WHERE IS THE WOMAN'S PLACE?

In my travels through America as I knock on doors of farms, or town houses the housewife has often said when she heard who I was, "Oh, I don't know much about any of that you had better go and see Tom or Jack" as the case may be.

In the eyes of the law women take equal place and as people with feelings and emotions common to every person, the enjoyment of the good things of life in this country is as important to the Government as is the happiness of any other individual.

In the old days when Governments were concerned more with foreign policy defence and maintenance of justice than with the happiness of each individual there was neither the opportunity nor the scope for the active participation of women in public affairs.

We have gone along way since the 15th century. Manual of Chivalry prescribed this treatment for a scolding wife. "He smote her with his fist down to the earth and then with his foot he smote her in the visage and broke her nose." John Stuart Mill a reformer of last century and Florence Nightingale were two of the earliest and most influential advocates of the position that women hold today. Many of you will remember the struggles of the suffragets in England in the years before and after the first great war. Struggles which ended in success and the vote for women only in 1928. Australian women were granted this right many years earlier in 1902.

When the Government Administration affects nearly every aspect of life it is not hard to find spheres in which women's advice is not only desirable but necessary if the most efficient job is to be done. In many matters affecting the happiness of women and families the knowledge and experience of women must be given great importance. But it is not only in the domestic sphere that women are capable of taking an active part. Madame Pandit Nehru has been elected president of the U. N. General Council Assembly, the first women in the world to preside over an Assembly of 60 nations. However we do have to go so far afield to find the pre-eminent example. Our own Queen Elizabeth II, by her grace and charm and sympathy has won the deep and lasting affection of everyone of us. In this second Elizabethan age it is a fitting sign that the most important person in this British Empire and Commonwealth of Nations is a woman.

In these days of drastic changes and of extreme creeds the choice of its government is possibly the most important part that each person, man and woman accomplish together. The vote is not to be cast lightly on one side or another. We must remember the growth of our democratic system. The struggles and sufferings that our English men and women went to achieve the passage of the first great reform bill in 1832, and which continued, to culminate in the "First Bill of the Gladstonian liberals (in 1884) which granted the vote to every man over 21.

In Australia men and women over 21 have had the vote longer than people in most other countries. Each one of us, every man and every woman must think and give his or her judgement carefully. The future of Australia, the development of our resources the creation of more prosperous homes for happy Australians, these are the things we want, that we may be strong and united in defence of our own people. Women as well as men have their equal part in this country, they have their equal shares of happiness and prosperity, the choice too must be equally theirs.
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