

Friends and Citizens, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The bright and glorious new-born year of eighteen hundred and seventy-one has been ushered upon us like a benison from the boundless stores of illimitable goodness. Not cradled in clouds, and rocked by earthquakes, and baptized with storms, did he come to greet us in this favored city of the broad Pacific—this famous city, whose golden gate is always open, and whose welcome extends to the remotest corners of the earth. The starry, heavenly host presided at the birth of the blest New Year; sweet zephyrs rocked his first grand lullaby; and the gentle dews of Heaven christened his infant brow with blessings fraught with peace on earth and good will to men.

In the name of the Human Rights Society and Universal Suffrage Association of your sister State of Oregon, and as representative of a gratified people, who have eagerly watched your progress from afar, and who proudly claim you as co-workers in a righteous cause, I, their humble, but willing and active servant, come to-night to greet you.

I regret that I am not more thoroughly informed concerning the workings of the Association in Oregon. You will find, in the last issue of the *PIONEER*, of your city, as full a report as I am at present prepared to give. It is needless for me to reiterate that report at this time and place. If you do not all purchase and pay for that able Journal, you ought to do it, that's all.

MY BUSINESS WHEN AT HOME

so completely occupies every moment that I have neither time nor opportunity to attend our meetings; and but for my active tongue, which did not by a lucky chance become *Dun-
away* when I did, and my busy fingers, which will scribble for the newspapers, the Universal Suffrage Association of California and Oregon never would have heard from me.

I went about a month ago from Albany, on the Wallamet, where I live, down to Portland in the interests of my business. When I returned, the documents declaring me unanimously elected to the coming Woman's Fair and Convention in San Francisco, and introducing me to the Society here and elsewhere in the State as delegate from the Oregon Human Rights and Universal Suffrage Association, at Salem, were awaiting me in the careful custody of my sensible husband. For, be it known, oh, curping candidates for masculine monopoly—ye men who insist that no women are dissatisfied with the existing order of things except vinegar-faced spinsters, who have been cross-eyed out in the matrimonial market—I have a husband, a radiant daughter, and five bonnie boys; and I reverently thank the great All-Father for my husband, my daughter, and my many boys.

THE ASSOCIATION IN OREGON

is poor, they told me, and could give me neither purse nor scrip; but thanks to these deft hands of mine, a month's hard extra labor at mantua-making earned my steamer-fare, and I am here to-night to rejoice with you over the era of progress.

Already, my sisters, has the day-star of our destiny dawned in the distant east, and its refulgent rays are permeating even to the remotest regions of the busy, bustling West. From Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, sweet glows of its genial light are seen; and here, where San Francisco sits beside the busy bay, we feel its blest effulgence.

THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL MOVEMENT,

which claims the attention and consideration of the greatest minds in Europe and the East, and which many thinking men and women in California willingly espouse, has found a lodgment in the home of my adoption. And throughout the smiling valleys, hillside homes and forest-shaded habitations of that growing State, the leaven of human progress and equal rights before the law is steadily at work, enlightening the dense darkness of local ignorance, decomposing the noxious influence of selfishness, and slowly undermining the sandy foundations of the iron-bound walls of bigotry and prejudice.

THE ERA OF INVESTIGATION

Has dawned upon us, and our willing minds, responding to yours in the work, join with you in the onward march toward the goal of universal liberty. We proceed this evening to consider the momentous matters embodied in the object of the woman movement. It is perfectly astonishing to note the number of otherwise intelligent men and women, who, after having lived through more than two decades of discussion, investigation and action in the cause, are yet so wholly ignorant of its most manifest objects that they are entirely dependent upon their numbers—daily diminishing, thank knowledge!—for even a show of respectability in their self-imposed stupidity.

We are not insane enough to expect a sudden overthrow of all the ills which flesh is heir to when we get the ballot. Great reforms move slowly. This is the experience of ages. But you once grant the necessary conditions under which a moral reform can become developed, and your personal moral obligation concerning that particular reform becomes canceled. You are no longer a stumbling-block in its way, and of course become fitted for the next great step in the advancement of knowledge.

THE WHOLE WOMAN QUESTION

Resolves itself into one great principle—a principle as firm and immutable as the Rock of Ages. The air we breathe, the land we inhabit, and the food that sustains us, all unite in proclaiming the fundamental law of universal enfranchisement.

With increase of power and privilege—which we hold will accrue to every person who understandingly exercises the right of suffrage—will necessarily come increase of moral responsibility. This necessary increase of responsibility will induce effort, investigation, application and wisdom. When

THE WOMAN QUESTION

becomes thoroughly inaugurated in all of our civil and religious institutions, and its practical aims become accomplished, every sensible woman will rise above receiving the support of any man as a gratuity. We intend to make it as dishonorable for any able-bodied woman to subsist as a parasite upon the bounty of man, as it is now deemed disreputable for any man to live wholly dependent upon the toll of woman. "Is that an object of the woman's movement?" Innocently asked a bachelor friend of mine at the hotel, the other day.

"Certainly. It is one great object for which we are striving," I answered, earnestly. "Then I bid you God speed, and stand ready to vote

for your cause," he remarked, evidently relieved to find that there was at least one object for which women "clamor" besides polls and pantaloons. He was not a mercenary man, this bachelor friend of mine, but like many other would-be women supporters in the world, he wants a wife as a helpmate, instead of a clog, a toy or a butterfly. Now, I do not believe that women are, in ninety-seven cases out of a hundred, supported by men, even when men get the credit of it.

THE PATIENT, TOILING, DRUDGING HOUSEWIFE,

Whose unending labor would command a handsome premium in the servant market, who is often chosen by man as his wife that he may thereby save the expense of servants—is situated upon the other extreme—the opposite of the butterfly state. Both are a result of the existing false basis of social, political and family laws, which laws make the husband and wife one, and that one in every case the husband.

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD,

With her piquant, coquettish airs, her aim for conquest and desire for frivolity and show, is a hybrid between the drudge and butterfly. But she has the element of true womanhood in her composition, God bless her! and I shudder when I consider her false position in the world. At present she is thriving upon the bounty of father or brother, or, as is too often the case, upon the self-denying heroism of an indigent mother, whose real poverty nobody but that over-worked, non-producing mother can know.

NO PROFESSION OR TRADE

Has this girl of the period. That she may ever become independent of the bounty of man never once enters into her perception of possibilities. By-and-by she will marry, may be. Then comes one of two extremes. And the misguided child is but following in the path marked out for her by her legal master, *man*, no matter which road she follows. If her husband have means, and is not a brutal nig-gard, he feels that he must support and protect her. So she is appointed nominal mistress of a house—or, worse still, is placed in one of our fashionable boarding-houses, without any employment to sharpen her faculties or ennoble and develop her plastic imagination. If children come, and by a rare chance survive the hot-house system of gestation and infancy, she is often known to make an exemplary mother. Purified by maternal anguish and tried by the great test of maternal solicitude, she learns to make the best of circumstances, and her life becomes a state of utter self-abnegation. But if no tiny buds of promise come to bless her—and it is unfashionable to have children now-a-days—she turns her attention, more than before her marriage, to the empty allurements that surround her. What wonder that, with

ALL AVENUES OF NOBLE AMBITION

Closed upon her, nothing is left for her to do except to dress and flirt and continue the conquests which before her marriage she enjoyed so much, and for which, as a girl of the period, she was so much distinguished. Her husband is busily occupied on 'Change, or his Club needs his attention, or (as is often the case) his hours of leisure are spent in the haunts of vice, in the society of women whom he would not suffer his wife to name—herself left to the machinations at home which her husband seeks abroad.

INFIDELITY OF THE WIFE

is at last suspected. God help her! It is sometimes proven. She is at once an outcast in the society where before she ruled, and most likely becomes a disgraced and fallen and wretched inmate of the same brothel where her husband was wont, in her days of purity, to resort to spend his evenings. Poor, miserable, forsaken husband! His wife has dishonored him; she has disgraced his name! But the sympathy of his lady friends,

IN THE BEST SOCIETY,

soon soothes his lacerated honor, and he marries again some other butterfly, who in her turn lives a parasite upon his bounty—himself infinitely lower in the eyes of angels than the crushed victim of the brothel, whom it was his duty before God and justice to guide and keep, by his own upright example, in the paths of rectitude and virtue.

Concerning the deceived, misguided ones who have never married—who fell before the force of marrying for protection and support was, in their particular cases, enacted—I have not time to speak in full to-night.

I remember a sorrowful story, plainly and beautifully told, which in my younger days, before care had dulled my powers of memory, I learned after one or two readings. I will recite it here, as the best story I can tell upon the subject. It carries with it a sad moral, which I hope every woman here will heed:

The night was dark and bitter cold,

The low, dim clouds all wildly rolled,

Scudding before the blast;

Around me fell the blinding sleet,

As down an unfrequented street

I went my way in haste.

I bowed my head before the storm,

Across my way a prostrate form

In woman's garb was seen;

I stooped and raised her fallen head,

Was she but faint from want of bread,

Or what could all this mean?

Again I raised her drooping head,

"Have you no home or friends?" I said;

"Get up, poor creature, come,

You seem unhappy, faint and weak,

How can I serve or save you? speak!

Or whither help you home?"

"Alas! kind sir, poor Ellen Gray

Has had no home this many a day;

And but that *you*, so kind,

She has not found a friend of late,

To look on her with aught but hate,

And still despairs to find.

"A home? Yes, I've a home! Would I had none;

The home I have's a wicked one;

They will not let me in

Till I can see my jailor's hands

With the vile tribute she demands—

The wages of my sin.

"My mother died when I was born,

My father cast his babe, forlorn,

Upon the workhouse floor;

That father! would I knew him not—

A squalid thief, a drunken sot—

I dare not tell you more.

"And I was bound, an infant slave,

Whom no one loved enough to save

From cruel, morbid men;

A hungry, famished, factory child,

Morn, noon and night, I toiled and toiled,

But I was happy then.

"My heart was pure, my cheek was fair,

Ah! would to God a cancer there

Had eaten out its way,

For soon my tasker, degraded man,

With treacherous arts and wiles, began

To mark me for his prey.

"And months by months he vainly strove

To light the flame of lawless love

In my most loathing breast;

Oh! how I feared and hated him,

So basely kind, so smoothly grim,

My terror and my pest.

"Thence forward drooped my stricken head,

I lived, and died a life of dread,

Least they should guess my shame;

But week and months would pass away,

And all too soon the bitter day

Of wrath and ruin came.

"I could not hide my changing form,

Then on my head the awful storm

Of gibe and insult burst:

Men only mocked me for my fate,

But woman's scorn and woman's hate,

Me, their poor sister, cursed.

"Oh, woman! had thy kindless face

But gentler looked on my disgrace,

And healed the wounds it gave,—

I was a drowning, sinking wretch,

Whom no one loved enough to stretch

A finger out to save.

"They tore my baby from my heart

And locked it in some hole, apart,

Where I could hear its cry—

Such was the horrid poorhouse law,—

Its little throes I never saw,

Although I heard it die.

"Still, the stone hearts that rule the place,

Let me not kiss my darling's face,—

My little darling dead;

Oh! I was mad with rage and hate,

And yet all sullenly I sate,

And not a word I said.

"I would not stay, I could not bear

To breathe the same infected air

That killed my precious child;

I watched my time and fled away,

The livelong night, the livelong day,

In fear and anguish wild.

"I was half starved, I tried in vain

To get me work, my bread to gain,

Before me flew my shame:

Cold charity put up her purse,

And none looked at me but to curse

The child of evil fame.

"But ah! why need I count by links

The heavy, lengthening chain that sinks

My life, my soul, my all.

I still was fair, though hope was dead,

And so I sold myself for bread,

And lived upon my fall.

"Now, I was wretched, bold and bad,

My love was hate, I grew half mad

With thinking on my wrongs:

Disease and pain and giant sin

Rent body and soul, and ragged within—

Such meed to guilt belongs.

"And as I was, such still am I,

Unfit to live, afraid to die,

And yet I hoped I might

Meet my best friend and lover, Death,

In the fierce frowns and frozen breath

Of this December night.

"My tale is told, my heart grows cold,

I cannot stir, yet good, kind sir,

I know that you will stay;

But God is kinder even than you,

Will he not look in pity too,

"On wretched Ellen Gray?"

Her eye was fixed, she said no more,

But back against the cold street door

She leaned her fainting head.

One moment she looked up and smiled,

Full of new hope, as Mercy's child—

And the poor girl was dead.

GAY MAN ALONE SAYS 'T'S

Men and brethren, are you, as a sex, capable of self-government? Ah! if you were, then indeed might we depend upon you to work out this great social problem. Thank God! there are many noble ones among you who would scorn to take advantage of the physical necessities of your most degraded sister. But oh, my God! are we mothers sure that our sons will not fall into the many alluring snares which, under the laws and by the support of men, exist and flourish on every street? Men tell us that there is no remedy for this social evil. Ah, my sons and brothers, the mothers of men know better!

YOUR INTENTIONS HAVE BEEN HONORABLE.

You have done as well as you could. But forces in the union of masculine and feminine in our political and religious, as well as our social economy, we cannot expect harmony or success. We know that with you lies the balance of political power. You have tried to frame and execute such laws as would bring the greatest good to the greatest number, and woe, woe to men and women, you have failed! Our many grog shops attest your failure. Our social evil attests it. Our corruption in high places attests it.

WE HAVE WAITED LONG

For you to right these fearful wrongs. We have shrunk from your ridicule and abstained from complaint when many thousand heart-
atfings were breaking. The voice of the wife and mother, whose husband and sons and daughters are lured to ruin.

IN THE HELLS OF YOUR PERMITTING,

Cries to you for redress. The many thousands of our women whom God has endowed with the ability to work, which man denies them the privilege to perform, cry to you for equality before the law, that they may thereby find work and wages. We have besought you in tones of earnest, respectful entreaty to abolish these pools of moral corruption. We have asked you, in tears and humility, to no longer permit the traps, in which men and women daily fall, to remain set and baited to lure our growing sons and daughters to social ruin. Alas, you tell us you cannot do it. God pity you! we know you cannot. But we ask you now to listen to us, while we propose a remedy.

LET WOMAN SHARE THE BALLOT

With you. We do not want to monopolize it. Alone, we fear that we should do but little better than you have done. But side by side with you, O men and brethren, let us come and work, and we shall do you good.