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## Twelve Reasons Why Women Want to Vote

Alice Stone Blackwell

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# WOMAN SUFFRAGE LEAFLET.

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## Twelve Reasons Why Women Want to Vote.

BY ALICE STONE BLACKWELL.

1. Because it is fair and right that those who obey the laws should have a voice in making them, and that those who pay taxes should have a voice as to the amount of the tax and the way in which it shall be spent. Harriet Beecher Stowe says: "If the principle on which we founded our government is true, that taxation must not be without representation, and if women hold property and are taxed, it follows that women should be represented in the State by their votes. I think the State can no more afford to dispense with the aid of women in its affairs than can the family."

2. Because it is the quietest, easiest, most dignified and least conspicuous way of influencing public affairs. It takes much less expenditure of time, labor and personal presence to go up to the ballot-box, drop in a slip of paper and come away, than to stand all day at the polls offering coffee and entreaties to a miscellaneous crowd of voters. Above all, the ballots would be effectual; the coffee and entreaties too often are not.

3. Because it would elevate and broaden women's minds to take part of the spare time which they now spend on fancy-work, wax flowers, crazy quilts and gossip, and devote it to the study of public questions. It would make them more intelligent companions for their husbands, and broader-minded mothers for their children. If women understood politics, a man would not be obliged to leave his wife and go down to the store of an evening in order to find some one with whom to talk over the questions in which he is most interested.

4. Because it would increase women's influence. Mrs. Zerelda G. Wallace, "the mother of Ben Hur," lately said, speaking of the exclusion of women from all voice in regard to public affairs: "Think of the effect of this dishonor upon the boys of the land. The mother tries to teach her boy that he must be pure, and temperate, and honorable. That boy goes out from his mother, and the first thing he meets with neutralizes and gives the lie to all his mother's teachings. He says to himself, 'Why, mother says so and so;' but he finds men in high places violating all those teachings, and he begins to conclude that his mother does not know much about it. From that minute that boy discounts his mother's judgment, and though she must still have a hold on his affections, she does not have a hold upon him in any other way. There is where you wrong us, gentlemen, and cripple us in training men who will make the statesmen of this nation. If you want us to make statesmen, you must give the women an interest in the government, and you must count their opinions."

5. Because it would result in the election of better men to office. In Wyoming, soon after the passage of the woman suffrage law, a man was elected who was popular with his party, but who was a secret drinker. After his election he grew more careless, went into saloons openly, and was several times seen on the street

the worse for liquor. The politicians of his party did not care. When his term was out, they re-nominated him. A man came home from the caucus, and his wife asked him who the candidate was. He told her. "Why," she said, "that man cannot possibly be re-elected." "Why not?" asked her husband, in surprise. The wife made no answer, but she put on her sunbonnet and went out and talked with the woman next door, over the fence. The woman next door then put on her sunbonnet, and went out and talked with her next neighbor, and so they passed the word all through the town. The women held no caucus, made no public demonstration, but when election day came, the intemperate candidate found himself defeated. He knew he had done nothing to make him lose caste with his party, and he could not understand his defeat until one of his lady friends said to him, very quietly, "We could not let you go back; you were setting a bad example to our boys." In Wyoming, both parties have come to recognize the necessity of nominating their best men, or at least not nominating bad men, if they wish to succeed.

6. Because, under our present system, bad women have too much influence in politics. A member of the Michigan Legislature once told Rev. Anna Shaw that if women voted, the bad women would have to vote. She answered: "There is a certain row of houses close to the capitol at Lansing, and you know by what sort of women those houses are occupied every year during the session of the Legislature; and you know that their influence is a formidable factor in determining legislation. If women could vote, a class of men would be chosen to office who are not so susceptible to the influence of bad women." The bad women are too few in number, in comparison with the good women, to exert much influence merely by their votes. But our public officers are elected by men alone, and are responsible for their official acts to a constituency composed of men alone. Public opinion on social questions is comparatively lax among men. Hence, men of notoriously immoral character are often chosen to positions of high public trust, and they appoint others like themselves. Witness the case of Sheriff Flack, of New York. Such men, of course, are open to the influence of bad women, who are thus able to exert a power out of all proportion to their numbers. Let the great mass of good mothers, wives and sisters have a voice in choosing our representatives, and a higher class of men will be chosen, who will not be under the sway of bad women. Women want to vote in order that the good women may have more influence in politics than the bad ones.

7. Because women want to protect their business interests. As farmers need votes in order that they may represent the farming interests, and manufacturers in order that they may represent the manufacturing interests, so women need votes in order that they may represent the interests of the home. For instance: A few years ago the mayor of Louisville made an

effort to enforce the city ordinances against gambling-houses. He was met by a petition from legal voters, begging him to desist, on the ground that his action would injure the business interests of the city. Men who came to Louisville to trade expected to have "a good spree" after transacting their business. If they could not do this in Louisville, trade would go elsewhere. Not long after, the mayor of St. Paul made an effort to enforce the city ordinances against houses of ill-fame, and he was met with a similar petition from prominent citizens, protesting on the same ground—that it would injure the business interests of the city. How many of the wives of those prominent citizens do you suppose you could have got to sign such a petition? Probably most of the men who signed it were not themselves gamblers, or patrons of the other places. But they were business men; their minds were fixed on making money, and they looked mainly at the money side of the question. The mothers, too, were in business. Their business was bringing up their boys and girls to be good men and women. They knew that the gambling-houses and similar places interfered with their business—which is really the most important business of all, and the one for the sake of which all the others exist. And every mother of them would have supported the mayor, if she could. But every gambler, every loafer, every man who is absorbed in material interests to the exclusion of moral interests, has a vote with which to intimidate a mayor who tries to do his duty. The good wives and mothers have no votes with which to sustain him. Is it any wonder that city officials so often wink at violations of the law?

8. Women want to vote because politics are so corrupt. For years, good men have been trying in vain, unassisted, to purify them. They need the help and coöperation of women. The corruption of public life sets a bad example to every woman's husband; it assails the morals of her son as soon as he steps across her threshold; it takes the tax money contributed by women, and refuses to apply it to purposes which women think most useful and desirable, such as police matrons, and squanders it lavishly for things which women regard as useless or even harmful, such as great quantities of champagne at inauguration balls. It is idle to say that the political world is too corrupt for women to touch it, when it inevitably touches women at so many points. It is as if a man, in a mistaken spirit of chivalry, should refuse to let his wife lift a hand to do any housecleaning, on the ground that the house was too dirty for her to touch it, and at the same time should expect her to go on living in that same dirty house. When she saw her husband and children suffering from the effects of dirt, she would be sure to ask to be allowed to help clean things up. And to fancy that a woman can purify politics better by abstract moral disapprobation than by voting for good men and against bad ones, is like fancying that she could cleanse her house more effectually by frowning at the dirt than by taking a broom in her hand.

9. Because, in the laws now upon our

statute books, the reasonable wishes of women are not adequately represented. Witness the laws which license the sale of intoxicating liquor; the laws in relation to the age of consent, which in many States regard a little girl as mature enough to consent to her own ruin at ten or twelve years of age—in Delaware at seven; the law by which a married mother has no right to her own children as long as she lives with her husband; the law by which the husband in some States can, by will, bequeath the custody and guardianship of the children away from their mother; the law of Massachusetts which provides a heavier penalty for stealing a fine cow than for ruining a virtuous woman by fraud and deceit. These laws were not enacted because men meant to be unjust or unkind to women, but because they looked at things simply from their own side of the question. That is human nature. If women alone had made the laws, no doubt the laws would be just as one-sided as they are now, only in the opposite direction. As we need two eyes to get a correct perspective, so we need to have both the masculine and the feminine points of view represented in legislation in order to reach a just result.

10. Because actual and cruel wrongs are every day inflicted upon women, to which woman suffrage would put an end. We have all shuddered over Dr. Kate Bushnell's account of the stockaded dens of vice in the lumber camps of Michigan and Wisconsin, where women are compelled to lead a life of shame against their will, and over the cruelties inflicted upon the twelve hundred Chinese slave girls of San Francisco. Dr. Bushnell, and others who have tried to do away with these evils, all testify that the reason such things are allowed to continue is that the officers of the law are in league with the wrong-doers. How long would such officers remain in power if their tenure of office depended in any degree upon the votes of women? No woman has all the rights she ought to want, until she has the right to say with authority that such things shall cease.

11. Because it is a maxim in war, "Always do the thing to which your enemy particularly objects." The Brewers' Convention at Chicago passed this resolution by a unanimous vote:

*Resolved*, That we are opposed to woman suffrage everywhere and always; for when woman has the ballot, she will vote solid for prohibition; and woman's vote is the last hope of the prohibitionists.

You may persuade a church member that the majority of mothers would vote for dramshops; but you will never make the liquor interest believe it. "The children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

12. Because we are more and more coming to realize the truth of Frances Willard's emphatic assertion, "The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are voted up or voted down upon election day." When such interests are trembling in the balance, every woman ought to wish to cast a vote into the scale that represents purity, sobriety, and honor.

### The Woman's Journal.

A weekly paper, founded 1870. Editors, Lucy Stone, H. B. Blackwell, Alice Stone Blackwell. "The best source of information upon the woman question that I know."—*Clara Barton*. First year on trial to new subscribers, \$1.50. Regular price per year, \$2.50. To libraries and reading-rooms, \$1.25. Address *Woman's Journal*, Boston, Mass.

### The Woman's Column.

Edited at 3 Park St., Boston, by Alice Stone Blackwell. Published weekly. 25c. a year. "The best condensation of the argument for woman's enfranchisement, the method by which that argument is enforced, and the news of the movement, that we have anywhere."—*Frances E. Willard*.

A full set of equal suffrage leaflets, 40 different kinds, post paid, for 10 cents. Address *Woman's Journal*, Boston.