

TO THE OREGON STATE EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION IN 26TH
ANNUAL CONVENTION ASSEMBLED, GREETING, Members, Delegates, Friends

When our work for securing the equal rights of women began in the Pacific Northwest in 1871, every woman was required by law to bury her entire individuality, including even her right to retain her own name, to hold property, to sue and be sued, to own her own wardrobe and earnings, and the right to the custody of her own children, at the foot of the marriage altar. If her husband proved capable financially, and worthy morally, all was well; but, if he failed in either case, or was removed from his family by death or insanity, or was rendered unable to support his household through illness or accident, the records of too many a tribunal can point a moral, to make individual mention of any particular case necessary at this time and place. Suffice it to say that while a vast majority of husbands have always proved faithful to their trusts, the best of them could not fail to discover when in Legislative Halls that the same laws which are made to favor or punish the weak or the criminal classes of men work manifold injustice when applied indiscriminately to all women, however worthy, capable or deserving. To bring these facts before Legislatures was the first work of our Equal Suffrage Leaders, hence the frequent changes in our Statutes in the last quarter of a century concerning the rights and opportunities of women, all of which have been made by men in whom the spirit of justice has proved stronger than prejudice or precedent, but we have thus far appealed to this same power without avail in all but four of our Pacific Coast States and must still continue asking men to remove the same political disabilities from our shoulders against which our forefathers rebelled and which we know they are destined to remove before we can be as free as themselves.

That we are still resolved as in the beginning of our associations endeavors to continue our struggle till we reach the goal of Equal Rights and can stand by our brothers, clothed like themselves, with the inherent power of full personal citizenship, is

illustrated by this gathering. That men, who readily see an objective wrong, when placed before them as an illustrated fact, cannot see it, or are slow to recognize it when placed before them as an abstract principal, is an anomaly not confined to gender.

As the field glass of observation turns from its sweep of retrospection to the broader outlook of the present, we see women everywhere occupying positions in the business, political, religious and commercial world, which must ultimately and in the states of the entire Pacific Northwest, in the near future land them in the arms of liberty--a feminine divinity, by the way, with whom men have coquetted almost alone for so many centuries without once realizing that they were out of their sphere--that we need not wonder that they slowly realize the need of the feminine forces of the world as a sort of political chaperon to keep them in political order.

While the failure of our Legislature to organize in 1886 caused a two years postponement of our constitutional amendment and necessitated prolonging our quiet campaign or one which appears as such on the surface, we have as an association done much effective work, during the past year, which gives excellent promise of an abundant harvest when we are again permitted by the Legislature to come before the voters with a live political issue.

Aside from the meetings reported by our efficient and faithful secretary, your president has been invited to address under the auspices of the Woman's League of Lebanon in the center of the State, an immense Equal Suffrage mass meeting on the 4th of July, and was enthusiastically received by both sexes, one of our leading suffragists, Dr Anna B. Reed of Lebanon, managed the meeting and the men and women of the County assisted her right royally. Miss Helen Crawford, the popular professor of elocution of the State Agricultural College at Corvallis, herself a leading suffragist, had read the declaration of Independence at the morning or men's session of the celebration, thus presenting the text from which the argument of your President was drawn at the afternoon or women's part of the celebration.

The sight of that vast array of eager expectant men and women sitting for two hours of a hot 4th of July afternoon, on uncomfortable benches, listening gladly to the gospel of liberty, expounded from the stand point of the disenfranchised sex and contrasting that occasion with a former one when your speaker had dared to thus address a multitude upon the same theme in another County of the State and had encountered stale eggs and the anathemas of the voters as a result of her temerity, was encouraging proof of great progress.

The Willamette Valley division of our Chautauqua assembly was another inspiring occasion where our association enjoyed the approbation of a multitude of leading minds. We kept on the Chautauque grounds a handsomely appointed equal suffrage headquarters during the ten days session of the assembly, and held one mass meeting, that proved of absorbing interest to a widely spread constituency.

The State Fair gave another splendid opportunity for the exchange of ideas as to methods of work between men and women gathered from almost every county in the State, who in every case reported a steady, healthy growth of equal suffrage sentiment in their respective localities.

As Colorado and Idaho are the two and thus far the only states which have extended the elective franchise to women through a constitutional amendment, it is our duty to see that the women of Oregon and Washington continue the method which brought success to those states where conditions were similar to ours. The submission of the amendment in both Colorado and Idaho came upon the public like a gentle shower from a cloudless sky. Although much general field work had been done in both states at intermittent periods for twenty years previously--I personally having done about all the preliminary work that had been attempted in Idaho,--the amendment found the women so completely unorganized that our Eastern veterans were quite disconcerted because they thought the experiment was too hazardous to be risked at the ballot box without previous thorough organization for effective work, but the spirit of liberty is strong in the men of our Western states and the enfranchisement of

women when placed before them as an issue, without the handicap of any ism always enlists their sympathy. The voters had been educated up to the idea of Equal Suffrage on the broad gauge principle of equal rights to all and special privileges to none.

In Idaho a much longer time between the submission of the amendment and the day of election intervened than in Colorado but the leading men of the State all of whom favored the measure except a very few who have since been politically entombed, decided that it was best for women to postpone the time of active organization until ~~the / time~~ a few months prior to election, then when the amendment became a direct issue, it was argued, there would be no time for the adherents of any side issue to get up and agitate them that would inevitably arouse the voters to organize secretly and defeat the amendment, as had been done in other states and in Washington, when a territory, against the protest of resident equal suffragists. This briefly stated is not only the whole secret of our success in the wholly free states of Colorado and Idaho, but is the key to the cause of our defeat in other states, where equal suffrage has been handicapped by a wholly different issue. It gives me great pleasure to state that Oregon's and Washington's equal suffrage veterans have decided to follow the example of the states that have won the ballot instead of those that have lost it. They realize that no state whose women, or any portion of them, resolve to create a ferment concerning any subject involving women's voting on any other issue can succeed in the future any more than in the past.

Let us then continue as from the beginning the campaign of education that has brought us thus far in the quiet liberty loving conciliatory spirit that will not antagonize our voters upon whom alone the women of any state must depend particularly. We have from our first existence as an association demanded our right to vote because it belongs to us by every sacred right vouchsafed to every citizen of the United States through the declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution. We make no pledges as to what we will or will not do with the ballot when we get it.

Women differ as widely over side issues as do men. They must seek only the full and free recognition of their right to a voice in making the laws which they as a component part of the people are taxed to sustain and to which they are held amendable.

Let none imagine that we are not impatient of this long delay. We have learned by hopes deferred through many years of compulsory waiting, that the greater haste produces the lesser speed. We are schooling ourselves to the exercise of that patience, forbearance, kindness and ~~xxxx~~ motherly and sisterly love without which men are always antagonized and will always vote to defeat us. Let us prove to them, to the world and to each other, that we possess the forbearance of wisdom, the enthusiasm of patriotism and the expectations of true prophecy. We do not hope to gain the approval of the idol and ultra conservative or that of the irresponsible and vicious classes: they always vote in unison against progressive issues, but we do expect to win our full, free and permanent enfranchisement through the vote of honorable men by pursuit of the same methods that have empowered our sisters of Wyoming, Colorado Utah and Idaho with the ballot. Every man whom we do not incite to vote against us by undue agitation of any side issue issue to which he objects counts as half a vote in our favor by failing to vote at all. Our Constitutions are not ironclad but are sufficiently elastic to yield to the will of the majority of those who vote instead of those who refuse to vote, as in the older states, where it is almost impossible to amend a Constitution at all.

We have been strongly appealed to for financial assistance from our beloved co-workers, the officers of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, to which, though holding ourselves, sovereign ⁱⁿ our own capacity, we are proud to be auxiliary, while pursuing out own methods in our own way, let us not ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{permit} our eastern friends to appeal to us in vain. They assisted us in 1864 before we had learned that we must fly with our own wings if we would fly at all. While they are not working in our way, in some states, they are working with a ability and earnestness in their own.

Let us do what we can to sustain their work--especially in the States of Iowa and South Dakota, where their efforts are now centered. Realizing that if they fail, their disappointment will be ours; if they win we will rejoice together.

As I close I claim the right to pay due tribute of to my worthy co-workers of the executive Board; without exception they have been faithful in the performance of every duty, but for their efficient co-operation, I should often have been tempted to falter by the way. In like manner have our co-workers in every County loyally discharged every duty thus far required of them; with such a constituency working in such a cause with all the leading men of the different parties as our efficient allies we cannot help but win.