

The Republican
SPRINGFIELD, THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1907
MATTERS CONCERNING WOMEN.
THE FIELD OF THEIR ACTIVITY.
Late Expression of Opinion on Women's Votes.

Since the debate on equal suffrage between ex-Mayor Osborne and Miss Blackwell, at Geneva, N. Y., a class of college students who listened to the debate have been writing essays and arguing the question among themselves; and Prof Muirhead at length suggested that Miss Anne Fitzhugh Miller be invited to the last meeting, May 15. On that occasion, after passing judgment on the efforts of the students Miss Miller asked the privilege of speaking, and said, in substance:-

The question, "Should women vote?" is, to my mind a very great question, and one worthy of our deepest investigation and highest intelligence. Before we can come to any satisfactory opinion upon it, we should be sure that we understand the true meaning of the vote or ballot, and also the nature of woman, and that is difficult -- even for women. As Mrs. Gilman so poetically puts it:-

For she walketh veiled and sleeping,
And she knoweth not, her power.
Slow advancing, halting creeping,
Comes the woman to the hour

We need all the light we can get from all sides on this question, and I am greatly obliged to you for allowing me to listen to your discussion. I have one thought which I should like to leave with you. It was suggested by a recent remark of Mr. Osborne at the meeting of the P. E. club.

You may remember that Mr. Osborne declared himself to be an ardent advocate of the democratic form of government, and in that connection used a quotation to the effect that only those who are free can fully understand the true meaning and value of freedom. I was much pleased with this idea, as it explains in a measure the apathy of women in general in regard to the use of the ballot by women, and it seems to me to place the responsibility of action in regard to the extension of suffrage to women very largely upon those who already really know, through their own freedom in its exercise, the value of the ballot.

We are so often told that when the majority of women want the ballot they will get it. This may be true; but is it not asking too much of our inexperience, and is it not the most obvious duty and present responsibility of those who have had and who have this experience (I mean voters) to explain its meaning and worth to us, who are also "citizens in the making," although as yet with small experience in the wonderful world of social action into which, as we awaken to our needs and abilities, we are entering through a thousand doors?

It seems to me that on those who are free is imposed the solemn obligation to extend that freedom to others. Think of this when you are exercising your political freedom, and remember that there are already some women who count themselves your friends who are working and waiting and hoping, with your help, that they may some day become your political equals.

A suggestive and a tactful address, this of Miss Miller, who is Gerrit Smith's granddaughter. Here is no rhetorical appeal, no notion of enmity, no setting woman against man. The day has surely come when quiet, earnest, deeply-based argument like this is effective. The seed of the agitators has been sown, and it is springing up in the consciences of men, who do not realize how much all the storm and stress was needed to bring about rational consideration of the great question.

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