

With the return of the usual anniversary season for most of the State Equal Suffrage Organizations that hold themselves auxiliary to the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Oregon wheels into line with a better equipped service, more courage and a more thoroughly united force of co-workers than at any time previous since our eventful repulse in the constitutional amendment campaign of 1884.

While our work of organizing the state by precincts has not yet been commenced, the county work has progressed as rapidly during the year as the excitement attendant upon a complex campaign in national politics has permitted. Many of our strongest allies, because of the fact that they are strong women, became so imbued with what seemed to them the vital emergency of the times that it was deemed advisable for the state organization to hold itself strictly aloof from all partisan issues, that we might be the better prepared to present a united front to the public after the storm should have subsided. While, with all our care, it was not possible to prevent some bitterness, especially with those partisans who found the issues for which they contended had been left behind on election day, and the consequent, and we hope temporary, disgruntlement of some of the best and most valued friends of the equal suffrage cause, the president believes that after all, much general good has been accomplished by partisanship of women, since, through it women have become open and avowed equal suffragists who, but for the political current with which they have been moving, would still be hugging the threadbare delusion that "they do not want to vote"—a phantasy that always provokes derision among men who see through the folly of their position and the thin veneer of the ridiculous assertions which their example denies. And yet, such is the perverse mental obliquity of the average voter of today, that we are sometimes compelled to doubt the wisdom of even this very catchy method of opening the eyes of the adversary, since every party that is beaten at any election in which women have taken part, is prone to use the fact that many women would have voted against its theories if allowed to vote, as a pretext for withholding the ballot from women altogether.

But it is worthy of note, also, that of the many prominent men of all parties who took sides in the late political contest, almost every one, and certainly all the wiser and more respected leaders, were open and avowed advocates of our cause, a spectacle we have never before witnessed since the leaders of opposing partisan factions, imagining they were fighting prohibition, made common cause against our enfranchisement in Washington in 1886 and 1887, and wrested the ballot from one half of her people.

A healthy and hopeful growth of public sentiment in favor of our proposed constitutional amendment, to enfranchise women, is reported from the counties of Baker, Benton, Clatsop, Clackamas, Coos, Crook, Douglas, Grant, Gilliam, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Lincoln, Lake, Multnomah, Marion, Polk, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wasco, Washington, Willamette and Yamhill, each of which contains a number of the association's prominent co-workers who are only waiting for the anticipated favorable vote of the incoming legislature, ratifying the action of its immediate predecessor, to give them a specific rallying point.

The time for concerted, organized action in agitating our right to a voice in the government which we are taxed to maintain, and to whose laws we are held amenable, has become, by common consent, a period wherein a constitutional amendment has passed, or is in progress of passing through a state legislature. An amendment once legally submitted to the voters for final action, is properly placed before the public for discussion, adoption or rejection. Just as a question must be moved by one member, and seconded by another before it is properly placed before a parliamentary body for final action, an amendment to our state constitution must be moved, or "proposed" by one legislative assembly and moved by the next one before it reaches the voters for their consideration, adoption or rejection.

The very large vote given by our last legislative assembly on the proposition to so amend the state constitution that the women of Oregon may, in common with those of Wyoming, Colorado and Utah, enjoy the full equality of rights before the law which it is the avowed, though long deferred purpose of the government of these United States to establish, inspires the women of this state with the belief and hope that the incoming legislature will be glad to ratify the just and chivalrous act of its immediate predecessor.

The most notable and distinctive work we have to chronicle for Oregon during the past year has been The Woman's Congress, which last June held three sessions daily for three consecutive days in Portland, and the Chautauqua assemblies of the Willamette and Rogue river valleys, which meet annually in July. Although these associations were not convened in the interest of any particular idea or propaganda, it was noticeable that the equal suffrage movement received much more favorable consideration than any other single issue that came up for discussion at any session.

To Mrs. Mary Schaffer Ward, the very able and untiring recording secretary of the equal suffrage association, was delegated the responsible position of keeper, this year, of the suffrage headquarters at Gladstone Park, the headquarters of the Willamette Valley Chautauqua Assembly, where we had a commodious tent, held numerous receptions and secured the signatures of many hundreds of friends who are ready to co-operate with us as occasion may grant them opportunity.

No one knows better than the president that, but for the untiring faithfulness and business ability of the society's Executive Board and its various committees, it would have been impossible to accomplish the work of the year. Each of these earnest women, no matter in what department her efforts extended, merits the sincerest regard of every patriot. But to Frances E. Gotshall, publisher of THE PACIFIC EMPIRE, the association is especially indebted for her untiring devotion to the cause. It is the duty of every friend of the cause to assist her in carrying her financial burdens, to sustain the paper, and it is hoped that at this anniversary some action will be taken in this direction.

The engagement of Susan B. Anthony at The Woman's Congress, and of Rev. Anna Shaw at the Willamette Valley Chautauqua, together with social efforts to do honor to these distinguished visitors by all organized bodies of women, was as significant as it was encouraging.

The attitude of the respectable press has been uniformly considerate and kind. Full and complete notices have been accorded to everything of public importance connected with our work, for all of which we are duly grateful.

The pulpit has been another and a powerful factor in the dissemination of our principles. The pastors of almost all of our popular churches, aided by many of their most substantial supporters, have lent us their valuable assistance whenever invited, and some have kindly volunteered to assist us in emergencies.

The most distinguished members of the Bench and Bar are also, in the main quite friendly to our movement. Their arguments in favor of our cause are legal, scholarly, logical and unanswerable. It is noticeable, also, that the desire of our popular judges of all degrees has been to allow woman the fullest leniency of the laws within the pale of their power. And,

while it is possible that a jurist may err sometimes in his decisions, because of the manifest inequalities of the laws toward women who are taxed without representation and governed without consent, yet it is, under the circumstances, a satisfaction to note that if errors are committed they are, far more frequently than in former years, made upon the side of mercy. While in a strictly just government, no favoritism toward sex could be tolerated, it is manifestly impossible for the best men to hold a defenseless class to the same strict rulings to which they hold the makers of the laws.

In coming years, when women are also no pretexts for favoritism in any case on account of sex, because both the sexes will be equally represented by its own gender.

Outside of Oregon our cause has made great progress in many parts of the Union. In the state of Washington, where the women voters were disfranchised in 1887, by a political coup d'etat, of which its abettors of all parties will yet confess themselves ashamed, we have the assurance from what we believe to be well qualified sources of information, that the supreme court could not during the year, have done otherwise than reverse the infamous decision under which Chief Justice Jones legalized the robbery of the women's ballots if their case had not been indefinitely postponed through the oversight of an attorney who permitted some sort of a technicality, that might have been prevented, to intervene and stay the wheels of progress for a season.

We have the cheering news from Idaho that she has become the fourth star in our galaxy of free states, her voters having given her this power by a more than two-thirds majority of all the votes cast on the constitutional amendment, which was submitted for their decision on November 3rd, by the legislative assembly of 1884.

But the question being raised as to whether the two-thirds majority vote given on the amendment itself shall be declared the legal one, instead of the majority vote on some wholly irrelevant question, prompt measures have been taken by the friends of equal suffrage to secure the earliest possible decision of the supreme court, to allay all uncertainty and avoid the risk of invalidating future elections by tyrannical, absurd and senseless litigation.

We have also to record a repulse, but not a defeat, in California, where a vote on a constitutional amendment to enfranchise women was cast on the same day as that of Idaho, but with a different result. Although the majority of the vote cast in favor of granting the elective franchise to women on November 3rd, as nearly as can be known to date, in absence of the official count, was, outside of San Francisco, and Oakland, about 13,000, this vote was overcome in the cities named by an adverse majority vote of 21,000, thus causing the amendment to be defeated by a majority of about 8,000.

Never before, except perhaps in New York in 1884 had the handicapped women of any state gone into their battle for ballots with what seemed so favorable a prospect for success.

Their campaign of education had been non-partisan, vigorous, universal, dignified, masterly. Money was raised, almost without stint or limit, to pay the heavy salaries of Eastern leaders, who devoted eight months of painstaking, intelligent, systematic work to the dissemination of the fundamental principles of a republican form of government.

The heaviest women taxpayers of the state became its avowed allies, and in many instances its leading officers. Religion, morality, beauty, wealth, domesticity, intelligence, brilliancy and fashion were its united devotees.

The unanimous opinion of the public, up to ten days preceding the election, was that victory certainly awaited the women, though they could only watch the battle of ballots from afar while it was being waged for or against their liberties by a privileged class. The sequel proved that women, through their campaign of education, notwithstanding it had been wholly non-partisan, had aroused the same old ambushed enemy that had gathered adherents from all parties and overthrown the women's votes in the state of Washington. The Liquor League and its allies, masquerading as a "Business Men's Protective Association," issued, as is alleged, a secret circular, on or about October 24th, a copy of which is now in my possession, commanding all men connected in any way with the liquor interests to vote solidly against "amendment No. 6." And while these negative votes, amounting to about 18,000 in the aggregate, were not enough, of themselves, to offset the very large affirmative majority secured elsewhere in the state, the fact must not be overlooked that nearly 80,000 other men voted against the amendment. Although these voters are, in my judgment, the victims of a wholly groundless alarm, the fact remains that they are aroused, and determined to prevent what they conceive to be the unwarrantable interference of women with their personal prerogatives.

We have seen, in the result of the recent great national election, how many men in their might, and women in their manacles, will arise above all partisan considerations to protect what they believe to be the immediate interests of their own pockets. Whether all these people were mistaken or not in their apprehensions is not germane to this contention. That their votes carried the day is cited to illustrate my point.

California is a wine-producing, beer-brewing state. A very large proportion of her productive acreage is employed in growing grapes, hops, barley and rye, all of which depend in the main upon the liquor traffic for a market. To this must be added the barrel and bottling interests of a large class of voters; and to further cite the power of this many-sided traffic, I will mention that, unloading on a dock, at the time of my last visit to San Francisco, were 11 tons of hoop iron, to be used by a local brewer in the manufacture of beer kegs. When to all this is added the immense income from the rentals of real estate engaged in the traffic, we can form some idea of the power arrayed against us. A widely spread error overran California to the effect that Woman Suffragists were masquerading in the real interest of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. While it is true that all good women believe in temperance in everything, and that Equal Suffrage, being non-partisan, repels no allies, whether they be prohibitionists or liquor dealers and drinkers, it is equally true that of the nearly 200,000 enrolled Equal Suffragists, only about 10 per cent. look upon prohibition as a temperance measure, and the remaining 90 per cent. are divided, numerically, according to their respective localities, between the republican, democratic and populist parties. I have, personally, long been aware that equal suffragists must everywhere proclaim that they look higher than whisky barrels for their inspiration or go down disfranchised to their tombs. I would not myself, if a voter, with my present understanding, cast my ballot for monometallicism or the gold standard, for free trade, for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at a fixed ratio, or for prohibition of the liquor traffic—much as I detest the abominations of drunkenness, of which the saloon is only the outward sign. But, were I an adherent of any or either of these political creeds, such a fact would not be germane to this movement, which is organized to sustain the right of every person, in the words of Benjamin Harrison, to "cast one ballot and have that ballot honestly counted."

Because of the fallacy existing in the public mind, to the detriment and overthrow of Equal Suffrage in every state where the opponents of prohibition have become alarmed at the prospect of our success, it becomes necessary to say in this connection that two principles more diametrically opposed to each other than Equal Suffrage, which means liberty, and Prohibition, which means the exercise of force, were never yet associated together by the human mind. But, when the powerful, balloted and financially-ballasted hosts of the Liquor League, with its various allies and aliases, masses its forces in ambush to strike down Equal Suffrage, which has never made war on it or its methods; and this power, through the agency of its ballots, bombards our Fort Sumpters and trails our banners of liberty in the dust, it is quite time that we remind it that it must cease to interfere with our liberties or take the consequences.

History is always repeating itself. Women are not much longer to be held in bondage to the apron strings of foreign born bar tenders; nor are all the hosts of free men, in California or elsewhere, who have cast, or are yet to cast their votes for the political equality of the home-makers and morality-conservitors of these United States to be silenced by the menacing power of the whisky barrel, the beer keg, the decanter and the demijohn.

When the leaders of the slave-holders' rebellion startled the world by firing on Fort Sumpter they did not strike at abolitionists, but at a government that upheld slavery. But the recoil of their guns stirred up a latent power that created an uncontrollable host of abolitionists to put down their pet, peculiar institution, chief among the host being President Lincoln, himself.

The women of this nation, whose loyal fathers, husbands and sons have been defeated in California and elsewhere by the Liquor League and its devotees, have met their Balls Bluff disaster and their Bull Run defeat. But our enemy must yet evacuate our Richmond or meet the fate of Jefferson Davis, for whose high crime of treason against the cause of freedom and justice to all the people he received the punishment of disfranchisement, which, after all, only relegated him to the political equality of the loyal American womanhood, which had furnished the soldiers to put down his rebellion.

Why it is that the patriotic and chivalrous manhood of this Nation has not long ago arisen in its might to resent this ignominious abridgment of woman's liberties can only be accounted for by the fact, so well expressed in their own Declaration of Independence, "That mankind are more ready to suffer while evils are sufferable than to right the wrongs to which they have become accustomed."

Your president recommends, as a means of awakening and sustaining a social, useful and universal interest in the equal suffrage cause for the coming year, the foundation everywhere of Political Study Clubs, auxiliary to the State Equal Suffrage Association.

Respecting the vast array of text books provided for leading the student of political science along the partisan lines drawn by opposing political parties, I find upon close examination, that the four years' course of scientific political study, edited by Carrie Chapman Catt, head organizer of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, is absolutely non-partisan, thoroughly reliable, in a historic as well as a present day sense, and therefore eminently applicable to the needs of all women who are patriotic enough to desire their own enfranchisement.

The late political campaign was the means of a thorough awakening of all classes along financial lines. But the root of financial evils has not yet been removed, or we would nowhere have idle luxury, distressing poverty, or present or prospective panics. When any aggregation of men have, at any time overstepped the bounds of their resources in the promotion of great public enterprises they have gladly welcomed woman's aid to relieve them of financial stress. There are Mary A. Livermores, Florence Nightingales and Clara Bartons in every community, of whom the world has not heard. But their monetary genius is seen everywhere in lifting church debts, erecting school houses, building sidewalks, and directing the numerous philanthropies for which in every village, town, city and precinct there are calls. When men have called women as equals to their aid in the affairs of government, as they should long ago have done, I predict that one of free womanhood's first endeavors will materialize as a National Fair, with organizations in every state and county, and auxiliaries in every precinct, in which simultaneous festivals will be held to raise the means, in woman's own inimitable way, for liquidating the national debt. Already many women are talking up this idea; but we are resolved to work for its accomplishment as free women only, and not as the political peers of a dead Jefferson Davis, an imported Chinaman, or an Indian not taxed.