

The Old Story.

Reasons Why Some Women do Not Wish Suffrage.

One of the stock objections offered by the opponents of woman suffrage is that women do not want the ballot, that they are contented in their present condition and that they are already overburdened with care and should not have this extra responsibility thrust upon them.

It is true that a great many women say they do not wish to vote. Such women have expressed the same sentiment in regard to every step in the progress of women, but as soon as the change is made, they are among the first to avail themselves of its privileges.

When a merchant in a town in Maine first employed a woman in his store, the men boycotted the store, and the women upheld the men. When Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell began to study medicine, not only did the men say very severe things about her, but the women refused to speak to her. When the effort was begun to secure equal property rights for the women, many women said with contempt, "Do you suppose I would give myself where I would not give my property?"

Likewise objections were made by both men and women when the attempt was first made for higher education for women. No longer than thirty-eight years ago, when Vassar college was founded, it was the object of general jibes and sneers.

Mrs. Lucinda H. Stone, of Kalamazoo, Mich., who, with her husband, was chiefly instrumental in opening Michigan University to women, went abroad about that time, in charge of a traveling party of young women going to visit the Holy Land. Among their fellow-passengers were a band of ladies going out as foreign missionaries. Vassar was the topic of conversation, and public opinion was strongly unfavorable to it. Mrs. Stone tells how the leader of the missionary party, a woman of intelligence and cultivation, voiced the general feeling when she said: "The mere fact of its being called a 'college for women' is enough to condemn it. We may be sure that no refined Christian mother will ever send her daughter to Vassar college."

No great reform has ever been asked for by the masses; the few more progressive ones have seen the needs and obtained the change, then the people have grown to the improved condition.

In the old anti-slavery days opponents jeered the abolitionists and said: "Why make all this noise about emancipation? The slaves are contented and happy." When asked if they wished to be free, many said: "No, we are well fed, clothed and sheltered, and all our wants supplied."

Is there anyone who would claim that these steps in the progress of the race have not been beneficial to humanity? And yet the masses of those concerned said they did not want them, before they were established facts.

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Practical experience has already shown this "bugbear" about women's wishing to vote to be an illusion like all the rest. In the four states where women have full suffrage they vote in even a greater proportion than the men do. Mrs. Elizabeth B. Harper, treasurer of the Colorado State Federation of Women's Clubs, who opposed the granting of suffrage to women in 1893, now says that she doubts if any woman who had lived where she could vote, would be content to live in a state where she was denied the right.

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ELNORA M. BABCOCK.

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