

## SUFFRAGE

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THE fundamental law of the United States and of each individual State, is based upon the principle, that man has certain inalienable rights; the "right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;" the last including the rights of property and conscience. These rights are common to every citizen, of whatever sex—not to the male sex solely.

The laws enacted by the people through the power delegated to their agents, the legislature, are intended to define, regulate and protect each citizen of both sexes in the enjoyment of their rights; and if the laws are not in harmony with the Constitution they are null and void. What is the theory of the ballot? It is the power which the citizen possesses of enacting the laws and expressing his preference as to the agent who shall execute them. Men value this right of suffrage, and justly so, as it is their safeguard under the Constitution against tyranny. If the right of suffrage is so valuable to man, why is it not equally valuable to woman? Has she not the same rights to be protected? is she not subject to the same laws, and are not her rights as dear to her as the rights of man are to him? Is it not reasonable that she should desire the privilege of expressing her choice through the ballot-box as to the laws and those who are to execute them? Even if she does not express the wish to vote, ought she not to have the right to protect her rights? There can be but one reply to these questions. There are no reasons why man should vote which do not equally apply to woman. The law of custom, prejudice, is the only objection which can be raised against suffrage to woman. The power of prejudice must sooner or later yield to the force of reason, the voice of conscience and the law of justice. Men may not admit women into competition with themselves in the various occupations of society, may deny their intellectual and physical ability, but they cannot deny that under the Constitution of our free government they are citizens, and as such ought to be allowed the right of suffrage.