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# Why I Should Vote.

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# QUALIFICATIONS OF WOMEN VOTERS.

(Representation of the People Act, 1918).

## PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISES.

A woman who is 30, and is not subject to any legal incapacity, will have a vote if she is:—

1. The occupier or one of two joint occupiers of a house or flat either as owner or tenant.
2. The occupier, either as owner or tenant of any land, shop or building of a yearly value of £5 or over for each occupier.
3. A Lodger in a room which has been taken unfurnished.
4. The wife of a man who is the occupier of land or premises as above.
5. University Graduates. (Oxford and Cambridge women have a special qualification.)
6. Otherwise qualified, but away from home on naval or military service.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT FRANCHISES.

A woman of full age (21), not legally disqualified, is entitled to the Local Government Franchise if she is:—

1. The occupier or one of two joint occupiers, as owner or tenant, of any land, shop or building within any local government electoral area.
2. A married woman of 30 if she is the wife of a man who is entitled to the Local Government Franchise, in respect of premises in which they both reside.

N.B.—The word "tenant" includes for Parliamentary and Local Government Franchises:—

1. A person who inhabits any dwelling house by virtue of any service, or employment if the dwelling house is not occupied by the person in whose service she is.
2. A Lodger occupying a room or rooms which are let to her unfurnished.
3. IN SCOTLAND, however, for the Local Government Franchise, a lodger is a person occupying a room or rooms which are let either furnished or unfurnished of the annual value of £10.

## QUALIFYING PERIOD.

The qualifying period is 6 months ending January 15th or July 15th.

BUT FOR THE FIRST REGISTER 1918, THE QUALIFYING PERIOD IS OCTOBER 15TH, 1917, TO APRIL 15TH, 1918.

## Why I Should Vote?

What is a vote? It is an expression of opinion, a judgment on some disputed question, and both in public or private matters, settlement by vote is held to be the most just and fair method of decision. A vote confers power and dignity. Dignity—because the right to vote is a tacit acknowledgement that the voter is a being capable of thought whose judgment is worth considering both in public or private matters great or small. Power—because in this country most questions of public interest are decided by vote, either directly or indirectly. Indeed the material advantages attached to it and its latent possibilities are enormous. It is a handle, a key, a crowbar in the last extreme, which will open many doors: not alone and of itself of course, but side by side with the vote of thousands of other men and women. For of votes it is literally true that "every one counts." Each one may help to win or lose a cause. The knowledge of this fact makes canvassers at elections so eager to seek out the most insignificant elector, thinking no trouble too great if it can secure their



candidate another vote. It matters not whether the voters be men or women, provided they vote honestly for the cause they believe to be right; they are helping things forward, and are public benefactors. That brings us to this consideration, "In what way can a woman with a vote benefit herself and others?" The answer is three-fold and shows the power of a citizen,—a woman citizen,—a Catholic woman citizen.

#### AS A CITIZEN

a woman will find much the same uses for a vote as a man. It will help to secure good and capable representation in Parliament, and on the other hand to get rid of those who have proved themselves inefficient or who have betrayed the trust reposed in them, thus indirectly the vote gives to its possessor a voice in the making of the laws. Such a position, all will agree, is much more satisfactory than submitting blindly or unwillingly to laws made for us by others, with little or no reference to our wishes.

Then it is the possession of the vote which gives to organised bodies of workers, guilds, unions and societies, their weight and importance, and which makes them a power to be reckoned with. This is an age of syndicates of limited liability companies, of co-operative societies. Men have found that co-operation and combination in the production and distribution of commodities is a sound and

profitable system. The same spirit has been applied with success to politics and in conjunction with the vote has secured the workers a hearing which they would never have been accorded under former conditions. Whether they seek reform of existing abuses or resist harmful innovations, the member who would obtain the support of these hundreds and thousands of united voters, *must* pledge himself to take up their cause, and so, in time, it is brought before Parliament and receives attention.

But, to consider some of the special interests of

#### A WOMAN CITIZEN,

and the numerous questions which concern women either wholly or in part and in which a woman's point of view is of paramount importance. For instance, women's wages (to use a well worn example) have not in the past and do not at present receive a fair share of attention; for the same work they are almost everywhere lower than men's and often shamefully inadequate. True, there have long been unions and societies for working and professional women, but their demands in the main have remained unheeded. This has been due partly to the fact that women were slow to organise, but more especially to the fact that they have had no political importance and consequently could be disregarded with impunity. Experience



shows that numbers of voteless citizens, however energetic, rarely or only with great difficulty obtain their demands. We see this in the long struggle for woman's suffrage itself; there was no time to attend to a voteless section of the community, and again and again the question was shelved. But to-day if only women voters can be persuaded to join hands and organise, their societies and unions, because of their women electors, will be able to achieve many new reforms, and the question of a living wage must be in the forefront; for the value of a living wage is often that of a human soul. Want of the necessities of life is only too frequently the driving force behind the woman who joins "the submerged tenth." Is it an exaggeration to say that a vote may even save a soul?

Then comes the problem of infant welfare, with all its attendant schemes of mothers' schools and pensions, clinics, day nurseries, pure milk supply. All these surely need a woman's point of view. And that is what her vote can help her to express. Or, there are the laws relating to institutions of all kinds, hospitals, schools, orphanages, workhouses, asylums which include women and children as well as men. Laws affecting these have been made by men from a man's point of view; their work has left room for improvements and might not women be able to suggest a few? Indeed there is no end to the valuable reforms, which await the awakening touch

of the woman's vote. Perhaps it is looking rather a long way ahead to contemplate the possibility of women in Parliament, sent there by their fellow electors to look after the interests of men and women alike. But that the country will gain by the entrance of women into legislation is certain if we are to judge by recent reports from Australia and America. The application of their thought and experience, hitherto confined largely to home, husband and children, to the wider sphere of politics, will, we may reasonably hope, help to build up, not an Utopia, but a State nearer the ideal than man alone has been able to create.

Lastly, for

### A CATHOLIC WOMAN CITIZEN

there is the extremely important duty of guarding the most precious possession of all,—the faith. Here Catholic women can help Catholic men to fight the opposing forces, for in school and home they share with men the guardianship of Catholic souls.

Again, let us remember that the education of the young has always been considered woman's special province, and of course for us Catholics the education question is bound up with that of religion. We have had to fight for it always, but our position will be undoubtedly strengthened by the addition of a large number of Catholic women to the voters of this country, and laws which



menace our schools will have small chance against such an united body of opinion.

So much for the usefulness of the vote summed up in a brief and somewhat superficial manner. It is the bounden duty of every enfranchised woman to use her vote in the interests of some or other of these causes. Results will not show themselves at once, nor can we always hope to be on the winning side. Still that is no reason why we should despair with the lady who would never vote again, because "she voted once and nothing came of it." Rome was not built in a day, neither is a new state of society. The thing to do is to use the vote if you have it, and use it well. The war has called women out of their homes in the cause of patriotism. It has widened their horizon and ought to have given them some knowledge of the nation's needs. It remains to be seen what use they will make of their new knowledge, their larger freedom.

Miracles will not follow the mere possession of the vote. It has been said of the Reform Bill of 1832 that "the chief thing about it was that it did not reform." The newly enfranchised people were at first little more than tools in the hands of the party in power. Men were easily persuaded to refrain from voting, so that members were returned with such farcical totals as seven votes! So today valuable time will be lost unless women try to understand their own necessities and

the importance of the vote. This they can do by taking an intelligent interest in social questions, by attending meetings of the societies of which they are members and by making themselves acquainted with the details of our voting system. Then, with their eyes open and their minds made up, they can vote when the opportunity offers. For a vote, like a talent, is given for use, hidden in the earth, it produces nothing and calls forth the anger of the Master. Used in His interests, and these are surely the interests of His creatures, it will gain an everlasting reward.



## Where Women Vote.

### (1). In the Interests of Mother and Child.

#### IN AMERICA.

In all the enfranchised States, Mothers' Pension Laws exist.

#### IN NORWAY.

Maternity assistance is given for six weeks after child-birth, and medical attendance upon mothers is free.

#### IN NEW ZEALAND.

A Widows' Pension Act has been passed.

### (2). In the Interests of Moral Reform.

#### IN AMERICA.

In all enfranchised States there are laws for the suppression of immoral houses.

In Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho and Utah alcohol is forbidden to minors.

#### IN FINLAND.

The legal age of marriage for girls has been raised from 15 to 17.

#### IN AUSTRALIA.

The age of consent has been raised to 18.

### (3). In the Interests of Industrial and Professional Women.

#### IN AUSTRALIA.

There is equal pay for men and women throughout the Federal Public Service.

## The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society.

Office :

55, Berners Street, Oxford Street, London, W. 1.

Patron - Blessed Joan of Arc.

Colours - Blue, White and Gold.

### Objects.

To band together Catholics of both sexes, in order to secure political, social and economic equality between men and women; and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens.

### Methods.

1. Strictly non-party.
2. Active propaganda by political and educational means.

### Membership.

All Catholic women are eligible as Members, who approve the object and methods, and will pay a minimum annual subscription of 1s. Men are invited to join as Associates, on the same conditions, with the exception that they may not elect or be elected to the Executive.

ORGAN:

## The Catholic Citizen.

1d. Monthly.



# The Catholic Women's

## Association

Organized by the Holy See  
in 1891

First National Convention  
at St. Louis, Mo., 1892

Second National Convention  
at St. Louis, Mo., 1894

### Object

To bind together the Catholics of the world  
in order to secure political, social, and  
economic betterment for men and women;  
and to foster the growth and development of  
the woman as citizens.

### Methods

Active propaganda by political and edu-  
cational means.

### Membership

All Catholic women are eligible as members  
who approve the object and methods, and will  
pay a minimum annual subscription of \$1.  
They are invited to join as Associates, on the  
same conditions, with the exception that they  
are not eligible to the Executive.

# The Catholic Women's

14 Months