



Suffrage in Ednah Dow Cheney (1824-1904)

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A leader in the Women's Rights movement Ednah Dow Cheney first formed her philosophical principles about women in letters written at age 13 to Caroline Wells Healey (Dall), their differing philosophies to be sustained throughout their lives. Cheney believed that men and women were by human nature equal, and so should have equal rights. She argued, "Let them not lead you to the altar of matrimony, until you are allowed your full political rights" even though it require civil disobedience. Although women are "deprived of our rights and liberties," we "have as good a right to rule men as they have to rule us." In one lecture Cheney defined woman as "immortal soul," the Divinity recognizing the "philosophic Trinity, the One, the All, the two through which unity acts, and the resulting third which is the Spirit of Life." The "eternally womanly" in God, God "our Father and Mother" means "great fact of his moral life" is man's relation to woman." But the fact is that neither the right to vote nor the privileges of religion nor professional work are extended to women. The medical profession does not give "women students of medicine any opportunity to see their work done." Women physicians and nurses are not hired, nor are unmarried midwives to look after maternity patients. Cheney argued to extend the need for white women in medicine to African American women. So, the rights of women to suffrage and to work in honorable professions have unbalanced the eternal mandate for equality, and if the balance is not restored, civilization "will fall" so adjusted. The problem of the age, womanhood, must relate to these "eternal principles." For, "the scale has dipped pretty heavily on one side," yet "the eternally feminine must lead as well as the eternally male."

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