

Grover Cleveland's Defense of True Womanhood, 1905

Woman's Clubs Not Only Harmful, But a Menace

I am persuaded that without exaggeration of statement we may assume that there are woman's clubs whose objects and intents are not only harmful, but harmful in a way that directly menaces the integrity of our homes and the benign disposition and character of our wifehood and motherhood; . . . I believe that it should be boldly declared that the best and safest club for a woman to patronize is her home. American wives and American mothers, as surely as "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world," have, through their nurture of children and their influence over men, the destinies of our Nation in their keeping to a greater extent than any other single agency. It is surely not soft-hearted sentimentalism which insists that, in a country where the people rule, a decisive share in securing the perpetuity of its institutions falls upon the mothers who devote themselves to teaching their children who are to become rulers, lessons of morality and patriotism and disinterested citizenship. Such thoughts suggest how supremely great is the stake of our country in woman's unperverted steadfastness, and enjoin the necessity of its protection against all risks and all temptations.

The Real Path of True Womanhood

I am in favor of according to women the utmost social enjoyment; and I am profoundly thankful that this, in generous and sufficient measure, is within their reach without encountering the temptations or untoward influences so often found in the surroundings of woman's clubs.

For the sake of our country, for the sake of our homes, and for the sake of our children, I would have our wives and mothers loving and devoted, though all others may be sordid and heedless; I would have them disinterested and trusting, though all others may be selfish and cunning; I would have them happy and contented in following the Divinely appointed path of true womanhood, though all others may grope in the darkness of their own devices.

Grover Cleveland, "Woman's Mission and Woman's Clubs," *Ladies Home Journal*, Vol. 22 (May, 1905).