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A MOTHER'S LETTERS TO A DAUGHTER

ON

Woman Suffrage.

BY

ISABELLA BEECHER HOOKER,

HARTFORD, CONN.

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PRESERVATION MASTER
AT HARVARD

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A MOTHER'S LETTERS TO A DAUGHTER

ON

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

I.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER :

You ask me what I think of the modesty and sense of a woman who can insist, in these days, that she is not sufficiently cared for in public and in private, and who wishes to add the duties of a politician to those of a mother and housekeeper.

This is a large question to ask, and a still larger one to answer by letter ; but since you have a clear and thoughtful head of your own, and we are widely separated just now and unable to converse together as in times past, I will see what can be said by pen and paper for just the woman you have described.

And let me begin by asking you the meaning of the word politician. Having consulted your dictionary, you reply, "One who is versed in the science of government and the art of governing." Very well. Now who is thus versed in the science and art of governing, so far as the family is concerned, more than the mother of it? In this country, certainly, the manners, the habits, the laws of a household, are determined in great part by the mother ; so much so, that when we see lying and disobedient children, or coarse, untidy, and ill-mannered ones, we instinctively make our comments on the mother of that brood, and declare her more or less incompetent to her place.

Now let me suppose her to be one of the competent ones who, like your Aunt E., has helped six stout boys and four of their quick-witted sisters all the way from babyhood up to manhood and womanhood, with a wisdom and gentleness and patience that have been the wonder of all beholders—and let us

think of her as sitting down now in her half-forsaken nest, calm, thoughtful, and matured, but fresh in her feeling as ever she was, and stretching out by her sympathies in many directions after the younglings who have gone each to a special toil, and what wonder if she finds it hard to realize that she is unfitted either by nature or education for the work of law making, on a broader and larger scale than she has ever yet tried.

Her youngest boy, the privileged, saucy one of the crowd, has just attained his majority, we will say, and declaims in her hearing on the incompetence of women to vote—the superiority of the masculine element in politics, and the danger to society if women are not carefully guarded from contact with its rougher elements—and I seem to see her quiet smile and slightly curling lip, while in memory she runs back to the years when said stripling gathered all he knew of laws, country, home, heaven, and earth, at her knee—“and as for soiling contacts, oh! my son, who taught you to avoid these, and first put it into your curly little head, that evil communications corrupt good manners, and that ‘a man cannot *touch* pitch, except he be defiled.’”

I have taken the bull by the horns, you perceive, in thus taking our mother from her quiet country home and setting her by imagination among the legislators of the land;—but it is just as well, because the practical end of suffrage is, not *eligibility* to office merely, but a larger *use* of this privilege than most women have ever yet dreamed of, much less desired.

I hope, by the way, that you have not forgotten the unanswerable argument of Mr. Attorney General Bates on “What constitutes the citizen,” which we read together some years since. If it is not fresh in your mind, please read it again, because no woman ought to be ignorant or unmindful of her relations to her government, or of her rights and duties under it, in times like these, especially, when our country is forming itself anew, as it were, and needs all the wisdom and strength she can gather from every quarter.

And now she is there, we will say, in the legislature of our State—a high-minded, well-bred woman; one who, amid all her cares, has never failed to read the newspapers more or less, and to keep alive her interest in the prosperity of her country, whatever the claims of her numerous family. She is one, too, who has not had the assistance of wealth in doing all this; she is, as you know, straight from the rural districts, a genuine farmer's wife. But she has more leisure now than she once

had, and with it there comes a longing for change, for more cultivated society, for recreations and diversions such as her busy hours have seldom afforded her; and just now, by the unanimous vote of her townspeople, she is sent to our glorious old Hub, to spend the winter in considering what the Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall do this year, by legislation, for the public good.

She enjoys right well the prospect of ten or twelve weeks spent at the metropolis, where she may refresh herself, in the intervals of business, by the music of the Great Organ, and where she may command libraries and means of culture hitherto quite beyond her reach, and in whose busy life she may study human character and human activities under new aspects, which are of great interest to her matured and thoughtful mind.

Having secured a home not far from the old State House, she seeks the Assembly Room and meets there gentlemen from all parts of the State—farmers, merchants, and mechanics, physicians, teachers and ministers, lawyers and bankers, and they go into debate on such questions as these: Shall our deaf mutes be educated at home, or in the Institution at Hartford, as heretofore? What of the economies of our past practice, and are there better methods of training than those instituted there? State Prison—shall the discipline be penal merely, or reformatory? the institution self-supporting by a system of rigid tasks, or partially supported by the State? what punishment shall be allowed, what religious and moral instruction furnished, and what sanitary regulations enforced? The prohibitory law—has it proved itself adapted to the suppression of intemperance? are its provisions enforced, and why not? Is a special license law better adapted to the desired end, or is there any thing which human ingenuity can devise that shall arrest the spread of intemperance over the land? The school for juvenile offenders—is that managed judiciously? Here obviously the great aim should be reformation. Is a system of rewards or punishments, or both together, best adapted to that end? Should boys and girls be associated in the same buildings and classes, and for what length of time should they be retained for improvement before sending them out again into society? Endowments for colleges and other educational institutions, supported in whole or in part by the State: Shall these be confined to institutions designed exclusively for men, or shall they be applied equally to the education of both sexes? Taxation—how apportioned?

What interests can best bear heavy taxation, and is any further legislation needed to secure the right of representation to all who are taxed? Prostitution—shall it be licensed as in the old countries, or left to itself, or subjected to severe penalties? Divorces—by whom granted, and for what cause, and upon what conditions? Common schools, and high schools, and the whole system of State education; insane asylums, poor-houses, jails, and many other institutions of modern civilization:—in all these objects, you will perceive, our mother has a deep and intelligent interest, and it is not difficult to imagine the warm, even enthusiastic energy with which she will give herself to the discussion of the questions involved—some of them the highest that can come before a body of legislators.

If you say, There are other State interests with which she is less familiar, I reply, No one legislator is prepared by his previous habits of business and thought, to deal intelligently with all the questions that may come before the House, or is expected to; committees are appointed for specialties, as you know, and composed, or they ought to be, of those whose education and training have fitted them for that special investigation.

Our mother will have her hands full if she should serve on the Committee of Charitable Institutions alone; and none can do better service there than such a wise, prudent, affectionate care-taker as she has ever been. And I could name to you one lady who might be called to sit on the Judiciary Committee, and help to frame and modify the laws without discredit to herself or to the Committee. She is Miss W. of —, of whom you have heard your father speak as a well-read lawyer, and the very able office partner of her father, Judge W—; and there is many a woman now-a-days whose counsel in the matter of framing laws ought not to be despised. She need not necessarily perfect herself in the technicalities of a legal education, though some would like well to do that, no doubt; professional gentlemen are generally called upon now by committees at their need; but she can bring a clear, practical, and experienced head and sound heart to the help of many a vexed question. And as to railroad bills and management—would that she might have a voice there; you may be sure that all charters would contain provisions for the comfort and safety of passengers, and the holding of all officials to a strict responsibility for neglect of duty.

And so in all matters pertaining to merchandise and business, which fairly come under state jurisdiction; it is late in the day to assert that women know nothing of these things, and could not learn if they should try. There are too many honest and successful women-traders, artists, and *littérateurs* in every city of the land, and too many men dependent in whole or in part upon their earnings, to give a show of color to such assertions—to say nothing of a whole city full of Parisian women, who have for years demonstrated that the delicious feminine graces, which the world of men are so fearful of losing, are in no danger of being driven out by the practice of honest industries.

On the whole, then, my dear, you begin to perceive that my mind receives no shock when I am charged with the crime of desiring to meddle with politics, and to educate my daughters as well as my sons to take an intelligent, and, if need be, an active part in the government of their country; and I am convinced that these sons will not fail ere long to be the first to recognize the propriety and wisdom of such a course on my part. The truth is, that one chief reason why young men oppose the extension of suffrage is, that their sense of true gallantry, their desire to shield and protect, is violated by *their conception* of the probable result of a woman's going to the polls. This is certainly a misconception. Every woman knows in her own heart that she does not hold her purity and delicacy subject to injury by such cause. We know that we have never entered any precinct, however vile and debased, without carrying something of that God-given power of womanhood—of motherhood—with us, which is a greater protection against insult and contamination than all the shields that man can devise.* But we ought not to blame men too severely for their reluctance to relinquish this office of protector and guardian, which custom has so long laid upon them as a high duty and privilege.

In the days when physical forces ruled the world, men might naturally offer, and women receive with thankfulness, the protection of a strong arm, and become greatly dependent upon it,

* Thus the poet Crabbe says of Mrs. Fry, the well known philanthropist:—

Once I beheld a wife, a mother go
 To gloomy scenes of wretchedness and woe,
 She sought her way through all things vile and base,
 And made a prison a religious place;
 Fighting her way, the way that angels fight,
 With powers of darkness, to let in the light.

without serious harm to either sex; but in the day of moral forces it is quite otherwise. This day has come upon us, however, so silently, so gradually, that we ourselves have scarcely recognized that we are now near its noon-tide: how then can our fathers, brothers, and husbands, be expected to feel its quickening glow and inspiration? It may seem to them a consuming heat, though to me it is delicious warmth, pure air, God's own blue sky, and His benignant smile over all.

But I must stop here and wait your reply, since on your acceptance of my views thus far stated will depend the courage and enthusiasm with which I shall proceed to develop further my thought on the whole matter of the relation of the sexes to each other and to government. I confess that I have a philosophy of the past and a hope for the future that gives me much peace of mind and satisfaction amid the perplexing and often heated discussions which fill the land, and it would give me great pleasure to try my theories first upon you, before committing myself to their defence before other tribunals. Moreover, I am persuaded, contrary to the judgment of many earnest advocates of equal suffrage, that women are quite as much responsible for the present condition of affairs as men, and that they, as a body, will be the last to be convinced of their duty in the matter of good citizenship; so I am seriously anxious to make converts to my faith from the young mothers, rather than from any other class. I know, of course, that the power of regulating suffrage now lies wholly with men; that not a single vote can be given, save by them; but I know as well that the minds of all honest, earnest thinkers among them are turned to this subject, and that they are inclined to give it a candid hearing; and I am convinced that the indifference, not to say opposition, of their wives, mothers, and sisters, stands in the way of their coming to a right solution of the problem before them, beyond anything and all things else.

I beg you, therefore, to give my argument so far a candid consideration, and let me hear from you in reply.

I am always your affectionate

MOTHER.

II.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER :

You say to me, in reply to my last, that the case, for the present and the future, does look very much as I have stated it, but that the whole past history of woman seems to contradict the idea that she was intended by God to take that place in the management of affairs which reason and common-sense now suggest; at least, that your mind demands some solution of the problem of her nonentity during past ages, before you can step resolutely forward in the newer way now pointed out to her.

To this I reply, that it is true, certainly, that women have been not only greatly dependent upon men during all these years, but subject to them, and in nowise the master-minds of the world, *so far as appears*; but it is difficult to see how this could have been otherwise during a period of physical supremacy. Considering the disabilities she was under, by reason of the pains and cares incident to her motherhood, it is not surprising that she should call for protection, in days of violence, and that man should best express his regard for her by assuming the office of protector. If he had been a perfect man, he would have accepted and used this office as a privilege, rather than a right, and have seen to it that these mothers were well cared for, in every respect, while abiding in their nests, just as the father-bird, with cheerful assiduity, ministers to his mate during her periods of confinement and seclusion from the leafy world. And since these human mothers had mental needs as well as physical, the fathers, had they been the perfect men we have supposed, would have brought to them all the means of culture that came to themselves, and cheerfully shared with them their soul's food as well as their crust of daily bread; and by degrees this culture would have taught women that there were many ways by which they themselves could add to the family wealth, without neglecting in the least any family duty. The two thus brought together as partners and fellow-workers, as well as parents, would have had a common motive for making the most judicious expenditure of their united gains for the comfort of the whole household. But these men were not only imperfect themselves, but they ministered to equally imperfect women; and while they, by reason of their strong arms and broad use of the world at large, were tempted to become headstrong and domineering, their wives and mothers were equally

tempted to make their need of protection a ground for unthinking dependence ; and since the acquisition of knowledge required serious exertion, and man was best pleased with woman without it, she easily surrendered to him the fresh springs of knowledge which his industry was from time to time discovering.

This is a dark picture for woman, certainly, and unattractive ; because we all instinctively admire strength, wherever we find it—whether in a strong right-arm or an active brain. The conqueror has usually carried the day over the conquered, in all past history, let the virtues of the vanquished be what they may. But there are several modifications of the above picture, which are generally overlooked, and which go far toward restoring our respect for these apparently feeble creatures, who seem to have resigned both their bodies and their souls to the control of man. In the first place, they have had no written history as yet ; the trumpet being in the hands of man, he has naturally enough used it to sound his own conquests ; and these have filled the pages of history. To the eye of God and overwatching angels, no doubt, there has ever been a supplemental page to these many-volumed records ; and therein are noted heart-triumphs and victories of spirit among women, which rank them high among the great ones of the earth, and make them mates indeed of their wedded ones, however exalted in name or station. And by reason of this moral growth, gained through sorrow and submission, they have really made greater intellectual progress than is at first apparent ; since the activities of the heart not only *lead the way to knowledge, but are, to some extent, knowledge itself*. Many a poor slave has found his way to a deeper insight of God's own truths than his most instructed master ; and these are the high things, which *to know is life eternal* ; and we have the assurance of one of the wisest men of ancient times, that "the fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom."

And, once more, this servitude has not, after all, been so complete and so debasing as at first sight might appear ; because these women have been, all along, the mothers of these men, and their power over them, through their mutual affections, and quite aside from that of *endowment*, has been very great and very elevating to both parties. This power of motherhood has not been sufficient, as we have seen, to stem the tide of man's selfishness, and compel him to share his advantages with woman, whose disabilities of body have prevented her seeking

them for herself; nor to save him from a love of domination, that brought to him as great injury as to her; but it has always been a real power, nevertheless; and when the true history of mankind lies before our eyes, either in this world or the next, we shall recognize it as the great civilizer of the human race—the divinest agency, indeed, by which it has been preserved from utter destruction. All this is dimly foreshadowed in that solemn word of prophecy, uttered in the infancy of a race to whom sin was an experiment and its curse a blessing in disguise. “Cursed be the ground for thy sake, O man—in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.” “Thy desire shall be unto thy husband, O woman, and he shall rule over thee.” What are these but epitomized history, as it lay spread out before Him with whom there is neither beginning nor ending, and whose great heart of love had already conceived that grand restoration implied in the bruising of the serpent’s head by “the seed of the woman?”

Toil to man and subjection to woman; bitter experiences these—curses truly, but regenerative, nevertheless; and at last a Deliverer, the Son of a Virgin Mother, whose exulting song, “From henceforth all nations shall call me blessed,” was but a vibration of the chord touched in Paradise itself.

Welcome, then, blessed privilege of motherhood, with all thy anguish, care, and sorrow; in thee, at last, lies the purification of our race, and abundant compensation for ages of suffering and subjection and an unwritten history; not only because of thy Son, “who taketh away the sins of the world,” but because of thine own innermost power of sympathy by which thou subduest all hearts to thyself. Let no man fear, then, to trust to woman the guidance of her own life in all the ages to come. He who condescended to be born of her, knew well the sanctuary of her heart, wrought by His own word of power, and into which He also must enter, and that it would be to His human nature, as to all the race of man, the Holy of Holies, out of which sanctifying influences must forever flow. Accordingly, we find that the child Jesus, while “increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man,” was still subject unto his parents, and that his anxious but reverent mother “kept all his sayings, and pondered them in her heart,”—wherein she but led the way by which all mothers, in all times, may hope to come to the knowledge of all truth, both that which pertains to this life and also to that which is to come.

Following, then, the history of Christian civilization, which, by every showing, had its beginning in the advent of our Lord, inasmuch that the years themselves are called by His name, I come to this conclusion: that a national government, whose legislative and executive functions are performed by men alone, has not yet fully emerged from the barbarism of ancient times, and has before it a work of regeneration as serious as any that has marked its progress since the organization of nationalities.

Let me illustrate. Families governed by fathers alone, or mothers alone, are less likely to be well governed than those where their joint authority controls. Boys need the mental and moral influence of mothers, and girls of fathers, that their respective natures may be developed to a full and harmonious completeness. Just so a nation needs a governing power which shall represent the thought and feeling of both men and women; and the same infelicities must attend a national government by one sex alone, that would attend such a family government. Is it not after the slow but sure fashion of the family, that God is training the world to a right understanding of true national glory and happiness? Christianity first introduced to man the doctrine of individual *liberty* and individual *responsibility*; and the two are indissolubly connected; so that a woman who has come to desire the fullest freedom of thought and action for herself, must, whether she will or not, accept the divinely-appointed and correlative responsibilities of a free moral agent; and no man can attempt to limit her activities in any direction, without assuming a prerogative of Deity itself. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

How vital and integral a part of early Christian teaching this idea of personal freedom was, is remarkably illustrated to my mind by the direct results of it, in ameliorating the condition of women during these eighteen hundred years now past. Missionaries in heathen lands are never weary of calling upon the women of all Christian countries to rejoice over their emancipation from bondage, and are full of narrations of the degrading customs still prevailing among the peoples they are trying to christianize. But every step in this onward way has been one of hesitation on the part of woman, and the subject of ridicule and opposition on the part of man; and I now suppose that this sense of modesty, which is to keep a woman from going to the polls, or performing any public duty, is the same thing that led her to shrink from appearing unveiled in the presence

of any man save her own lord and master, in the sanctuary of his harem! But the years will be few now before she shall have learned wiser discriminations and come to more ennobling judgments.

It is not, however, by reason of her virtues alone that woman should desire to take part in political government: she is a wrong-doer as well as man; there are few crimes which she may and does not commit; and by every principle of justice and right feeling she ought to be tried by her peers—by a jury, one-half of whom shall be of her own sex; and I have no hesitation in affirming that our court-rooms will find themselves honored rather than disgraced by the presence of women there, in the character of judges, counsel, and jurors, so long as women are liable to be brought there as culprits and litigants, or even as witnesses. Indeed, it is one of my chief hopes for the future that the day will come when men will choose to associate with themselves, in the performance of all the more perilous duties that have heretofore been assigned to them alone, their wives and mothers, who, by nature, are less tempted than themselves to serious defections from virtue. To mothers as well as fathers should be intrusted the management of those numberless cases of wrong-doing which call for moral legislation and penalty; and nothing will do more to hasten the day of moral purity than a general conviction that boys and young men should be taught to avoid as carefully sights and sounds of contamination as their young sisters, and that modesty is by no means an exclusively feminine virtue.

Once more you say to me that there does seem to be some force in the assertion, that if women would vote they should also fight; and I reply, once more, that in nothing is the dominance of the physical over the mental more shown than by that very argument, which, as you say, is usually the first that comes from the lips of all young men. And the force of it is this: one of the chief duties of man, and of governments made by men, is *war-making*—all things would go to ruin if that were not attended to; therefore women, who are not fighters by nature, should not aspire to government. No doubt this has been the case hitherto, and therefore women have been, of necessity, less influential in upholding the hands of government than they are preparing to be in the future; because this power of force is rapidly giving way to the power of the spirit, wherein all have ever been equal before God, and are destined so to become in the sight and judgment of man.

But the true answer to those who think that a government has a right to withhold suffrage from women because they are not inclined to be soldiers, is this, that the duties belonging to the citizen are many and various, and should be required and fulfilled according to his or her superior capacity for the one or the other; and as certain classes of men are considered more valuable to the community in the capacity of clergymen, physicians, judges, etc., than in that of soldiers, and others are considered incapable of military duty by reason of age or infirmity, so, if the whole class of women are really thus disabled, or are needed in other capacities, the State is no sufferer by such apportionment, but shows its wisdom the rather by calling upon each child of the state to serve wherever he is most valuable.

It is to be said, moreover, that in these days of humanity, the sanitary department of war-making is scarcely less important than the fighting; and there can be no possible objection to committing the practical management of this to woman. Indeed, this has been done during our late war; and few would urge that she should not be enfranchised because of any failure in the performance of the very arduous duties there committed to her.

I seem to see much farther than this, however, and am prepared to say, that the day of unjust wars will never cease until women have a voice in deciding when war shall be undertaken and for what cause. It is a monstrous mistake to suppose that the burdens of men as soldiers will be increased when such power of decision has been placed in their hands. Every one of these women is daughter of some father, to say the least, and has, pretty surely, husband, brother, or lover, besides, to whom the call may come to arm himself for deadly fight; and this call brings greater anguish to her than to the hero who girds himself for battle. We all know how much easier it is to endure pain and encounter danger for ourselves alone, than to sit down quietly and see one, to whom our hearts cleave, going out into the darkness alone; and one of two things will certainly happen in the days to come in this land—either wars will be fewer, or women will insist on sharing the dangers and privations of them more than ever they have done before, with those they love.

If you should suggest that many most unjust wars have had the sympathy of woman, and have even been greatly sustained by her, I reply that, upon examination, it will be found, I think, that in all these cases there was great ignorance of the true

state of public affairs among the women, such as could never have existed had they been responsible law-makers themselves, or practically interested in questions pertaining to government and the general welfare of the State. Without some such stimulus and education as this implies, they have been, and must forever be, so far as I can see, children of *passion* rather than of *reason*, and the appeal to arms will always strike such minds with less of dread and more of welcome than any other; just as uncultured nations have always rushed eagerly to battle, and disdained any other arbitrament than that of the sword. It is one of the boasts of modern civilization that wars are becoming less frequent under the influence of education and increased intelligence; and we read of the period when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks, with the accompanying conviction that it is the enlightened mind of universal man, led by the Spirit of God, which is to usher in that glorious day.

But you will not, I trust, my child, conclude from all that I have said, that it is my opinion that when the right of suffrage is granted to women there will be an end to political troubles. So far from this being the case, I look with anxiety to the immediate results of such an experiment, and have only hope in the long future. And my hope is based on moral grounds purely, viz., the, to me, immutable doctrine, that personal responsibility is the best educatory scheme that God himself has been able to devise for erring man. Starting with this, and allowing, as I think we must, that women constitute a large branch of the human family, I urge that they should be put upon their responsibilities anywhere and everywhere that human activities come in; and I see no place where a limitation could be made without relieving them by so much of an obligation that they owe to themselves, their families, and their God.

Look at the popular objection, that if women were voters this moment, the state of parties would remain the same, the numbers in them only being doubled. This might be so at first, perhaps, but soon that party most nearly representing justice and morality would certainly be the gainer. But suppose it were not so. What I affirm is, that both parties and all parties, when made up of active men and women, will represent a higher grade of thought, feeling, and action than they now do. Granted that the men and women of a family will always vote alike, now and forever: the *men* will not vote pre-

cisely as they would have done had there not been an intelligent discussion of the principles of political and moral economy in the family; and thereby we have made the great gain of which I speak.

If you say, let the women *influence* the men in the right way and by the methods suggested, without actually becoming voters themselves, I reply, you call upon them to perform an impossibility. No human being ever goes thoughtfully, earnestly, into any investigation, out of which there is not to come either *a pleasure or a duty*. Look at men themselves, in this country, where the whole burden of government has lain upon them for near one hundred years—and of such a government, so founded, so maintained, and of such overwhelming importance to the interests of mankind—and how many of them are able to persuade themselves to give, on an average, one day in a month to the study of the principles of government, or even to active political duties? Not only so, but I have noticed, during the late war, when our election-days have seemed to me, at times, like judgment-days themselves, the fate of a nation hanging in the balance, as it were, that good and honest and well-meaning men went about their business with a calm forgetfulness that was enough to make one's blood boil; and were only in season to drop a ballot by virtue of the alertness of some more earnest brother. What I say, then, is this: if a man, who knows that the sole responsibility for active work rests upon him, cannot bring himself to much study of politics, nor even to a remembrance of his most obvious duties as a voter, how can you expect a woman, who has *nothing whatever to do with politics*, to keep herself posted on public affairs, and full of intelligent opinions upon them, simply because she may possibly have some influence over this absorbed and very indifferent man? But let her once understand that, when election-day comes, she has to drop a ballot, for this cause or that, and this man or that, and she will at least ask some questions of father, husband, or brother, which he may find it difficult to answer; and so they may both be put on the search for the truth. If, by this asking, family discussion may be stirred and family dissension, even, introduced, God be thanked; for out of this may come a purification of this foul mire of politics, of which we hear so much, and which is driving from the field of action so many of our best men. "I came not to send peace," said our Master, "but a sword;" and there never was a great moral advance made by any less incisive method since the world began.

You will perceive that all my hope, thus far, has been predicated upon the mere fact that a sense of individual responsibility will beget thoughtfulness and comparison of views; but I wish to add, that women will bring into politics, it seems to me, a certain experience of their own, which is fundamental in the art of governing, viz., a habit of *calculating possibilities in the management of human beings*. Every young mother starts, I suppose, with the determination that *her* children shall never do this and that thing which she has seen other children do, and that they shall certainly be made to walk in ways that do not seem to be followed very generally in the families of her acquaintance. But by-and-by she finds, to her dismay, that she has to deal, not so much with a little plastic boy, as with his grand-father before him, whose image he bears, and whose resolute will, not a whit abated by reason of skipping a whole generation, continually thwarts her most wise and motherly designs. And leaving all ancestors out of the question, she finds herself brought face to face, day by day, with this everlasting problem, "*How and how much shall I try to govern my children, and when may I safely let them alone, and leave nature and outside influences to work upon them?*" Now, so far as I can see, this is the first question that a politician (I use the word, of course, in its primary and legitimate sense) must decide before he can take an intelligent part in the management of public affairs. National government, like that of the family, is a question of possibilities, of adaptation of means to ends, taking into account the inexorable law of free-agency and the selfish tendencies of our race.

Sometimes we see a father wise and thoughtful, and full of expedients in the management of children and servants—more often a mother; and blessed is that family, indeed, where both parents are thus given to the well-being of their whole household. But a nation is made up of grown boys and girls, of masters, mistresses, and servants, of just such material, in short, as makes up a household; and I am unable to see how it can afford to commit its highest interests to the wisdom and faithfulness of either sex alone.

You will perceive, by this, that I am not in the least of the opinion that if women alone bore the responsibilities of government, there would be greater faithfulness or higher patriotism than now; but rather that each sex needs the stimulus of the other to the right performance of every duty; and that such

duties are far less likely to become burdens when shared, both in preparation and performance, by one's nearest and most congenial friends.

You will notice, also, that I am far more impressed with a sense of a woman's duty, in this matter, than of her rights merely. One may patiently suffer injustice, up to a certain point, and only make steady gain in moral purity thereby. This is true of a people as well as of an individual; but a period always arrives at last wherein quiet submission becomes pusillanimity, and the duty of resistance, by pen or sword, becomes manifest. Years ago I began to give this subject the gravest consideration; but the fundamental and inherent difficulties of it, involving, as it does, more practically than theology itself perhaps, an investigation of the whole nature of man, of his relations to God, and of his own great future, have kept me silent; and, like Mary of old, I have simply pondered these things in my heart. I have even gone so far as to doubt the wisdom of those pioneer women of this country who, eighteen years ago (which was about the time when my convictions of right were settled, but those of duty yet in embryo), began to speak and write upon the subject; and not long since I ventured to refer to Mr. Stuart Mill's admirable speech on "Suffrage for Woman," as evidence that the progress of the age, in the discussion of the principles of individual liberty, would have brought about the desired result without much intervention on the part of women themselves. But to my astonishment, I will confess, I have lately found that *Mrs. Stuart Mill* was the author of the first tract on this subject ever published in England, and that her husband acknowledges himself greatly indebted to her leadership in this matter, as in nearly every other effort of his life. I found, also, that she was moved to the writing of that most remarkable essay by the accounts which she received from this country, in the columns of the *New York Tribune* for October 29, 1850, of an organized effort here in favor of suffrage, irrespective of sex. Until you have read this tract, which is republished by the Equal Rights Association of New York City, you can have but little idea of the truthfulness of Mr. Mill's tribute to his wife, in the dedication to her of his magnificent essay "On Liberty." Lest you should fail to see this dedication, let me copy it for you here:

To the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer, and, in part, the author of all that is best in my writings—the friend and wife,

whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward—I dedicate this volume.

Like all that I have written, for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage of her revision; some of the most important portions having been reserved for a more careful re-examination, which they are now destined never to receive.

Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one half the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write, unprompted and unassisted by her all but unrivalled wisdom.

A more comprehensive, logical, and unanswerable argument than hers was never made on any subject, so far as I know; and if I could only persuade all men and women to read it with anything like impartiality, I should consider all further argument unnecessary, and should only propose that we resolve ourselves, one and all, into a committee of ways and means, to devise expedients for carrying out this new gospel of individual responsibility. I trust you will read all these essays for yourself, and think and act for yourself; and, so far as these pioneer women of our country have enunciated great truths, let us thank them in our hearts and fraternize them in our lives, while, at the same time, we admit the occasional mistaken and infelicitous methods by which they have sought to gain the attention of an unwilling public. All human progress, so far, has been marked by human imperfection in the great organizers of reform; and I greatly fear that the immediate future will fare no better than the past in this respect. Therefore it becomes us, one and all, to take by the hand every honest worker in the vineyard, whether we quite approve his system of culture or not.

The question of what is suitable education and work for woman, grows inevitably out of your first question, and my ideas on this are perhaps sufficiently indicated by my general course of thought. I can see no reason for closing any avenue of thought, study, or action to her, and every reason in the world why she should be not only permitted but encouraged to address herself to any pursuit which commends itself to her judgment and taste. That every young woman should limit her expectation of happiness and her ideas of duty by her possible wifeness and motherhood, is as absurd as that a young man should limit himself after the same fashion, especially since the duties of a citizen, when far more faithfully performed than they now are by a majority of men, are neither engrossing nor

exhaustive. At the same time, should she be called, in her happy maturity, to this blessed privilege, she will, by a previous life of independent thought and action, under the guidance of wise parents, perhaps, have prepared herself for the performance of those matronly duties, than which none require more wisdom and culture. There is no training, either mental, moral, or physical, which is good for a boy, that is not, with some slight modifications, good for a girl also; and it is because girls, in accordance with a true spirit of progress, have been invited to a higher mental culture, while still under old-time limitations as to physical exercise, out-door sports, and games, that they seem in some cases to break down under hard study. So long as boys and girls, in our country schools, are considered young enough to play and romp together in the open air, they are equally uninjured by studious application; it is only when the exactions of young ladyhood come in, that there is evidence of over-brainwork; and the comparative frequency of this is much exaggerated, I think. There are many district schools and high schools of our cities where the average scholarship and the average health is as high among the girls as among the boys.

And as to laborious occupations: it seems desirable, certainly, that men should reserve these for themselves, and that women should be relieved of them, so far as they make excessive demand upon bone and muscle. Children born of overworked mothers are liable to be a dwarfed and puny race. I am inclined to think, however, that their chances are better than those of the children of inactive, dependent, indolent mothers, who have neither brain nor muscle to transmit to either son or daughter. The truth seems to be, that excessive labor, with either body or mind, is alike injurious to both man and woman; and herein lies the sting of that old curse. If sweat of the brow had been the best possible thing for primitive man, and pain and subjection the best thing for woman, those memorable words would never have been the sad ones they were in the day of their utterance. And now, the one thing that we may hope to do, each in our small way, is to abate that unfriendliness of selfishness, out of which has come this worldful of toil, privation, and suffering.

That men are to become less thoughtful toward women, less considerate of their real needs, and undemonstrative in ways of gallantry, when these have become more thoughtful of their

country and active in labors on her behalf, or in behalf of any independent and honorable calling, is not a thing to be feared for a moment. It has frequently happened that men, whose tastes and habits and ways of thinking have drawn them toward each other, have fallen into most congenial friendships. This is true of women also; and nothing is more beautiful in life than such friendships, nor more tender than the manifestations flowing from them. How is it possible, then, that all gentle graces will depart from either sex, when each is at liberty to pursue its laborious work of self-development after the plan most agreeable to itself and most in harmony with the designs of nature? In my judgment, the day is close at hand when pure friendships between the sexes will be far more possible and frequent than they now are. This will be brought about in various ways, of which the equal enjoyment of political privileges will be one; but the chiefest will be the associating the sexes in all educational institutions, so that tastes and modes of thought and action will be similar, and on the broadest scale possible to human beings. There is no reason in nature why boys and girls should be trained together in the family and in primary schools up to a certain age, and ever after kept sedulously apart in colleges, seminaries, and scientific schools, and the like. They need each other just as truly in the one case as in the other; in fact, there is no period when young people so much need to be closely associated as during that restless, curious, eager one, when the instincts of manhood and womanhood are first awakening, and young hearts are irresistibly drawn to each other by that most subtle and delicate passion which is altogether more primeval than any other known to man. Nothing seems to be more tending to barbarism than the cutting this fine chord of civilization, by which every boy and girl is instinctively drawn to the practice of those gentle amenities which have gone far to make mother-earth tolerable to us, ever since wrong-doing called forth from her bosom the thorns and thistles we all so much dread.

It is not necessary, of course, that homes for students of both sexes should always be provided within the college buildings; though that experiment has been found to work admirably in several institutions of decided excellence in this country. In every university town there will grow up private homes, where students can secure such comforts and luxuries as their respective means will warrant. And what a hopeful method of stim-

ulating a young man to the maintenance of gentlemanly habits, if only his sister might accompany him to the lecture-room as a fellow-pupil, or should he uniformly meet there young ladies of intelligence and culture of his own social standing. What a blessed exchange, too, for old-time convivialities, the social gatherings over which these young ladies might preside, adding to them dignity, piquancy, and grace, and taking from them only those unwarrantable excesses which none should fear to lose.

It is to be considered, moreover, in favor of this plan, that no institution of large range and well endowed in every department, can be maintained except at great cost to the State or to private benefactors, or to both; and it would be inconvenient, not to say impossible, to provide such institutions in abundance for women alone. Those that have grown with the centuries are full of enriching memories and tender associations, such as daughters can appreciate and enjoy, no less than sons; and why should *Alma Mater* close her doors to any hungry child? Surely, her heart is large enough for all!

You remember the testimony of Dr. D——, years ago, to the beneficent influence, upon the medical students of his class in Demonstrative Anatomy, of Miss B——, who, having been denied, everywhere else, opportunities of perfecting her medical education, was received by him to this most delicate branch, on his sole responsibility. I shall never forget his tribute to her, and to the young men, her fellow-students, who gave no sign, throughout the whole course, by jest or innuendo, that there was a woman in the room, and recognized her presence only by uncommon quietness and gentlemanly behavior. My own mind settled then upon the conclusion that there was no possible activity which did not belong to a woman as well as to a man, if she felt called to exercise it. The personal call is the one thing to be sure of, it seems to me, and results will take care of themselves.

As to the fact that low and uneducated women will be brought into power by the ballot, as well as the really noble ones, I can only say that they need the education of personal responsibility quite as much as any, and that they peculiarly need the *protection* in their own households, which such power of equal choice would furnish. No men come so near to being absolute domestic tyrants, in these days, as the ignorant foreigners with whom our land is filled, and who are the representatives of an old-time civiliza-

tion; and I can conceive no more effective way of crippling their power over their own families than by putting a ballot in the hands of mothers and daughters, so long as it has been irrecoverably given to fathers and sons. In fact, I have a good deal of hope that some time, in the cheerful future, our election days may come to have the appearance of our best holidays—our Sundays even; and that every man, knowing that he is probably to accompany to the polls or meet there his mother, wife, sister, or sweetheart in her best attire, will be driven to wash clean his own hands, and array himself in his best also, as is meet when all are going to the performance of a duty as sacred as any the world knows.

And here is just my conception of my own interest and duty in this matter. I have often felt that I might just as well have called upon my husband to profess my allegiance to my Saviour as to my country. His heart and mine are as truly one in this case as in the other, and my privilege to speak for myself is as dear to me in one case as in the other. In fact, so far as uniting with the members of a particular church in maintaining the worship of God in the earth, and celebrating the ordinances of religion is concerned, I have but little choice, comparatively, where my lot may be cast. Wherever faithful souls, believing that love to God and man is the spring of all goodness and happiness, seek to express their belief in ceremonial and worship, there can I join with all my heart, whether the form of church government suit me or not; but there is but one form of government for nations that seems to me adapted to their highest development; and I am deeply desirous to express my thought and feeling on this subject, not only *through* my husband, but *with* him, and long after he has gone to his rest, if so be I should outlive him. And if I had never been so fortunate as to meet with this man of my choice, your beloved father, I feel that it would have been still more a necessity to me to seal my devotion to my country by a life of faithful service in her behalf.

The idea that women are going to desert their babies and their homes, and rush for political offices, the moment they become responsible for a ballot, is simply preposterous. When the Great Father desired to express the infinite depths of His own faithfulness towards His human children, He found no better words than these, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" and we may safely leave all her personal matters, as He has ever done, to her truly divine instincts. There is every reason

to hope and believe that these will not only prevent her from an unconscientious acceptance of offices whose duties she cannot perform without sacrificing higher duties at home, but that in case of her acceptance they will enable her to regulate both her actions and speech according to the true standard of womanly excellence. That this is not an unreasonable hope appears from the fact that, in the denomination of Friends, there has been always the most entire freedom as to public speaking among the women; and it frequently happens, I am told, that they chiefly make public exhortations, and deliver the words of the Spirit; yet who, among all women, have higher reputation for modesty, and gentleness of speech, and all womanly virtues, than these same Quaker ladies?

I cannot forbear noticing, too, the official responsibility put upon women, in that venerable church, which is, in some sort, the mother of us all, and whose vitality has been a subject of wonder and speculation up to the present moment. No less a person than Lord Macaulay has made the suggestion that the Roman Church may have owed its success largely to the opportunities it has always opened to women, for honorable work and the attainment of authoritative positions. In his review of "Ranke's History of the Popes," occurs the following passage, which all Christian denominations would do well to ponder :

For female agency there is a place in her system. To devout women she assigns spiritual functions, dignities, and magistracies. In our country, if a noble lady is moved by more than ordinary zeal for the propagation of religion, the chance is that, though she may disapprove of no one doctrine or ceremony of the Established Church, she will end by giving her name to a new schism.

If a pious and benevolent woman enters the cells of a prison, to pray with the most unhappy and degraded of her own sex, she does so without any authority from the Church. No line of action is traced out for her; and it is well if the Ordinary does not complain of her intrusion, and if the Bishop does not shake his head at such irregular benevolence. At Rome, the Countess of Huntington would have a place in the calendar as St. Selina, and Mrs. Fry would be foundress and first Superior of the Blessed Order of Sisters of the Gaols.

In fact, Christian churches everywhere should, it seems to me, lead the way in this reform, as in all others, where the moral elevation of mankind is proposed. And were not authority and tradition arrayed against it, they would hardly be so far behind their privilege in this matter as they are. Let us, then, hope for increased grace and knowledge; and, just so far as

they are able to make wise interpretations of Scripture, following the spirit rather than the letter of apostolic teaching, and entering fully into the mind of Christ in these matters, they will come to an increase of power and to the realization of that old promise given to the prophet Joel, in the days of his seership, so many years ago: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

Is it not the duty, then, of the women of this day, as a part of their contribution to human progress, to maintain this doctrine of individual freedom and responsibility, even at some cost to their personal comfort? At first glance this may seem to imply a greater sacrifice of feeling than the case requires; but you will agree with me when I say that nothing could be much more trying to a woman of delicacy and sensibility than such assertions of herself as are commonly stigmatized as immodest, unfeminine, unnatural, and the like; especially if she be the mother of sensitive children, on whom the recoil of rebuke may fall so heavily as to more than double her own pain. And does not this become the best of reasons why men should prepare the way for her in these matters, rather than call upon her to make a way for herself? Of course they must do this, so far as mere legislation is concerned, they only having the power; but in all departments of life, how easily can they invite her companionship, without incurring any loss or bringing any odium to themselves; whereas, she must suffer in various ways, if left to claim and contend alone for her rights and privileges, as a free, responsible being, owing, like man, allegiance to God and her own conscience alone. It is on this account that I would call upon man, rather than because he seems to me to be pre-eminently a wrong-doer, or even the wilful cause of his own present acknowledged supremacy.

There are many important considerations affecting this subject practically, which I should be glad to present to you; but these must wait your leisure and mine. Meantime, I subscribe myself, once more,

Your affectionate

MOTHER.

