

of hundreds of years of continuous agitation. In our own country the colonists, having left their homes for the sake of freedom and equality, based their earliest attempts at self-government upon the right of suffrage. As free men they believed that they had equal rights, and, furthermore, that they were in duty bound to exercise these rights. In spite of prime ministers, parliaments and kings they insisted on the privilege of ruling themselves through the ballot and finally, by force of arms, established the principle that every just government receives its authority from the governed. During the formation of our national constitution the right of suffrage and the duty, yea, the necessity of exercising this right, were not only the foundation upon which these master builders rested their work, but also the instrument with which other men were to build.

Many things have contributed to our success as a nation, but none has been more powerful than the right of the people to share directly in the government. Whatever success has been obtained has been largely due to the right of suffrage. Whatever success we hope to attain, whether we shall go on in national power and glory, or whether we, too, like other nations shall fall from the position which we now hold, depends to a great extent upon the use we make of the ballot. Although we prize our liberty and national honor, although we love our country, justly esteeming it one of the greatest, we fail to estimate at its true value one of the chief factors of our greatness. Seldom do we recall that the right which we enjoy is the result of centuries of intense effort; that for the ballot our ancestors gave their time, their money and their lives.

At the age of twenty-one a new world opens before every American youth. Then for the first time he has political rights and duties, and the nation looks to him for support. He becomes a living, active part of the body politic and, grasping the reins of government, he makes his influence a power for good or evil. By his vote he is made joint ruler over a nation of millions, and the most powerful magistrate of the world is his brother, citizen and agent. Through the influence of that insignificant yet irresistible force political