

## What Women Have Done with the Vote

By Carrie Chapman Catt

**F**IVE years ago, on August 26, 1920, the vote was extended to the women of the entire United States by Federal constitutional amendment. At the fifth anniversary of the completed campaign, men and women ask: What of it? What good has it done? What change has it made? Has it been worth while? There is an indirect and a direct reply to these questions which combined can alone give the correct answer.

The indirect reply is this. Although hundreds of doubts and objections were voiced by the opposition to woman suffrage, there were only two real causes for the hesitation and hostility to granting women the vote: one, "the superiority of the male complex;" the other, "the inferiority of the female complex." The first led to a terrific resistance in which vested interests, politicians, and extreme conservatives united to counter every forward move of the suffragists and that, too, with the expenditure of vast sums of money. The second led to an entirely separate yet cooperating opposition of the women antisuffragists. It was certain that these two complexes would persist after the grant of the vote and that nothing but death and time could remove them. Suffrage leaders made this prediction long before the end, and it has been satisfying to discover no incident which has not fitted into this prediction. Now and then a writer, man or woman, issues an article which, in fiery and resentful tones, condemns women voters; but both the writer and the magazine that has published it were antis "befo' de wah" and are merely betraying symptoms of painful adjustment to the new order. Such pronouncements may disturb the mental composure of uninformed readers, but they are received by experienced suffragists in much the spirit with which the astronomer greets a comet whose coming he has predicted and, similarly, they know that it will pass.

For a hundred and forty years political organization had been in the process of building and had become pretty thoroughly fixed by 1920. Democracy within the party, always struggling for expression, had never been really achieved. Nominations at conventions had a way of being made in hotel bedrooms, and platforms of being written by a few and carried with a whoopla by a tired, perspiring

convention that did not clearly hear a single sentence. Leaders of election districts, county, State, and national committees, were expected to do most of the thinking and acting. In consequence, these

leaders frequently imagined the mantle of "the divine right of kings" had fallen upon them. It was into this incomplete developing experiment of self-government, in some senses quite fixed, that the woman voter entered.

A bride going into her mother-in-law's house has small chance of

keeping it in her way. A new member in the church isn't invited to pass the contribution box the first Sunday. And the rule applied when women came into politics. They were lavishly welcomed by both dominant parties, each expecting to draw a good majority of the new women voters. Behind the smiles lurked the old complex which watched with suspicion. The political leaders suffered a double-barreled variety of complex. They knew themselves superior to the average male voter by about 100 per cent and superior to the new female voter by about 250 per cent. Their complex has been shocked rather often by women voters who, while engaged loyally in their party duties, have questioned the method or the wisdom of the process. It was then the women's turn to be surprised for discipline with a heavy hand was speedily laid upon them.

**O**NE common cause of female insurrection is the primary. It interferes with the divine right of bosses, and they do not like it. For example: In a certain city a primary election was at hand, and the election of leaders and co-leaders, as they are called in some States, was to precede the primary. In four election districts precisely the same thing happened: The co-leader had been a hard-working, devoted partisan, but she had shown a tendency to think for herself. The man leader, having made sure of his own election, decided to discipline his too freethinking co-worker by having her "thrown out." In each case the name of the successor was whispered about. The man leader, getting his orders from higher up, without calling his members together, suddenly announced that the regular machine would support a certain candidate for high office in the primary. This ultimatum was

At the fifth anniversary of the completed campaign for equal suffrage, Mrs. Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, sums up the achievements of the suffragists. No one is better qualified for the task than Mrs. Catt, who has lectured in nearly every State and conducted successful campaigns for suffrage all over the country