

The Jews and Woman Suffrage

A WEEKLY COMMENT

BY RICHARD S. RAUH

Perhaps the most interesting problems presented by the Woman Suffrage question is the effect which its adoption will have on the women themselves, but a phase, which to the writer's knowledge has never been touched upon, is the relation which the entire Feminist movement will have with the Jews. In fact upon first thought there seems to be very little in common between Jewesses and a political propaganda, and of course there never must be any connection whatever between the Church and State but as there is a marked relationship between the women of England and the Government of that country, so, speaking of the Jews RACIALLY there is every reason to discuss the effect which Woman Suffrage will have on them in the manner in which the issue is argued in other nations.

There are still those who claim that Jews are but a religious sect and to them there is little to be said concerning the comment of the week, but such a view, although it is held by some of the greatest Jews in America, is difficult to swallow when some facts are considered. The dark features and typical nose are characteristic of a people and are not the result of some particular belief in morality and spiritual worship. The emotional gesture and usual enthusiasm is certainly not caused by the view in one God which the Jews entertain. The continual discussion of Zionism proves that the Jews who have wandered far away from home, are anxious to go back again to the land which gave them birth,—the nation in a word, in which they were all, once upon a time, full fledged citizens with no rights and privileges denied them. The Hebrews, racially, have been the body which has given soul to their religion—their one great contribution. The faith and creed of the Jews has not been the cause of Israel's triumph. With these scattered ideas, it shall be assumed that the comment will deal with an actuality or the racial side of the Jews and that the religious viewpoint must not be indulged in except from indirect position.

Although there are references in the Bible to the fact that the political work was always taken care of by the men, this point will not be included, for it can rightly be argued that different conditions prevail in the twentieth century. Perhaps as vital an argument as can be set down in opposition to the Suffrage movement from the standpoint of the Jews is the fact that the link which bound the Jews together, and which preserved their identity until the present time has been their marvelous domestic and family life, without which Jews and Judaism would have been impossible. One of the most remarkable stories ever related to me was that of a Russian Jew, whose description of his family, his mother particularly, was as inspiring as a wonderful epic. In tears, this young man told me of the privations which his mother suffered for the sake of her household, and how it was her cheerful influence which cleared the way for the family's ultimate success in the world. From the cradle, I was told, this woman was as watchful of her little children, (and she had five of them) as a cat is

of her kittens. Besides her vigilant guard of these boys and girls, she was the cook and the housekeeper, all-in-one, and even made money for her family by baking bread because her husband was not able to garner a great sum in his business. Now this story could be repeated a thousand times, and a thousand upon a thousand times besides in the history of the Jews. And in the face of this greatest of all relationships, the men and women are willing to throw the bomb of suffrage. Let it be understood immediately that this is not an attempt to bring to life, the old "Women in the home" discussion which is true but which is scoffed at by the average suffragist, generally through his or her inability to set what the future will hold out for women. It is an appeal to those enthusiastic Jewish women and men to look before they leap. As substantial as is the argument that Woman Suffrage will work havoc in the home, so true is the assertion that with its inception there will be little left of the traditional Jewish family which has safeguarded the Jews through the ages. And with only a partial disruption of the family life, it is difficult to hold out much hope for the future of the Jews.

To exercise the vote carefully and conscientiously will be the duty of every woman. A prejudiced ballot is far worse than no ballot at all. An absolutely independent vote must always be recorded. I will be answered that men fall far short of this ideal state when they cast their opinions in the booth. But remember that there is only one reason that women have ever been granted the vote, and but one which will ever entitle them to it internationally, and that it the belief that if they get the prerogative, they will be saner and more intelligent voters than men. To do practically what men are doing over again, and perhaps worse, is an uneconomic doctrine for two doing the work of one is a loss of energy and time. This talk of women being citizens, and as such being entitled to a vote is senseless, for if the truth were known, they ARE citizens and and today given more rights than ever before. Now, man's superior, suffrage will make them his equal. And it can easily be seen that with woman debating, arguing, reasoning, discussing, analyzing, and considering the great financial, political, social and industrial problems of the day, she will not only be forced to inquire into, and study these questions and then take part in the work which the solution of these issues demands, but in the home there will be many a breach when there is a conflict of opinion. Perhaps there never will be. Mayhap the MAJORITY of women will be nothing more than superfluous impedimenta acquiescing at the demand of the husband or father to vote such-and-such a way. Of course I shall be reprimanded for this contention, BY A FEW ARDENT SUFFRAGISTS, who are usually of the higher intellectual type, and who can only see the vote of a million women who are of the more intelligent class. But granting that the interest in big public questions is to be far greater by the women than it has been by the men in the past, let us see what the suffragette would be willing to

do in the following case, and let us imagine it in a Jewish household.

A gentleman, Smith by name (perhaps not entirely Jewish), is engaged in a business which by the majority of people is considered disastrous to the country's progress and welfare. His wife, one of those intelligent voters, is called upon with him to vote for a measure, national or local it matters not, which will materially hurt his business. Now by the greater portion of people and particularly, the women, who claim to be moral and ethical exponents, the legislation will be of social good to the community or country. The puzzle is this: What will Mrs. Smith do? Naturally she will throw her ethical scruples to the wind and will vote the way in which her husband desires. In suffrage, husband and wife are not to be looked upon as one, even though the marriage relationship has ordained this to be the case, for if they are one, then why have suffrage at all? But as has been previously stated, each is an independent voter. If Mrs. Smith expects to vote her own way in the matter, there will be nothing short of violent internal dissension in the home, and if she votes WITH her husband, against right for his protection, she will have violated the pledge which she took when she becomes a technical citizen and her influence for good will be worthless. For whom the votes are to be cast; what is the correct attitude on such-and-such a question; holding offices WHICH WILL BE THE DIRECT RESULT OF THE BALLOT; participation in public elections; stump speaking; political gatherings; etc., etc., all this and more will the women of necessity be compelled to enter into if they are to wield the ballot in a manner fitting intelligent citizens, and all these activities will mean an eruption in the family life. Argue until the sunlight ceases, yet this condition MUST be the inevitable outcome of "votes for women" and with it will mean that the "sacred precincts of the home" will become voting precincts in the ward. Then what is to become of this beautiful Jewish home life? Other peoples may not feel it as much as the Jews but when this last binding force is broken they will lose their power and vigor and will assimilate so thoroughly that not even the stone of their religion will be left to make their grave. As important as has been the family to the Jew in the dark days of disaster and disappointment, this ennobling, uplifting, sacred influence will disappear with the new fad "Woman Suffrage" which is as unnecessary as it is wrong.

It will be interesting to see just what this movement will mean to the voting population in Pittsburgh alone, where the Jewish community is quite large. It can be fairly accurately estimated that there are about 8,000 wielders of the ballot in this city who are Jews and approximately 200,000 of other nationalities. Making a fair assumption that for each man there will be a female voter, either a wife, mother or sister, it is quickly observed that whereas the Jews, (racially do not forget) are in a very weak minority at present their influence will be reduced to such a miserable extent that their ballot power will be scarcely evident in any election or primary. The cry should then be: "Votes for Jews." With suffrage in Pittsburgh there will be approximately 16,000 Jewish voters and 400,000 other citizens. Whereas the majority over them was 192,000 before the calculation of women suffrage, the ma-

majority after its introduction at 384,000. The Jews are swamped! While in each case the number of voters is doubled, at the same time the majority over the Jews is doubled. It would be very difficult for a student of the question to be able to determine whether it is prejudice against the Jew as a religious factor, or the Jew as a racial entity which makes it so hard for him to be rewarded with a high office in the city, state or country. I am personally inclined to believe that his race dominates in this case, for the non-Jew does not bother particularly about his beliefs. On the contrary he is more concerned with his habits, culture and general demeanor which are the results of his race development. At any rate whether we are not of the opinion that the Church and State should have anything to do with each other, the truth nevertheless remains that the two are sometimes associated, and very frequently related. Now it is the ambition of the Jews to have credit placed where it is due and while it is similar to the Judge who is called upon to decide his own case or like the United States when interpreting its own privileges in a treaty such as it has done recently in the Canal Tolls Repeal Bill,—the Jews are convinced, without egotism, that there are many of their race who are excluded from position and recognition just because and only because they are Jews. Believing that they make active, useful, industrious citizens of America, they are asking for rewards for their labor, but through some kind of prejudice are invariably refused. With suffrage their voting strength will be so disastrously reduced that they will no longer be important factors in the government. Not only this but think of that family disintegration besides! They will be weakening their outside as well as their inside influences.

If Woman Suffrage were necessary, men would be willing to concede the point in a flash. Women believing that the liquor traffic is wrong have waged a campaign against its sale. As a matter of fact for their own enlightenment, it is interesting to note that of the nine Prohibition States, none has Suffrage. Men are still able to discern the right and then practice it. That is why equal suffrage is so slow in coming. That is why the Jews have been spared for a short time at least.

There are two menaces which are threatening this country at the present time and one of these is Woman Suffrage. The purpose of this article was not to argue Anti-Suffrage for a thorough discussion would require a protracted article and perhaps even a volume or two. Simply to show that the old family ties are to be obliterated from memory by domestic strife and that the "Jewish Vote" (which is deplored by some although it has its deep significance) is to become lost forever by the introduction of Woman Suffrage, is this article inscribed to my co-religionists. The viewpoint is selfish and will probably be shared by very few, but Time will reveal the truths contained. Many more arguments could be brought forward but these seem to be the most important at present. Let us think before acting rather than act before thinking.

At the meeting of the Committee of Management of the Cape Town Free Dispensary, held on the 8th of May, Mr. P. Myers was unanimously elected Chairman for the ensuing year.