

The proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at West Chester, Pa., June 2d and 3d, 1852

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION HELD AT WEST CHESTER, PA. June 2d and 3d, 1852.

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REPORT. -Wednesday, June 2d, 1852.Morning Session.

Pursuant to public notice, a Convention of those interested in the subject of Woman's Rights assembled in the Horticultural Hall, West Chester, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, June 2d, at 10 o'clock A. M.

The meeting was called to order by Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia, and Mary Anne W. Johnson was called to the chair.

On motion of Hannah M. Darlington, Alice Jackson was appointed Secretary *pro tem*.

On motion of Phebe Goodwin, the following Committee, nominated by the Chair, was appointed to bring forward names of officers, and a Business Committee for the Convention: Ann Preston, M. D., Chandler Darlington, Sarah L. Miller, Mary Whitson, and William Lloyd.

The Call of the Convention was then read by the President, as follows:

"WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION, To be held in the Horticultural Hall, West Chester, Chester Co., Pa., on Wednesday and Thursday, the 2d and 3d of June, 1852.

The friends of Justice and Equal Rights are earnestly invited to assemble in Convention, to consider and discuss the present position of Woman in Society, her Natural Rights and Relative Duties.

The reasons for such a Convention are obvious. With few exceptions, both the radical and conservative portions of the community agree, that Woman, even in this progressive age and country, suffers under legal, educational and *vocational* disabilities which ought to be removed. To examine the nature of these disabilities, to inquire into their extent, and to consider the most feasible and proper mode of removing them, will be the aim of the Convention which it is proposed to hold.

If it shall promote in any degree Freedom of Thought and Action among Women; if it shall assist in opening to them any avenues to 4 honorable and lucrative employment (now unjustly and unwisely closed;) if it shall aid in securing to them more thorough Intellectual and Moral Culture; if it shall excite higher aspirations; if it shall advance, by a few steps, just and wise public sentiment, it will not have been held in vain.

The Elevation of Women is the Elevation of the Human Race. Her interests cannot be promoted or injured without advantage or injury to the whole race. The call for such a Convention is therefore addressed to those who desire the Physical, Intellectual and Moral Improvement of Mankind. All persons interested in its objects are respectfully requested to be present at its sessions and participate in its deliberations."

Lucretia Mott addressed the Convention, briefly referring to the importance of the movement and expressing her gratification on seeing the response given to the call, by the great number of persons assembled. She saw before her not only a large delegation from the immediate vicinity, but a goodly number from other and distant States.

The movement for the enfranchisement of Woman was indeed making rapid progress. Since the first Convention held at Seneca Falls, in 1848, where a few women assembled, and notwithstanding their ignorance of the Parliamentary modes of conducting business, promulgated these principles, which took deep root, and are already producing important results, other large Conventions have been held in different places, which have done much towards disseminating the great principles of equality between the sexes; and a spirit of earnest inquiry has been aroused.

She referred to the fact that the agitation commenced in those States most distinguished for intellectual and moral culture—that we in Pennsylvania were ready to embrace their views on this subject, and she trusted that the Convention now assembled would be neither less interesting nor less efficient than those which have been already held.

The Secretary read a letter from Paulina W. Davis, of Providence, R. I., from which the following paragraphs are extracted:

"I regret that circumstances will prevent my accepting your cordial invitation to be with you at your Convention. * * *

“That order of society which makes woman simply the appendage of man, has descended to us from time immemorial, like any other custom, for us to make a trial of; and if we find it proves not adopted to the enlarging demands of humanity, it has no claim upon us for a further observance.

“We have found that, with the enlarging desires of the human soul, there comes a knowledge which our ancestors did not possess, and that is, that human unity is the grand aim of creation, and also, that this unity, this harmony, this oneness of the race, cannot be secured while there is class legislation; while one half of humanity is cramped within a narrow sphere and governed by arbitrary power. This unrecognized *half* desires these factitious restraints removed, and to be placed side by side with the other, simply that there may be full, free and equal development in the future. The moral life which urges this claim is the God within us. The force which opposes it, it matters not whence it comes, ‘is of the earth, earthy.’ * * *

“I trust you will make it clearly understood that you do not take new antagonistic positions, but are seeking to remove the old; that you simply demand that man shall put himself in a position in which he can be symmetrically developed, and that this cannot be done while he infringes the right of another, however weak that other may be. There must be no pressure, no confusion, no weak love of power on his part, if he would fulfill his high destiny. To him has been entrusted the world during its pioneer period of struggle and conquest. This age is nearly past, and a gentler element is now needed to produce harmony and beauty, and that element (who can doubt?) is woman. In preaching this mission we must be impersonal, single-hearted and earnest; and if sundering the ties which have bound us to time-honored customs does produce violence or coarse abuse, we have only to remember that Christ's teachings, though all pure and peaceful, brought ‘not peace to the earth but a sword;’ and this great work, the object of which is to remove the cause of antagonisms—perhaps the very last great moral movement which shall be needed to elevate humanity—cannot be expected to reach its consummation without receiving somewhat of the persecution which has attended other moral reformations.

“When Socrates was advocating the equal education of women for governmental offices, he was met by ridicule. His words in consideration of it are full of wisdom. Says the sage, ‘the man who laughs at women going through their exercises, reaps the unripe fruit of a ridiculous wisdom, and seems not rightly to know at what he laughs, or why he does it, for that ever was and will be deemed a noble saving, that the profitable is beautiful and the hurtful base.

“It is often said that women, without any share in governmental, wields three-fifths of that influence which moves the world, and that she might make it better if she desired to. Woman's influence is no doubt far greater than she herself comprehends. With all her littleness, her jealousy, her duplicity

and weakness, she is still powerful. Man, knowing her and acknowledging her potent sway, should shrink from it, while he considers her thus weak and ignorant, for nothing is more common than to hear him say, 'what does a woman know' about such or such a matter? If man acknowledges that she has any influence on the world, he should open to her every avenue to equal intellectual, moral and physical improvement. He should not accuse her of having a one-sided development—of being only a religious, sentimental and poetical being, destitute of acting, organizing, judging and reasoning powers, with which he is endowed. He should first remove the unnatural relations existing between the sexes, and leave her free to assert her womanhood without a struggle, which costs more to her delicacy and pride than she is able to endure.

"It is also often asked if women want more rights, why do they not take them? Let us see how that may be. Does a woman desire a *thorough* medical education, where is the institution fully and properly endowed to receive her? Two women, it is true, have made their way through two separate Colleges, and when they had honorably won their diplomas, and even the voice of scandal could not cast a shadow upon them, they were publicly insulted by having the doors of these institutions closed upon all others of their sex. If she desires a course of through disciplinary study for any purpose whatsoever, where is he to find means or the institution to receive her? The academic shades are forbidden ground to her, while their massive doors turn with no harsh grating sound at the magic word of man for man. If we did not feel too deeply the injustice of this, we might comfort ourselves with the idea that our brains are so superior that we do not need the same amount of study and discipline as the other sex."

Ann Preston, M. D., from the nominating committee, reported the following names, which were adopted by the Convention.

President MARY ANNE W. JOHNSON, of Philadelphia.

Vice Presidents. Mary Ann Fulton, of Chester Co. Pa. William Jackson, " " " Chandler Darlington, " " " Sarah L. Miller, of Delaware Co. "

Secretaries. Hannah M. Darlington, of Chester Co. Pa. Sidney Peirce, " " " Edward Webb, of Wilmington, Del.

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Business Committee. — James Mott, Ann Preston, Lucretia Mott, Frances D. Gage, Sarah D. Barnard, Dr. Harriet K. Hunt, Joseph A. Dugdale, Margaret Jones, Ernestine L. Rose, Alice Jackson, Jacob Painter, Phebe Goodwin.

Finance Committee, appointed by the Chair: Hannah Darlington, Jacob Painter, Isaac Mendenhall, Elizabeth Miller.

The President took the chair and delivered the following address:

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

I accept, not without reluctance, the position which your partiality has assigned me, because I would not even seem, at this stage of our movement, to set an unworthy example by timidly shrinking from its duties.

We are assembled on this occasion from a deep consciousness of the evils resulting from the false position occupied by Woman, and in the hope that earnest and friendly discussion may prepare us to labor efficiently for their removal. These evils affect not Woman alone, but stand as an obstruction to the development and progress of the race. By her exclusion from a voice in the public councils, the legislation of the country is deprived of the purifying, elevating, unselfish, feminine element, which is essential to the enactment of just and beneficent laws. By depriving her of the proper facilities for intellectual culture and growth, her whole nature is wronged; and deep shadows are now resting upon the world of mind, which can be dispersed only by mingling with the inadequate light of the masculine element, the rays emanating from woman's clear instincts and cultivated mental powers.

Woman, in consequence of being placed in unequal and unnatural social relations, fails to recognize her individuality, and submissively merges her own life in that of man, whom she has been taught to reverence as her intellectual superior. This process has gone on, age after age, until the great mass of the sex fail to perceive the true relations of life and duty, and feel it to be no concern of their husbands, fathers and brothers, to gratify their political ambition or promote their personal aggrandisement, plunge the nation in the horrors of war, by which their own hearthstones are made desolate, and widows and orphans are multiplied throughout the land. They are too often content with their present meagre facilities for culture and development, and willing to remain in the vale below, and watch with exultation the progress of their brothers as they surmount successive difficulties in their ascent to the heights of learning and power: forgetting that the mothers of the 8 race, if they would be prepared to transmit a vigorous and healthful intellectual constitution in their children, and be qualified to guard the infancy of a great and virtuous people, must cultivate to their fullest extent the intellectual capacities with which they are themselves endowed. Thus woman connives at her own degradation, and in so doing wrongs not only herself but the whole race. During

the period of her youthful existence, she is admired, flattered, petted and caressed, and ere the years of ripening womanhood arrive, she is ready to merge her being in that of a husband, who is quite willing to assume her most important responsibilities, on condition of receiving from her the love and obedience which he feels are due to his superior intelligence and wisdom.

This subserviency and weakness on the one hand, and this authority and power on the other, yield their legitimate fruits, and life is darkened by the bitterest disappointment. If the wife yearns for a larger, freer, and more independent existence, and begins to look in hope for a wider field of thought and action—something beyond mere household drudgery—she finds the fetters of custom and prejudice binding her as with bands of iron, while the powers by which alone they can be broken have been enfeebled by an inadequate and pernicious system of education.

The position in which woman has been placed is an anomaly. On the one hand she is constantly reminded of duties and responsibilities from which an angel might shrink. The world is to be saved by her prayers, her quiet and gentle efforts. Man, she is told, is ruled by her smiles—his whole nature subdued by the potency of her tears. Priests, politicians and poets assure her with flattering tongue, that on her depend the progress and destiny of the race. On the other hand, she is told that she must lovingly confide in the strength and skill of man, who has been endowed with superior intellectual powers; that she must count it her highest honor to reflect upon the world the light of his intelligence and wisdom, as the moon reflects the light of the sun!

We may congratulate one another on this occasion in view of the cheering indications so manifest on every hand that the ignorance and darkness which have so long brooded over the prospects of woman, are beginning to give place to the light of truth. In the summer of 1848, in the village of Seneca Falls, a small number of women, disregarding alike the sneers of the ignorant and the frowns of the learned, assembled in Convention and boldly claimed for themselves, and for their sex, the rights conferred by God and so long withheld by man. Their courageous words were the expression of sentiments which others had felt is deeply as themselves, but which the restraints imposed by long established custom had taught them to suppress. But now the hour had come, and the world stood prepared for the reception of a new thought, which is destined to work a revolution in human society, more beneficent than any that has preceded it. The seeds of truth which that Convention planted in faith and hope were not left to perish. In many thoughtful minds they germinated apace and brought forth fruit. That fruit was seen in the large Convention held in Ohio in the spring of 1850, in that held in Massachusetts in the autumn of the same year, and in those which have followed since in New England and the West.

Woman at length is awaking from the slumbers of ages. Many of the sex already perceive that knowledge, sound judgment, and perfect freedom of thought and action are quite as important for

the mothers as for the fathers of the race. They weary of the senseless talk of "woman's sphere," when that sphere is so circumscribed that they may not exert their full influence and power to save their country from the war, intemperance, slavery, licentiousness, ignorance, poverty and crime, which man, in the mad pursuit of his ambitious schemes, unchecked by their presence and counsel, permits to desolate and destroy all that is fair and beautiful in life and fill the world with weeping, lamentation and wo. Woman begins to grow weary of her helpless and dependent position, and of being treated as if she were formed only to cultivate her affections, that they may flow in strong and deep currents merely to gratify the self-love of man.

She does not listen with delight, as she once did, when she hears her relations to her equal brother represented by the poetical figure of the trellis and creeping tendril, or of the oak and the gracefully clinging vine. No, she feels that *she* is, like him, an accountable being—that the Infinite Father has laid responsibilities upon her which may not be innocently transferred to another, but which, in her present ignorance, she is not prepared to meet. She is becoming rapidly imbued with the spirit of progress, and will not longer submit, without remonstrance, to the bondage of ancient dogmas and customs. In the retirement and seclusion of life, the stirring impulse of the times has reached even the heart of woman, and she feels the necessity of a more thorough culture and a wider field of usefulness. She sees the glaring injustice by which she has long been deprived of all fair opportunity to earn an independent livelihood, and thus, in too many instances, constrained to enter the marriage relation, as a choice of evils, to secure her self against the ills of impending poverty. The wrong she so deeply feels she is at length arousing herself to redress.

What, the, is the substance of our demand? I answer, we demand for woman equal freedom with her brother to raise her voice and exert 10 her influence directly for the removal of all the evils that afflict the race; and that she be permitted to do this in the manner dictated by her own sense and propriety and justice. We ask for her educational advantages equal to those enjoyed by the other sex; that the richly endowed institutions which she has been taxed to establish and support, may be open alike to *all* her children. We claim for her the right to follow any honorable calling or profession for which she may be fitted by her intellectual training and capacity. We claim for her a fair opportunity to attain a position of pecuniary independence, and to this end that she receive for labor a compensation equivalent to its recognized value when performed by the other sex.

These demands, we think, must be admitted to be essentially wise and just. We make them in no spirit of selfish antagonism to the other sex, but under a deep conviction that they are prompted by an enlightened regard for the highest welfare of the race. Some one has justly said that God has so linked the human family together that any violence done at one end of the chain is felt throughout its length. The true interests of the sexes are not antagonistic but harmonious. There can be no just

conflict between their respective rights and duties. For the coming of the day when this great truth shall be universally received, we must work and pray as we have opportunity. When that day shall arrive, it will be clearly perceived that in the true Harmonic Order "woman and her brother are pillars in the same temple and priests of the same worship."

The Secretary, Sidney Peirce, read letters from Sarah M. Grimé and William and Mary Johnson.

Extract from Sarah M. Grimké's letter.

When an insect emerges with struggles from its chrysalis state, how feeble are all its movement, how its wings hang powerless until the genial air has dried and strengthened them, how patiently the insect tries again and again to spread them, and visit the flowers which bloom around, till at last it enjoys the recompense of its labors in the nectar and the fragrance of the garden.

This illustrates the present condition of Woman. She is just emerging from the darkness and ignorance by which she has been shrouded. She looks forth from her chrysalis and sees the natural and intellectual world lying around her clothed in radiant beauty, and inviting her to enter and possess this magnificent inheritance. How came I, she asks, to be excluded from all these precious privileges? I will arise and go to my Father and say, "Father, permit me to share the labors of my brethren 11 and partake of the fruits which they enjoy." "Go, my daughter," is the paternal response. "Be unto man, in an infinitely higher sense than heretofore, a help-meet." Now how is woman fulfilling this her divine mission? Is she looking on the benefits she is commissioned to bestow on the human race, or is she keeping her eye on her own interests and seeking her own elevation, with little of that expensive benevolence, that philosophical foresight which seeks the development of all?

Woman is now in the transition state, a glorious mission is before her, a glorious destiny awaits her. To fulfill that mission, to be worthy of that destiny, she must patiently wait and quietly hope, blessing those who scorn and deride her feeble, and often unsuccessful efforts, to free herself from her entanglements. She must expect many failures in her attempts to emancipate herself from the thralldom of public opinion. Those who have long held the reins of power and the rank of superiority, naturally look with distrust on a movement which threatens to overturn long established customs and transforms the baby and the toy into an intellectual being, desiring equal rights with themselves and asserting her claim to all immunities they enjoy. Woman must be willing to see herself as she is, the slave of fashion, assuming all the Proteus forms she invents, without reference to health or convenience. She must remember how few of us give evidence of sufficient development to warrant our claims; and whilst we feel a divine impulse to proceed in achieving the enlargement of woman, whilst we hear a voice saying, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; speak to

the people that they go forward," let us not be dismayed at the hindrances we shall encounter from those whom we are laboring to release from the swaddling bands of infancy, or the grave clothes of superstition, time-honored opinion and crushing circumstances. We are now in a perilous and difficult position. We feel all the inconvenience of our past condition, all the disadvantages and uneasiness of the one we are constrained to occupy, and see in hold relief all the advantages which a change will yield us. But let us remember that our transition state, although replete with temptations and suffering, is necessary to our improvement; we need it to strengthen us and enable us to bear hardness as good soldiers of Truth.

To regard any state of society as *fixed*, is to regard it as the ultimate good, as the best condition to which we can attain. But when man has progressed. when his morality and his religion have assumed a higher tone, it is impossible to perpetuate his childhood, or to give permanence to institutions and opinions whose days are numbered. When Reform has truth for its basis and is instinct with the life of progression, no 12 power can dress it in the habiliments of the grave, and bury it out of sight, either in Potter's field or under the magnificent Mausoleum. There is nothing so precious to man as progress; he has defended it with his heart's best blood, and according to his development has aided it, although sometimes in his blindness he has scattered fire and sword, destruction and misery around, in endeavoring to force mankind to adopt the truths he thought essential to progress. "Woman has come on the stage," says Horace Mann, "6000 years after man, to profit by his misdeeds and correct his errors." Until now, the world was not prepared to receive, in full measure, the hallowed influence which woman is designed to shed. Her holy mission is to bring peace on earth and good will to man. She does not ask for irresponsible power; she has seen that from the earliest records of the human race the possession of such power is fraught with danger, that it has always made tyrants. She feels Divinity stirring within her, and its irrepressible aspirations cannot, should not be controlled. Mankind have always rejected the means appointed by Infinite Wisdom to assist their upward flight. Let us then go calmly forward, alike regardless of the scorn and ridicule of the shallow, the grave denunciations of the bigot, or the weighty counsel of the narrow minded and selfish, who would point out the exact position fitted for us to occupy, and with seeming condescension invite us to fill some posts of honor and profit, while they undertake to confine us within *their* bounds, leaving nothing to our good sense, intelligence, intuitive desires and aspiring hopes. The truth is, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." God alone is competent to do this, and in the present movement his power, wisdom, and will, are so conspicuous, that it will be well to set no bounds to his work, but let it have free course, expecting that contradictions and inconsistencies will mar it, but believing that those contradictions will cease, those inconsistencies disappear, and the perfected human being be developed.

If we adopt as our watchword the language of Margaret Fuller, we cannot but overcome all obstacles, outlive all opposition: "Give me Truth. Cheat me by no illusion. Oh, the granting of this prayer is sometimes terrible; I walk over the burning plowshares and they sear my feet— Yet Nothing but Truth will do."

Sarah M. Grimké.

Extracts from Wm. H. and Mary Johnson's Letter.

The demands on our time precluding our attendance at the Convention, we are glad of the opportunity offered of giving, at least, a response to the call. According to the objects of the meeting stated therein 13 and of similar Conventions with which we have become familiar, we have no hesitation in declaring our entire sympathy with the movement, as one which lies as the foundation of all other reforms. We are told that the "call for such a Convention is addressed to those who desire the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of mankind." The only hope of securing these blessings must depend upon *woman* occupying her proper position in society.

The influence of woman as a wife and a mother has been so often portrayed, that it would be difficult to find a moral writer, who has not indulged in the fruitful theme, but we cannot omit the occasion of quoting the sentiments of the eloquent Wm. Wirt on this subject: "Is not *our* conduct towards this sex ill-advised and foolish in relation to our own happiness? Is it not to reject a boon which Providence kindly offers to us, and which, were we to embrace and cultivate it with skill, would refine and enlarge the sources of our own enjoyment, and purify, raise and ennoble our own character beyond the power of human calculation?"

"As the companion of a man of sense and virtue, as an instrument and partner of his earthly happiness, what is the most beautiful woman in the world without a mind; without a cultivated mind, capable of an animated correspondence with his own, and of reciprocating all his thoughts and feelings?"

"Is not our conduct on this head ungenerous and ignoble to the other sex? Do we not deprive them of the brightest and most angelic portion of their character, degrade them from the rank of intelligence which they are formed to hold; and instead of making them the partners of our souls, attempt to debase them into mere objects of sense?"

“Is not our conduct mean and dastardly? Does it not look as if we were afraid that with equal opportunities they would rival us in intellect, and examine and refute our pretended superiority?”

We congratulate the Convention on the selection of the place for holding their deliberations. In no part of the State could a community be found better qualified to appreciate the objects of such a meeting, or the means for their accomplishment. Chester has undoubtedly taken the lead of all her sister Counties in Educational movements, as may be witnessed in her numerous flourishing schools for both sexes, which are attracting, as to a common focus, pupils from all parts of the country. And it affords us unmingled pleasure to observe the numerous female schools that have been established in this quarter, and the patronage that has been extended towards them. These are sure indications of an improved public sentiment in relation to the development of the female mind.

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But there are other indications of advancement in this particular, still more encouraging, because they exhibit fruits of the most ennobling powers of the human understanding. We allude to those benevolent associations particularly for promoting Temperance, in which the females of Chester county have borne such a conspicuous and effective part. The reflection is, indeed, animating, that at a period when almost all kindred associations in the State, among the other sex, had languished, and intemperance seemed likley once more to overwhelm the land with more desolating evils than had ever yet been known, there was yet to be found in Chester county an association of females, who were nobly bearing the standard of Total Abstinence, and by their well timed labors giving evidence that there was yet vitality in the cause! Thus we have seen not only in this, but in other fields of moral reform, that the progress has uniformly been commensurate with the intellectual and moral culture of the female mind. Let the sex, then, give their influence in promoting a system of education that will, if carried out, secure to every woman in the land the blessings of thorough practical instruction. May the deliberations of the Convention tend to the promotion of this most desirable object. With such developments as must result from the more general diffusion of knowledge, not only *rights* but duties that have been hidden by the suggestions of ignorance and bigotry will be brought to light, and the sex will realize the noble sentiment of one of New England's gifted sons. that

“New occasions teach new duties—Times makes ancient good uncouth,

“They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth!”

Desiring that your discussions may be guided by that spirit which has heretofore characterized them, we remain your friends, Wm. H. Johnson and Mary Johnson.

Clarina I. H. Nichols, of Brattleboro, Vermont, made a few brief remarks upon the absurdity of the popular idea of woman's sphere. She contended that the sphere of the sex could not be determined by man nor even by herself, it being limited only by her capacity and her sense of moral obligation.

James Mott, from the Business Committee, reported a series of resolutions.

On motion of Lucretia Mott they were taken up and considered separately.

Whereas, It is an acknowledged principle in our Democratic government, that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that taxation without representation is unjust and despotic;" therefore—

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1. *Resolved*, That women are entitled by natural right to equal participation with men in the political institutions required for the protection of the whole people; and that it is a gross inconsistency, and glaring exercise of arbitrary power, to compel women to pay taxes, while they are not permitted a voice in deciding the amount of those taxes, or the purposes to which they shall be applied.

The resolution was briefly advocated by Phebe E. Gibbons, Frances D. Gage, C. I. H. Nichols, Dr. Harriet K. Hunt, and Ernestine L. Rose, and adopted by a unanimous vote.

The Convention then adjourned till 2½ o'clock p. m.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The President took the chair at half past two. The spacious Hall was crowded in every part by an intelligent, earnest-minded and attentive audience.

The second Resolution was taken up.

2d. *Resolved*, That every party which claims to represent the humanity, the civilization, or the progress of the age, is bound to inscribe on its banner, "Equality before the laws, without distinction of sex."

After some remarks by Chandler Darlington it was adopted.

The next in order was the following:

3d. *Resolved*, That the science of government is not necessarily connected with the violence and intrigue which are now frequently practised by party politicians, neither does the exercise of the elective franchise, or the proper discharge of governmental duties necessarily involve the sacrifice of the refinement or sensibilities of true womanhood.

C. I. H. Nichols supported this resolution in a brief but pertinent speech. She said she had once thought politics necessarily too degrading for woman, but she had changed her views. The science of government, it is said, is of divine origin; a participation in its administration cannot then necessarily involve anything to deteriorate from the true dignity of woman. The world's interests have never yet been fully represented. The propriety of woman voting had been to her a stumbling block; the idea was repelling. She was not yet allowed to vote, but she had ceased to consent to the arrangement which deprived her of that right, and therefore experienced a freedom of spirit which she had not known before. The idea that woman could not go to the ballot-box without a sacrifice of her delicacy was absurd. Women were allowed to vote in church matters unquestioned. They can hold railroad stock, bank stock and stock of other corporations, where their influence is in proportion to the amount held.

But we are not called upon to maintain the position of the propriety or expediency of women voting. The question is, shall they exercise the right so to do;—the propriety should be left to themselves. Women can now travel alone securely, where formerly it was considered a risk. She can deposit her vote with men, with as much propriety as she can ride with them in railroad cars, on steamboats, &c. She came all the way from the Green Mountains without any male attendant; she traveled with members of Congress and delegates to the Baltimore Convention, and not a “bear” among them offered her the least indignity.

Ernestine L. Rose quoted the testimony of Horace Mann, that our legislatures were bear gardens, but she looked upon them differently; men err ignorantly rather than wilfully. H. Mann represented Congress as the vilest of the vile, and argued thence the impropriety, the indelicacy of woman mingling in such company; but if H. Mann's representation be true, is it not time for woman to interfere? Men have had it their own way; in all the disgraceful political squabbles not a single son's mother of them all was present.

Further remarks were made by J. Miller McKim and Phebe Gibbons , after which the resolution was adopted.

The three following resolutions were separately considered and unanimously adopted, after remarks by P. E. Gibbons, J. A. Dugdale and E. L. Rose :

4th. *Resolved* , that the true interest of society demands, that woman should be represented in the government, and that her most strenuous exertions, and most valuable services are to be obtained only through her participation in its responsibilities and emoluments.

5th. *Resolved* , That if it be true, that it is woman's province to soothe the angry passions and calm the belligerent feelings of man, we know of no place where she would find a riper harvest awaiting her labor, than in the Halls of our National and State Legislatures.

6th. *Resolved* , That woman's sphere is that which her nature and capacity will enable her to fill, and not that appointed by man, and bounded by his ideas of propriety.

Dr. Harriet K. Hunt read the following letter from Elizabeth Blackwell, M. D., of New York.

New York, May 27, 1852.

Mrs. Darlington :—

Dear Madam —I thank you cordially for your very kind invitation, and would willingly attend your Convention did not my duties in New York prevent my leaving the city.

The Convention could not choose a more important subject than “Education” for discussion; and great good will be done if public attention is roused to the imperfection of our present system, in which the *physical nature* and the *duties of life* are equally neglected. I believe that the chief source of the false position of women is, the *inefficiency of women themselves* . The deplorable fact that they are so often careless mothers, weak wives, poor housekeepers, ignorant nurses, and frivolous human beings. If they would perform with strength and wisdom, the duties which lie immediately around them, every sphere of life would soon be open to them. They might be Priests, Physicians, Rulers, welcome everywhere, for all restrictive laws and foolish customs would speedily disappear before the spiritual power of strong, good women.

In order to develop such women, our present method of educating girls, which is an injurious waste of time, must be entirely re-modeled, and I shall look forward with great interest to any plan of action that may be suggested by your Convention.

With hearty sympathy in every aspiration, and the right hand of fellowship to every conscientious worker, believe me Very truly yours, 44 University Place Elizabeth Blackwell.

H. K. Hunt then read an address upon the medical education of women; on concluding she offered the following resolutions:

1st. *Resolved* , That the present position of medical organizations, precluding women from the same educational advantages with men, under pretext of delicacy, virtually acknowledges the impropriety of his being her medical attendant.

2nd. *Resolved* , That we will do all in our power to sustain those women who, from a conviction of duty, enter the medical profession, in their efforts to overcome the evils that have accumulated in their path, and in attacking the strongholds of vice.

3rd. *Resolved* , That the past actions and present indications of our medical schools should not affect us at all; and notwithstanding Geneva and Cleveland Medical Colleges closed their doors after graduating *one* woman each, and Harvard, through the false delicacy of the students, declared it inexpedient to receive one who had been in successful practice many years, we would still earnestly follow in peace and love where duty points, and leave the verdict to an enlightened public sentiment.

P. E. Gibbons advocated the relation. She remarked that the presence of woman is refining and civilizing. In large assemblies especially her influence is powerfully felt in restraining the boisterous passions of men. The Professors of the Geneva Medical College wished that Miss Blackwell might remain among them; her influence upon the class being highly beneficial.

18

Mrs. Nichols spoke earnestly of the imperfect education of woman. She has no knowledge of the laws of health, nor has she the means of obtaining the required information. Men hold the purse even when the money is made by the labor of both. We are ignorant of the laws which govern our being. Does it *cost* too much to educate us in a knowledge of these? How much greater are the expenses incurred by our ignorant violations of the laws of health?

Mrs. Gage testified to the ability of women to become good physicians. As the medical Colleges, none passed examination more successfully than the women students. The Professors granted

their capability for the study. We are all liable to disease, sickness and death. Women must be the physicians of their own children. The lives of children are in the hands of their mothers.

Mrs. Rose said, These are mighty questions. When our little ones are removed by death from our care and affection, we feel keenly our ignorance, and long to know more of the laws of health. Woman might be physicians to herself and her children. But the medical schools are closed against her; she is denied the advantages granted to man, for obtaining knowledge of these things, more necessary if possible to her than to her sex. Thus are her rights curtailed in this important respect. Public sentiment is against her. The idea of a female doctor is ridiculed. But what is she worth as a nurse of the sick, without a knowledge of the art of healing? I call upon the people to open the avenues to all occupations equally to woman, to remove the political and legal shackles from her, and *all* will be benefited thereby. Why am I, in the prime of life, in such feeble health? In my country the laws of health are, comparatively speaking, kept in a nut shell. The girl must not exercise herself. It is not fashionable! She must not be seen in active life, it is not feminine. The boy may run, the girl must creep. The great basis of this Convention is, that the rights of women are not inferior to those of men.

Evan Pugh, said, the question of women's rights affects the whole human race. We know from sad experience that man cannot rise while woman is degraded. No one soul can degrade another without injuring himself. Who were the mothers of great men? Women of mind, of thought, of independence; not women degraded by men's tyranny, laboring in prescribed limits, thinking other people's thoughts. No fact is better established than that the character of the parent is inherited by the child. Can noble men be born of inferior women? This question was universal, affecting all alike. The degradation of one sex was the degradation of the other.

19

Mrs. Mott spoke of the great change in public opinion, within her recollection, in regard to the so-called sphere of woman. There had been progress. Twenty-five years ago people wondered how a modest girl could attend lectures on botany; but modest girls did attend them, and other places, in former times, frequented only by men; and the result was not a loss of delicacy, but a higher and nobler development,—a truer modesty. She took a hopeful view of the cause, and closed with words of encouragement.

Dr. E. Harvey moved that ten cents admission be charged for each session to-morrow.

After some opposition, the motion was adopted by a large majority.

Adjourned to meet a 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

MORNING SESSION, JUNE 3.

The Convention met at 9 o'clock—the Hall crowded. The President in the chair.

The minutes of yesterday's proceedings were read by Sidney Pierce , and approved by the Convention.

A letter addressed to the Convention by Mary Mott of De Kalb Co., Indiana, was read by one of the Secretaries. The following passages are extracted from the letter.

Auburn, De Kalb Co., Indiana, May 17.

Sisters :—You have called another Convention, and all who are the friends of equal rights are invited to attend and participate in the deliberations. The invitation will probably meet the eye of thousands who would gladly encourage you by their presence, did circumstances permit them to do so. Your aim is the moral, physical, and intellectual elevation of woman, and through her to benefit the whole human race. Can a Convention be called for a nobler purpose? Have men ever aimed so high? They have had Conventions without stint; old men and young men, Whigs Democrats, Abolitionists and Slaveholders, all have had Conventions; but how few have aimed at anything higher than political power for themselves and party. We have looked upon their contests without personal interest in their result. Some benefits might come to our husbands and brothers, but none to us. We are permitted to talk about liberty, but we may not enjoy it. We may water the tree with our tears, while our husbands pluck and enjoy the fruit. Of what advantage is it to us to live in a Republic? Our social position is no better than it was in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Men have made great progress since that day; from being subjects they have become Sovereigns, 20 ruling as she professed to rule—by *divine right*. True, many of these Sovereigns have not a foot of ground, and but one subject, a wife; but then he has absolute control over that one. Yes, they have made progress; but for that progress they are much indebted to men who, being in possession of power, were only anxious to retain and extend it. The Great Charter was extorted from King John by the Barons in order to consolidate their power; they attended to the interests of the common people (who then were in a state of villanage) just so far as they could clearly see would be for their own interest, and no further. The world is much indebted to those sturdy Barons; they did more good than they ever thought of doing. There were germs in that charter that have borne excellent fruit since that day.

Error delights in obscurity; surrounded with clouds and darkness it is comparatively secure; but let these clouds be scattered, let the light of reason fall upon it, and it is dangerous no longer. Any act

that causes men to think, is so far an advantage to society. The ideas will not be lost. When King James the First talked and wrote upon the doctrine of the divine right of Kings, he little thought it would result in the beheading of his son Charles, and the expulsion of his son James from the throne. Shrouded in mystery, it was approached with reverence, and seldom critically examined, until he lifted the veil and invited others to behold its beauty. What had been a mystery was a mystery no longer. He forgot what others remembered—that it might have different aspects for the Sovereign and subject. I was judged unworthy of national homage; but very desirable as a household god. And men who thought Paul was in the dark when he wrote “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever resisteth the powers resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”—the men, I say, who could not and would not receive such doctrine from Paul, found him worthy of all praise, when he said, “wives, obey your husbands.” After awhile England proposed taxing the colonies. One party held that protection gave them the right of taxation. The other said the British Constitution gave the Government no power to tax, unless the persons were represented in Parliament. They declared their resolution to pay no taxes without representation. Much was said about the rights of man. And when at last a three penny tax was laid upon tea, the men being brimfull of patriotism, cared nothing for the tax; it was the principle they cared for, and they would fight for their principles. How very sincere they were, let the millions of wives answer, whose very existence is ignored in law. There was one thing women gained by that contest; they gained a clearer knowledge of their rights, a better understanding of their wrongs, which, according to Blackstone, are a deprivation of rights. A knowledge of these has produced a strong desire to seek a remedy. Hence the call for a Woman's Convention. We must expect some difference of opinion as to the extent of the reforms proposed; but none who have carefully examined the subject will see reason to doubt that our rights run parallel with the rights of man. That being granted, we may then inquire into their expediency. Many things we have a right to do which are inexpedient; but it is for *us* to say what rights we will waive and what we will enjoy.

We claim that the professions should be open to woman, believing she can preach as acceptably, study the law as thoroughly, and practice medicine as successfully, as man. The business of a clerk seems to us to be peculiarly feminine, and we claim the rights to choose any trade or business for which we have strength and capacity. If it is true that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, we would respectfully ask, by what authority men legislate for us, and who gave them that authority? If the power is a just one, from what source did they derive it? Certainly not from the consent of the governed. We presume neither men nor women care for the privilege of voting, except as a means of securing the enjoyment of the rights with which they have been endowed by their Creator, and for the protection of which “Government were first instituted among men.” The rights of woman have been long in abeyance, but no lapse of time can deprive her of

them; they are not transferable. She does not ask the law to confer upon her new rights. She only asks to have her just rights recognized and protected. A glance at the present position of women will show that the Law does not effect this. It places Minors, Idiots, Insane Persons and Married Women in the same category. Man takes all that the wife has to his own use, and such robberies are so common that they excite no indignation in the breasts of his fellow men. He can spend all she has at the gaming table, and who can hinder him? He can spend it in dissipation, while his deceived wife is suffering at home for the necessary of life. The law gives him the property, and with that he can usually find tools to work out his designs. The law interposes no barriers between him and his victim. If a married woman had equal protection with the husband, she would be ambitious to acquire property by her own industry, and the habit of industry and forethought thus acquired, would be found valuable in the marriage relation, and she would not be compelled to enter matrimony as a house of refuge. 22 But we are told that marriage is a contract, voluntarily entered into by competent parties, and by this contract the rights of the woman are transferred to the man. But *marriage is not a contract*, it is an union instituted by God himself, anterior to any contract whatever. Man was not pronounced good until woman created, and God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let THEM *have dominion*. But some one may meet us here with the questions, did he not say to the woman, after the fall, "thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee?" Yes, the Bible says so: and in the next chapter we are told, that Adam and Eve had two sons, the eldest called Cain, the youngest Abel; and God said to Cain when speaking of Abel, unto thee shall be his desire, and *Thou shalt ruled over him*, You see they are the very words used to Eve; therefore, if dominion was taken from the woman and given to the man; it was taken from all younger brothers and given to the first born. If marriage be a contract, why is it not governed by the same rules that govern other contracts? A consideration is necessary to the existence of a contract. In marriage, the man offers love for love and hand for hand, but what is the consideration for those personal rights of which he dispossesses her? If a contract, why is there no remedy for its violation, either in Law or Equity, as is the case with other contracts? The bridegroom says in the marriage service, "with all my worldly goods I thee endow." Those who framed that impressive service no doubt considered it but just, that he who received all by the courtesy of England, should endow her as liberally, and they thus reminded every bridegroom of his duty, even before the altar; and what honest man will say he should not keep his word?

Mary Mott

The following Address, written by Ann Preston, and designed as an exposition of the principles and purposes of the Convention, was impressively read by the author:

ADDRESS.

The question is repeatedly asked by those who have thought but little upon the subject of woman's position in society, "What does woman want more than she possess already? Is she not beloved, honored, guarded, cherished? Wherein are her rights infringed, or her liberties curtailed?"

Glowing pictures have been drawn of the fitness of the present relations of society, and of the beauty of woman's dependence upon the protecting love of man, and frightful visions have been evoked of the confusion and perversion of nature which would occur if the doctrine of the equal rights of man and woman was once admitted.

The idea seems to prevail that movements for the elevation of woman arise not from the legitimate wants of society, but from the vague restlessness of unquiet spirits; not from the serene dictates of wisdom, but from the headlong impulses of fanaticism.

We came not here to argue the question of the relative strength of intellect in man and woman, for the reform which we advocate depends not upon its settlement.

We place not the interests of woman in antagonism to those of her brother, of "The woman's causes is man's: They rise or sink together, Dwarfed or God-like, bond or free."

We maintain not that woman should lose any of that refinement and delicacy of spirit which, as a celestial halo, ever encircles the pure in heart.

We contend not that she shall become noisy and dictatorial, and abjure the quiet graces of life.

We claim not that she, any more than her brother, should engage in any vocation or appear in any situation to which her nature and abilities are not fitted.

But we ask for her, as for man, equality before the law, and freedom to exercise all her powers and faculties under the direction of her own judgment and volition.

When a woman dies, leaving behind her a husband and children, no appraisers come into the desolated home to examine the effects; the father is the guardian of his offspring; the family relations is not invaded by law. But when a man dies the case is entirely different; in the hour of the widow's deep distress strangers come into the house to take an inventory of the effects, strangers are appointed to be the guardians of her children, and she, their natural care-taker, thenceforth has

no legal direction of their interests; strangers decide upon the propriety of the sale of the property—earned, perhaps, by her own and her husband's mutual efforts—and her interest in the estate is coolly designated as the “*widow's incumbrance?*”

In the extremity of her bereavement there is piled upon her, not only the dread of separation from her children, but that of being sent homeless from the spot where every object has been consecrated by her tenderest affections.

Nor is the practical working of this law better than its theory; all over the country there are widows who have been made doubly desolate 24 by its provisions—widows separated from their children, who, if they had the disposal of their own and their husband's mutual property, might have retrieved their circumstances, and kept the household band together.

We ask for such change in public sentiment as shall procure the repeal of this oppressive law.

We ask that woman shall have free access to vocations of profit and honor, the means of earning a livelihood and independence for herself! As a general rule, profitable employments are not considered open to woman, nor are her business capabilities encouraged and developed by systematic training. Gloomy must be the feelings of the father of a family of young daughters when he is about to bid farewell to the world, if he is leaving them without the means of pecuniary support. Their brothers may go out into society and gain position and competency; but for them there is but little choice of employment, and, too often, they are left with repressed and crippled energies to pine and chafe under the bitter sense of poverty and dependence.

Their pursuits are to be determined, not by their inclination, judgment, and ability, as are those of man, but by the popular estimate of what is proper and becoming. In Turkey public delicacy is outraged if a woman appears unveiled beyond the walls of the Harem; in America a sentiment no less arbitrary presumes to mark out for her the precise boundaries of womanly propriety; and she who ventures to step beyond them, must do it at the peril of encountering low sneers, coarse allusions, and the withering imputation of want of feminine delicacy.

Even for the same services woman generally receives less than man. The whole tendency of our customs, habits and teaching, is to make her *dependent*—dependent in outward circumstances, dependent in spirit.

As a consequence of her fewer resources, marriage has been to her the great means of securing position in society. Thus it is that this relation—which should ever be a “holy sacrament”—the

unbiased and generous election of the free and self-sustained being, too often is degraded into a mean acceptance of a shelter from neglect and poverty!

We ask that woman shall be trained to unfold her whole nature; to exercise all her powers and faculties.

It is said that the domestic circle is the peculiar province of woman: that "men are what mothers make them." But how can that woman who does not live for self-culture and self-development, who has herself no exalted objects in life, imbue her children with lofty aspirations, or train her sons to a free and glorious manhood?

25

She best can fulfil the duties of wife and mother, who is fitted for other and varied usefulness.

The being who lives for one relation only cannot possess the power and scope which are required for the highest excellence even in that one. If the whole body is left without exercise, one arm does not become strong; if the tree is stunted in its growth, one branch does not shoot into surpassing luxuriance.

That woman whose habits and mental training enable her to assist and sustain her husband in seasons of difficulty, and whose children rely on her as a wise counsellor, commands a life-long reverence far deeper and dearer than can be secured by transient accomplishments, or the most refined and delicate imbecility!

All women are not wives and mothers, but all have spirits needing development, powers that grow with their exercise.

Those who are best acquainted with the state of society know that there is, at this time, a vast amount of unhappiness among women for want of free outlets to their powers; that thousands are yearning for fuller development, and a wider field of usefulness. The same energies which in man find vent in the professions, and in the thousand forms of business and study, must find an ennobling channel in woman, else they will be frittered away in trifles, or turned into instruments to prey upon their possessor.

To follow the empty round of fashion, to retail gossip and scandal, to be an ornament in the parlor or a mere drudge in the kitchen, to live as an appendage to any human being, does not fill up nor satisfy the capacities of a soul awakened to a sense of its true wants, and the far-reaching and mighty interests which cluster around its existence.

We protest against the tyranny of that public sentiment which assigns any arbitrary sphere to woman.

God has made the happiness and development of His creatures to depend upon the free exercise of their powers and faculties. Freedom is the law of beauty, written by His fingers upon the human mind, and the only condition upon which it can attain to its full stature, and expand in its natural and beautiful proportions.

It is recognized, in reference to man, that his judgment, opportunities and abilities are the proper measure of his sphere. "The tools to him who can use them." But the same principles are not trusted in their application to woman, lest, forsooth, she could lose her feminine characteristics, and, like the lost Pleiad, forsake her native sphere!

It seems to be forgotten that the laws of nature will not be suspended: that the human mind, when released from pressure, like water, must find its own level; that woman cannot, if she would, cast away her nature and instincts; that it is only when we are left free to obey the inward attractions of our being that we fall into our natural places, and move in our God-appointed orbits.

We ask that none shall dare to come in between woman and her Maker, and with unhallowed hands attempt to plant their shallow posts and draw their flimsy cords around the Heaven-wide sphere of an immortal spirit!

We maintain that God has not so failed in his adaptations as to give powers to be wasted, talents to be wrapped in a napkin; and that the possession of faculties and capabilities is the warrant of nature, the command of the All-Wise for their culture and exercise.

We believe that the woman who is obeying the convictions of her own soul, and whose ability is commensurate with her employment, is ever in her own true sphere; whether in her quiet home she is training her children to nobleness and virtue, or is standing as a physician by the bed of sickness and sorrow,—whether with Elizabeth Fry she is preaching the gospel of glad tidings to the sad dwellers in prison, or like the Italian, Lauri Bassi, is filling a professor's chair and expounding philosophy to admiring and instructed listeners.

While we demand for woman a more complete physical, intellectual and moral education, as the means of strengthening and beautifying her own nature, and of ennobling the whole race, we also ask for a more elevated standard of excellence and moral purity in *man*: and we maintain that if

there is any place of resort or employment in society, which *necessarily* would sully the delicacy of woman's spirit, in that, man also must be contaminated and degraded.

Woman indeed should wear about her, wherever she moves, the protecting investment of innocence and purity; but not less is it requisite that he, who is the companion of her life, should guard his spirit with the same sacred and beautiful covering.

We believe that woman as an accountable being, cannot innocently merge her individuality in that of her brother, or accept from him the limitations of her sphere.

In all life's great extremities she also is thrown upon her inward resources, and stands alone. Man cannot step in between her and the "accusing angel" of her own conscience; alone in the solitude of her spirit she must wrestle with her own sorrows: none can walk for her "the valley of the shadow of death!" When her brother shall be able to settle for her accountabilities, and "give to God a ransom for her 27 soul," then, and not till then, may she rightly commit to him the direction of her powers and activities.

We ask, in fine, for the application of the fundamental principles of Christianity and republicanism to this, as to all other questions of vital importance; and appealing to all who desire the progression and happiness of the whole race, we ask them, as magnanimous men and true women, to examine this subject in the spirit of a generous and candid investigation.

Joseph A. Dugdale moved the adoption of the address, and in doing so, made a few remarks on the injustice of the laws by which happy households are often broken up on the death of the husband and father. He said there remained one way in which this great evil could be avoided even while the law remains unchanged, and that was by a will of the husband conveying the whole property of their joint industry and economy to the wife, in the event of his death. He urged this as the duty of every husband and father. He closed his remarks with the following extract from the will of Martin Luther, proving that other errors than those of the church, were deemed by the great Reformer of sufficient magnitude to awaken his earnest opposition:

"This is all I am worth, and I give it all to my wife for the following reasons:

"1. Because she has always conducted herself towards me, lovingly, worthily and beautifully, like a pious, faithful and noble wife; and by the rich blessings of God, she has borne and brought up five living children, who yet live, and God grant they may long live.

"2. Because she will take upon herself and pay the debts which I owe and may not be able to pay during my life, which, so far as I can estimate, may account to about 450 florins, or perhaps a little more.

"3. But most of all, because I will not have her dependent on the children, but the children on her; that they may hold her in honor, and submit themselves to her as God has commanded. For I see well and observe, how the devil, by wicked and envious mouths, heats and excites children, even though they be pious, against this command; especially when the mothers are widows, and the sons get wives, and the daughters get husbands, and again *socrus murum, nurus socrum*. For I hold that the mother will be the best guardian for her own children, and will use what little property and goods she may have, not for their disadvantage and injury, but for their good and improvement, since they are her own flesh and blood, and she carried them under her heart.

"And if, after my death, she should find it necessary or desirable to 28 marry again, (for I cannot pretend to set limits to the will or providence of God,) yet I trust and herewith express my confidence that she will conduct herself toward our mutual children as becometh a mother, and will faithfully impart to them property, and do whatever else is right.

"And herewith I humbly pray my most gracious lord, his grace Duke John Frederick, elector of Saxony, graciously to guard and protect the above named gifts and property.

"I also entreat all my good friends to be witnesses for my dear Catey, and help to defend her should any good for-nothing mouth reprove and slander her, as if she had secretly some personal property of which she would defraud the poor children. For I testify there is no personal property except the plate and jewelry enumerated above.

"Finally, I beg, since in this will or testament I have not used legal forms or words, (and thereto I have my reasons,) that every one may let me be the person that I am in truth, namely, openly and known both in heaven and earth, and in hell, and let me have respect and authority enough so that I may be trusted and believed more than any lawyer. For so God the Father of all mercies hath entrusted to me, a poor miserable condemned sinner, the Gospel of His dear Son, and therein thus for I have behaved and conducted myself truly and faithfully, and it has made such progress in the world through me, and I am honored as a teacher of truth, notwithstanding the course of the Pope and the wrath of emperors, kings, princes, priests and all kinds of devils; much rather then let me be believed in this little matter, especially as her in my hand which is very well known; and I hope it may be enough, when it can be said and proved that this is the serious and deliberate desire of Dr. Martin

Luther (who is God's lawyer and witness of his Gospel,) to be proved by his own hand and seal, Sept. 16th, 1542."

Lucretia Mott, (see 7th Resolution,) thought it important that we should not disclaim the antagonism that woman's present position rendered it necessary she should assume. Too long had wrongs and oppressions existed without an acknowledged wrong-doer and oppressor. It was not until the slaveholder was told, "thou art the man," that a healthful agitation was brought about. Woman is told that the fault is in herself, in too willingly submitting to her inferior condition; but, like the slave, she is pressed down by laws in the making of which she has had no voice, crushed by customs that have grown out of such laws. She cannot rise, therefore, while thus trampled in the dust. The oppressor does not see himself in that light until the oppressed cry for deliverance.

29

The extract from Luther's will which has been read, while it gives evidence of the appreciation of the *services* of his wife, to a certain extent, and manifests a *generous* disposition to reward her, as a faithful wife, still only proves the degrading relation she bore to her husband. There is no recognition of her equal right to their joint earnings. While the wife is obliged to accept as a gift that which in justice belongs to her, however generous the boon, she is but an inferior dependent.

The law of our State and of New York has within a few years been so amended that the wife has *some* control over a part of her property. Much yet remains to be done; and if woman "contend earnestly" for the right, man will co-operate with her in adjusting all her claims.

We have only to look back a few years, to satisfy ourselves, that the demands already made are met in a disposition to redress the grievances. When a delegation of women to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, in 1840, could find no favor in London, what were the reasons assigned for the exclusion? Not that the *right* of representation was not as much woman's as man's, but that "they would be ridiculed in the morning papers."

Daniel O'Connell felt the injustice done to those delegates, and in a letter on the subject thus expressed himself:

"My first impression was strong against that admission; but when called upon to give my personal decision on the subject, I investigated the grounds of the opinion formed, and easily discovered that it was founded on no better grounds than an apprehension of the ridicule it might excite, if the Convention were to do what is so unusual in England—to admit women to an equal share and right of discussion. I also without difficulty recognised that this was an unworthy, and indeed a cowardly motive, and I easily overcome its influence.

“My mature consideration of the entire subject convinces me of the right of the female delegates to take their seats in the Convention, and of the injustice of excluding them. I do not care to add, that I deem it also impolite, because that exclusion being unjust, it ought not to have taken place, even if it could also be politic. ... Even in England, with all our fastidiousness, some women vote upon the great regulation of the Bank of England—in the nomination of its directors and governors, and in all other details, equally with men; that is, they assist in the most awfully important business, the regulation of the currency of this mighty empire, influencing the fortunes of all commercial nations.

“Our women, in like manner, vote at the Indian House; that is, in the regulation of the government of more than one hundred millions of human beings ... I have a consciousness that I have not done my duty, in not sooner urging these considerations on the Convention.”

Dr. Bowring advocated the admission of the delegates at that time; and afterward in a letter to this country, said, “How often have I regretted that the woman's question, to me of singular interest, was launched with so little preparation, so little knowledge of the manner in which it had been entangled, by the fears of some, and the follies of others! But, bear up! for *the coming of those women will form an era in the future history of philanthropic daring*. They made a *deep*, if not a wide impression; and have created apostles, if as yet they have not multitudes of followers. The experiment was well worth making. It honored America—it will instruct England. If in some matters of high civilization you are *behind us*, in this matter of courageous benevolence how far are you before us!”

Since that time women have fairly entered the field, as students of Medicine and as Physicians, as Editors and Lecturers, engaged in schools of design, and in the taking of Daguerres, as well as in some other works of art, and in holding Conventions in several of the States of our Union for the advocacy of our entire claims.

A National Society has been formed; and the proceedings of these Conventions and Society Meetings have been fairly reported and have received favorable notices in many of the papers of this country, as well as in the Westminster Review in England.

Frances D. Gage said that allusion had been made in the address to the popular sentiment, that men are what their mothers make them. She repelled this sentiment as an indignity to her sex. What mother, she asked, ever taught her son to drink rum, gamble, swear, smoke and chew tobacco? The truth was, that the boy was virtually taught to regard his *mother as inferior*, and that it was not *manly* to follow her instructions. When he left the hearthstone he was beyond her reach. He found men, and those too in elevated stations, addicted to vulgar and vicious practices, and he was liable, in forgetfulness of all that his mother had taught him, to fall into such habits himself. Men allowed

grog-shops to be set up on the street corners, and permitted gambling-houses to exist, to tempt the boy from the path of virtue; and when the mothers asked for the abatement of these evils, they were told to keep in their *sphere*. In the town where she resided (McConnellsville, Morgan county, Ohio,) the women sent a large petition to the Court asking that grogshops 31 might not be licensed. The Judge thereupon remarked that "woman's place was in the nursery and the parlor, and that when she interfered with public affairs, or set herself up as an instructor of the Courts, she was out of her sphere." Thus men perpetuate institutions which undermine the influence of the mothers, and corrupt the morals of the sons. The boys were, therefore, in many cases, what men made them. True, there were some cases in which the mother, by superior power, shaped the destiny of her sons, in spite of adverse influences. Such cases were not the rule, but the exception. Mothers, generally, *could not* exert their full influence over their sons, unless they were permitted to stand by them as the equals of their fathers in all relations of life.

After further remarks by Lucretia Mott and Oliver Johnson, the Address was fully adopted as an exposition of the views of the Convention, and, on motion, ordered to be printed, with the Proceedings, and separately, for distribution.

James Mott, from the Business Committee, reported resolutions, which, after discussion by L. Mott, E. L. Rose, Mary Earle, Wm. Lloyd and others, were adopted:

7. *Resolved*, That in demanding for women that equal station among their brethren to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, we do not urge the claim in the spirit of an adverse policy, or with any idea of separate advantages, or in any apprehension of conflicting interests between the sexes.
8. *Resolved*, That while we regret the antagonism into which we are necessarily brought to some of the laws, customs and monopolies of society, we have cause to rejoice that the exposure of the great wrongs of woman has been so promptly met by a kind spirit, and a disposition to redress these wrongs, to open avenues for her elevation, and to cooperate for her entire enfranchisement.
9. *Resolved*, That the greatest and most varied development of the human mind, and the widest sphere of usefulness, can be obtained only by the highest intellectual culture of the whole people, and that all obstructions should be removed which tend to prevent women from entering, as freely as men, upon the study of the physical, mental and moral sciences.

On motion the Convention adjourned till half-past two.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

President in the chair at half-past two. House excessively crowded.

The Convention resumed the consideration of the 9th Resolution.

B. Rush Plumly said: I desire to speak, although very briefly, upon this important reform, which, it seems to me, has a wider scope and a deeper significance—than we are accustomed to believe.

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It is not, as many persons imagine, a small insurrection against authority, or even tyranny, in the domestic circle; nor is its object limited to the alleviation of that unspoken and often unspeakable wretchedness which results from the discordant relations of the sexes in the present state of society.

It seeks, not only diminish the vice and disease and lessen the suffering of the present, but to so promote and establish true and harmonious relations between man and woman, that, in the future, the steadily improving race shall out-grow perverse propensities which have become *characteristics* in millions of human beings, from which the vices and misery and degeneracy of society inevitably result.

This is the depth and compass of the Woman's Rights movement, and considered in this aspect it has, in my opinion, an importance not equalled by any reform of this reformatory era; it is of greater moment than Peace, Anti-slavery, or Temperance,—although no candid person will suspect me of a design to depreciate any one of these beneficent efforts.

It is urged against this movement, that woman must leave her sphere to prosecute it. This we deny. We affirm that she is not now in her sphere, nor ever will be, until she has equal advantages with man, and is no longer regarded as his inferior.

But, the question is not whether woman shall desert her household, to cabal and intrigue in politics, vote at elections, harangue Senates, marshal Armies, and direct Navies,—for in these things man may be as much out of his sphere as woman. God did not create either of them to be the murders and marauders of their kind. But this is the matter at issue: Shall woman be herself the judge of her duties to God and humanity; shall she, as a citizen amenable to the laws under which she lives, have a voice in their enactment; as a member of the social compact, shall she participate in the formation and control of those institutions to which she is made subject; or shall man assume the power to prescribe the sphere of her duties, become the keeper of her conscience, the censor of her actions,

and having first limited her development to the measure of his convenience, then estimate her abilities by that restricted and partial development?

This has been the usage of society towards woman,—a usage equally repugnant to common justice and sound philosophy, and for which tyranny the world has incurred unceasing retribution.

Nowhere is permanence in human institutions; nowhere is happiness among men. The whole history of the race is one continued story of violence, and crime, and suffering, with only occasional episodes of peace and virtue. Although institutions which recognize all the rights of all classes of the people, and allow scope for the growth and activity of every faculty, must, in their very nature, increase in power and permanence, yet, compared with the duration of things, the oldest nations and the best founded governments have had but an ephemeral existence, appearing, maturing, and decaying with startling rapidity, and endless succession.

No form has been exempt from this national mortality. Theocracies, oligarchies, monarchies, despotisms, republics, have arisen, flourished and vanished into history or tradition. So inevitable does the successive ruin appear, that we have incorporated into our religious faith the idea that limitation, conflict and decay, rather than expansion, permanence and peace, are inherent in all human governments, and, in despair, man postpones his hope of national as well as of individual stability and happiness to some future existence.

For results so certain and so universal among all people, in every age, there must be some profound and radical cause, which religion and philosophy have not discovered, or for which they have proposed no remedy.

It is not sufficient to say that these are consequences of human imperfection; *that* we know; but whence arises the imperfection? It does not satisfy us to assert that they proceed from the depravity of man,—how came he depraved? Nor is it more consoling to declare that all human institutions *must* change and perish. Why *must* they? Human institutions, if founded upon eternal principles, become divine, and may be immortal; it is not the human, but the inhuman institution which perish; not humanity, but *in* humanity which fills the earth with strife and blood.

No! there is behind, and below all these imaginary causes, a real cause for the degeneracy of the race. It may be traced to the long continued disregard of the laws of God in relation to woman, and the retribution is worked out physiologically upon the whole nature of man, reaching every tissue of his body and every faculty of his mind.

It is a law of God, well understood, that whenever and wherever any community forcibly depresses any class of its people below the general level, it only injures and degrades that class, but is itself injured, degraded, and deranged in exact proportion to the wrong it perpetrates. Whenever we crowd any portion of our fellow beings into an abyss of ignorance and servitude, we are drawn irresistibly, by their weight, to the brink of the same gulf; in whatever country any degree of oppression exists, the oppressor will early discover that a measure of his own 34 freedom is lost, in the constant vigilance demanded to watch his victims; and by so teaching us that we cannot bind a chain on the neck of any man, without finding the other end on our own heel, God at once vindicates the immutable justice of his laws, and establishes the unity of the race.

If this be the inevitable result of the oppression of an individual, or a class, how much more forcibly must it apply when one-half the world, the "mothers of the living," are made subject to systematic deprivation of rights, and tyrannous restriction in the exercise of high and noble faculties.

I do not propose to detail the disabilities under which woman suffers. They have been ably depicted by women in this meeting. But I wish to indicate the breadth and basis of this reform, for the consideration of those people who suppose it to be a fractional and transient movement.

Whatever suffering or degradation woman is subjected to, by the depression of the whole sex below the level of society, reacts with frightful force upon man; who is thus compelled to compensate for the cruel and mistaken policy, which, in all time, has denied to her equal opportunities of education and development, closed to her those avenues to profit and progress open to him, ignored her in the Church and State as feeble and inferior, rejected her counsels, and derided her authority in the creation of those institutions of society to which not only she but her children are to be subject; although if there be any induction more striking than another it is this, that a child, who is the offspring of the physical union of man and woman, can only be truly educated and nurtured by institutions springing from the unity of mental and moral elements in the father and mother.

This universal ignoring of the feminine element pervades not only the politics, but the religion of every country on earth. Men worship, as their supreme God, only an embodiment of the masculine element,—“Power,” whether in Jove or Jehovah; and ever in the Christian Trinity or Unity, the same masculine ideal is maintained. Jesus did, indeed, recognize the feminine element in his emphatic declaration that “God is Love,” but his professed followers have “not so learned him,” for they not only declare God to be a triune masculinity, but they have driven woman from the pulpit, and would dispute with her the place at the cross and the sepulchre.

The religions of antiquity permitted woman to be a priestess at the expense of wifehood and maternity, but our Christian protestantism denies to her the mission of minister, even with that penalty. It is true the Catholic Church does recognize women among its divinities, and it might be a curious and instructive inquiry, how far that church owes its perpetuity, despite its gigantic crimes and crushing despotism, to the recognition of "Mary the *mother* of God." In its effort to perpetuate the servitude of woman, as in other attempts to defend oppression and falsehood, society has suborned the handmaids of progress, Religion and Science, to justify its wickedness; the one to prove inferiority from her organism, the other to add the weight of its anathema against any effort at equality.

But Nature vindicates herself against the first, by presenting De Stael, Margaret Fuller and others; and to the cavilling bigot it may be said that whoever declared that "man is the head of the woman," if he designed to justify the present interpretation of that expression, has forfeited all claim to the apostleship of a religion whose highest merit it is to equalize the people by elevating the oppressed. But Paul taught no such doctrine.

The result of all this circumscription of woman has been to enfeeble and misdirect her faculties, to weaken the influence of her nature upon society and specially upon her offspring. Driven from the thousand avenues to wealth and position open to man, denied access to the best institutions of learning, permitted to acquire only superficial accomplishments, she is ushered into society at an age when her brothers are preparing to enter colleges and halls of learning from which she is excluded, and thus undeveloped and comparatively helpless, her instincts vitiated and no freedom for her affinities, she is turned adrift to encounter obstacles for which she is unprepared, and in the severe conflict to barter her honor for subsistence; or if she escape that horrible contingency, to exchange her beauty or her services for a matrimonial establishment, and thus prepare to perpetuate human degeneracy.

There are many exceptions to this statement, but the statement is the rule. From these unequal and discordant relations, and the feeble and restricted influence of the mother, spring generations of children who are born constitutionally defective in the feminine qualities of gentleness, purity and love; and the utter rejection of that element in the societary arrangements under which they grow to manhood, aggravates their inherited tendencies, until whole nations of warriors founding governments of blood have filled the earth, and war and rapine have not only become the occupation and the pastime of man, but have grown into his religion and become incarnate in the Deities he worships.

It is thus that the seeds of violence and vice are sown with the germs of the generations, and they spring to a frightful harvest in each succeeding growth of the race. Millions of human beings issue into life, 36 pre-ordained—not in the theological but in the physiological sense—to violence and crime, and they go forth to make their calling and election sure.

From these the world recruits its armies, renews its tyrants, refills its slave-pens and its brothels, populates its prisons, alms-houses and asylums. It is vain to hope for other result while woman, upon whom, as “mother of the living,” depends the progress of man, is denied any other than a limited and indirect influence in the fabric of society.

We may abolish slavery, remove intemperance, banish war and licentiousness, but they will have frightful reproduction in the elemental discord of our natures; for that which is “*in us* will be revealed.” Man indicates his condition by the institutions he creates; they are the issues of the life he lives at the time, the outward sign of his inward state.

To improve that inward condition, and arrest at their origin these causes of human degeneracy, is the object of this reform. It proposes, as before stated, not only to cure but to prevent the diseases of the body politic; to place man and woman in such natural and true relations of equal and mutual development, and to so sanctify marriage that from their union under the highest auspices, a regenerate humanity shall not only cease to be violent and vicious, but shall outgrow the dispositions to violence and vice.

We know that this is a work for whole generations, but as we believe it to be radical and effectual, it should be at once begun. We think the first great step is to clear away the rubbish of ages from the pathway of woman, to abolish the onerous restrictions which environ her in every direction, to open to her the temples of Religion, the halls of Science and Art, and the marts of commerce, affording her the same opportunity for education and occupation now enjoyed by man; no longer, by corrupt public sentiment and partial legislation, to limit her to a few and poorly paid pursuits to obtain subsistence and thus increase her dependence upon the charity of man, not to deny her admission to any institution of learning, whose richly endowed professorships and vast advantages she by her labor has contributed to create only to see them monopolized by man. I know that in answer to this it is urged that she has organic limits intellectually which deny to her such attainments. It is sufficient to reply, that under all the disabilities to which she is subject, her sex has produced De Stael and Margaret Fuller. I may refer again to the old objection that she must neglect the sacred duties of home, to which we might reply by naming honorable women not a few, “who have made the highest attainments wholly compatible with domestic 37 duties and those of us who have the

privilege of their friendship may point with silent exultation to Lucretia Mott and Mrs. Mira Townsend of Philadelphia, and many others whose names are destined to enviable fame, in this respect.

Give to woman her freedom from social tyranny, allow full development to her faculties and scope for her affinities, and then if the world shall need Napoleons it may also need Joans of Arc; if its is prepared for Newtons and Herschels, it may need its Mitchell; or if it ascend to the cycle of art, philanthropy, morals or religion, it will find in the mutual labors of the co-equal sexes its only hope of an ultimate rounding up of humanity to symmetry and perfection.

C. I. H. Nichol followed. The resolution was then passed by a large and unanimous vote.

The following persons were appointed as a publication Committee; Sidney Pierce, Hannah Darlington, Abby Kimber, Margaret Jones.

The Finance Committee reported, that from the amount of money received at the door, after the rent of the Hall had been paid, ninety dollars would be left for the publication of reports, and other expenses of the Convention.

The remainder of the Resolutions were separately considered and passed without discussion.

10. *Resolved*, That we cannot appreciate the justice or generosity of the laws which require women to pay taxes, and thus enable legislators richly to endow Colleges and Universities for their own sexes, from which the female sex is entirely excluded.

11. *Resolved*, That the growing liberality of legislation and judicial construction, in regard to the property rights of married women, affords gratifying evidence of the equity of our demands, and of their progress in public sentiment.

12. *Resolved*, That the disposition of property by law as affecting married parties, ought to be the same for the husband and the wife, "that she should have, during life, an equal control over the property gained by their mutual toil and sacrifices; and be heir to her husband, precisely to the extent that he is heir to her."

13. *Resolved*, That the mother being as much the natural guardian of the child as the father, ought so to be recognized in law, and if it is justly the province of the Court to appoint guardians for minors, want of qualification in the surviving parent should be the required condition of the appointment.

14. *Resolved*, That the inequality of the remuneration paid for woman's labor compared with that of man, is unjust and degrading, for so long as custom awards to her smaller compensation for

services of equal value, she will be held in a state of dependence, not by any order of nature, but by an arbitrary rule of man.

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15. *Resolved*, That the distinctive traits of female character like is distinct physical organism, having its foundation in nature, the widest range of thought and action, and the highest cultivation and development of all its varied powers, will only make more apparent those sensibilities and graces which are considered it peculiar charm.

16. *Resolved*, That claiming for woman all the rights of human beings we are but asserting her humanity, leaving the differences actually existing in the male and female constitutions to take care of themselves, these differences furnishing no reason for subjecting one sex to the other.

On motion of Phebe E. Gibbons,

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to prepare and circulate petitions, asking of our Legislature such a change in the Constitution and laws of this State, as shall extend to woman the privilege of the elective franchise, and equality in the division and inheritance of property.

Resolved, That said Committee be instructed to collect information upon the rights acknowledged and privileges guaranteed to women by other States and Governments, publishing it in such way as by them shall be deemed best for promoting political and legal equality between the sexes.

On motion,

Resolved, That H. M. Darlington, P. E. Gibbons, Hannah Wright, Mary Ann Fulton, Sarah E. Miller, Lea Pusey and Ruth Dugdale be the Committee.

Oliver Johnson offered a resolution expressing the satisfaction afforded to the members of the Convention by the presence and labors of those friends who had come from their distant homes in other States to be with us on this occasion. It was unanimously adopted.

The Convention adjourned *sine die*.