

The Home

Women and Politics

That women of all social grades should assemble to consider the best methods of securing honest administration of municipal affairs, on the eve of an election that has aroused more moral feeling than has ever been excited in the history of New York politics, means, not that woman is in danger of becoming unsexed, but that she sees how dependent are the health, morals, and refinement of her household on the condition that controls its environment. The close relation between politics and the home is being recognized. In spite of the declaration, often heard, of woman's rebellion against routine, of her restlessness under the conditions that limit her to certain fields of activity, women as a body are conservative. They prefer, the great majority of them, to avoid contact with the outer life called the world. Slowly but surely the conviction has grown, even among very conservative women, that a clean house is impossible in a dirty street; that health cannot be maintained without the active co-operation of the proper authorities; that morals are not a matter of precept, but of example, not merely in the home, but in the school, in the street, in the parks, in the street conveyances; that environment—which in cities depends so largely on honest municipal control—has a positive influence on the development of character; that familiarity with sights and sounds which dull sensitiveness, and cause indifference to conditions that minister to disease and vice, lowers the moral tone of the home.

To preach against intemperance and accept the violation of the law governing the sale of liquors, the only protest being the declaration that it must be endured, is not the way to teach respect for the law. To make gambling illegal and permit it to flourish under the patronage of the police is not the way to teach a child the dignity of authority. It is impossible to educate children to respect laws that do not compel obedience. To hear in the home only protests against the evils that beset it, and not see warfare waged against those evils, is the surest way to kill patriotism. To salute the flag as the emblem of the country, when the country stands for political corruption, tolerated, if not nurtured, by its own citizens, is like praying for salvation with your hand in your neighbor's pocket.

Women are realizing this. They see, as never before, their opportunity to educate voters to a sense of their responsibility. They know, as never before, that the ballot is but a poor instrument for the preservation of the country if it is not controlled by a moral sentiment and love of country.

This sentiment, this love, it is woman's to create, woman's to nurture. Not the number of ballots cast, but the intelligence, the honesty, the consecration that control them represent the salvation of the country. It is a beggarly thing to sit in comfort criticising the conditions that rob life and property of security, purity, and integrity, when the critic's indifference is a contributing cause to those conditions.

The character of every public officer represents the average character of the voters who put him in his place. They stand or fall together. A citizen of high character decides the character of the man he votes for, not at the ballot-box, but at the primary. He works, not ten minutes a day, but a year, two years, four years, to secure honest government; he works through organized efforts

to make bad government impossible, even in his village, all the year.

Who has had the greatest influence in forming the characters of the voters of to-day? Woman. These voters are the sons, brothers, husbands, pupils, of women. There are many of them to-day who never sat for one hour under the teaching of men. Can it be possible that the failure of woman to appreciate the value of civic and National responsibility is the cause of the present condition of politics in our country? Has her lack of appreciation of the responsibility of a citizen been the cause of the criminal indifference which to-day has put sections of our country in bondage to politicians? If so, she has the opportunity to educate the coming voters to a sense of the duties of citizenship. She can educate herself to appreciate the value of honest citizenship; she can give a positive meaning to the term "honest citizen;" she can make every voter under her influence feel that it is his private as well as his public duty to secure honest administration of government, whether of city, of State, or of Nation.

Laws cannot be administered above the sentiment of the governed, nor can they be degraded below the tolerance of the governed. Intelligence and sentiment are born and nurtured in the home. If they are personal and selfish, we must suffer from the maladministration of public affairs; if they are altruistic, good government is assured. Women must show their intelligence, not by building hospitals, homes, and institutions, but by struggling to make these institutions unnecessary, because the best conditions for the development of every child born under the American flag shall have been secured through honest and intelligent administration of public affairs.



"Dropped in Her Tracks"

By Margaret E. Sangster

The homestead, with its substantial house and ample barns and outbuildings, was set like a gem amid the green lawns and spreading elms and maples of a beautiful New England valley. Everything in and around it indicated the thrift of careful spending and equally careful saving; nothing was run down, nothing looked neglected. No field of the slothful here, but hard work which had kept everything in perfect repair, and pride which had suffered no falling below a certain standard, no contrast in any way with the best that one's neighbors had to show. Not a leaf allowed to lie on the velvet sward, nor a loose hinge permitted a single day on the gate, nor any defacement endured which hammer or paint-brush could remedy. A fine old place, conscientiously maintained in excellent order. The high-water mark of neatness reached, nothing less tolerated.

I went in, ushered by a young daughter of the house into a stiflingly dark parlor, clean and grim, and musty for lack of fresh air. As she opened a shutter the sunlight streamed in, and the dignified furniture, the unread books on the old-fashioned "what-not," the framed photographs on the wall, seemed surprised and abashed, as a nun might were her cell suddenly exchanged for a ball-room. "Kept for funerals" occurred to me, so little had this apartment the look of a place where the living had any business to be except in the rôle of mourners for the dead.

"Mother would like to see you," said the girl, hospitably, "but she is ill; won't you come to her room? She hasn't been out of bed for a week. She is all tuckered out and run down, and she doesn't get her strength."

It is of this mother, a woman prematurely old, who should have been in her prime, and of her daughters, slim and pallid girls, defrauded of flesh and color, that I am fain to write. I had lately been the guest of a woman much older by count of years than the one whose thin, feverish hand

was extended to clasp mine, a wan ghost of a smile playing over her gaunt features; but my former hostess, in her sixties, was gracious and beautiful as a queen, serene, well-nurtured, strong, alert, a leader among women.

She had started in life from such a home and such an environment as the one in which I now found myself. But for her certain traditional fetters had early been broken, and she had learned to choose her work wisely, and to insist on sufficient rest and recreation. She had made money her servant, had not been its slave.

"I've had a houseful of boarders this summer," said the invalid, "and Kathie, Lizzie, and I have done all the work, besides getting meals for father's hired help. Many a Saturday we've made ten loaves and eighteen pies, and we always get up early, and have the work well out of the road before seven o'clock. Washing? Well—a woman comes when we have boarders, but, generally speaking, we do it ourselves; we have a machine. And we never have a dressmaker; we do the sewing ourselves, too. My girls are very smart, and"—pausing for breath and coughing pitifully—"I've made it my rule never to give up till I dropped in my tracks."

This is the true story, tersely told, of what she had done—dropped in her tracks; and, boneset and composition and mustard plasters failing to bring her up, the doctor, poor man! had been called in, and was regarded with evident scornful disfavor because he prescribed rest and tonics and dainty food, and, by and by, drives and a change of air.

"Old Dr. Yates, when he was alive, always knew what to do for me!" said the poor woman, pathetically. "He'd give me something *strong* and bring me round."

"But do you think it is necessary or well for you all to work so very hard?" I ventured. "When do these young people get time to read and to enjoy their friends? Why don't you and they have help in the house, as father does in the fields?"

The younger daughter, a scrawny, sallow girl, who needed only a little ease, bathing, food which she did not always cook in person, and innocent fun—her share of it—to be very pretty, sighed and regarded me with wistful sympathy. I could see that she beat against her limitations as a bird against its prison bars. But the elder, quick and proud, said: "Of course we might have hired help, but we prefer not to. We can manage nicely without, and we like our independence, and we enjoy the sum we have to put in the bank at the end of the summer, don't we, mother?"

If I drive through that pleasant hamlet next year, and stop again at that fair home on the wide street at the turn where the path begins to climb the mountain, I shall not find the mother. I met the doctor, and he told me she would not be here when snow flies. "She is worn out," he said, "with hard work and no play; and the trouble is," he added, "that a great many women in the country, back a little from the larger towns, are just like her. They glorify work. The public opinion of their class and set justifies them in wearing themselves to the bone, literally, in hard, unrelenting daily toil. They scrub and scrimp and earn and save, and lose beauty and health and freshness, grow old and die before their time; but if one of them commit the rashness of keeping help except at some extraordinary crisis, she is looked upon with suspicion as lazy and improvident, or criticised with acrimony as vain and shiftless."

Pointing to the upland cemetery, the doctor said: "There is many a gravestone there that, if it told the plain truth, would say, 'Died of house-cleaning and cooking,' and the text below this ought to be that one about the 'destruction of fools.'"

The physician may have indulged in exaggeration. But I am moved to cry aloud and spare not, until my sisters and friends, dear countrywomen whom I love and honor, shall at least consider the question whether *per se* there is anything meritorious in mere work. Would it not be better to have less to show in the bank-book, and more to one's credit in vitality and health? Are these occasional long illnesses when one "drops in her tracks," and these

frequent slowly dragging spells of backache and headache, worth one's while, when probably, and usually, both are preventable?

Even if your means are very narrow, and it is hard work, desperately hard sometimes, to make both ends meet, would it not be sensible to economize your strength, to take a nap in the daytime, to let some things go, to learn how to slight when slighting is occasionally possible? for, my dear friends, it still is and will forever be true that "the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment." One may work very hard and *not* break down, but to do this she must rest intelligently and often.



A United States Household Pamphlet

The United States Department of Agriculture has just issued a pamphlet, "Suggestions Regarding the Cooking of Food," by Edward Atkinson, with an introduction by Mrs. Ellen H. Richards. Every intelligent housekeeper should own this book. The unintelligent would not profit by it, because they do not recognize the importance of their office. A close observer of woman in her special field of housekeeping has said that women were such close followers of tradition in the matter of cooking that it was almost impossible to get them to consider the question of the nutritive values of foods; that many intelligent women, compelled to do their own work, or to keep house with one servant, so rarely provided themselves with labor-saving machines that the most you could expect them to buy was an egg-beater. There is a larger degree of truth in this statement than the lovers of womankind care to acknowledge. This pamphlet issued by the United States Government can be had for the asking—a postal addressed to the Department is all that is necessary. It would be interesting to know how many housekeepers make application for it. Mrs. Ellen H. Richards, a graduate of Vassar College, and now connected with the Massachusetts School of Technology, has a most valuable introduction on "The Nutritive Values of Common Food" and "Suggestions for Cooking Food."

Mrs. Richards says: "The best coal for a locomotive is that which will enable it to haul the greatest number of tons over the longest distance. The best food for man is that which will enable him to do the most work in a given time and keep him in perfect condition for further work. Food is the only means by which the physical and mental power of man can be sustained. It behooves us to make the most of the supplies of food which are at our command."

The history of cooking might almost be called the history of the development of a nation. The pendulum with us has swung to both extremes, and we are only now coming back to the balance which indicates scientific knowledge of foods and the desire of a percentage of the people to acquire it. Mrs. Richards, in her introduction, gives carefully prepared tables on the food elements and their values in increasing the working power. The mistake that is generally made is that when we talk of working power we usually think of those whose labor is performed with the muscles; but it certainly is as important for the man who manages millions of capital to be so fed as to keep full command of his mental and physical powers as it is for the man who performs work for which he receives one dollar a day. Mrs. Richards says:

"The locomotive burns coal only in order to produce power to haul the train. When it becomes worn or broken, it is taken to the repair-shop to be made as good as new. When its day is past, it leaves on the world no impress of great thoughts, no inspiration to great deeds, transmits to no child the hopes and unfulfilled desires of higher things than have been possible to it. The higher forms of energy involved in the physical and mental life of man are unknown to the locomotive. Hence, in selecting the best foods, we must take cognizance of more than mere calories or heat units."

We present one table from Mrs. Richards's introduction, because it contains a percentage composition of thirty