



THE RISK OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE

By KELLY MILLER



THE August number of *THE CRISIS* contained an interesting symposium on woman suffrage. The symposium was unusual, in that it involved only one side of a disputed issue. The contributors represent some of the ablest and most thoughtful names among us. They presented, presumably, the best possible putting of the cause espoused. The public, however, should not be misled to suppose that they represent the general attitude of the colored race on that question. Despite the ardent advocacy and plausible pleas of the propagandists, I am wholly unable to see wherein the experiment of woman suffrage promises any genuine advantage to social well-being.

The human race is divided horizontally by age, vertically by sex and diagonally by race. Each individual passes from the minor to the adult stage in course of a life time; the cleavage of race is subject to indefinite modification through environment and intermingling of blood; but sex is the one fixed and unalterable separatrix of mankind. The function of sex in human economy is clearly defined and well understood. The bearing and rearing of the young constitute the chief duty and responsibility of the female, and this task absorbs her highest energies during the most energetic period of her life. The family constitutes the fundamental social unit. Woman's sphere of activity falls mainly within while man's field of action lies largely without the domestic circle. This represents the traditional and, presumably, the ideal relation between the sexes. It has the sanction of divine authority and the test of human experience. Woman suffrage could not possibly enhance the harmoniousness of this relationship, but might seriously jeopardize it.

Woman is physically weaker than man and is incapable of competing with him in the stern and strenuous activities of public and practical life. In the final analysis, politics is a game of force, in which no weakling may expect to be assigned a conspicuous role.

As part of her equipment for motherhood, woman has been endowed with finer feelings and a more highly emotional nature than man. She shows tender devotion and self sacrifice for those close to her by ties of blood or bonds of endearment. But by the universal law of compensation, she loses in extension what is gained in intensity. She lacks the sharp sense of public justice and the common good, if they seem to run counter to her personal feeling and interest. She is far superior to man in purely personal and private virtue, but is his inferior in public qualities and character. Suffrage is not a natural right, like life and liberty. The common sense of mankind has always limited it by age, sex, possession, attainment and moral character. It is merely a convenient agency through which to secure the best result of government, and to make secure life, liberty and happiness to all. It cannot be maintained that woman is deprived of any of these objects under male suffrage. It is inconceivable that man would legislate against his wife and daughter, who are dearer to him than life itself, and who, he knows, must fall back upon his strong arm for protection, whether they be given the suffrage or not.

The historical hardships and legal disabilities against which women complain so bitterly were incidental imperfections of social development. Most of these have already been swept away, as all of them are bound to be, by man's growing sense of justice and fair play.

Female suffrage has been tried in twelve states of the Union, but so far no genuine public benefit has resulted therefrom, nor has the lot of woman been ameliorated more rapidly than in other states under exclusive male suffrage.

There may be some argument for suffrage for unfortunate females, such as widows and hopeless spinsters, but such status is not contemplated as a normal social relation.

Women as voters would undoubtedly stand against the purely masculine vices such as drunkenness and the social evil, but they can be equally or even more

efficacious through non-political influence.

The logical sequence of suffrage is office-holding. Female suffrage will never reach its full fruition until fully one-half of all public offices, legislative, judicial and executive, local and national, are filled by women. Is the public mind ready for this risky innovation?

It is alleged that Negro suffrage and woman suffrage rest on the same basis. But on close analysis it is found that there is scarcely any common ground between them. The female sex does not form a class separate and distinct from the male sex in the sense that the Negro forms a class separate and distinct from the whites. Experience and reason both alike show that no race is good enough to govern another without that other's consent. On the other hand both experience and reason demonstrate that the male seeks the welfare and happiness of the female even above his own interest. The Negro can not get justice or fair treatment without the suffrage. Woman can make no such claim, for man accords

her not only every privilege which he himself enjoys but the additional privilege of protection.

The fundamental defect in the propaganda of woman suffrage consists in the fact that instead of confining its effort to the improvement of woman's lot along the line of her obvious sphere and function in the social scheme, it insists upon her privilege and opportunities being artificially identical with those of man. It is amusing to note that women are to be allowed to vote at twenty-one merely because men are accorded the privilege at that age; whereas according to their physical and mental developments, the sexes have a different order of maturity. If the strictly physiological and psychological basis of male suffrage is placed at twenty-one, female suffrage should be placed at eighteen. If man should be allowed to vote on the first appearance of a mustache, some woman would doubtless demand the same privilege.

Male and female created He them; what God has made different man strives in vain to make identical.



GLIMPSES OF BRAZIL



By R. W. MERGUSON

BRAZIL occupies about one-half the land area of South America. It is larger than the United States without Alaska and is the third largest country in the world, Russia and China alone being larger. Most of its land lies in the southern hemisphere. So vast is its territory, so dense its thousands of leagues of tropical forests, and so inadequate are its transportation facilities, that it remains today the one country about which least is known. The upper Amazon basin, in the states of Amazonas and Matto Grosso, states larger than empires, has hardly as yet been trod by the foot of civilized man. All the countries of Europe, except Russia, could be placed within its borders and still there would be sufficient territory left to accommodate a portion of the United States.

From the Guianas on the north to the Republic of Uruguay on the south is a distance of nearly four thousand miles. Practically all of South America lies east of North America. Should one travel directly south from Chicago and continue his journey as far south as the latitude of Rio Janeiro, the capital of Brazil, he would be in the Pacific Ocean a thousand miles from the west coast of South America and Rio Janeiro would be two thousand five hundred miles east.

With its territory covering forty degrees of latitude, Brazil enjoys several varieties of climate. The general yet erroneous opinion is that as a whole it has only a tropical climate. This is not so. Near the equator and up the Amazon Valley the climate is oppressive, rainfall