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# WOMAN SUFFRAGE

## The Growth of Civilization.

AN ARGUMENT

DELIVERED MAY 14, 1874, IN THE MASSACHUSETTS SENATE,

BY

Hon. Henry S. Washburn.

Mr. PRESIDENT.—The question under consideration has been the subject of prolonged debate at former sittings of the Legislature, especially in the House; and while it has not received in either branch the required support, the vote in its favor has steadily increased. The matter has been presented by a body of earnest men and women, who, assured of the righteousness of their cause, have worked on, regardless of opposition, confident that their efforts would be ultimately crowned with success. It cannot be denied that a radical change has taken place in respect to the status of Woman within the past generation, not only in regard to the ownership and disposition of property, but especially in respect to her connection with the Reformatory, Educational and Benevolent organizations of the day. Time was, and that within the memory of most who hear me, when she was rarely seen in public, except upon the boards of a theater, when she had no voice and took no active part in matters of public concernment. Now, we find her everywhere where good deeds are to be performed; in the pulpit and upon the forum; a manager and director of Reformatory and Benevolent Institutions; teachers in public and private schools, and outnumbering males as such, in this profession as ten to one; engaged in business pursuits, and the possessor of property acquired among the marts of men; in a word, ready and foremost to spring to the call of want and suffering, bringing ever to her task, whatever it may be, that force and ability which are a certain guarantee of success. Now all this change, we, in our individual lives have witnessed. It is a fair question, Is the world happier and better for it? Could we desire to have undone what has thus been accomplished, and restrict Woman to the sphere she formerly occupied? Whatever answer we may make to these questions, it is evident that she feels what has been done in her behalf, is only introductory to a fuller recognition of her claims to an equality before the law, and to the part she is fitted, and should be permitted to perform in the Government, under which we live equally with the other sex. It is for this reason that she appears before us to-day with a proposition that the Constitution may be amended so that the limitation of sex shall no longer exist; and that she shall, if she desires, have a voice and vote in the management of public affairs. The question is a simple one, and yet it contemplates changes involving the dearest and most sacred interests of society.

I shall not enter upon an argument to show that women are as capable as men to exercise the elective franchise. Very much has been said upon this matter, and Senators are well acquainted with the arguments bearing upon the case. When we speak of the equality of the sexes, we employ a very vague and indefinite term. The members of the great human family are, irrespective of sex, equal; and yet they are wholly unequal; alike, and yet entire-

ly unlike, morally, intellectually, and physically. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." It is not good, said the great Creator, that man should live alone, and so he made woman the companion of man: not his inferior, or slave, but his companion and helpmeet in the toils and struggles, the joys and sorrows of life. It is not possible to separate or divide their interests. What is necessary for the welfare and happiness of the one, is equally so for the other. A man and woman, mutually pledging their love to each other, start out upon the journey of life, to share a common lot till separated by death. They have before them, and before the children that may be the result of their union, no separate or divided interests. The joy of one is the joy of both; and the sorrow of one is alike the grief of the other. They are equal, and yet unequal; alike, and yet unlike: each dependent the one upon the other for their mutual welfare and happiness. He whom we are accustomed to regard as the stronger, is often the weaker of the two; such is the fact in innumerable instances. Is there a matter of public regard, that can, or should concern the one more than the other? Is not her happiness, equally with his, dependent upon the general welfare, good order, and prosperity of society? Why then should she be silent in regard thereto? Why should not her vote and voice be felt in ordering and directing public affairs? Is it said she degrades and unsexes herself thereby? Where is the proof for this? We have said great changes have transpired within the past generation, and that Woman to-day is taking a part in matters of public concern, as never before. Is she less pure and womanly than formerly? Has her presence before the public, as an active participant in the Reformatory, Benevolent and Educational interests of the hour rendered her less lovely, less the companion and helpmeet of man? No; rather is not the reverse true? Has not the atmosphere been purified by her presence? Instead of lessening her own, has she not exalted the character and dignity of the other sex? These questions are susceptible of satisfactory answers, in whatever light and to whatever extent they may be carried.

I was strikingly impressed with an illustration upon this very point during a hearing, this session, before the Committee on Education, in which testimony was given in regard to the Medical Institution in this city, connected with the Boston University, which is open to both sexes. To an inquiry as to the practical working of the Institution, where both sexes were present at surgical operations and post mortem examinations, the answer given by one of the professors was, that he had never known the tone of an operating and dissecting room of any medical institute so elevated and unexceptionable as that had been; in which, in so marked a degree, there

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had been an absence of whatever had the semblance of immodesty and vulgarity. Recognizing that they were students of medical science and practice, and that their duty was to know and understand the wonderful mechanism of the human frame, they came to the task assigned to them with no debasing feelings or sentiments. Upon this point, so often the subject of unjust and unwarranted criticism, the evidence was most conclusive and satisfactory. Will her presence be less refining and elevating in other professions and pursuits of life? Will she not elevate by her presence the caucus or ward room? Has her presence and influence elsewhere been such as to warrant a conclusion that there it will be detrimental to order, to decency, to good behavior? Is not the opposite the more rational conclusion? The caucus, Mr. President, how sadly does that need reformation, both in numbers and quality. Here, just here, is the root of the evil, the fountain from which issues the streams that so pollute the body politic. We shall never discharge our duty as freemen, or properly protect our institutions as a people, till we make it our imperative duty to attend the primary meetings of our political organizations. Until that duty is recognized and acted upon, in vain shall we expect wise and competent legislators, or any just laws and ordinances for the government of society. Mayor Havemeyer, of New York, in a recent speech upon this matter, said:

"I warn the commercial and capitalist classes that they cannot hold the unrivaled advantages which our city naturally possesses for profitable enterprise, as if they were given of God without conditions which attach to every work of his hand. I warn this community that a people, among whom it is a fashionable boast with those who claim a superiority over their fellows, that they have nothing to do with public affairs; that they take no interest in legislation, in administration, in the conduct of judicial tribunals, and the great instrumentalities whereby human government is carried on, cannot long have material prosperity. The parties entrusted to perform the great functions of legislation are, in many cases, persons in whom they would repose no confidence in any matter personal to themselves, where honesty or efficiency was expected. And until a deeper interest in public affairs is manifested by those who have a large stake in this community than has hitherto prevailed, nothing but extravagance, dishonesty and corruption, will continue to disgrace their administration. Men cannot long reap the benefits, without bearing the burdens of human society. It is liberty, it is a popular government which is the ultimate source of all our success in industry and trade. But popular government requires the watchful, patient, patriotic, self-sacrificing care and guardianship of all citizens, and it is a peculiar duty of those who gain and appropriate to themselves the largest pecuniary result of our free institutions, to fulfill these obligations of citizenship, to watch and work, as well as pray and resolve, without which, their own wealth will soon turn into ashes in their grasp."

There is great force and wisdom in these utterances, and they commend themselves to the earnest consideration of all who wish well for the government under which we live. Should the Amendment to the Constitution take place, then women may, and will, participate in these primary political meetings, and what may we anticipate as the result? Will it not be a large increase of attendance on the part of the men, and a purification of the atmosphere to an extent never before enjoyed in them? If women are there, the men will be sure to come, as a matter of course; and what is required next to character in these meetings is numbers; not the few, but the many; not half a dozen to cut and carve out the political future of a ward or a town, the

county or state, but the people, the masses, who are responsible for the general good and welfare. Such, it is believed, would be the result of the introduction of women into the primary meetings of political bodies.

The Hon. Amasa Walker, a retired merchant and veteran politician, yet in the enjoyment of a vigorous old age, relates that previous to 1828 the women of New England rarely, if ever, attended literary or scientific lectures. They seldom appeared in public assemblies unless of a religious character. In 1828 a meeting was held in the vestry of Dr. Lyman Beecher's meeting-house, on Hanover St., Boston, to devise some means to counteract the evil effects of the theater. Mr. Walker, then a young man, with several other gentlemen, proposed a course of popular lectures and discussions upon literary and scientific subjects, to be known as "The Boston Lyceum." After listening to the proposition, Dr. Beecher rose and said that this project of a popular Lyceum reminded him of a very ingenious machine which had been constructed by one of his neighbors in Litchfield, Ct. "It was a beautiful machine, a complicated machine, its object was grand, nothing short of perpetual motion. It lacked only one thing, it wouldn't go. And that," said Dr. Beecher, "is the trouble with your proposed lyceum, it won't go." Mr. Walker, full of enthusiasm, replied, "Dr. Beecher has lost sight of the new motive power upon which we rely to make our lyceum go—it is *feminine influence*. We propose not only to invite our young men to attend the Lyceum themselves, but to bring the ladies with them," and it was finally decided, after some hesitation, to try the experiment. Up to this time, Mr. Walker tells us, a public lecture was a difficult and dreary affair; great efforts had to be made to bring out even a small audience; and then a thin array of black coats was the cold and chilling response. The effect of the Lyceum as a social institution for ladies and gentlemen, was magical. The largest hall in Boston, holding 2000 people, was insufficient, and it was often necessary to repeat the performance on a subsequent night; and this interest continued for many years unabated. In 1830, in the Boston Lyceum, a debate took place, "Should women have equal political rights with men?" Mr. Walker and two other gentlemen took the affirmative. Mr. Bigelow, afterwards Judge Bigelow, and several others the negative. After the debate a vote was taken, and Mr. Walker alone, out of an audience of nearly two thousand, voted in the affirmative. Of course the very idea of a woman speaking in public would then have been treated with derision.

Women first appeared in public, as speakers, on the anti-slavery platforms. They were denounced as Jezebels, even from the pulpits, yet no speakers aroused so much interest, or made so many converts in the early history of the anti-slavery contest. The Whigs, in 1840, made the first move to introduce women into politics. In the "Tippecanoe and Tyler" campaign, ladies were invited, and attended the Whig meetings in great numbers. They were not, I believe, invited to attend the Democratic meetings. The inspiration of their presence, with songs, &c., was the distinguishing characteristic of that successful campaign. The present Republican party from the start adopted similar tactics. The first campaign was for

John and Jessie; and Jessie Fremont won thousands of votes for her distinguished husband. The changes, which have transpired within the past thirty years with respect to women, are seen in the fact that a large number of women are now practising medicine; twenty or more are pastors of religious societies; and several are practicing law in various parts of the country. Seventy-six colleges admit women on the same terms as men; including the State Universities of Vermont, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, and California; as do also Oberlin, Otterbein and Antioch Colleges in Ohio, Asbury College in Indiana, the Wesleyan University at Middletown, Ct, Boston University, Colby and Bates Colleges in Maine, and most of the Agricultural Colleges throughout the country. Cornell University in New York, and Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania have also opened their doors to women. Women, as members of churches, now vote in the Baptist, Methodist, Quaker, Universalist, Unitarian, and very generally in the Orthodox Congregational churches.

In almost every Northern State the marriage laws have been so amended, that wives control their own persons, property and earnings. In Kansas, husbands and wives are equally guardians of their children. In Illinois and Iowa, the individuality and separate personality of the wife have been fully established by a radical amendment of the law for married women, within two years. In both these States, women married and single, are acting as County Superintendents of schools, with power to appoint and remove teachers, to hold Teachers' Institutes and prescribe the regulations of schools, qualifications of teachers, &c. In Maine, women are serving as Justices of the Peace, as well as on School Boards, &c. In Pennsylvania, women have been especially empowered to fill all educational offices. In Mississippi and Kansas, no liquor licenses can be obtained, except upon the written petition of a majority of the male and female adult citizens of the town. [This is Woman Suffrage on the liquor question.] In Wyoming, Woman Suffrage is pronounced by Governor Campbell, in his late message to the Legislature, "after four years' trial, an unqualified success." Chief Justice Howe and United States Justice Kingman testify to its beneficial results, and to the good results of women on the juries. In Rhode Island, this winter, the House voted to submit a Woman Suffrage constitutional amendment, by 44 to 17. It was, however, defeated in the Senate. In Ohio the Constitutional Convention voted in favor of submitting a Woman Suffrage Amendment, 49 to 41; but as it required a majority of the whole number of members, it lacked 4 votes of the 53 which would have submitted it. In Iowa both branches of the Legislature have this winter voted to submit the question to the people. In the House, the vote stood for Woman Suffrage 56 against 38. In the Senate, for Woman Suffrage 27 against 21. Two years ago, both branches of the Iowa Legislature voted for Suffrage. Last year the House voted for it, but it failed in the Senate by one vote. Thus it came within one vote of going to the people last year, as it requires there the majority of two successive Legislatures. In Michigan, the Legislature, by a vote of both branches, at a special session called to

review and act upon the recommendations of a Constitutional Convention, have submitted Woman Suffrage to the people; and it will be voted upon next November. An active canvass has already begun there.

The question of Woman Suffrage has been under discussion during the past winter in the Legislatures of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, S. Carolina, California, Oregon, Washington Territory, District of Columbia. In the States named, excepting Kentucky, there are Associations actively engaged in circulating tracts and newspapers, and employing speakers. In England, women vote on the same terms as men in all town, parochial and municipal elections; and it is believed the present Parliament will give them Suffrage for members of Parliament, the only step which remains to be taken, Gladstone and Disraeli both being favorable thereto. In Holland, women vote on the same property qualifications as men. In 1870, a Woman Suffrage resolution failed of acceptance in the Republican State Convention of Massachusetts by only fifty-six votes out of nearly one thousand. In 1871 the Republican State Convention of Massachusetts recommended Woman Suffrage "to careful and respectful consideration." In 1872 Woman Suffrage was made a Republican issue in Massachusetts.

The "National Republican Platform adopted at Philadelphia, June 9, 1872," declares as follows:

"14. The Republican party is mindful of its obligations to the loyal women of America for their noble devotion to the cause of freedom; their admission to wider fields of usefulness is viewed with satisfaction; and the honest demands of any class of citizens for additional rights should be treated with respectful consideration."

The Massachusetts Republican platform adopted at Worcester, August 28, 1872, contains the following:

"8. Resolved, That we heartily approve of the recognition of the Rights of Women, contained in the fourteenth clause of the National Republican Platform; that the Republican party of Massachusetts, as the representative of liberty and progress, is in favor of extending Suffrage on equal terms to all American citizens irrespective of sex, and will hail the day when the educated intellect and enlightened conscience of Woman will find direct expression at the ballot-box.

It will be seen, Mr. President, that the Republican party is clearly committed to Woman Suffrage.

We have given this summary of the movements of the advocates for an extension of the rights of women, to show that the feeling is wide-spread and almost universal, and is confined to no particular State or locality of the Union.

The spontaneity of these movements indicates the readiness of the people, or at least many of them, to entertain at the polls the question at issue, and for which the advocates of Impartial Suffrage have so long contended. It is said that the rights, for which the petitioners ask, are not desired as a body, by the women of the State. However this may be, it is certain that the petitioners before us outnumber the remonstrants as six to one. Moreover, nearly all the women in Massachusetts, distinguished in literature, reform and philanthropy, are in favor of Woman Suffrage. And this is true of representative women the country over. To the objection against Wo-

man Suffrage, often urged, that only the least intelligent and respectable of the women of the State would exercise the elective franchise, were it granted, it may be sufficient to say, the result would probably show that the proportions of those who would vote would be about the same as it now is with the other sex. There is nothing whatever compulsory about the matter. Men vote or not as they please. A far greater number than we imagine habitually stay away from the polls, or but seldom go to them. There are undoubtedly bad women as well as bad men. But the preponderance of women is in favor of the good over the vicious; and the majority of the votes of women would be unquestionably in favor of law and order, of justice and humanity.

The petitioners at the hearing before the Committee dwelt with much force upon the propositions that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; that taxation without representation is unjust and tyrannical. These self-evident truths are accepted as fundamental principles in a Republican government, the very foundation stones of the structure itself. Why, in their application, a discrimination should be made in behalf of a portion of the people, is a question in casuistry more easily asked than answered.

I have referred, Mr. President, in these remarks, to the changes, wrought in the condition and work of the women of this country, within the past generation. We may, and probably shall, differ in judgment upon the question before us, but we shall not differ in our estimate of the deeds women have performed in a collective capacity, deeds fraught in innumerable instances, with inestimable blessings to mankind. With an intuitive perception of the right, they have come to the rescue in matters deeply affecting the public welfare, and we have willingly bowed to their almost invincible power, as we have witnessed the accomplishment of their purposes. The proudest historical monument of the State, the shaft on Bunker Hill, owes its completion, if not its conception, to women. I well remember how, for many years after its corner-stone was laid with so much of pomp and show by Lafayette, it remained unfinished, but a few feet above the ground, a sorry comment upon the patriotism of the people; till finally the women of the State took the work in hand, and the monument was soon completed. Their efforts in rescuing from neglect and decay the tomb and ancestral estates of Washington, are familiar to you all; and in our late dreadful civil strife how grandly did they do their part! Passing by numerous instances of heroic achievements in behalf of the fallen and the oppressed, within the last one and two decades, how at this moment are all eyes turned upon the work Woman is performing in her renowned crusade against the liquor traffic. We may regard that work as we please; we may call it visionary, spasmodic, evanescent, the enthusiasm of an hour, which is sure speedily to come to an end; but it is a mighty movement, nevertheless, and fraught with unspeakable blessings to the people. It has its origin in a long suppressed sense of wrong and shame, endured by thousands, I had almost said millions of women, who have realized the enormity of the evil, in abuse and suffering, of which we have but the faintest conception.

We see it, as it shows its vile head in the street and in our penal institutions, and we feel the enormous burden of taxation it creates. She sees it in the garret, in the cellar, in want and starvation, in the night, alone with the beast and demon, in his most revolting and horrid forms. She may have no right to vote: but she has the right to pray, to implore in God's name the vendors of this cause of so much ruin and death, to desist from their iniquity. It may be but a wave, sweeping over the land, whose effects will be visible only for the hour; but it will purify, as it passes, many a den of infamy; it will kindle a light of gladness in many a hovel of want and woe, and cause the hearts of many long abused and suffering women and neglected children to sing for joy.

One of our finest writers has said, "While we may not be able to keep long the heights we are capable of attaining, we are nevertheless the better for even the brief exaltation." And so we shall view hereafter the Woman's Crusade in the Temperance Reformation. Give to the women of the land the power to vote, and I greatly mistake, with their intuitive perception of right and wrong, if they do not speedily settle questions pertaining to the liquor traffic, which have thus far defied the power of our Legislatures to comprehend and adjust. With these evidences of the good accomplished by Woman, multiplying on every hand, in all she has undertaken of a public nature, is it reasonable to withhold from her any longer the simple right to declare her wishes, by her vote, for whatever in her judgment pertains to her own and the public welfare? May we not safely trust the ballot in her hands? Can any wrong come to her, or to the State, by this exercise of Suffrage? At any rate, may we not safely submit the question to the people of the Commonwealth? This is all we are asked to do by the resolve under consideration. I have unquestioning faith in the people. The matter may be safely left to their verdict. Should the question submitted to them be decided against the petitioners, they will accept the result as good and loyal citizens, hoping for the better time which they feel will come in the future.

This is the first time, Mr. President, that I have spoken in public in favor of Woman Suffrage. While I have not been recognized as a champion of what is known as the Woman's Rights Movement, I have, since I have been honored with a seat in the Legislature, voted on three successive occasions for a resolve similar to that before us. I could not do less, and satisfy my sense of the justice of her claims to be heard in this matter. I shall give my vote again in the same direction, assured that I shall have no cause hereafter to regret my action.

As a State, it has been our pride and glory that Massachusetts has not been in the rear, but in the van of public sentiment, in all that has pertained to liberty and human rights. Whenever she has spoken her voice has been potent in the councils of the nation. She has given heretofore no uncertain response to the appeal of the oppressed, nor will she in the future. This cause of Impartial Suffrage, and the Equality of the sexes before the law, will continue to be agitated till whatever is wrong shall be made right, and Freedom shall in deed and in truth govern the councils and destinies of the Commonwealth.

Woman's Journal Office, 3 Tremont Place, Boston.