

"You will remember, friends, that when I last stood before you I explained our work in the Oregon Legislature from 1872 to 1880. I related how, step by step, the grand good men of Oregon had acceded to our demands until our equal statutory rights and responsibilities with themselves had all been conceded, and I said that the Legislature of 1882 would ratify the action of the Legislature of 1880, which had passed a resolution for so amending our State Constitution that the women of Oregon might become possessors of their rightful heritage—the elective franchise. I am here to-night to rejoice with you over the fulfillment of that prediction.

"The opposition to Woman Suffrage has all died out among thinking men. They have learned that women do not base their plea for equal rights upon any real or imaginary antagonism between the sexes. They have learned that this movement is going forward in their interest quite as much as in the interest of women. They know that all good women appreciate and honor everything that is good and noble in men. And women know that men have rescued the earth from its pristine wildness. Men have felled the forests, fenced the lands, builded the railways and bridges, erected homes, school-houses and churches, and made the world a comfortable place for women to live in. The roofs over our heads are the products of their handiwork. They have not proved themselves our enemies, but our friends. And if any man present would say that women are not the friends of men—the best, indeed, that man can have—I would pause to ask if the memory of his own mother does not dissipate at once all thought of such a theory. Remember, sir, that what your mother was to you all men's mothers are to them.

"I am here to-night to speak to you of the best friends men have—their own dear, faithful wives and mothers. I am here to do what I can to awaken you to the justice of our demand that these best friends of men shall be allowed equal rights with the sons of women before the law. The weeds of tyranny and selfishness must be no longer left to grow unchecked. The abrasion of conflicting interests is a necessary factor in solving the great problem of human rights. Once, years ago, when I was in San Francisco, during one of my semi-annual visits to the metropolis while I was engaged in trade, after a busy day in the wholesale stores, I returned to my hotel, and, retiring, fell into a sleep from which I was soon awakened by the sound of a man's and woman's voices in an adjoining room, between which and my own there was a transom open.

"Go to sleep!" exclaimed a gruff voice, "and stop your slack!"

"How can I sleep," replied a feminine echo, "when I know I'll have to go home to-morrow without the necessities of life for myself or children? The girls expect new shoes and dresses, and they've worked so hard all Summer, and now you've brought our butter and eggs to town and drank and gambled everything away; and I've got to go back to the poor children without even a paper of needles or pins or a spool of thread to use."

"Go to sleep!" was the emphatic response, followed by a wicked oath about a "woman's tongue."

The man fell to snoring, and I could hear his wife weeping till a late, late hour.

"While listening to the woman's sobs, I thought of the rank weeds of tyranny and selfishness that had grown unchecked in that man's heart till they had choked out all the wheat; and I reflected long upon the fact that there was in all America no Canada for that fugitive woman to flee to with her little ones, no redress except through the horrible inquisition of the divorce court. And I reflected that if that man had not been that woman's husband, she, instead of weeping in unavailing agony over the robbery of her own and children's earnings, could and would have had him arrested for misappropriating the proceeds of her toil. Then I thought of the system of one-sided power that made these things possible in the home, where above all other places under the sun there should be equal and exact justice. Thus by degrees did the Infinite Father open my eyes to facts that otherwise would have escaped my notice. Gradually, through the evolution of thought, the startling truths of the Declaration of Independence came home to my awakened understanding, till I saw through and through the great network of government; saw through it to the ballot-box, where the sovereignty of the individual first finds expression.

"I know that it is only in individual cases that the weeds of tyranny and selfishness have choked out every semblance of justice in the human home; and I also know that in a rightly ordered condition these weeds would not be permitted to grow unchecked anywhere.

"It seems to me that the time for argument has passed. This movement has progressed until all the liberty-loving men of Oregon have seen the justice of our plea, and they are coming to the rescue in battalions now. They see that a government, however correct it may be in theory, which is administered upon the one-sexed plan, necessarily falls short of its highest possibilities. A one-sexed government is like a one-sexed home. It is a bachelor's hall on a big scale. And while it is true that men's hearts are right toward women, it is equally true that we cannot hope for a just government where one-half of the people—the home-making element—are denied a voice in making the laws which vitally concern them, and the power to cleanse and purify the moral atmosphere immediately surrounding their homes.

"If you tell me that bad women will control the government, I must reply that they control it now, and that is what we complain of. The woman whose husband gambled away her earnings was not a bad woman, or she would have taken advantage of the immoral conditions that men allow, and would have secured, in spite of law, temporal rights by a sacrifice of honor, instead of taking refuge behind unavailing tears. Men have never been successful in remanding bad women to back seats—unless good women were around. This is to be the work of good women; and woman will never reach her highest and best position till she has learned to take interest not only in her own home, where everything that ennoble life must originate, but also in the moral and political atmosphere that surrounds her home. The mother who has instilled good precepts in the mind of her son at home too often sees her work of years overturned in one evil hour by the bad associations outside of home. Gradually with woman's freedom will come the power to right these wrongs.

"But I am not going to make a speech. Hon. C. W. Fulton, who has promised to speak later in the evening, is now busy at court; but I want to say before he comes that to him belongs the credit of championing the pending amendment in the State Senate of 1880. And while he is engaged elsewhere, I am happy to state that another gentleman who is present will occupy the platform—Hon. B. F. Dennison, ex-Chief Justice of Washington Territory.

"When Oregon and Washington were geographically one, Hon. Samuel R. Thurston, an Oregon Representative in Congress, set the great question of equal rights in motion by securing the passage of the Donation Land Law. Oregon and Washington are yet one in interest. They cannot be otherwise, since they are joined together by the pulsing arteries of our mighty Columbia River. The enfranchisement of Washington's women will doubtless be accomplished by her next Legislature—while she is yet a Territory. Oregon, being a State, must leave the final solution of this great problem to what is called the popular vote.

"The gentleman from Washington already alluded to will now speak for himself. I have the honor to introduce Judge Dennison."