

ANNIE S. PECK'S VIEWS

"Too Many Men in Politics Better Qualified for Hoeing Corn or Selling Ribbons," Says Well-Known Author.

New York, Feb. 26, 1915.

To the Editor of *The New York Times*:

AS it is a long time since I have asked space in your columns in regard to the question of woman suffrage, may I be permitted to attempt a response, not an answer, to your question in today's editorial?

The programme of the woman suffragists of New York? Pardon me if I say that the question is absurd. Richard Barry some time ago, interviewing Anna Shaw, Mrs. Catt and Mrs. Blatch on that subject, probably received non-committal answers. What woman is authorized to speak for all suffragists? On one point only are we agreed: We desire the ballot. Our reasons for this desire are various. Some of us wish it for the benefits which we think will result to members of our own sex; some in order to be of greater service to humanity in general; some, mayhap, for their own personal ambition, and more for simple justice.

To suppose that we shall unite upon a definite programme before or after obtaining the ballot in New York is as absurd as to conceive of men doing so. Why not observe what women have done in the States and countries now possessing equal suffrage? They have not attempted revolutionary measures. They have here for the most part modestly refrained from nominating or electing each other even to State Legislatures and wholly from seeking seats in Congress. This may not continue always. Doubtless in time women will take a more active part in political affairs, but it appears that they are disposed to become qualified for such honors before seeking them. We have too many men in politics who are better fitted for hoeing corn or selling ribbon than for settling the affairs of State or nation.

Why should we be supposed to agree? Are we not also Democrats, Republicans, a few Progressives still, and many, I hope, Independents? If, less partisan than most of the men, we vote for the best and ablest candidates surely it will be an improvement. But our ideas of best will differ. Some women are Socialists, a theory which many of us oppose, though approving of certain reforms which seem to lie in that direction. Others are strenuous against capital

punishment, while I hold the opinion that if 90 per cent. of our murderers were executed, instead of approximately 1 per cent., we should not be disgraced by having a far greater proportion of homicides than any other civilized country on the globe.

Most of us believe in peace and arbitration, possibly in a few other matters, but the supposition of Mr. Hayden that women would elect themselves to the Legislature and unite in passing a law to which all men were opposed is too ridiculous for consideration.

Personally, since the subject was first presented to me long years ago, I have believed in woman suffrage on the ground of justice. I desire to be regarded as an intelligent human being. When women have for a generation or two been counted equal before the law they will be so regarded, and not before. That woman's sphere should be prescribed by men, that men know better what is womanly and of what we are capable than do we ourselves, has not seemed to me logical or proper.

The privileges which we are supposed to have many of us would willingly forego could we have equal opportunities. Are our privileges, so called, merely in consideration of our political and other inferiority? One might fancy that a gentleman like Mr. Wheeler would think rather that the burden of motherhood entitled a woman to some consideration, if not for her own benefit at least for the welfare of the race.

And must we believe that while in our Western States where women vote they receive more courtesy than ever, the men here, having less real chivalry, will treat them with less consideration? We are willing to take the risk. There are some privileges, indeed, which might better be abrogated. We want those only to which the possibility or actuality of motherhood might seem to entitle us.

On various matters I have proved a good prophet. When a girl of 16 I said I should live to vote; that the opportunity would come when I was about fifty or sixty. Three years ago I said in *THE TIMES* that we should have the ballot here within ten years. Progress has been rapid. The question now is, Will the men of New York give us the ballot this year and be the first State east of the Mississippi to give full suffrage to women, or will they wait for Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New Jersey, and lose the honor which might be theirs? Postponement is possible, but it should be clear that the result is inevitable.

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