "short-haired women" and classed with long-haired men. This is perfectly in accord with the policy of those who, unable to answer the arguments advanced by a speaker, try to bring her personality into the discussion and through ridicule becloud the message that the speaker tries to deliver.

During the past few years the movement for woman suffrage has made considerable headway and has succeeded in gaining its object in some of the Western commonwealths.

The query naturally arises: "Why does woman want to vote?" "What use will she make of the vote if it is granted her?" "Will she use it wisely, or will she, from the naturally conservative instincts of her sex, use it in behalf of reactionary legislation?" The old argument that many women own property upon which they are compelled to pay taxes without being permitted a voice as to what taxes shall be levied or how the money shall be spent after being collected, while sound in principle, is not a suffi-

cient reason for the wholesale enfranchisement of women.

There are relatively few women who own taxable property, and their economic interests are the same as the interests of the masculine property owners. There is no sex question involved in property rights that would divide the voters, and no clash of interests between male property owners and female property owners.

The most common and to those who offer them, the most convincing answers to all the claims of women to equality with men at the ballot box are, "A woman's place is in her home." "She has enough to do if she looks after her home and her children." "Her place is at the fireside." The person advancing these ideas is very much in the position of the man riding in a railroad car with his back to the engine—he never sees anything until he has passed it, and cannot see anything in the direction in which he is traveling.

And yet it is because it is true that a woman's interest still centers in the family that she is forced to take a position in public affairs in order to protect herself and her children.

The change in home life and home conditions and industries caused by the industrial revolution of the past one hundred and fifty years has brought new problems into existence, or rather brought old problems into a new aspect. The problems that confronted the wife and mother

in the past were the same that confront her to-day, but the solutions then were simple, as the life most people lived was a simple life. Our modern social and industrial processes are so complex and so different from the old life of a century or more ago, that new methods must be evolved to fit the new conditions.

You cannot put new wine into old bottles. The old social order cannot contain the new wine of the modern industrial and commercial system, in the midst of which we find ourselves. Old customs are giving way to new customs. Old habits of thought are being displaced by new ones. Old theories are being discarded and science and invention have transformed our whole social fabric. The old simple life has gone. The new complicated life has taken its place. The woman, her children, and her home, have all been involved in the change. To understand how vast has been that change, what caused it, and what woman can and must do to secure for herself and the race the greatest benefit from the change, the past must be reviewed and the present understood and then woman with her new found power will surely take her place in the ranks with those seeking to establish a better and higher civilization than mankind has ever known.

THE FAMILY HEARTH.

We hear the term "Woman's work" used. Why should some work be sacred to woman which

would be discreditable if performed by one of the opposite sex? Why should certain other avocations be the monopoly of man and into which sphere it is discreditable for woman to enter, There never has been any person or body of persons authorized to designate what labor one sex should perform and what labor the other sex should perform. The truth of the matter is that the work of the world has been divided between the two sexes through many centuries merely by custom and convenience.

The bearing and rearing of children, a burden placed upon woman by nature, had very much to do with classifying certain industries as best performed by her, but her maternal duties were not altogether responsible. Another, and possibly greater force, which resulted in division of labor between the sexes, and one to which little attention has been given, was the discovery and use of fire.

Whatever was the source from which fire was first derived, it is certain that primitive man considered it sacred, and it was preserved with the utmost vigilance. The first attempts at architecture made by man were probably the rude sheds or shelters erected to protect the sacred flame from wind and rain. These later grew into temples and shrines, where the fire was kept burning continuously. To have the tribal fire go out was a great calamity. The difficulty of securing a new fire with the crude and

clumsy methods of primitive times, if a chance volcanic fissure in the rocks, or a tree in the forest set ablaze by a bolt of lightning were not available, was such that it led to certain members of the tribe being charged with the sole duty of its maintenance.

The tribal fire was a permanent fire, and it was the center around which all gathered. Feasts in celebration of victory, and councils of war or peace were concluded within the circle of its radiance.

This communal fire was the nucleus around which grew up the first functions of the State. It was the first civic center. The guardians of the fire became the first public servants, and as the State developed they absorbed other functions and became priests and magistrates and even kings.

The rude shed evolved into a temple in which the sacred fire burned. This was the origin and development of the Temple of Vesta, where the sacred fire of the Romans was kept burning by the Vestal Virgins for, it is said, a thousand years.

If, by chance, the tribal fire was extinguished, all tribunals, all authority, and all public and private business stopped and remained suspended until the fire was relighted. When Augustus usurped the empire of Rome he assumed the charge of the public fire, and when he trans-

ported it into his own palace he had to transform it into public property.

In savagery woman's social status was low, because her value as an economical factor was low. This was a condition forced upon her by the brutal social environment of the past, out of which a new social order was slowly evolving. The fierce struggle by primitive man against the forces of nature was characterized by intermittent periods of want and starvation. During the hunting stage of human development woman was more or less a burden and inconvenience. In the pursuit of game she was never as swift and agile as man, and especially was this true during her periods of pregnancy. The burden placed upon her by nature of preserving the race from extinction placed her at a disadvantage compared with man.

No woman ever enters a Marathon race. In the dim past fleetness of foot was an important factor in solving the question of the supremacy of contending hordes. Not only in the pursuit of wild animals, which furnished the chief source of food supply, but in the constant strife between contending tribes, the quick, agile and sure-footed had a distinct advantage.

When attacked by superior numbers flight was the only recourse of the warrior. If the tide of battle ran the other way, pursuit of the enemy and overtaking and dispatching him settled the question of the survival of the fittest in favor

of the man with the best developed feet and legs. In this regard, woman, whose physical structure was adapted to her child-bearing and child-nursing functions, was at a disadvantage as compared to man.

Other sources were at work which tended to reduce woman's position in the tribe. The hazards of the chase and war would naturally result in a higher death rate among men than among women, and as the ratio of births between the sexes was nearly equal, this, if not corrected, would result in a tribe containing a much greater number of women than men. Woman was, in those rude times, the spoil of war, and was the property of any man who could capture her and bear her away. The presence of a large number of women in a tribe resulted in the incursions of neighboring tribes, and conflicts for the possession of the women were consequently frequent.

Economically speaking, woman was of less value than man, and furthermore was the cause of strife and conflict between tribes. Here we have an explanation of the cause of female infanticide practiced by those savages who were the progenitors of the race.

To tribes surrounded by enemies, sons were a source of strength both in defense and in the quest of food, while daughters were a weakness. They ate, but they did not hunt, and they were a constant temptation to surrounding tribes.

Promiscuity, polyandry, and group marriages

were the natural consequences of such a social system and woman, bandied about from man to man, in her own tribe and between tribes, seeing her infant daughters murdered, must have welcomed the change to a monogamous family, even though she was still regarded as property and a slave.

In the former tribal state, the idea of paternity could not have had a place. The children of a woman were brothers and sisters to one another, and also to all the children of their mother's sisters and all relationships were traced through the maternal side only. This was the gens. The identity of the father was unknown and was a matter of utter indifference.

THE MATERNAL GENS.

The family as we know it today is not the earliest, but one of the latest forms of human association.

The evolution of the monogamous family from the group marriages of the savage was a slow and a gradual process, and was the result of a continual contraction of the circle within which marital relations between both sexes were permitted.

First near and then remoter relatives were denied the privilege of marrying, until group marriages disappeared. Marriage between members of the same gens was prohibited, and finally the pairing family became an established insti-

tution. The ties thus established were for a longer or shorter period and were easily dissolved by both sides, but practically mark the dividing line between savagery and barbarism.

At the dawn of civilization, during the matriarchal period, woman occupied the position of an equal with man, and in some degree his superior. In the primitive communism that prevailed at the time many married couples and their children occupied the same habitation and most, if not all, of the women belonged to the same gens, while the husbands were members of different gentes.

The women were supreme in the household; the children all belonged to the same gens as their mother and took her name. The household affairs were controlled by the women. The provisions were common property and it was the duty of husbands to provide for the wants of the household, and if one were too lazy or unskillful to contribute his share to the common stock, he was promptly turned out of doors. The entire administration of the household was entrusted to the women, and was in the nature of a public function. She cared for and trained the children, prepared and served the food, provided raiment, and in the gens, she dominated even to the extent of choosing or dethroning the chief.

Woman's position in the gens made her economically independent of her husband, and in case do-

mestic difficulties resulted in a separation, it was the man who "went home to mother."

This was the golden era of the woman, so far as her position in society in relation to man was concerned. His equal, and in some matters his superior, she held this place for countless centuries. But the breeding of flocks, the tilling of the soil and the raising of grains and other food crops, often by slave labor, with the resultant production and accumulation of wealth, brought about the institution of private property in place of communistic property.

It was at this period that the maternal law met its historic downfall. Woman, once supreme in her sphere as head of the household, found her place usurped by man and she was forced into a secondary position.

Under the law of the gens, it was the task of the man to supply the food. The utensils and tools necessary for this purpose belonged to him, and in case of separation he kept them, while the woman kept the household goods. But the riches that flowed from the new sources of wealth production, such as agriculture, and the breeding of herds of milk and meat animals, gave to man a position in the family superior to woman's.

Under monogamy and polygamy the administration of the household lost its public character and became a private service, and woman was forced into the position of servant, in a realm where she once reigned supreme. The adminis-

tration of the ancient communistic household was a socially necessary industry, and partook of the nature of a public function, entrusted entirely to women. Woman lost her equality with man when she was excluded from this public service. But the great industries of today have again opened an opportunity to women to engage in social production, and she is taking advantage of it and through it will regain her equality with man.

As the tribe increased, the same causes that led to the maintenance of the permanent fire caused each family to have a permanent fire on its hearth. Around it grew up the primitive industries by means of which the family provided the necessities of life, namely, food, warmth, clothing and shelter.

Here germinated the first crude ideas of the sanctity of the home. Here was the first departure from the promiscuity that was the common custom of the horde, and the beginning of the monogamous relation of man and wife.

The family hearth had a recognized right of asylum, a custom that is discernible in the declaration in this late day that "A man's home is his castle." If the fire was extinguished it was considered an adulterous act to bring fire from a neighbor's. A new fire must be made from coals from the sacred altar, or from the friction of twigs. It was the duty of the father,

and his alone, as king and high priest in his own household, to perform this act.

Beside the family hearth, the second place was taken by the wife and mother, and it was right here that the division of labor between the man and his wife began to be made.

While it was the prerogative of the man to start the fire in their new home, it can easily be seen that it devolved on the woman to maintain it and keep it alive. The necessity of procuring food for the family would cause the man to be absent for more or less prolonged periods, during which time the fire would need attention or it would die out, and this one of the most important duties of the domestic economy devolved upon the woman, and the allied domestic industries gradually came to be hers.

WOMAN'S PRIMITIVE POSITION.

It must not be supposed that her position was a free and independent one. Far from that. Her status was little, if any, above that of a slave. Her lord and master had absolute control over his household. His property consisted of his wife, slaves and cattle, and he could inflict death on any one of them at his pleasure.

But with the change from the collective life of the tribe to the individual life of the family, the custom of tracing kinship through the maternal side was altered to tracing it through the paternal side. The establishment of permanent places

of abode and the cultivation of the soil was followed by the accumulation of wealth, and it was illogical that the possession and bequeathing of riches should be enjoyed by enslaved women. Hence the children took their names from the father and inherited wealth from him, while the mother was powerless to resist.

BEGINNINGS OF INDUSTRY.

In the family group, around the hearth-stone, grew up and developed the family industries through which the members of the household were fed, clothed and sheltered. By a slow process of evolution certain tasks fell to the lot of the woman, while others became classed as masculine.

The maintenance of the fire was of the first importance. Approaching maternity and the care of small children naturally kept the woman at home and so keeping the fire alive and preparing and cooking food became her duties.

Grinding corn into meal in the old hand querns then in use and baking it into bread also became her task, as well as curing and preparing the skins of animals and thereby providing suitable raiment for the family. Wicker-work is undoubtedly the oldest and most universal industry. It was probably woman's ingenuity, spurred by her needs, that first led her to interweave twigs and rushes into baskets to aid her in carrying her burdens or in storing food for fu-

ture consumption. This is probably the origin of the first creative industry, and which slowly developed into the weaving of textiles by means of which the whole human race is clothed.

The need of some utensil to carry water from spring or brook to her home brought into existence the second most important industry—the invention of pottery. It is highly probable that a wicker basket lined or covered with clay and dried in the sun answered the first crude needs of the primitive housewife. Whether through accident or design, it is undoubtedly to the credit of woman that fire-burned pottery was given to the world.

But the spinning of the animal and vegetable fibres, such as wool, linen, cotton and silk, into yarn which was woven and knitted into garments with which to clothe the human family, was probably the most important of all the sedentary occupations which narrowed woman's sphere to the four walls of the home.

For thousands of years she sat beside the hearth and through long hours of patient industry and with a whirling hand spindle, twisted between thumb and fingers every thread of every garment that covered a human form. No career was open to her. Man, freed from the petty details of the daily needs of the family, could devote his time and intellect to science, art, literature, statescraft, music and philosophy, and leave a name that lives in history. A Joan of Arc, or

a Du Barry is no consolation to women for the millions of wasted lives worn out through countless centuries of dreary drudgery.

PROPERTY AND SLAVERY.

The matriarchal gens, one of the most important and long continued of human institutions of which we have any knowledge, had disappeared before the rising institution of private property. With private ownership of land came the right to sell or mortgage it. Debt, usury, land monopoly and slavery followed as the fruits of this change in the social order. Out of the chaos rose the State, an institution whose purpose was to keep order and settle the endless disputes and conflicts that rose between the landless, poverty-stricken many and the wealthy few.

The dispossessed and the slaves fell into a condition of serfdom, tilling the soil possessed by military chieftains and patrician families through conquest or usurpation. Production of commodities for exchange began to take the place of production for use, and a trading class came into existence, still further dividing society into classes.

Century after century rolled by and woman's status remained almost unchanged. Like Cinderella in the fairy tale, she sat by the fireside waiting for the arrival of the good fairy with the magic wand to free her from her bondage.

The eighteenth century arrived and with it came the industrial revolution that sounded the death knell of the feudal system. The use of steam power and machinery in production gave added wealth and power to the manufacturing and trading classes and led them to demand equal political rights with aristocrats in the affairs of State. The middle class revolution was successful, and as Carlyle truly says: "Aristocracy of Feudal Parchment has passed away with a mighty rushing, and now by a natural course we arrive at Aristocracy of the Money-bag. Apparently a still baser Aristocracy. An infinitely baser; the basest yet known. In which, however, there is this advantage—that it cannot continue."

EARLY CONDITIONS IN AMERICA.

At the time the changes in the processes of the production of goods was taking place in England, America was still an agricultural country. Little or no manufacturing was done outside of the home. The family was a producing unit, and at the same time a consuming center. Then was the time that it could be truly said, "A woman's place is in her home."

In the conditions then prevailing she was as important an economic factor as the man. While the husband and sons did most of the rough work, such as ploughing, planting, and cultivating, cutting wood for fuel, and with rifle or fowling piece

furnishing the table with fresh meat, the woman helped in the harvesting and haying and gathered the fruits in the orchard. She milked, made butter, pickled and preserved the food supply for the winter, bore children and reared them, spun, wove, knitted, cooked, baked, washed, scrubbed, sewed, mended, made soap and candles—in short, her whole days were filled from daylight till bedtime with homely, useful toil.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, twenty-nine out of every thirty people lived outside of a town. That means that twenty-nine out of thirty families produced by their own labor nearly everything they ate and wore. While some commerce was carried on, it was generally by barter, and mostly for articles such as tea, pepper, salt, spices, sugar, pins and needles, and other "Yankee notions."

Interesting proof of the entire independence of the American family at the beginning of the nineteenth century was evidenced by an incident published in the press a few years ago.

A New Hampshire farmer and his wife, both past eighty years of age, and living in an out of the way corner of the state, celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of their wedding. The summer before the farmer sowed a field of flax and in the fall he gathered the crop and separated the linen fibres. During the winter his old wife spun the linen threads on the spinning-wheel that she had used when a young girl, and the man wove the

cloth on the loom that still stood in the loom-room just as it was when he brought his bride to their new home. Woolen yarn was spun and the wife's knitting needles came again into use, and when springtime came and the old couple stood up in the "best room" to hear read again the marriage ceremony that sixty years ago had made them husband and wife, they were clad completely in garments every thread and stitch of which was made by their own skillful, useful hands. The table and bed linen was from the same source, and the repast partaken of by the guests was home made to the last dish. Bread made from wheat grown within sight of the house and ground at a neighboring grist mill, butter, cheese, home-cured ham and bacon, chicken, eggs, buttermilk, preserved fruits and berries in abundance—all gave mute evidence of the economic value of the women of their earlier days. And when evening came the house was illuminated with candles made in the old candle-moulds that were once in evidence in every well-regulated kitchen.

WOMEN WAGE WORKERS.

But what of the unmarried woman of today, who is dependent on her own exertions for her livelihood? She is out in the world of work, facing problems that the spinster of a century ago never dreamed of, and competing with men in the arena of industry on unequal terms.

A curious and instructive fact is disclosed and a strong light thrown on the new complications in industry by the twelfth census, where 303 separate employments are listed, in 295 of which women are employed, leaving only eight employments in the United States in which men can be found exclusively.

The list in which no women are reported as being employed is as follows:

1. United States soldiers.
2. United States sailors.
3. United States marines.
4. Fire department foremen.
5. Apprentices and helpers to roofers and slaters.
6. Helpers to steam-boller makers.
7. Helpers to brass workers.
8. Street car drivers.

This paints more graphically than words the stupendous change that has taken place in the status of women in a few decades. As a wage-worker, her appearance on the economic stage is, speaking historically, only a very recent occurrence. The employment of saleswomen in stores began only a few years before the civil war, but now she nearly monopolizes that line of effort.

PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS.

Is it any wonder that women are developing an independent and self-reliant spirit and are demanding a place in the public life, formerly

the exclusive domain of man? Who could know better what laws are needed for the protection of the health and morals of the children than the mothers who bore them? Who could know better what is needed to protect lives, health and virtue than the women of the working class who, under present conditions, suffer most from the want of proper safeguards?

The loadstone of the modern commercial system first drew from the home the household industries and the women have followed, drawn by the same irresistible force. New conditions have been created, new problems have arisen, and man alone cannot be depended upon to deal with them. They affect the whole womanhood of the nation, and she must be allowed to have her full share in their settlement.

Who could be more depended upon for the proper enforcement of a pure food law than woman, whose duty it has been for countless centuries to prepare the food for the human race?

The capitalist system of production germinated in the feudal system, and its growth disrupted and finally overthrew that system. It had a historic mission to perform, which was to organize industry, and increase the production of all commodities. It has accomplished these results, brutally but effectively. In its progress it has transformed the whole of society. It has practically destroyed the handicrafts and has made the former skilled work-

man a mere feeder of a machine. It has invaded the home, and the old family life has been destroyed. The sweet, peaceful village has largely disappeared and in its place has grown up the huge city, where hovels, brothels, dens of vice and iniquity flourish side by side with palaces and cathedrals.

MODERN INDUSTRY AND THE HOME.

But what a change has come over the home of a century ago! Today one-half of the people live in cities, towns and vilages, and the home conditions in the families living outside of these modern centers of population have been so changed that little difference exists between the city and country home. Then, a woman's creative and managing ability could find its greatest expression in the home in which the lives of herself, her husband and her children were concentrated. There she found no idle ease, but every hour of the day was filled with thought and action. It was her joy and pride to guide her children's first toddling footsteps. At her knee the little ones learned their first childhood lessons. Under her guidance they were taught the simple tasks which went so far in making the home bright and attractive.

Under her loving eyes they grew to maturity, learning day by day the useful household industries that fitted them to be self-supporting and independent men and women. During their for-

mative period no task was given them too great for their tender strength. Fresh air, sunshine, and good, wholesome food were their daily portion. The pleasures enjoyed by the young were mainly clean, wholesome, healthy, outdoor sports, and the dances and entertainments were attended by all, old and young alike. All were friends and neighbors.

But the change in the methods of industry was followed by a revolution in the household. Industries that were once home industries have become factory industries. The education of the young is now given entirely outside of the home, almost from infancy. The kindergarten claims the child of tender years. The grammar school, the high school, university, technical institute, agricultural and business college open welcoming doors to the willing students of either sex, and lay before them the accumulated knowledge of the ages.

Modern industry and modern conditions of life have separated the family. Where once they worked together as a harmonious unit, each one knowing the activities of the other, and each one bearing his or her own share of the family burdens, they are now almost strangers.

The father leaves home at an early hour, often before the children are awake, and returns late at night, often after they are asleep. The mother sees little of her children during their school days, and still less when they go out into the

world to earn their living. What the atmosphere, physical and moral, is of the school, factory, shop or mill in which they find a place to work or study, she does not know. Or, if she does know, or suspects that they are bad and tries to change the conditions, she finds that her puny individual efforts are futile. In the arena where once she was supreme, she finds herself looked upon as an interloper. When she joins with others of her sex in a woman's club and tries to secure better surroundings for the children at school, at play or at work, she is scoffed at and ridiculed. She is told to go home and attend to her children and household duties, by the shallow reasoners who do not realize that the children are not there as once they were, that the household duties that once filled the woman's day from daylight till dark have been withdrawn one by one, and the woman and mother finds herself drawn irresistibly into the huge maelstrom we call the modern industrial system, and which has left the home little more than a bed-room and a lunch-counter.

The old has passed away and all the wizardry of fabled Arabian magicians cannot recall it to life. The new is here and its new problems must be faced and solved.

Problems there are—enough and more. Why should one-half of the adult population of the nation refuse the assistance of the other half in meeting the new questions and finding the an-

swers? Is not woman herself one of the problems? She **MUST** be allowed a voice in fixing her own status? She **MUST** be allowed a voice in matters relating to her own sex and her own children.

Woman's horizon has widened. Her sphere is no longer circumscribed by the four walls of a house. The walls have disappeared and her view is as wide as humanity.

Women are banding together in organizations whose object is to conquer for woman her rightful place in the new civilization that has dawned upon the earth.

The spirit of the matriarchal gens that has so long lain dormant is awakening and will lead every woman to recognize a sister in every other woman, and that she has a mother's duty to perform for every child in the world.

A woman's place **IS** in her home, but her home is now the world.

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