

Speeches of George William Curtis and Henry Ward Beecher

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EX LIBRIS Carrie Chapman Catt I have six honest serving men, They taught me an I knew, Their names are Why&What&When And How&Where&Who. Kipling.

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SPEECHES of GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS HENRY WARD BEECHER New York: THE NATIONAL-AMERICAN WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION 107 WORLD BUILDING 1898

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EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN. By GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. A speech in the Constitutional Convention of New York, at Albany, July 19, 1867.

The Convention resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole on the report of the Committee on the Right of Suffrage and the Qualifications to Hold Office, Mr. Alvord, of Onondaga, in the Chair.

The Chairman announced the question to be on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Cayuga Mr. C.C. Dwight.

Mr. Curtis offered the following amendment:

“In the first section, strike out the word ‘male,’ and wherever in that section the word ‘he’ occurs, add ‘or she,’ and wherever the word ‘his’ occurs, add ‘or her.’”

Mr. Curtis —In proposing a change so new to our political practice, but so harmonious with the spirit and principles of our government, it is only just that I should attempt to show that it is neither repugnant to reason nor hurtful to the state. Yet I confess some embarrassment, for while the essential reason of the proposition seems to me to be clearly defined, the objection to 2 it is vague and shadowy. From the formal opening of the general discussion of the question in this country, by the Convention at Seneca Falls, in 1848, down to the present moment, the opposition to the suggestion, so far as I am acquainted with it, has been only the repetition of a traditional prejudice, or the protest of mere sentimentality, and to cope with these is like wrestling with a malaria or arguing with the east wind. I do not know, indeed, why the Committee have changed the phrase male inhabitant or citizen, which is uniformly used in a constitutional clause limiting the elective franchise. Under the circumstances, the word “man” is obscure and undoubtedly includes women as much as the word “mankind.” But the intention of the clause is evident, and the report of the Committee makes it indisputable. Had they been willing to say directly what they say indirectly, the eighth line, and what follows, would read: “Provided that idiots, lunatics, persons under guardianship, felons, women, and persons convicted of bribery, etc., shall not be entitled to vote.” In their report the committee omit to tell us why they politically class the women of New York with idiots and criminals. They assert, merely, that the general enfranchisement of women would be a novelty, which is true of every step of political progress and is therefore a presumption in its favor, and they speak of it in a phrase which is intended to stigmatize it as unwomanly, which is simply an assumption and a prejudice. I wish to know, sir, and I ask in the name of the political justice and consistency of this State, why it is that half of 3 the adult population, as vitally interested in good government as the other half, who own property, manage estates, and pay taxes, who discharge all the duties of good citizens and are perfectly intelligent and capable, are absolutely deprived of political power, and classed with lunatics and felons. The boy will become a man and voter; the lunatic may emerge from the cloud and resume his rights; the idiot, plastic, under the tender hand of modern science, may be moulded into the full citizen; the criminal, whose hand still drips with the blood of his country and of liberty, may be pardoned and restored. But no age, no wisdom, no peculiar fitness, no public service, no effort, no desire, can remove from women this enormous and extraordinary disability. Upon what reasonable ground does it rest? Upon none whatever. It is contrary to natural justice, to the acknowledged and traditional principles of the American government, and to the most enlightened political philosophy. The absolute exclusion of women from political power in this State is simply usurpation. “In every age and country,” says the historian

Gibbon, nearly a hundred years ago, "the wiser or at least the stronger of the two sexes, has usurped the powers of the State and confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life."

The historical fact is that the usurping class, as Gibbon calls them, have always regulated the position of women by their own theories and convenience. The barbaric Persian, for instance, punished an insult to the woman with death, not because of her, but of himself. 4 She was part of *him*. And the civilized English Blackstone only repeats the barbaric Persian when he says that the wife and husband form but one person—that is, the husband. Sir, it would be extremely amusing, if it were not tragical, to trace the consequences of this theory on human society and the unhappy effect upon the progress of civilization of this morbid estimate of the importance of men. Gibbon gives a curious instance of it, and an instance which recalls the spirit of the modern English laws of divorce. There was a temple in Rome to the Goddess who presided over the peace of marriages. "But," says the historian, "her very name, Viriplaca—the appeaser of husbands—show that repentance and submission were always expected from the wife,"—as if the offense usually came from her. In the "Lawe's resolution of Women's Rights," published in the year 1632, a book which I have not seen, but of which there are copies in the country, the anonymous and quaint author says and with a sly satire: "It is true that man and woman are one person, but understand in what manner. When a small brooke or little river incorporateth with Rhodanus, Humber or the Thames, the poor rivulet looseth her name: it is carried and recarried with the new associate: it beareth no sway—it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman as soon as she is married is called *covert*: in Latine, *nupla*—that is, veiled; as it were, overclouded and shadowed; she hath lost her streame. I may more truly farre away, say to a married woman, her new self is her superior; her companion, her master. * * See here 5 the reason of that which I touched before—that women have no voice in Parliament; they make no laws; they consent to none; they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to be married, and their desires are to their husbands."

From this theory of ancient society, that woman is absorbed in man, that she is a social inferior and a subordinate part of man, springs the system of laws in regard to woman which in every civilized country is now in course of such rapid modification, and it is this theory which so tenaciously lingers as a traditional prejudice in our political customs. But a State which, like New York, recognizes the equal individual rights of all its members, declaring that none of them shall be disfranchised unless by the law of the land or the judgment of his peers, and which acknowledges women as property-holders and taxable, responsible citizens, has wholly renounced the old Feudal and Pagan theory, and has no right to continue the evil condition which springs from it. The honorable and eloquent gentleman from Onondaga said that he favored every enlargement of the franchise consistent with the safety of the State. Sir, I heartily agree with him, and it was the duty of the committee in proposing to continue the exclusion of women, to show that it is necessary to the welfare and safety

of the State that the whole sex shall be disfranchised. It is in vain for the Committee to say that I ask for an enlargement of the franchise and must therefore show the reason. Sir, I show the reason upon which this franchise itself rests, and which, in its very nature, forbids 6 arbitrary exclusion; and I urge the enfranchisement of women on the ground that whatever political rights men have, women have equally.

I have no wish to refine curiously upon the origin of government. If any one insists, with the honorable gentleman from Broome that there are no such things as natural political rights, and that no man is a born voter, I will not now stop to argue with him; but as I believe the honorable gentlemen from Broome is by profession a physician and surgeon, I will suggest to him that if no man is born a voter, so no man is born a man—for every man is born a baby. But he *is* born with the right of becoming a man without hindrance; and I ask the honorable gentlemen, as an American citizen and political philosopher, whether, if every man is not born a voter, he is not born with right of becoming a voter upon equal terms with other men? What else is the meaning of the phrase which I find in the New York *Tribune* of Monday, and have so often found there: “The radical basis of government is equal right for all citizens.”

There are, as I think we shall all admit, some kinds of natural rights. This Summer air that breathes benignant around our national anniversary, is vocal with the traditional eloquence with which those rights were asserted by our fathers. From all the burning words of the time I quote those of Alexander Hamilton, of New York, in reply, as my honorable friend the Chairman of the Committee will remember, to the Tory farmer of Westchester: “The sacred rights of mankind are not 7 to be rummaged for among old parchments or dusty records. They are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.” In the next year, Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, summed up the political faith of our fathers in the Great Declaration. Its words vibrate through the history of those days. As the lyre of Amphion raised the walls of the city, so they are the music which sing course after course of the ascending structure of American civilization into its place. Our fathers stood indeed upon technical and legal grounds when the contest with Great Britain began, but as tyranny encroached they rose naturally into the sphere of fundamental truths as into a purer air. Driven storms beyond sight of land, the sailor steers by the stars; and our fathers, compelled to explore the whole subject of social rights and duties, derived their government from what they called self-evident truths. Despite the brilliant and vehement eloquence of Mr. Choate, they did *not* deal in glittering generalities, and the Declaration of Independence was *not* the passionate manifesto of a revolutionary war, but the calm and simple statement of a new political philosophy and practice.

The rights which they declared to be inalienable are indeed what are usually called natural, as distinguished from political rights, but they are not limited by sex. A woman has the same right to her life, liberty and property that a man has, and she has consequently the same right to an equality of protection that he has; and this, 8 as I understand it, is what is meant by the phrase, the right of suffrage. If I have a natural right to that hand, I have an equal natural right to everything that secures to me its use, provided it does not harm the equal right of another; and if I have a natural right to my life and liberty, I have the same right to everything that protects life and liberty which any other man enjoys. I should like my honorable friend, the Chairman of this Committee, to show me any right which God gave him which he also gave to me, for which God gave him a claim to any defence which he has not give to me. And I ask the same question for every woman in this State. Have they less natural right to life, liberty and property than my honorable friend the Chairman of this Committee—and is it not, to quote the words of his report, an extremely “defensible theory,” that he cannot justly deprive the least of those women of any protection of those rights which he claims for himself? No, sir, the natural, or what we call civil right, and its political defence, go together. This was the impregnable logic of the revolution. Lord Gower sneered in Parliament at the American Colonists a century ago as Mr. Robert Lowe sneers at the English Reformers to-day: “Let the Americans talk about their natural and divine rights. * * * * I am for enforcing these measures.” Dr. Johnson bellowed across the Atlantic “Taxation, no Tyranny.” James Otis spoke for America, for common sense, and for eternal justice, in saying: “No good reason, however, can be given in any county, why every man of a sound mind 9 should not have his vote in the election of a representative. If a man has but little property to protect and defend, yet his life and liberty are things of some importance.” And long before James Otis, Lord Somers said to a committee of the House of Commons, that the possession of the vote is the only true security which an Englishman has for the possession of his life and property.

Every person, then, is born with an equal claim to every kind of protection of his natural rights which any other person enjoys. The practical question, therefore, is, How shall this protection be best attained? and this is the question of government which, according to the Declaration, is established for the security of these rights. The British theory was that they could better be secured by an intelligent few than by the ignorant and passionate multitude. Goldsmith expressed it in singing: “For just experience shows in every soil, That those who think must govern those who toil.”

But nobody denies that the government of the best is the best government; the only question is how to find the best, and common sense replies: “The good, ‘tis true, are heaven's peculiar care, But who but heaven shall show us who they are?”

Our fathers answered the question of the best and surest protection of natural right by their famous phrase, 10 “the consent of the governed.” That is to say, since every man is born with equal natural rights, he is entitled to an equal protection of them with all other men; and since government is that protection, right reason and experience alike demand that every person shall have a voice in the government upon perfectly equal and practicable terms—that is, upon terms which are not necessarily and absolutely insurmountable by any part of the people.

Now these terms cannot rightfully be arbitrary. But the argument of the honorable gentleman from Schenectady, whose lucid and dignified discourse needs no praise of mine, and the arguments of others who have derived government from society, seemed to assume that the political people may exclude and include at their pleasure; that they may establish purely arbitrary tests, such as height, or weight, or color, or sex. This was substantially the squatter sovereignty of Mr. Douglas, who held that the male white majority of the settlers in a territory might deprive a colored minority of all their rights whatever; and he declared that they had the right to do it. The same right that this Convention has to hang me at this moment to that chandelier, but no other right. Brute force, sir, may do anything; but we are speaking of rights, and of rights under this government, and I deny that the people of the State of New York can rightfully, that is, according to right reason and the principles of this government derived from it, *permanently* exclude any class of persons or any person whatever from a voice in the government, unless it can be 11 clearly established that their participation in political power would be dangerous to the State; and, therefore, the honorable gentleman from Kings was logically correct in opposing the enfranchisement of the colored population upon the ground that they were an inferior race, of limited intelligence, a kind of Chimpanzee at best. I think, however, sir, the honorable and scholarly gentleman—even he—will admit that at Fort Pillow, at Milliken's Bend, at Fort Wagner, the Chimpanzees did uncommonly well; yes, sir, as gloriously and immortally as our own fathers at Bunker Hill and Saratoga. “There ought to be no Pariahs,” says John Stuart Mill, “in a full grown and civilized nation; no person disqualified except through their own default. * * Every one is degraded, whether aware of it or not, when other people, without consulting him, take upon themselves unlimited power to regulate his destiny.” “No arrangement of the suffrage, therefore, can be permanently satisfactory in which any person or class is peremptorily excluded; in which the electoral privilege is not open to all persons of full age who desire it.” (Rep. G., p. 167) And Thomas Hare, one of the acutest of living political thinkers, says that in all cases where a woman fulfils the qualification which is imposed upon a man, “there is no second reason for excluding her from the parliamentary franchise. The exclusion is probably a remnant of the feudal law, and is not in harmony with the other civil institutions of the country. There would be great propriety in celebrating a reign which has been productive of so much moral benefit by the abolition of an anomaly which is so 12 entirely without any justifiable foundation.” (Hare, p. 280.)

The Chairman of the Committee asked Miss Anthony the other evening whether, if suffrage were a natural right, it could be denied to children? Her answer seemed to me perfectly satisfactory. She said simply, "all that we ask is an equal and not an arbitrary regulation. If *you* have the right, *we* have it." The honorable Chairman would hardly deny that to regulate the exercise of a right according to obvious reason and experience is one thing, to deny it absolutely and forever is another. And this is the safe practical rule of our government, as James Madison expressed it, that "it be derived from the great body of the people, not from an inconsiderable portion or favored class of it." When Mr. Gladstone, in his famous speech that startled England, said, in effect, that no one could be justly excluded from the franchise, except upon grounds of personal unfitness or public danger, he merely echoed the sentiment of Joseph Warren, which is gradually seen to be the wisest and most practical political philosophy: "I would have such a government as should give every man the greatest liberty to do what he chooses, consistent with restraining him from doing any injury to another." Is not that the kind of government, sir, which we wish to propose for this State? And if every person in New York has a natural right to life, liberty and property, and a co-existent claim to a share in the government which defends them, regulate only by perfectly equitable conditions, what are the practical grounds upon 13 which it is proposed to continue the absolute and hopeless disfranchisement of half the adult populations.

It is alleged that women are already represented by men. Where are they so represented, and when was the choice made? If I am told that they are virtually represented, I reply with James Otis, that "no such phrase as virtual representation is known in law of Constitution. It is altogether a subtlety and illusion, wholly unfounded and absurd." I repeat, if they are represented, when was the choice made? Nobody pretends that they have ever been consulted. It is a mere assumption to the effect that the interest and affection of men will lead them to just and wise legislation for women as well as for themselves. But this is merely the old appeal for the political power of a class. It is just what the British Parliament said to the colonies a hundred years ago. "We are all under the same government," they said; "Our interests are identical; we are all Britons; Britannia rules the wave; God save the King, and down with edition and Sons of Liberty." The Colonies chafed and indignantly protested, because the assumption that therefore fair laws were made was not true.; because they were discovering for themselves what every nation has discovered—the truth that shakes England to-day, and brings Disraeli and the Tory party to their knees, and has already brought this country to blood, that there is no class of citizens, and no single citizen who can safely be intrusted with the permanent and exclusive possession of political power. "There is no instance on record," says Buckle, in his history of civilization in 14 England, "of any class possessing power without abusing it." It is as true of men as a class as it is of an hereditary nobility, or of a class or property-holders. Men are not wise enough, nor generous enough, nor pure enough, to legislative fairly for women. The laws of the most civilized nations depress and degrade women. The legislation is in favor of

the legislating class. In the celebrated debate upon the marriage amendment act in England, Mr. Gladstone said that "when the gospel came into the world woman was elevated to an equality with her stronger companion." Yet at the very time he was speaking, the English law of divorce, made by men to regulate their domestic relations with women, was denounced by the law lords themselves, as "disgusting and demoralizing" in its operations; "barbarous," "incident," a disgrace to the country," and "shocking to the sense of right." Now, if the equality of which Mr. Gladstone spoke had been political as well as sentimental, does he or any statement suppose that the law of divorce would have been what it then was, or that the law of England to-day would give all the earnings of a married woman to her husband; or that of France forbid a woman to receive any gift without her husband's permission?

We ask women to confide in us, as having the same interests with them. Did any deposit ever say anything else? and if it be safe or proper for any intelligent part of the people to relinquish exclusive political power to any class, I ask the Committee who propose that women should be compelled to do this, to what 15 class, however rich, or intelligent, or honest, they would themselves surrender *their* power, and what they would do if any class attempted to usurp that power? They know, as we all know, as our own experience has taught us, that the only security of natural right is the ballot. They know, and the instinct of the whole loyal land knows, that when we had abolished slavery, the emancipation could be completed and secured only by the ballot in the hands of the emancipated class. Civil rights were a mere mocking name until political power gave them substance. A year ago Governor Orr, of South Carolina, told us that the rights of the freedmen were safest in the hands of their old masters. "Will you walk into my parlor?" said the spider to the fly." New Orleans, Memphis, and countless and constant crimes, showed what that safety was. Then, hesitating no longer, the nation handed the ballot to the freedmen, and said, "protect yourselves!" And now Governor Orr says that the part of wisdom for South Carolina is to cut loose from all parties and make a cordial alliance with the colored citizens. Governor Orr knows that a man with civil rights merely is a blank cartridge. Give him the ballot, and you add a bullet, and make him effective. In that section of the country, seething with old hatreds and wounded pride and a social system upheaved from the foundation, no other measure could have done for real pacification in a century what the mere promise of the ballot has done in a year. The one formidable peril in the whole subject of reconstruction has been the chance that Congress would continue in 16 the Southern States the political power in the hands of a class, as the report of the Committee proposes that we shall do in New York.

If I am asked what do women want the ballot for? I answer the question with another, what do men want it for? Why do the British workmen at this moment so urgently demand it? Look into the British laws regulating labor and you will see why. They want the ballot because the laws affecting

labor and capital are made by the capitalist class alone and are therefore unjust. I do not forget the progressive legislation of New York in regard to the rights of women. The property bill of 1860 and its supplement, according to the New York *Tribune*, redeemed five thousand women from pauperism. In the next year Illinois put women in the same position with men as far as property rights and remedies are concerned. I mentioned these facts with pleasure, as I read that Louis Napoleon will, under certain conditions, permit the French people to say what they think. But if such reforms are desirable they would certainly have been sooner and more wisely affected could women have been a positive political power. Upon this point one honorable gentleman asked Mrs. Stanton whether the laws both for men and women were not constantly improving, and whether, therefore, it was not unfair to attribute the character of the laws about women to the fact that men made them. The reply is very evident. If women alone made the laws, legislation for both men and women would undoubtedly be progressive. Does the honorable gentleman think, therefore, that women only should make the laws?

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It is not true, Mr. Chairman, that in the ordinary and honorable sense of the words women are represented. Laws are made for them by another class and upon the theories which that class, without the fear of political opposition, may choose to entertain, and in direct violation of the principles upon which, in their own case, they tenaciously insist. I live, sir, in the county of Richmond. It has a population of some 27,000 persons. They own property and manage it. They are taxed and pay their taxes, and they fulfil the duties of citizens with average fidelity. But if the Committee had introduced a clause into the section they propose to this effect: "Provided that idiots, lunatics, persons under guardianship, felons, inhabitants of the county of Richmond and persons convicted of bribery, shall not be entitled to vote"—they would not have proposed a more monstrous injustice nor a grosser inconsistency with every fundamental right and American principle than in the clause they recommend; and in that case, sir, what do you suppose would have been my reception had I returned to my friends and neighbors, and had said to them, "the Convention thinks that you are virtually represented by the voters of Westchester and Chautauqua."

Mr. Chairman, I have no superstition about the ballot. I do not suppose it would immediately right all the wrongs of women, any more than it has righted all those of men. But what political agency has righted so many? Here are thousands of miserable men all around us; but they have every path opened to them; 18 they have their advocates; they have their votes; they make the laws, and at last and at worst they have their strong right hands for defence. And here are thousands of miserable women pricking back death and dishonor with a little needle, and now the sly hand of science is stealing that little needle away. The ballot does not make those men happy, nor respectable, nor rich, nor noble. But they guard it for themselves with sleepless jealousy, because they know it is the

golden gate to every opportunity; and precisely the *kind* of advantage it gives to one sex, it would give to the other. It would arm it with the most powerful weapon known to political society; it would maintain the natural balance of the sexes in human affairs, and secure to each fair play within its sphere.

But, sir, the Committee tell us that the suffrage of women would be a revolutionary innovation—it would disturb the venerable traditions. Well, sir, about the year 1790, women were first recognized as school teachers in Massachusetts. At that time the New England “schoolmarm,” and I use the word with affectionate respect, was a revolutionary innovation. She has been abroad ever since, and has been by no means the least efficient, but always the most modest and unnoticed of the great civilizing influences in this country. Innovation—why, sir, when Sir Samuel Romilly proposed to abolish the death penalty for stealing a handkerchief, the law officers of the Crown said it would endanger the whole criminal law of England. When the bill abolishing the slave trade passed the House of Lords, Lord St. Vincent rose and stalked out, declaring that he washed his hands of the ruin of the British Empire. When the Greenwich pensioners saw the first steamer upon the Thames, they protested that they did not like the steamer, for it was contrary to nature. When, at the close of the reign of Charles II., London had half a million of people, there was a fierce opposition to street lamps. Such is the hostility of venerable traditions to an increase of light. When Mr. Jefferson learned that New York had explored the route of a canal, he benignly regarded it, in the spirit of our Committee, as doubtless “defensible in theory,” for he said it was “a very fine project, and might be executed a century hence.” And fifty-six years ago, Chancellor Livingston wrote from this city that the proposition of a railroad, shod with iron, to move heavy weights four miles an hour, was ingenious, perhaps “theoretically defensible,” but upon the whole the road would not be so cheap or convenient as a canal. In this country, sir, the venerable traditions are used to being disturbed. America was clearly designed to be a disturber of traditions, and to leave nobler precedents than she found. So, a few months ago, what the Committee call a revolutionary innovation was proposed by giving the ballot to freedmen in the District of Columbia. The awful result of such a revolution were duly set forth in one of the myriad veto messages of the President of the United States. But they have voted. If anybody proposed to disturb the election, it was certainly not the new voters. The election was perfectly peaceful, and not one of the Presidential pangs has been justified. So with this reform. It is new, in the extent proposed. It is as new as the harvest after the sowing, and it is as natural. The reduction of rights, long denied or withheld, never made a social convulsion. That is produced by refusing them. The West Indian slaves received their liberty, praying upon their knees; and the influence of the enfranchisement of women will glide into society as noiselessly as the dawn increase into day.

Or shall I be told that women, if not numerically counted at the polls, do yet exert an immense influence upon politics, and do not really need the ballot? If this argument were seriously urged, I should suffer my eyes to move through this chamber and they would show me many honorable gentlemen of reputed political influence. May they, therefore, be properly and justly disfranchised? I ask the honorable Chairman of the Committee, whether he thinks that a citizen should have no vote because he has influence? What gives influence? Ability, intelligence, honesty. Are these to be excluded from the polls? Is it only stupidity, ignorance and rascality which ought to possess political power?

Or will it be said that women do not want the ballot and ought to be asked? And upon what principle ought they to be asked? When natural rights or their means of defence have been immemorably denied to a large class, does humanity, or justice, or good sense require that they should be registered and called to vote upon their own restoration? Why, Mr. Chairman, it might as well be said that Jack the Giant killer ought to have gravely asked the captives in the ogre's dungeon whether they wished to be released. It must be assumed that men and women wish to enjoy their natural rights, as that the eyes wish light or the lungs an atmosphere. Did we wait for an emancipation until the slaves petitioned to be free? No, sir, all our lives had been passed in ingenious and ignominious efforts to sophisticate and stultify ourselves for keeping them chained; and when we gave us a legal right to snap their bonds, we did not ask them whether they preferred to remain slaves. We knew that they were men, and that men by nature walk up right, and if we find them bent and crawling, we know that the posture is unnatural whether they may thank so or not. In case of women we acknowledge that they have the same natural rights as ourselves—we see that they hold property and pay taxes, and we must of necessity suppose that they wish to enjoy every security of those rights that we possess. So when in this State, every year, thousands of boys come of age, we do not solemnly require them to tell us whether they wish to vote. We assume, of course, that they do, and we say to them, "go, and upon the same terms with the rest of us, vote as you choose." But gentlemen say that they know a great many women who do not wish to vote, who think it is not ladylike, or whatever the proper term may be. Well, sir, I have known many men who habitually abstained from politics because they were so "ungentlemanly," and who thought that no man could touch pitch without defilement. Now what would the 22 honorable gentlemen who know women who do not wish to vote, have thought of a proposition that I should not vote, because my neighbors did not wish to? There may have been slaves who preferred to remain slaves—was that an argument against freedom? Suppose there are a majority of the women of this State who do not wish to vote—is that a reason for depriving *one* woman who is taxed of her equal representation, or one innocent person of the equal protection of his life and liberty?

Shall nothing ever be done by statesmen until wrongs are so intolerable that they take society by the throat? Did it show the wisdom of British Conservatism that it waited to grant the Reform bill of 1832 until England hung upon the edge of the civil war? When women and children were worked sixteen hours a day in English factories, did it show practical good sense to delay a "short time" bill until hundreds of thousands of starving workmen agreed to starve yet more, if need be, to relieve the overwork of their families, and until the most pitiful procession the sun ever shone upon, that of the factory children, just as they left their work, marched through the streets of Manchester, that burst into sobs and tears at the sight? Yet if, in such instances, where there was so plausible an adverse appeal founded upon vested interests and upon the very theory of the government, it was unwise to wait until a general public outcry imperatively demanded the reform, how wholly needless to delay in this State a measure which is the natural result of our most cherished principles, and which threatens to disturb or injure nothing whatever. 23 The amendment proposes no compulsion like the old New England law, which fined every voter who did not vote. If there are citizens of the State who think it unladylike or ungentlemanlike to take their part in the government, let them stay at home. But do not, I pray you, give them authority to detain wiser and better citizens from their duty.

But I shall be told, in the language of the Report of the Committee, that the proposition is openly at war with the distribution of functions and duties between the sexes. Translated into English, Mr. Chairman, this means that it is unwomanly to vote. Well, sir, I know that at the very mention of the political rights of women, there arises in many minds a dreadful vision of a mighty exodus of the whole female world, in bloomers and spectacles, from the nursery and the kitchen to the polls. It seems to be thought that if women practically took part in politics, the home would be left a howling wilderness of cradles and a chaos of undarned stockings and buttonless shirts. But how is it with men? Do they desert their workshops, their plows and offices, to pass their time at the polls? Is it a credit to a man to be called a professional politician? The pursuits of men in the world, to which they are directed by the natural aptitude of sex, and to which they must devote their lives, are as foreign from political functions as those of women. To take an extreme case: there is nothing more incompatible with political duties in cooking and taking care of children than there is in digging ditches or making shoes, or in any other 24 necessary employment, while in every superior interest of society growing out of the family, the stake of women is not less than men, and their knowledge is greater. In England, a woman who owns shares in the East India Company may vote. In this country she may vote as a stockholder upon a railroad from one end of the country to another. But if she sells her stock and buys a house with the money, she has no voice in the laying out of the road before her door, which her house is taxed to keep and pay for. And why, in the name of good sense, if a responsible human being may vote upon specific industrial projects may she not vote upon the industrial regulation of the State? There is no more reason that men should assume to decide participation in politics to be unwomanly than that women should decide for men that

it is unmanly. It is not our prerogative to keep women feminine. I think, sir, they may be trusted to defend the delicacy of their own sex. Our success in managing ours has not been so conspicuous that we should urgently desire more labor of the same kind. Nature is quite as wise as we. Whatever their sex incapacitates women from doing they will not do. Whatever duty is consistent with their sex and their relation to society, they will properly demand to do until they are permitted.

The reply to the assertion that participation in political power is unwomanly, and tends to subvert the family relation, is simply and unanswerable. It is that we cannot know what is womanly until we see the folly of insisting that the theories of men settle the question. We 25 know now what the convenience and feelings of men decide to be womanly. We shall know what *is* womanly in the same sense that we know what is manly, only when women have the same equality of development and the same liberty of choice as men. The amendment I offer is merely a prayer that you will remove from women a disability, and secure to them the same freedom of choice that we enjoy. If the instincts of sex, of maternity, of domesticity, are not persuasive enough to keep them in the truest sense women, it is the most serious defect yet discovered in the divine order of nature.

When, therefore, the Committee declare that voting is at war with the distribution of functions between the sexes, what do they mean? Are not women as much interested in good government as men? There is fraud in the Legislature; there is corruption in the Courts; there are hospitals, and tenement-house, and prisons; there are gambling-houses, and billiard-rooms, and brothels; there are grog-shops at every corner, and I know not what enormous proportion of crime in the state proceeds from them; there are forty thousand drunkards in the State, and their hundreds of thousands of children—all these things are subjects of legislation, and under the exclusive legislation of men the crime associated with all these things becomes vast and complicated. Have the wives and mothers and sisters of New York less vital interest in them, less practical knowledge of them and their proper treatment than the husbands and fathers? No man is so insane as to 26 pretend it. Is there then any natural incapacity in women to understand politics? It is not asserted. Are they lacking in the necessary intelligence? But the moment that you erect a standard of intelligence which is sufficient to exclude women as a sex, that moment most of the male sex would be disfranchised. Is it that they ought not to go to public political meetings? But we earnestly invite them. Or that they should not go to the polls? Some polls, I allow, in the larger cities are dirty and dangerous places, and those it is the duty of the police to reform. But no decent man wishes to vote in grog-shop, nor to have his head broken while he is doing it, while the mere act of dropping a ballot in a box is about the simplest, shortest and cleanest that can be done. Last winter Senator Frelinghuysen, repeating, I am sure thoughtlessly, the common rhetoric of the question, spoke of the high and holy mission of women. But if people, with a high and holy mission, may innocently sit bare-necked in hot theatres to be studied through pocket telescopes until midnight by any one who chooses, how can their high

and holy mission be harmed by their quietly dropping a ballot in a box? What is the high and holy mission of any woman but to be the best and most efficient human being possible? To enlarge the sphere of duty and the range of responsibility, where there are adequate power and intelligence, is to heighten, not to lessen, the holiness of life.

But if women vote, they must sit on juries. Why not? Nothing is plainer than that thousands of women ²⁷ who are tried every year as criminals, are not tried by their peers. And if a woman is bad enough to commit a heinous crime, must we absurdly assume that women are too good to know that there is such a crime? If they may not sit on juries, certainly they ought not to be witnesses. A note in Howell's State Trials to which my attention was drawn by one of my distinguished colleagues in the Convention, quotes an ancient work, "Probation by Witnesses," by Sir George Mackenzie, in which he says, "The reason why women are excluded from witnessing, must be either that they are subject to too much compassion and so ought not to be more received in criminal cases than in civil cases; or else the law was unwilling to trouble them, and thought it might teach them too much confidence and make them subject to too much familiarity with men and strangers, if they were necessitated to vague up and down at all courts upon all occasions." Hume says this rule was held as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century. But if too much familiarity with men be so pernicious, are men so pure that they alone should make laws for women, and so honorable that they alone should try women for breaking them? It is within a very few years at the Liverpool Assizes, in a case involving peculiar evidence, that Mr. Russell said: "The evidence of women is, in some respects, superior to that of men. Their power of judging of minute details is better, and when there are more than two facts and something to be wanting, their intuitions supply the deficiency." "And precisely the qualities which fit them to give evidence," ²⁸ says Mrs. Dall, to whom we owe this fact, "fit them to sift and test it."

But, the objectors continue, would you have women hold office? If they are capable and desirous, why not? They hold office now most acceptably. In my immediate neighborhood a postmistress has been so faithful an officer for seven years, that when there was a rumor of her removal, it was a matter of public concern. This is a familiar instance in this country. Scott's "Antiquary" shows that a similar service was not unknown in Scotland. In Notes and Queries ten years ago (Vol. II., Sec. 2, 1856, pp. 83, 204), Alexander Andrews says: "It was by no means unusual for females to serve the office of overseer in small rural parishes," and a communication in the same publication (1st series, Vol. II., p. 383), speaks of a curious entry in the Harleian Miscellany (MS. 980, fol. 153): "The Countess of Richmond, mother to Henry VII., was a Justice of the Peace. Mr. Attorney said if it was so, it ought to have been by commission, for which he had made many an hower's search for the record, but could never find it, but he had seen many arbitrations that were made by her. Justice Joanes affirmed that he had often heard from his mother of the Lady Bartlett, mother to the Lord

Bartlett, that she was a Justice of the Peace, and did set usually upon the bench with the other Justices in Gloucestershire; that she was made so by Queen Mary, upon her complaint to her of the injuries she sustained by some of that county, and desiring for redress thereof; that as she, herself, was Chief-Justice of all 29 England, so this lady might be in her own country, which accordingly the Queen granted. Another example was alleged of on—Rowse, in Suffolk, who usually at the assizes and sessions there held, set upon the bench among the Justices *gladio cineta*." The Countess of Pembroke was hereditary Sheriff of Westmoreland, and exercised her office. Henry the Eight granted a commission of inquiry, under the great seal, to Lady Ann Berkeley, who opened it at Gloucester and passed sentence under it. Henry Eight's daughter, Elizabeth Tudor, was Queen of England, in name and in fact, during the most illustrious epoch of English history. Was Elizabeth incompetent? Did Elizabeth unsex herself? Or do you say that she was an exceptional woman? So she was, but no more an exceptional woman than Alfred, Marcus Aurelius or Napoleon were exceptional men. It was held by some of the old English writers that a woman might serve in almost any of the great offices of the Kingdom. And indeed if Victoria may deliberate in council with her ministers, why may not any intelligent English woman deliberate in Parliament or any such American woman in Congress?

I mention Elizabeth, Maria Theresa, Catherine, and all the famous Empresses and Queens, not to prove the capacity of women for the most arduous and responsible office, for that is undeniable, but to show the hollowness of the assertion that there is an instinctive objection to the fulfillment of such offices by women. Men who say so, do not really think so. The whole history of the voting and office-holding of women shows that whenever men's theories of the relation of property to the political franchise, or of the lineal succession of the government, require that women shall vote or hold office, the objection of impropriety and incapacity wholly disappears. If it be unwomanly for a woman to vote, or to hold office, it is unwomanly for Victoria to be Queen of England. Surely if our neighbors had thought they would be better represented in this Convention by certain women, there is no good reason why they should have been compelled to send us. Why should I or any person be forbidden to select the agent whom we think most competent and truly representative of our will? There is no talent or training required in the making of laws which is peculiar to the male sex. What is needed is intelligence and experience. The rest is routine.

The capacity for making laws is necessarily assumed when women are permitted to hold and manage property and to submit to taxation. How often the woman, widowed or married or single, is the guiding genius of the family—educating the children, directing the estate, originating, counselling, deciding. Is there anything essentially different in such duties and the powers necessary to perform them from the functions of legislation? In New Jersey the Constitution of 1776 admitted to vote all inhabitants of a certain age, residence and property. In 1797, in an act to regulate elections the ninth section provides: "Every voter shall openly and in full view deliver his or her ballot,

which shall be 31 a single written ticket, containing the names of the persons for whom he or she votes." An old citizen of New Jersey says that "the right was recognized and very little said or thought about it in any way." But in 1807 the suffrage was restricted to white male adult citizens of a certain age, residence and property, and in 1844 the property qualification was abolished. At the hearing before the Committee, the other evening, a gentleman asked whether the change of the qualification excluding women did not show that their voting was found to be inconvenient or undesirable. Not at all. It merely showed that the male property-holders outvoted the female. It certainly showed nothing as to the right or expediency of the voting of women. Mr. Douglas, as I said, had a theory that the white male adult squatters in a territory might decide whether the colored people in the territory should be enslaved. They might, indeed, so decide, and with adequate power they might enforce their decision. But it proved very little as to the right, the expediency, or the constitutionality of slavery in a territory. The truth is that men deal with the practical question of female suffrage to suit their own purposes. About twenty-five years ago the Canadian government by statute rigorously and in terms forbade women to vote. But in 1850, to subserve a sectarian purpose, they were permitted to vote for school trustees. I am ashamed to argue a point so plain. What public affairs need in this State is "conscience," and woman is the conscience of the race. If we in this Convention shall make a wise Constitution, if the Legislatures 32 that follow us in this chamber shall purify the laws and see that they are honorably executed, it will be just in the degree that we shall have accustomed ourselves to the refined, moral and mental atmosphere in which women habitually converse.

But would you, seriously, I am asked, would you drag women down into the mire of politics? No, sir, I would have them lift us out of it. The duty of this Convention is to devise means for the improvement of the government of this State. Now the science of government is not an ignoble science, and the practice of politics is not necessarily mean and degrading. If the making and administering of law has become so corrupt as to justify calling politics filthy, and a thing with which no clean hands can meddle without danger, may we not wisely remember, as we begin our work of purification, that politics have been wholly managed by men? How can we purify them? Is there no radical method, no force yet untried, a power not only of skilful cheeks which I do not undervalue, but of controlling character? Mr. Chairman, if we sat in this chamber with closed windows until the air became thick and fetid, should we not be fools if we brought in deodorizers—if we sprinkled chloride of lime and burned assafoetida, while we disdained the great purifier? If we would cleanse the foul chamber, let us throw the windows wide open, and the sweet summer air would sweep all impurity away and fill our lungs with fresher life. If we would purge politics let us turn upon them the great stream of the purest human influence we know.

But I hear some one say, if they vote they must do military duty. Undoubtedly when a nation goes to war it may rightfully claim the service of all its citizens, men and women. But the question of fighting is not the blow merely, but its quality and persistence. The important point is, to make the blow effective. Did any brave Englishman who rode in the jaws of death at Balaklava serve England on the field more truly than Florence Nightingale? That which sustains and serves and repairs the physical force is just as essential as the force itself. Thus the law, in view of the moral service they are supposed to render, excuses clergymen from the field, and in the field it details ten per cent. of the army to serve the rest, and they do not carry muskets nor fight. Women, as citizens, have always done, and always will do, that work in the public defence for which their sex peculiarly fits them, and men do no more. The care of the young warriors, the nameless and innumerable duties of the hospital and home, are just as essential to the national safety as fighting in the field. A nation of men alone could not carry on a contest any longer than a nation of women. Each would be obliged to divide its forces and delegate half to the duties of the other sex.

But while the physical services of war are equally divided between the sexes, the moral forces are stronger with women. It was the women of the South, we are constantly and doubtless very truly told, who sustained the rebellion, and certainly without the women of the North the government had not been saved. From the 34 first moment to the last, in all the roaring cities, in the remote valleys, in the deep woods, on the country hillsides, on the open prairie, wherever there were wives, mothers, sisters, lovers, there were the busy fingers which, by day and by night, for four long years, like the great forces of Spring-time and harvest, never failed. The mother paused only to bless her sons, eager for battle; the wife to kiss her children's father, as he went; the sister smiled upon her brother, and prayed for the lover who marched away. Out of how many hundreds of thousands of homes and hearts they went who never returned. But those homes were both the inspiration and the consolation of the field. They nerved the arm that struck for them. When the son and the husband fell in the wild storm of battle, the brave woman-heart broke in silence, but the busy fingers did not falter. When the comely brother and lover were tortured into idiocy and despair, that woman-heart of love kept the man's faith steady, and her unceasing toil repaired his wasted frame. It was not love of the soldier only, great as that was; it was knowledge of the cause. It was that supreme moral force operating through innumerable channels, like the sunshine in nature, without which successful war would have been impossible. There are thousands and thousands of these women who ask for a voice in the government they have so defended. Shall we refuse them?

I again appeal to my honorable friend the Chairman of the Committee. He was made the land ring with his cry of universal suffrage and universal amnesty. Suffrage 35 and amnesty to whom? To those who sought to another the government in the blood of its noblest citizens, to those who ruined the happy homes and broke the faithful hearts of which I spoke. Sir, I am not condemning

his cry. I am not opposing his policy. I have no more thirst for vengeance than he, and quite as anxiously as my honorable friend do I wish to see the harvests of peace waving over the battle-fields. But, sir, here is a New York mother, who trained her son in fidelity to God and to his country. When that country called, they answered. Mother and son gave, each after his kind, their whole service to defend her. By the sad late of war the boy is thrown into the ghastly den at Andersonville. Mad with thirst, he crawls in the pitiless sun toward a muddy pool. He reaches the deadline, and is shot by the guard—murdered for fidelity to his country. “I demand amnesty for that guard, I demand that he shall vote,” cries the honorable Chairman of the Committee. I do not say that it is an unwise demand. But I ask him, I ask you, sir, I ask every honorable and patriotic man in this State, upon what conceivable ground of justice, expediency or commonsense shall we give the ballot to the New York boy's murderer and refuse it to his mother?

Mr. Chairman, I have thus stated what I conceive to be the essential reasonableness of the amendment which I have offered. It is not good for man to be alone. United with woman in the creation of human society, their rights and interests in its government are identical; nor can the highest and truest development of society be reasonably conceived, so long as one sex assumes to prescribe limits to the scope and functions of the other. The test of civilization is the position of women. Where they are wholly slaves, man is wholly barbarous; and the measure of progress from barbarism to civilization is the recognition of their equal right with man to an unconstrained development. Therefore, when Mr. Mill unrolls his petition in parliament to secure the political equality of women, it bears the names of those English men and women whose thoughts foretell the course of civilization. The measure which the report of the Committee declares to be radically revolutionary and perilous to the very functions of sex, is described by the most sagacious of living political philosophers as reasonable, conservative, necessary and inevitable; and he obtains for it seventy-three votes in the same House in which out of about the same whole number of voters Charles James Fox, the idol of the British Whigs, used to be able to rally only forty votes against the policy of Pitt. The dawn in England will soon be day here. Before the American principle of equal rights, barrier after barrier in the path of human progress falls. If we are still far from its full comprehension and further from perfect conformity to its law, it is in that only like the spirit of Christianity, to whose full glory even Christendom but slowly approaches. From the heat and tumult of our politics we can still lift our eyes to the eternal light of that principle; can see that the usurpation of sex is the last form of caste that lingers in our society; that in America the most humane thinker is the most practical man, and the organizer of justice the most sagacious statesman.

Mr. Curtis's amendment, in Committee of the whole, received 24 Ayes against 63 Nays; and on the final vote in the Convention, 19 Ayes against 125 Nays.

FAIR PLAY FOR WOMEN. By GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS. An Address delivered before the American Woman Suffrage Association, Steinway Hall, New York, May 12, 1870.

Ladies and Gentlemen :—It is pleasant to see this large assembly, and this generous spirit, for it is by precisely such meetings as this that public opinion is first awakened, and public action is at last secured. Our question is essentially an American question. It concerns women, but it is not one of chivalry, nor of gallantry. It is a demand for equal rights, and will therefore be heard. Whenever a free and intelligent people asks any question, involving human rights, or liberty, or development, it will ask louder and louder, until it is answered. The conscience of this nation sits in the way like a sphinx, proposing its riddle of true democracy. President and parties, conventions, caucuses and candidates, failing to guess it, are remorselessly consumed. Forty years ago, that conscience asked, “Do men have fair play in this country?” A burst of contemptuous laughter was the reply. “Fair play! It is the very country of fair play;” and the indignant land, drunk with prosperity and ease, turned its back. Louder and 39 louder grew that question, and the land opened its eyes. Louder and louder! and it opened its ears. Louder! until it was one great thunderburst, absorbing all other questions; and then the country saw that its very life was bound up in the answer; and, springing to its feet, alive in every nerve, with one hand it snapped the slave's chain, and with the other welded the Union into a nation —the pledge of equal liberty. [Applause.]

That same conscience sits in the way to-day. It asks another question,—“Do women have fair play in this country?” As before, a sneer or a smile of derision may ripple from one end of the land to the other; but that question will swell louder and louder, until it is answered by the ballot in the hands of every citizen, and by the perfect vindication of the American fundamental principle, that “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” [Applause.] By its very nature, however, the progress of this reform will differ from every other political movement. Behind every demand for the enlargement of the suffrage, hitherto there was always a threat. It involved possible anarchy and blood. When the question agitated England, in 1832, Sir Wm. Napier said that the country quivered on the verge of civil war. The voice of the disfranchised class was muttering thunder around the horizon, and by the lightning of its eyes, the British statesmen read the necessity of speedy action. But this reform hides no menace. It lies wholly in the sphere of reason. It is a demand for justice, as the best political policy; an appeal for equality of rights 40 among citizens as the best security of the common welfare. It is a plea for the introduction of all the mental and moral forces of society into the work of government. It is an assertion that in the regulation of society, no class and no interest can be safely spared from a direct responsibility. It encounters, indeed, the most ancient traditions, the most subtle sophistry of men's passions and prejudices. But there

was never any great wrong righted that was not entrenched in sophistry—that did not plead an immemorial antiquity, and what it called the universal consent and “instinct” of mankind.

As Sidney Smith said sixty years ago, in urging the claims of women to a higher education, “Nothing is more common or more stupid than to take the actual for the possible—to believe that all which *is* is all that can be; first, to laugh at every proposed deviation from practice as impossible, then, when it is carried into effect, to be astonished that it did not take place before.” That I suppose is the reason why—now that the Fifteenth Amendment is officially adopted—we discover that there were so many original Abolitionists, and while were piously grateful for their number, we can only wonder that, being so many, they did not earlier do their work. [Applause]

I say that the movement is a plea for justice, and I assert that the equal rights of women, not as citizens, but as human beings, have never been acknowledged. There is no audacity so insolent, no tyranny so wanton, no inhumanity so revolting, as the spirit which 41 says to any human being, or to any class of human beings, “You shall be developed just as far as we choose, and as fast as we choose, and your mental and moral life shall be subject to our pleasure!” and, as Mrs. Howe has said, this is always what men have said to women.

Gibbon, certainly as profound a student of the history of the race as any that we know, says distinctly, “that the wisest or the strongest of the sexes has always usurped the cares and duties of the state, and has confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life.” And Montaigne, the shrewdest and most passionless of the observers and critics of society, says, “Women are not at all to blame when they refuse the rules of life that are introduced into the world, forasmuch as the men made them without their consent.”

This is true of every condition of society and of every period. Edward, Lear, the artist, traveling in Greece, says that he was one day jogging along with an Altanian peasant, who said to him, “Women are really better than donkeys for carrying burdens, but not so good as mules.” This was the honest opinion of barbarism—the honest feeling of Greece to-day.

You say that the peasant was uncivilized. Very well. Go back to the age of Pericles. It is the high noon of Greek civilization. It is Athens—“the eye of Greece—mother of arts.” There stands the great orator—himself incarnate Greece—speaking the oration over the Peloponnesian dead. “The greatest glory of woman,” he says, “is to be the least talked of among men.” So said Pericles, when he lived. Had Pericles lived to-day he 42 would have agreed that to be talked of among men as Miss Martineau and Florence Nightingale are, as Mrs. Somerville and Maria Mitchell are, is as great a glory as to be the mother of the Gracchi. [Applause.] Women in Greece, the mothers of Greece, were an inferior and degraded class. And Grote sums up their whole condition when he says, “Everything which

concerned their lives, their happiness, or their rights, was determined for them by male relatives, and they seem to have been destitute of all mental culture and refinement.”

These were the old Greeks. Will you have Rome? The chief monument of Roman civilization is its law—which underlies our own; and Buckle quotes the great commentator on that law as saying that it was the distinction of the Roman law that it treated women not as persons, but as things. Or go to the most ancient civilization; to China, which was old when Greece and Rome were young. The famous French Jesuit missionary, Abbé Huc, mentions one of the most tragical facts recorded—that there is in China a class of women who hold that if they are only true to certain vows during this life, they shall, as a reward, change their form after death and return to earth as men. This distinguished traveler also says that he was one day talking with a certain Master Ting, a very shrewd Chinaman, whom he was endeavoring to convert. “But,” said Ting, “what is the special object of your preaching Christianity?” “Why, to convert you, and save your soul,” said the Abbé. “Well, then, why do you try to convert the women?” asked Master Ting. “To save their souls,” said the missionary. “But women have no souls,” said Master Ting; “you can’t expect to make Christians of women,”—and he was so delighted with the idea that he went out shouting “Hi! hi! now I shall go home, and tell my wife she has a soul, and I guess she will laugh as loudly as I do!” [Laughter.]

Such were the three old civilizations. Do you think we can disembarass ourselves of history? Our civilization grows upon roots that spring from the remotest past; and our life, proud as we are of it, is bound up with that of Greece and Rome. Do you think the spirit of our society is wholly different? Let us see. It was my good fortune, only a few weeks ago, to be invited to address the students of Vassar College at Poughkeepsie, which you will remember is devoted exclusively to the higher education of women. As I stood in those ample halls, and thought of that studious household, of the observatory and its occupants, it seemed to me that, like the German naturalist, who, wandering in the valley of the Amazon, came suddenly upon the *Victoria Regia*—the finest blossom on the globe—so there, in the valley of the Hudson, I had come upon one of the finest flowers of our civilization. But in the midst of my enthusiasm I was told by the President that this was the first fully endowed college for women in the world; and from that moment I was alarmed. From behind every door, every tree, I expected to see good Master Ting springing out with his “Hi! hi! you laugh at us Chinese barbarians; you call yourselves in America the head of civilization; you claim that the glory of your civilization is your estimate of women; you sneer at us Chinese for belittling women’s souls and squeezing their feet. Who belittle their capacities? Who squeeze their minds?” [Applause.] We must confess it. The old theory of the subservience of women still taints our civilization. As Goethe in his famous morphological generalization showed that every part of the inflorescence of plants, the stamens and pistils, the corolla, the bracts, are all but modifications of the leaf, so I think it would not be difficult to show that our view of women, greatly improved as it is, is but a modification of the old doctrine.

Within the last fortnight an advocate, pleading for his client before a jury, spoke of him as a man who owned his wife! Nor have I seen a single word of comment or surprise in the press of this city. Take any familiar illustration of the same feeling. You open your morning paper, and read that on the previous evening there was a meeting of intelligent and experienced women, with some that were not so, which is true of all general meetings of men and women; and these persons demanded the same liberty of choice, and an equal opportunity with all other members of society. As we read the report we see that there was a great deal of extravagant rhetoric and weak argument and sentimental appeal, which only shows more and more that it was exactly like the public meetings of men.

If only those persons could properly hold meetings and speak in public who talk nothing but reason and common-sense, the flood-gates of popular oratory in 45 America would be very suddenly dammed up. But if it is permitted to human beings to demand what is rational, even in a foolish way, there would seem to be nothing very irrational in the claim that equal liberty and opportunity development shall be secured to every member of society. But the report of the meeting is received with a shout of derisive laughter, that echoes through the press and through private conversation. Gulliver did not take the Lilliputians on his hands and look at them with more utter contempt, than the political class of this country, to which the men in this hall belong, take up these women, and look askance at them, with infinite, amused disdain.

But in the very next column of the same morning paper we find another report, describing a public dinner, at which men only were present. And we read that after the great orators had made their great speeches, in the course of which they complimented woman so prettily, to the delight of the few privileged ladies who stood behind the screens, or looked over the balcony, or peeped in through the cracks of the windows and doors; and when the great orators had retired with the President, amid universal applause, the first Vice-President took the head of the table, punch was brought in, and well towards morning, when the "army," and "navy," and "the press," and the "Common Council," had been toasted and drank, with three times three, and Richard Swiveller, Esq., had sung his celebrated song, "Queen of my soul!" the last regular toast was proposed—"Woman—Heaven's last, best gift to man," which was received 46 with tumultuous enthusiasm, the whole company rising and cheering, the band playing "Will you come to Kelvin grove, bonnie lassie, O? and, in response to a unanimous call, some gallant and chivalric editor replied in a strain of pathetic and humorous eloquence, during which many of the company were observed to shed tears, or laugh, or embrace their neighbors; after which those of the company who were able rose from table, and hallooing, "We won't go home till morning!" hiccuped their way home. [Great laughter and applause.]

This report is not read with great derision or laughter. It is not felt that by this performance women have been insulted and degraded. Gulliver does not take these men on his hands, and smile or sneer at them as unmanly and vulgar; and these very gentlemen who took part in the dinner, and who—thanks to these gentlemen at this table, [pointing to the reporters' table]—read, the very next morning, with profound complacency, the report of their evening's proceedings, presently turn to the column in which the report of the woman's meeting is recorded, and instantly rail at the shameless women who renounce their sex, and immodestly forget the sphere to which God had appointed them. And just here, in this feeling, is the spring of the latent hostility—the jesting indifference to the question. It is that political enfranchisement is not considered necessary to the discharge to those duties, which men choose to regard as the proper duties of women. I know of no subject upon which so much intolerable nonsense 47 has been talked, and written, and sung, and, above all—saving the presence of our President, Mr. Beecher—preached, as the question of the true sphere of woman, and of what is feminine and what is not, as if men necessarily knew all about it.

Here, at this moment, in this audience, I have no doubt there is many a man who is exclaiming with fervor—“Home, the heaven-appointed sphere of woman.” Very well. I don't deny it, but how do you know it? How *can* you know it? There is but one law by which any sphere can be determined, and that is perfect liberty of development. If a man says to me that it is the nature of molten lead to run into bullets, and I know nothing about lead, I may believe him until I suddenly detect a bullet mould in his pocket. Then I see that it is the interest of that man that molten lead should run into bullets; and what he calls the nature of lead is merely his own advantage. So I look into history and into the society around me, and I see that the position of women which is most agreeable upon the whole to men is that which they call the “heaven-appointed sphere” of woman. It may or may not be so; all that I can see thus far is that men choose to have it so. Or another gentleman remarks that it is a beautiful ordinance of Providence that pear-trees should grow like vines. And when I say, “Is it so?” he takes me into his garden, and shows me a poor, tortured pear-tree, trained upon a trellis. Then I see that it is the beautiful design of Providence that pear-trees should grow like vines, precisely as Providence ordains that Chinese 48 women shall have small feet; and that the powdered sugar we buy at the grocer's shall be half ground rice. [Applause.] These philosophers might as wisely inform us that Providence ordains Christian saints to be chops and steaks; and then point us to St. Lawrence upon his gridiron.

You see these flowers upon this table. If your good fortune takes you beyond the city at this moment you will see them everywhere. May-day is but just gone by; and the fields, the woods, the river banks, renew their summer splendor. Now, if ever, you understand the exquisite music of Shakespeare's song: “Hark! hark! the lark at haven's gate sings, And Phœbus 'gins arise; His steeds

to water at those springs On chalic'd flowers that lies; And winking Mary-buds begin To ope their golden eyes."

Has nature ordained that the lark shall rise fluttering and singing to the sun in spring? But how should we ever know it, if he were prisoned in a case with wires of gold never so delicate, or tied with a silken string however slight and soft? Is it the nature of flowers to open to the south wind? How could we know it but that, unconstrained by art, their winking eyes respond to that soft breath? In like manner, what determines the sphere of any morally responsible being, but perfect liberty of choice and liberty of development? Take those away, and you have taken away the possibility of determining the sphere. How do I know my sphere as 49 a man, but by repelling everything that would arbitrarily restrict my choice? How can you know yours as women, but by obedience to the same law?

When men gravely assemble to assert their rights and their claims to what they feel to be justly theirs—to the widest personal liberty, to the amplest education, to the pursuit of every honorable profession, to an equal share in the political control of society, to do, in fact, whatever God has given them the will and the power innocently to do, can you conceive anything more comical than a sudden protest from women that they are forgetting their sphere—deserting the duties which providence had assigned them—and becoming unmanly and vulgar?

There is something quite as comical, and that is men saying it to women. It is not the business of either sex to theorize about the sphere of the other. It is the duty of each to secure the liberty of both. Give women, for instance, every opportunity of education that men have. If there are some branches of knowledge improper for them to acquire—some which are in their nature unwomanly—they will know it a thousand-fold better than men. And if, having opened the college, there be some woman in whom the love of learning extinguishes all other love, then the heaven-appointed sphere of that woman is not the nursery. It may be the laboratory, the library, the observation; it may be the platform or the Senate. And if it be either of these, shall we say that education has unsphered and unsexed her? On the contrary, it has enabled that woman to 50 ascertain so far exactly what God meant he to do. [Applause.]

It is not the duty of men to keep women ignorant that they may continue to be women. But they have as much right to restrict their liberty of choice in education, as in any other direction.

The Woman's rights movement is the simple claim, that the same opportunity and liberty that a man has in civilized society shall be extended to the woman who stands at his side—equal or unequal in special powers, but an equal member of society. She must prove her power as he proves his. When Rosa Bonheur paints a vigorous and admirable picture of Normandy horses, she proves that she has

a hundred-fold more right to do it than scores of botchers and bunglers in color, who wear coat and trousers, and whose right, therefore, nobody questions. When the Misses Blackwell, or Miss Zachyewska, or Miss Hunt, or Miss Preston, or Miss Avery, accomplishing themselves in medicine, with a firm hand and a clear brain, carry the balm of life to suffering men, women and children, it is as much their right to do it—as much their sphere—as it is that of any long-haired, sallow, dissipated boy in spectacles, who hisses them as they go upon their holy mission. [Great applause.]

And so when Joan of Arc follows God and leads the army; when the maid of Saragossa loads and fires the cannon; when Mrs. Stowe makes her pen the heaven-appealing tongue of an outraged race; when Grace Darling and Ida Lewis, pulling their boats through the pitiless 51 waves, save fellow-creatures from drowning; when Mrs. Patten, the captain's wife, at sea—her husband lying helplessly ill in his cabin—puts everybody aside, and herself steers the ship to port, do you ask me whether these are not exceptional women? I am a man and you are women; but Florence Nightingale, demanding supplies for the sick soldiers in the Crimea, and when they are delayed by red tape, ordering a file of soldiers to break down the doors and bring them, which they do—for the brave loved bravery—seems to me quite as womanly as the loveliest girl in the land, dancing at the gayest ball in a dress of which the embroidery is the pinched lines of starvation in another girl's face, and whose pearls are the tears of despair in her eyes. Jenny Lind enchanting the heart of a nation; Anna Dickinson pleading for the equal liberty of her sex; Lucretia Mott, publicly bearing her testimony against the sin of slavery, are doing what God, by his great gifts of eloquence and song, appointed them to do. And whatever generous and noble duty, either in a private or a public sphere, God gives any woman the will and the power to do, that, and that only, for her, is feminine.

But have women, then, no sphere, as women? Undoubtedly they have, as men have a sphere as men. If a woman is a mother, God gives her certain affections, and cares springing from them, which we may be very sure she will not forget, and to which, just in the degree that she is a true woman, she will be fondly faithful. We need not think that it is necessary to fence her in, nor to suppose that she would try to evade these duties and 52 responsibilities, if perfect liberty were given her. As Sydney Smith said of education, we do not fear that if girls study Greek and mathematics, mothers will desert their infants for quadratic equations, or verbs in *mi*.

But the sphere of the family is not the sole sphere either of men or women. They are not only parents, they are human beings, with genius, talents, aspirations, ambition. They are also members of the state, and from the very equality of the parental function which perpetuates the state, they are equally interested in its welfare. Has the mother less concern than the father, in the laws that regulate the great social temptations which everywhere yawn for their children, or in the general policy of the government which they are summoned to support? Is she less entitled to the fruits

of her industry than he, and if it be best that some arrangement be made by law for the common support of the family, is there any just reason why she should not be consulted in making the law as well as he? The woman earns property and owns it. Society taxes her, and tries her, and sends her to the jail or to the gallows. Can it be improper that she be tried by her peers, or inexpedient that she have a voice in making the law that taxes her?

Is it said that she influences the man now? Very well; do you object to that? And if not, is there any reason why she should not do directly what she does indirectly? If it is proper that her opinion should influence a man's vote, is there any good reason why it should not be independently expressed? Or is it said 53 that she is represented by men? Excuse me; I belong to a country which said, with James Otis in the forum, and with George Washington in the field, that there is no such thing as virtual representation. The guarantee of equal opportunity in modern society is the ballot. It may be a clumsy contrivance, but it is the best we have yet found. In our system a man without a vote is but half a man. When we gave the freedmen their civil rights we gave them a gun. When we added political equality, we loaded it and made it effective. So long as women are forbidden political equality, the laws and feelings of society will be unjust to them.

The other day a young man and his sister graduated at Oberlin with exactly equal rank and ability. They became teachers of the same grade, in the same town—perhaps in the same school. He was paid three or four times as much as she; and when she asked that her salary might be raised, she was replaced by a young man—her pupil—and he was paid a third more than she had been. If women had a vote, I think that school-committee elected by the people would have a miraculous gift of sight, and suddenly see that exactly equal labor and ability are worth exactly equal wages. Or look into the Statutes of Massachusetts. There is one that provides that no married woman can be guardian, even of her own children by a former marriage, until her husband files in the Probate Court his written consent to her assuming the office. The late statute authorized that husband by will to appoint a guardian for his children who might be the widow or another; 54 and if she married again, the minor children were at the disposition of the guardian and not of their mother. Such a law is the consequence of making laws by men only. If women voted, it would follow the fugitive slave act into obloquy and oblivion.

I have no more superstition about the ballot than about any other method of social improvement and progress. But all experience shows that my neighbor's ballot is no protection for me. We see that voters may be bribed, dazzled, coerced; and where there is practically universal suffrage among men, we often see, indeed, corruption, waste and bad laws. But we nowhere see that those who once have the ballot are willing to relinquish it, and many of those who most warmly oppose the voting of women, also most earnestly advocate the unconditional restoration of political rights to the

guiltiest of the late rebel leaders, because they know that to deprive them of the ballot places them at a terrible disadvantage. If, then, it is what I may call an American political instinct that any class of men which monopolizes the political power will be unjust to other classes of men, how much truer is it that one sex as a class will be unjust to the other. And if the usurping sex, as Gibbon calls it, is physically the stronger, then, just in the degree that it becomes honorable, enlightened, civilized, will it see that no class can safely monopolize political power, and will gladly welcome every restraint upon its own tendency to abuse it.

Yes, I am told, but practical politics is a system of expediency. If the suffrage is to be enlarged, it ought to be shown that the enlargement will promote the general welfare. There are as many ignorant women as there are intelligent, and the change, therefore, will merely increase, without improving, the number of voters. Ignorance may be a proper disqualification for a vote, but ignorance is not confined to sex. If we say that ignorant persons shall not vote, very well. That is one thing. But it is quite another to say that, men and women having an equal interest in good government, ignorant men may vote, and intelligent women shall not.

Besides, if we speak of the public welfare, surely we ought to have learned by heart the great lesson which has been written in blood in this country, that nothing is so demoralizing to a people as persistence in obvious and proved injustice—a public policy inconsistent with our fundamental principles. I know, as every man knows, many a woman of the noblest character, of the highest intelligence, of the purest purpose, the owner of property, the mother of children, devoted to her family and to all her duties, and for that reason profoundly interested in public affairs. And when this woman says to me, “You are one of the governing class, your government is founded upon the principle of expressed consent of all, as the best security of all. I have as much stake in it as you, perhaps more than you, because I am a parent, and wish more than many of my neighbors to express my opinion and assert my influence by a ballot. I am a better judge than you or any man of my own responsibilities and powers. I am willing to bear my equal share of every burden of the government in such manner as we shall all equally decide to be best. By what right, then, except that of mere force, do you deny me a voice in the laws which I am forced to obey?” What shall I say? What can I say? Shall I tell her that she is “owned” by some living man, or is some dead man’s “relict,” as the old phrase was? Shall I tell her that she ought to be ashamed of herself for wishing to be unsexed; that God has given her the nursery, the ball room, the opera, and if these fail, he has graciously provided the kitchen, the wash-tub and the needle? Or shall I tell her that she is a lute, a moonbeam, a rosebud? and touch my guitar, and weave flowers in her hair and sing:— “Gay without toil and lovely without art, They spring to cheer the sense and glad the heart; Nor blush, my fair, to own you copy these, Your best, your sweetest empire is to please.”

No, no. At least I will not insult her. I can say nothing. I hang my head before that woman as when in foreign lands I was asked—"You are an American? What is the nation that forever boasts of the equal liberty of all its citizens, and is the only great nation in the world that traffics in human flesh!"

Or is it said that women do not wish to vote; that it depends wholly upon themselves, and that whenever a majority of them demand political equality, it will be granted? But this is a total surrender of the objection. 57 The argument hitherto has been that it is unwomanly to ask for a share in political power; and if that be so, then the louder the demand becomes the more pressing is the necessity to build the barriers higher and higher. If it is unwomanly to wish to vote, a general demand upon the part of women would be merely an insurrection of women against womanliness, to be put down at all hazards by men, who assume to know what this womanliness is, if women themselves do not. Instead of yielding to a majority, there should be more formidable preparations to resist them. Besides, if it be unwomanly, and destructive of the natural and proper sphere of sex for women to vote, when the demand becomes imposing from numbers, it will be necessary to ascertain what has fostered the demand. Then we shall find that it is the constantly growing respect for women, their admission to certain civil rights and to larger education which has logically led them to demand political rights, and there will be no remedy but in turning civilization backward and restoring them to their condition under the old civilization, which treated them as things and not as persons.

The very moment women passed out of the degradation of the Greek household, and the contempt of the Roman law, they began their long and slow ascent, through prejudice, sophistry and passion, to their perfect equality of choice and opportunity as human beings; and the assertion that when a majority of women ask for equal political rights they will be granted, is a confession that there is no conclusive 58 reason against their sharing them. And, if that be so, how can their admission rightfully depend upon the majority? Why should the woman who does not care to vote prevent the voting of her neighbor who does? Why should a hundred girls who are content to be dolls, and do what Mrs. Grundy expects, prejudice the choice of a single one who wishes to be a woman, and do what her conscience requires? You tell me that the great mass of women are uninterested, indifferent, and, upon the whole, hostile to the movement. You say what of course you cannot know, but even if it were so, what then? There are some of the noblest and best of women both in this country and in England who are not indifferent. They are the women who have thought for themselves upon the subject. The others, the great multitude, are those who have not thought at all, who have acquiesced in the old order, and who have accepted the prejudices of men. Shall their unthinking acquiescence, or the intelligent wish of their thoughtful sisters decide the question?

And if women do not care about the question, it is high time that they did, both for themselves and for men. The spirit of society cannot be just, nor the laws equitable, so long as half of the population are politically paralyzed. And this movement, so well begun twenty-two years ago by women whose names will be always honored in its history, for their undismayed fidelity to the welfare of their sex—this movement is now fully organized for the very purpose of interesting men and women in the question. It is a pacific agitation 59 but its issues are immeasurable. You cannot deride it so contemptuously as the last great agitation in this country was derided, nor so bitterly as the corn-law reform in England. Even Mr. Webster, whose business was to know the people and understand politics, who had himself, on Plymouth Rock, declared the cause of liberty to be that of American, and at Niblo's Garden had asserted the omnipotence of conscience in politics—even Mr. Webster derided the anti-slavery movement as a rub-a-dub agitation.

But it was a drum-beat that echoed over every mountain, and penetrated every valley, and roused the heart of the land to throb in unison. To that rub-a-dub, a million men appeared at Lincoln's call, with millions of women supporting them. To that rub-a-dub the brave and beautiful and beloved went smiling to their graves. To that rub-a-dub Grant forced his fiery way through the wilderness; following its roll Sherman marched to the sea, and Sheridan scoured the Shenandoah. The rattling shots of the Kearsarge sinking the Alabama were only the far-off echoes of that terrible drum-beat. To that rub-a-dub Jefferson Davis fled from Richmond, and the wall of the Rebellion and of slavery crumbled at last and forever, as the walls of Jericho before the horns of Israel. That tremendous rub-a-dub, played by the hearts and hands of a great people, fills the land to-day with the celestial music of liberty, and to that people, still thrilling with that music, we appeal!

We can be patient. Our fathers won their independence 60 of England by the logic of English ideas. We will persuade American by the eloquence of American principles. In one of the fierce Western battles among the mountains, General Thomas—whom we freshly deplore—was watching a body of his troops painfully pushing their way up a steep hill against a withering fire. Victory seemed impossible, and the General—even he, a rock of valor and of patriotism, exclaimed—“They can't do it! They'll never reach the top!” His chief of staff, watching the struggle with equal earnestness, placed his hand on his commander's arm, and said softly: “Time, time, General; given them time;” and presently the moist eyes of the brave leader saw his soldiers victorious upon the summit. They were American soldiers—so are we. They were fighting an American battle—so are we. They were climbing a precipice—so are we. The great heart of their General gave them time and the conquered. The great heart of our country will give us time and we shall triumph.

WOMANS' DUTY TO VOTE. By HENRY WARD BEECHER. Address made at the Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention, held in New York, May 10, 1566.

It may be asked why, at such times as this, when the attention of the whole nation is concentrated upon the reconstruction of our States, we should intrude a new and advanced question. I have been asked, "Why not wait for the settlement of the question that now fills the minds of men? Why divert and distract their thoughts?" I answer, because the question is one and the same. We are not now discussing merely the question of the vote for the African, or of his status as a new-born citizen. That is a fact which compels us to discuss the whole underlying question of government. That is the case in court. But when the judge shall have given his decision, that decision will cover the whole question of civil society, and the relations of every individual in it as a factor, an agent, an actor.

Now, if you look back, you shall see that the history of the development of man for the last thousand years—before that, but more obviously and noticeably since—has been collection for the sake of distribution. In order to guard interest against brute force, it was needful that guilds, and franchises, and fraternities, and professions should be established. Just as when we light a candle in flaring winds we take every precaution, not to hide the light, but to protect it until it has strength to burn without protection, and then let it stand to give light to all that are in the house; so it was necessary for law to protect itself. It was needful for medicine, too, as it were, to intrench itself and ward off empirics. It was needful for various mechanical trades to defend themselves. And it has been said that these were the bulwarks and the very advanced guards of popular democratic liberty. But so soon as, by guilds, and franchises, and fraternities, and professions, a principle had become so strong that it needed no longer to be protected, it then had worn out its time, and become a kind of aristocracy. And in our day the great distributive tendency has set in. The principle of democracy is so well established now that learning is not confined to a learned class; medicine is not confined to the medical profession; law is not confined to lawyers; and the ministration of the gospel, thank God, is not confined to ministers of the gospel. Everywhere it is becoming more and more acknowledged or apparent that the functions that used to be given to men of professions are becoming part and parcel of the right of every citizen who shows himself capable of exercising those functions. It needs now no reformation, no convention, to teach us that a man may take the Word of God in his hand, and go down into any street, and preach the gospel to every living creature. Once it would have required a man to make his peace with a civil magistrate to do that; for only the hand of ordination was supposed to give a man the right to preach. But not that is over, almost without discussion. It is not now thought necessary for a man, if he knows the law, to consult a lawyer. A man has a right to be healthy without a doctor, and to step aside, if he pleases, from the methods which have been prescribed by the schools of medicine. A mother is better than many a doctor that is called to attend

the child; and I think that nurses will one day be considered the best and chiefest of doctors. Good doctors already consider themselves as but men standing between officious friends and the patient to keep off medicine. And the time will come, has come, when any man may enter, by the simple right of capacity to do it, into any calling, profession, or business in life. There was a time when, in some lands, if the father was a cooper, the son must be a cooper too. There was a time when, if a man was born in a barrel, he must live in a barrel all his life! There was a time when a man felt as much bound to follow the profession that his father did, as a man, being born a man, feels bound to continue a man, or a woman, being born a woman, feels bound to continue a woman. Now that is changed. Christian civilization, the progress of democratic ideas, is making itself felt everywhere. Men are scholars, without belonging to a scholastic class. Men are practitioners in every one of the professions, without belonging to the professional class. Men have a right to be statesmen by virtue of their citizenship. There is more power to-day in one citizen of Massachusetts than at any one time there was in a score of English nobles. These changes are going on by reason of the working of this grand democratic element. All the interests of society are experiencing a change; and society itself, in its structure, is also experiencing a change.

All the world over, the question to-day is, Who has a right to construct law, and to administer law? Russia—gelid, frigid Russia—cannot escape the question. Yes, he that sits on the Russian throne has proved himself a better democrat than any of us all, and is giving to-day more evidence of a genuine love of God, and of its partner emotion, love to man, in enfranchising thirty million serfs, than many a proud democrat of America has ever given. (Applause.) And the question of emancipation in Russia is only the preface to the next question, which doubtless he as clearly as any of us foresees—namely, the question of citizenship, and of the rights and functions of citizenship. In Italy, the question of who may partake of government has arisen, and there has been an immense widening of popular liberty there. Germany, that freezes at night and thaws out by day only enough to freeze up again at night, has also experienced as much agitation on this subject as the nature of the case will allow. And when all France, all Italy, all Russia, and all Great Britain shall have rounded out into perfect democratic liberty, it is to be hoped that, on the North side of the fence where it freezes first and the ice thaws out last, Germany, will herself be thawed out in her turn, and come into the great circle of democratic nations. Strange, that the mother of modern democracy should herself be stricken with such a palsy and with such lethargy! Strange, that a nation in which was born and in which has inherited all the indomitableness of individualism should be so long unable to understand the secret of personal liberty! But all Europe to-day is being filled and agitated with this great question of the right of every man to citizenship; of the right of every man to make the laws that are to control him; and of the right of every man to administer the laws that are applicable to him. This is the question to-day in Great Britain. The question that is being agitated from the throne down to the Birmingham shop—from the Atlantic to the North Sea to-day, is this: Shall more than one man in six

in Great Britain be allowed to vote? There is only one in six of the full-grown men in that nation that can vote to-day. And everywhere we are moving toward that sound, solid, final ground—namely, that it inheres in the radical notion of manhood that every man has a right which is not given to him by potentate, nor by legislator, nor by the consent of the community, but which belongs to his structural idea, and is a divine right, to make the laws that control him, and to elect the magistrates that are to administer those laws. It is universal.

And now, this being the world-tide and tendency, what is there in history, what is there in physiology, what is there in experience, that shall say to this tendency, marking the line of sex: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther?" I roll the argument from off my shoulders, and I challenge the man that stands with me, beholding that the world-thought to-day is the emancipation of the citizen's power and the preparation by education of the citizen for that power, and objects to extending the right of citizenship to every human being, to give me the reasons why. (Applause.) To-day this nation is exercising its conscience on the subject of suffrage for the African. I have all the time favored that: not because he was an African, but because he was 66 a man; because this right of voting, which is the symbol of everything else in civil power, inheres in every human being. But I ask you, to-day, "Is it safe to bring a million of black men to vote, and not safe to bring in your mother, your wife, and your sister to vote?" (Applause.) This ought ye to have done, and to have done quickly, and not to have left the other undone. (Renewed applause.)

To-day, politicians of every party, especially on the eve of an election, are in favor of the briefest and most expeditious citizenizing of the Irishmen. I have great respect for Irishmen—when they do not attempt to carry on war! (Laughter.) The Irish Fenian movement is a ludicrous phenomenon past all laughing at. Bombarding England from the shores of America! (Great laughter.) Paper pugnation! Oratorical destroying! But when wind-work is the order of the day, commend me to Irishmen. (Renewed laughter.) And yet I am in favor of Irishmen voting. Just so soon as they give pledge that they come to America, in good faith, to abide here as citizens, and forswear the old allegiance, and take on the new, I am in favor of their voting. Why? Because they have learned our Constitution? No; but because voting teaches. The vote is a school-master. They will learn our laws, and learn our Constitution, and learn our customs ten times quicker when the responsibility of knowing these things is laid upon them, than when they are permitted to live in careless respecting them. And this nation is so strong that it can stand the incidental mischiefs of thus teaching the wild rabble that emigration throws on our shores 67 for our good and upbuilding. We are wise enough, and we have educational force enough, to carry these ignorant foreigners along with us. We have attractions that will draw them a thousand times more toward us than they can draw us toward them.

And yet, while I take this broad ground, that no man, even of the Democratic party (I make the distinction because a man may be a democrat and be ashamed of the party, and a man may be of the party and not know a single principle of democracy), should be debarred from voting, I ask, is an Irishman just landed, unwashed and uncombed, more fit to vote than a woman educated in our common schools? Think of the mothers and daughters of this land, among whom are teachers, writers, artists, and speakers. What a throng could we gather if we should from all the West call our women that as educators are carrying civilization there! Thousands upon thousands there are of women that have gone forth from the educational institutions of New England to carry light and knowledge to other parts of our land. Now, place this great army of refined and cultivated women on the one side, and on the other side the rising cloud of emancipated Africans, and in front of them the great emigrant band of the Emerald Isle, and is there force enough in our government to make it safe to give to the African and the Irishman the franchise? There is. We shall give it to them. (Applause.) And will our force all fail, having done that? And shall we take the fairest and best part of our society; those to whom we owe it that we ourselves are civilized; our teachers; our companions; those to whom we go for counsel in trouble more than to any others; those to whom we trust everything that is dear to ourselves—our children's welfare, our household, our property, our name and reputation, and that which is deeper, our inward life itself, that no man may mention to more than one—shall we take them and say, "They are not, after all, fit to vote where the Irishman votes, and where the African votes?" I am scandalized when I hear men talk in the way that men do talk—men that do not think.

If, therefore, you refer to the initial sentence, and ask me why I introduce this subject to-day, when we are already engaged on the subject of suffrage, I say, This is the greatest development of the suffrage question. It is more important that woman should vote than that the black man should vote. It is important that he should vote, that the principle may be vindicated, and that humanity may be defended; but it is important that woman should vote, not for her sake. She will derive benefit from voting; but it is not a selfish ground that I claim the right of suffrage for her. It is God's growing and least disclosed idea of a true human society that man and woman should not be divorced in political affairs any more than they are in religious and social affairs. I claim that woman should vote because society will never know its last estate and true glory until you accept God's edict and God's command—long raked over and covered in the dust—until you bring it out, and lift it up, and read this one of God's Ten Commandments, written, if not on stone, yet in the very heart and structure of mankind. *Let those that God joined together not be put asunder.* (Applause.)

69

When men converse with me on the subject of suffrage, or the vote, it seems to me that the terminology withdraws their mind from the depth and breadth of the case to the mere instruments.

Many of the objections that are urged against woman's voting are objections against the mechanical and physical act of suffrage. It is true that all the forces of society, in their final political deliverance, must needs be born through the vote, in our structure of government. In England it is not so. It was one of the things to be learned there that the unvoting population on any question in which they are interested and united are more powerful than all the voting population or legislation. The English Parliament, if they believed to-day that every working man in Great Britain staked his life on the issues of universal suffrage, would not dare a month to deny it. For when a nation's foundations are on a class of men that do not vote, and its throne stands on forces that are coiled up and liable at any time to break forth to its overthrow, it is a question whether it is safe to provoke the exertion of those forces or not. With us, where all men vote, government is safe; because, if a thing is once settled by a fair vote, we will go to war rather than to give it up. As when Lincoln was elected, if an election is valid, it must stand. In such a nation as this, an election is equivalent to a divine decree, and irreversible, but in Great Britain an election means not the will of the people, but the will of rulers and a favored class, and there is always under them a great wrong class, that, if they get stirred up by the thought that they are wronged, will burst out with an explosion such that not the throne, nor parliament, nor the army, nor the exchequer can withstand the shock. And they wisely give way to the popular will when they can no longer resist it without running too great a risk. They oppose it as far as it is safe to do so, and then jump on the ride it. And you will see them astride of the vote, if the common people want it. But in America it is not so. The vote with us is so general that there is no danger of insurrection, and there is no danger that the government will be ruined by a wronged class that lies coiled up beneath it. When we speak of the vote here, it is not the representative of a class, as it is in England, worn like a star or garter, saying, "I have the king's favor or the government's promise of honor." Voting with us is like breathing. It belongs to us as a common blessing. He that does not vote is not a citizen with us.

It is not the vote that I am arguing, except that that is the outlet. What I am arguing, when I argue that woman should vote, is that she should do all things back of that which the vote means and enforces. She should be a nursing mother to human society. It is a plea that I make, that woman should feel herself called to be interested not alone in the household, not alone in the church, not alone in just that neighborhood in which she resides, but in the sum total of that society to which she belongs; and that she should feel that her duties are not discharged until they are commensurate with the definition which our Savior gave in the parable of the good Samaritan. I argue, not woman's right to vote; I argue woman's *duty to discharge citizenship*. 71 (Applause.) I say that more and more the great interests of human society in America are such as need the peculiar genius that God has given to woman. The questions that are to fill up our days are not forever to be mere money questions. Those will always constitute a large part of politics; but not so large a portion as hitherto. We are coming to a period when it is not merely to be a scramble of fierce and

belluine passions in the strife for power and ambition. Human society is yet to discuss questions of work and the workman. Down below privilege lie the masses of men. More men, a thousand times, feel every night the ground which is their mother than feel the stars and the moon far up in the atmosphere of favor. As when Christ came the great mass carpeted the earth, instead of lifting themselves up like tress of Lebanon, so now and here the great mass of men are men that have nothing but their hands, their heads, and their good stalwart hearts, as their capital. The millions that come from abroad come that they may have light and power, and lift their children up out of ignorance, to where they themselves could not reach with the tip of their fingers. And the great question of to-day is, How shall work find leisure, and in leisure knowledge and refinement? And this question is knocking at the door of legislation. And is there a man who does not know that, when questions of humanity and justice are blended, woman's instinct is better than man's judgment? From the moment a woman takes the child into her arms, God makes her the love-magistrate of the family; and her instincts and moral nature fit her to adjudicate questions of weakness 72 and want. And when society is on the eve of adjudicating such questions as these, it is a monstrous fatuity to exclude from them the very ones, that, by nature and training, and instinct, are best fitted to legislate and to judge.

For the sake, then, of such questions as these, that have come to their birth, I feel it to be woman's *duty* to act in public affairs. I do not stand here to plead for your *rights*. Rights, compared with duties, are insignificant—are mere baubles—are as the bow on your bonnet. It seems to me that the voice of God's providence to you to-day is, "Oh messenger of mine, where are the words that I sent you to speak? Whose dull, dead ear has been raised to life by that vocalization of heaven, that has given to you more than to any other one?" Man is sub-base. A thirty-two feet six-inch pipe is he. But what is an organ played with the feet, if all the upper part is left unused? The flute, the hautboy, the finer trumpet stops, all those stops that minister to the intellect, the imagination and the higher feelings—these must be drawn, and the whole organ played from top to bottom! (Applause.)

More than that; there are now coming up for adjudication public questions of education. And who, by common consent is the educator of the world? Who has been? Schools are to be of more importance than railroads—not to undervalue railroads. Books and newspapers are to be more vital and powerful than exchequers and banks—not to undervalue exchequers and banks. In other words, as society ripens, it has to ripen in its three departments, in the following order: First, 73 in the animal; second, in the social, and third, in the spiritual and moral. We are entering the last period, in which the questions of politics are to be more and more moral questions. And I invoke those whom God made to be peculiarly conservators of things moral and spiritual to come forward and help us in that work, in which we shall falter and fail without woman. We shall never perfect human society without her offices and her ministrations. We shall never round out the government,

or public administration, or public policies, or politics itself, until you have mixed the elements that God gave to us in society—namely, the powers of both men and women. (Applause.) I, therefore, charge my countrywomen with this *duty* of taking part in public affairs in the era in which justice and humanity, and education, and taste, and virtue are to be more and more a part and parcel of public procedure.

We are near the end of the time when men will talk to us about *isms*. I have lived to see the day when Grace Church has preached politics, and I am prepared to say, “Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” (Great applause.) We have seen the time when humanity was so ostracised and was so vagabond that no man that valued his reputation, or his life even, dared to preach it. But that time has gone. The sepulchre is open, and the Christ has come out, and is a living Saviour and no man now, rolling the door back, can again shut in the Saviour of the world. It is too late. He has flown. And those regal ideas that struggle for liberty have come forth, and spread their wings to soar high, and yet brood low over all the nations, and you 74 shall never get them back; and the time is coming when they will take such proportions as we do not now suspect. And the men that pray out of grog-shops, and out of *Heralds*, and such like newspapers, and fear that the sacred garments of religion will be soiled by those who in the pulpit dabble with politics—let them prepare themselves, for there is to be more dabbling with politics that they ever saw before in all their lives. (Great laughter and applause.)

In such a state of society, then, as the present, I stand, as I have said, on far higher ground in arguing this question than the right of women. That I believe in; but that is down in the justice's court. I go to the supreme bench and argue it, and argue it on the ground that the nation needs woman, and that woman needs the nation, and that woman can never become what she should be, and the nation can never become what it should be, until there is no distinction made between the sexes as regards the rights and duties of citizenship —until we come to the 28th verse of the third chapter of Galatians:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

And when that day comes; when the Heavenly Kingdom is ushered in with its myriad blessed influences; when the sun of righteousness shall fill the world with its beams, as the natural sun, coming from the far South, fills the earth with glorious colors and beauty; then it will come to pass that there shall be no nationality, no difference of classes, and no difference of sexes. Then all shall be one in Christ Jesus.

I urge, then, that woman should perform the duty of a citizen in voting. You may, perhaps, ask, before I go any further, "What is the use of preaching to us that we *ought* to do it, when we are *not permitted* to do it?" That day in which the intelligent, cultivated women of America say, "We have a right to the ballot," will be the day in which they will have it. (Voices—"Yes." "That is so.") There is no power on earth that can keep it from them. (Applause.) The reason you have not voted is because you have not wanted to. (Applause.) It is because you have not felt that it was your duty to vote. You have felt yourselves to be secure and happy enough in your privileges and prerogatives, and have left the great mass of your sisters, that shed tears and bore burdens, to shift for themselves. You have felt that you had rights more than you wanted now. O, yes, it is as if a beauty in Fifth avenue, hearing one plead that bread might be sent to the hungry and famishing, should say, "What is this talk about bread for? I have as much bread as I want and plenty of sweetmeats, and I do not want your loaves." Shall one that is glutted with abundance despise the wants of the starving, who are so far below them that they do not hear their cries, not one of which escapes the ear of Almighty God? Because you have wealth, and knowledge, and loving parents, or a faithful husband, or kind brothers, and you feel no pressure of need, do you feel no inward pressure of humanity for others? Is there no part of God's great work in providence that should lead you to be discontented with your ease and privileges until you are enfranchised? You ought to vote; 76 and when your understanding and intellect are convinced that you ought to do it, you will have the power to do it; and you never will till then.

I. Woman has more interest than man in the promotion of virtue and purity and humanity. Half, shall I say?—Half does not half measure the proportion of those sorrows that come upon woman by reason of her want of influence and power. All the young men that, breaking down, break fathers' and mothers hearts; all those that struggle near to the grave, weeping piteous tears of blood, it might almost be said, and that at last, under paroxysms of despair, sin against nature, and are swept out of misery into damnation; the spectacles that fill our cities, and afflict and torment villages—what are these but reasons that summon woman to have a part in that regenerating of thought and that regenerating of legislation which shall make vice a crime, and vice-makers criminals? Do you suppose that, if it were to turn on the votes of women to-day whether rum should be sold in every shop in this city, there would be one moment's delay in settling the question? What to the oak lightening is, that marks it and descends swiftly upon it, that woman's vote would be to miscreant vices in these great cities. (Applause.)

Ah, I speak that which I do know. As a physician speaks from that which he sees in the hospital where he ministers, so I speak from that which I behold in my professional position and place, where I see the undercurrent of life. I hear groans that come from smiling faces. I witness tears that when others look upon the face are all swept away, as the rain is when one comes after a 77

storm. Not most vocal are our deepest sorrows. Oh, the sufferings of wives for husbands untrue! Oh, the sufferings of mothers for sons led astray! Oh, the sufferings of sisters for sisters gone! Oh, the sufferings of companions for companion-women desecrated! And I hold it to be a shame that they, who have the instinct of purity and of divine remedial mercy more than any other, should withhold their hand from that public legislation by which society may be scourged, and its pests cleared away. And I declare that woman has more interest in legislation than man, because she is the sufferer and the home-staying, ruined victim.

II. The household, about which we hear so much said as being woman's sphere, is safe only as the community around about it is safe. Now and then there may be a Lot that can live in Sodom but when Lot was called to emigrate, he could not get all his children to go with him. They had been intermarried and corrupted. A Christian woman is said to have all that she needs for her understanding and to task her powers if she will stay at home and mend her husband's clothes, if she has a husband, and take care of he children, if she has children. The welfare of the family, it is said, ought to occupy he time and thoughts. And some ministers, in descanting upon the sphere of woman, are wont to magnify the glory and beauty of a mother teaching some future chief-justice or some president of the United States. Not one whit of glory would I withdraw from such a canvas as that but I aver that the power to teach these children largely depends upon the influences that surround the household; so that she that would 78 take the best care of the house must take care of the atmosphere which is around the house as well. And every true and wise Christian woman is bound to have a thought for the village, for the country, for the State, and for the nation. (Applause.)

That was not the kind of woman that brought me up —a woman that never thought of anything outside of her own door-yard. My mother's house was as wide as Christ's house; and she taught me to understand the words of him that said, "The field is the world; and whoever needs is your brother." A woman that is content to wash stockings, and make Johnny-cake, and to look after and bring up her boys faultless to a button, and that never thinks beyond the meal-tub, and whose morality is so small as to be confined to a single house, is an under-grown woman, and will spend the first thousand years after death in coming to that state in which she ought to have been before she died. (Laughter.) Tell me that a woman is fit to give an ideal life to an American citizen, to enlarge his sympathies, to make him wise in judgment, and to establish him in patriotic regard, who has no thought above what to eat and drink, and wherewithal to be clothed! The best housekeepers are they that are the most widely beneficent. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these thing shall be added unto you." God will take care of the stockings, if you will take care of the heads! (Laughter and applause.) Universal beneficence never hinders anybody's usefulness in any particular field of duty. Therefore, woman's sphere should not be limited to the household. The

public welfare requires that she should have a thought of affairs outside of the household, and in the whole community.

III. Woman brings to public affairs peculiar qualities, aspirations, and affections which society needs. I have had persons say to me, "Would you, now, take your daughter and your wife, and walk down to the polls with them?" If I were to take my daughter and my wife and walk down to the polls with them, and there was a squirming crowd of bloated, loud-mouthed, blattering men, wrangling like so many maggots on cheese, what do you think would take place, but that, at the moment I appeared with my wife and daughter walking by my side with conscious dignity and veiled modesty, the lane would open, and I should pass through the red sea unharmed? (Great applause.) Where is there a mob such that the announcement that a woman is present, does not bring down the loudest of them? Nothing but the sorcery of rum prevents a man from paying unconscious, instant respect to the presence of a woman.

I am asked, "Would you take your wife and daughter into the vulgarity of politics?" Now, to take your wife and daughter into the vulgarity of politics is to cleanse politics of its vulgarity. (Applause.) Politics is vulgar, because you are not there, woman; and that is one of the reasons why you must be there. You may surround the polls with as many inspectors of election as the room would hold, and station a line of policemen or military all the way from the door to the ballot-box, and corruption will creep through them; but put a revered mother, a beloved wife, or an honored sister there, and corruption will look upon them, and veil its face, and pass on. (Applause.) It is the presence of woman in public affairs, actuated by a high sense of duty, and befriended and co-operated with by man, that allays corruption, wards off insult, and brings peace where was strife and struggle. And, therefore, I say, Politics is as the poor wretch that called out to the Master, "Art thou come to torment me before my time?" when woman approaches it. And a voice shall yet be heard saying, "I command thee to come out of it." And the devil will cast it on the ground, and tear it, and it will wallow foaming, and the devil will come out of it, and it will be worth twenty times more without a devil than with a devil in it. (Applause.)

IV. The history of woman's co-operative labors thus far justifies the most sanguine anticipations, such as I have alluded to. Allusion has been made to the purification of literature. The influence of woman has been a part of the cause of this, unquestionably; but I would not ascribe such a result to any one cause. God is a great workman, and has a chest full of tools, and never uses one tool, but always many; and in the purification of literature, the elevation of thought, the advancement of the public sentiment of the world in humanity, God has employed more than that which has been wrought in their departments. And that which the church has long ago achieved for herself, that which the family has achieved—that, in more eminence and more wondrous and surprising beauty,

the world will achieve for itself in public affairs, when man and woman co-operate there, as now they are co-operating in all other spheres of taste, intellection and morality.

81

Let me now pass, without touching upon some other points which I had marked, to a consideration of a few of the objections that are made to a woman's mixing in public affairs as a voter and as a citizen.

I. It is said, "A woman's place is at home." Well, now, since compromise are coming into vogue again, will you compromise with me, and agree that until a woman has a home she may vote? (Laughter.) That is only fair. It is said, "She ought to stay at home, and attend to home duty, and minister to the wants of father, or husband, or brothers." Well, may all orphan women, and unmarried women, and women that have no abiding place of residence vote? If not, where is the argument? But, to look at it seriously, what is the defect of this statement? It is the impression that staying at home is incompatible with going abroad. Never was there a more monstrous fallacy. I light my candle, and it gives me all the light I want, and it gives all the light you want to you, and to you, and to you, and to every other one in the room; and there is not one single ray that you get there which cheats me here; and a woman that is doing her duty right in the family, sheds a beneficent influence out upon the village in which she dwells, without taking a moment's more time.

My cherry-trees are joyful in all their blossoms, and thousands go by them and see them in their beauty day by day; but I never mourn the happiness that they bestow on passers-by as having been taken from me. I am not cheated by the perfume that goes from my flowers into my neighbor's yard. And the character of a true woman is such that it may shine everywhere without 82 making her any poorer. She is richer in proportion as she gives away. (Applause.) It is that which you give away that you keep. It is that which you keep that can never do any good to yourselves or others. It is that which you give away that bounds back and makes you stronger.

Why, I set a candle in my window in the country, that they who come up the lane may see how to drive and reach my house, and clear down to the road that modest candle sheds its light; but does it cheat me? Does it fail to do its work inside because it sends its long line of light outside? Some men seem to think that, if woman should get the rights that she is clamoring for, she would do nothing but put a reticule on her arm, and start out every morning with a bundle of tracts, discussing all manner of questions. Oh no, she is not a man! If she were a man she would go about with noisy inefficiency, buzzing and bustling, and making a great ado about nothing; but, being a woman, she goes about what she has to do, and does it so quietly as scarcely to be noticed. And is she not a skillful manager? Does she not know how to give up and conquer? Does she not know how to touch the subtle springs of action? Has she not the element of foresight? It is called "tact." I do not care what you call it, it

is blessed. For next to having your own way, is thinking that you have it. (Laughter.) Some of the sweetest experiences of my life were when my father, who was two-thirds a woman—a woman with man's enamel on—took my side when I meant to go to sea, and made it all so plain and right that, when I came 83 to the point of deciding, I did not want to go, and all trouble was avoided. If he had whipped me, and shut me up, and scolded me, I should have gone away; and I do not know where I should have been buried—somewhere. Woman has that peculiar quality of doing much while she talks little. Her life is largely in the sphere of spiritual unembodied power. She works with the fewest instruments, and the least noise possible, and avoids observation; while man works with all the instrumentation at his command, and makes the greatest possible amount of noise and clatter. And it is just because woman is woman that she is fitted, while she takes care of the household, to take care of the village and the community around about her.

II. It is said, "It will destroy woman's delicacy if she goes into politics." Certainly, if she goes into partnership with some politicians. One base politician is corruption enough to spoil a whole village; and I would not have her inoculated with it for the world. But I do not propose that she should change her sex. I would a great deal rather have a man that was born a man than a woman that has become a man. Unsexing is poor business. I have seen that tried to be women and women that tried to be men; and commend me to women that are women by nature, and men that are men by nature, and to no mixture. (Applause.) If you come into public affairs with the same kind of ratioeinactive force that men do, you will be no better there than men; but if you do not divest yourself of those intuitions of the moral sense, and that foresight, that tact, which you employ in other spheres, then your 84 presence there will be more fruitful of good than men's. It is to bring these things into the place of the coarser instrumentations of politics that I want you to be a woman more than ever. And if, there be sweetness on the tongue, let it ring like a silver bell. If there be mildness in the eye, let it not give place to fierce zeal. If there be melody of the heart, let it charm away that which is bad in public affairs. It is *as a woman* that you are summoned to take part in those affairs. If you lay aside the woman, then you are not needed. It is to get another sort of influence in public affairs that we plead for woman's entrance there.

But it is said, "She ought to act through her father, or husband, or son." Why ought she? Did you ever frame an argument to show why the girl should use her father to vote for her, and the boy who is younger, and not half so witty, should vote for himself? It does not admit of an argument. If the grandmother, the mother, the wife, and the eldest daughter, are to be voted for by the father, the husband, and the eldest brother, then why are not the children to be voted for in complete family relation by the patriarchal head? Why not go back to the tribal custom of the desert, and let the patriarch do all the voting? To be sure, it would change the whole form of our government; but, if it is good for the family, it is just as good for classes. I should like to see one man go to another and

claim the right to vote for him. Suppose I should go to men that are working for me, and say, "Boys, you are nothing but workmen, and I am the owner of a fancy farm, which I pay roundly for, and you ought to let me vote 85 for you; tell me what you want, and I will take it into consideration." There would be as much reason in this as there is in the argument that women ought not to vote because her husband or father can vote for her.

In a frontier settlement is a log cabin, and it is in a region which is infested by wolves. There are in the family a broken-down patient of a man, a mother, and three daughters. The house is surrounded by a pack of these voracious animals, and the inmates feel that their safety requires that the intruders should be driven away. There are three or four rifles in the house. The man creeps to one of the windows, and to the mother and daughter it is said, "You load the rifles, and hand them to me, and let me fire them." But they can load all the four rifles, and he cannot fire half as fast as they can load; and I say to the mother, "Can you shoot?" She says, "Let me try"; and she takes a gun, and points it at the wolves, and pulls the trigger, and I see one of them throw his feet up in the air. "Ah!" I say, "I see you can shoot! You keep the rifle, and fire it yourself." And I say to the eldest daughter, "Can you shoot?" "I guess I can," she says. "Well, dare you?" "I dare do anything to save father and the family." And she takes one of the rifles, and pops over another of the pack. And I tell you, if the wolves knew that all the women were firing, they would flee from that cabin instanter. (Laughter.) I do not object to a woman loading a man's rifle and letting him shoot; but I say that, if there are two rifles, she ought to load one of them herself and shoot. And I do not see any use in a woman's influencing a man, and loading him 86 with a vote, and letting him go and fire it off at the ballot-box. (Laughter and applause.)

It is said, again, "Woman is a creature of such an excitable nature that, if she were to mingle with men in public affairs, it would introduce a kind of vindictive acrimony, and politics would become intolerable." O, if I really thought so, if I thought that the purity of politics would be sullied, I would not say another word! (Laughter.) I do not want to take anything from the celestial graces of politics! (Renewed laughter.) I want Fernando Wood and the aldermen of New York to understand that I would not on any account demoralize politics; and, if I believed that bringing our mothers and wives and daughters into politics would have a tendency to lower its moral tone in the slightest degree, I would give up the argument. (Laughter and applause.) I will admit that woman is an excitable creature, and I will admit that politics needs no more excitement; but, sometimes, you know, things are homœopathic. A woman's excitement is apt to put out a man's; and if she should bring her excitability into politics, it is likely that it would neutralize the excitement already there, and that there would be a grand peace! (Laughter.)

But, not to trifle with it, woman is excitable. Woman is yet to be educated. Woman is yet to experience the reactionary influence of being a public legislator and thinker. Add let her sphere be extended beyond the family and the school, so that she should be interested in, and actively engaged in promoting the welfare of the whole community, and in the course of three generations the reaction on her would be such that the excitement 87 she would bring into public affairs would be almost purely moral inspiration. It would be the excitement of purity and disinterested benevolence. And this excitement we need. For, although men decry excitement, and enthusiasm, and fanaticism, that cause which has not enthusiasm in it is dead, and ought to be buried; and only that cause has regency and potency which has in it just that excitement, indomitable, far-reaching, and purifying, which comes from man's and woman's moral instincts. And I would to God that we could have a little more of such enthusiasm and fanaticism in politics. (Applause.)

It is said, furthermore, "Woman might vote for herself, and take office." Why not? A woman makes as good a postmistress as a man does postmaster. Woman has been tried in every office from the throne to the position of the humblest servant; and where has she been found remiss? I believe that multitudes of the offices that are held by men are mere excuses for leading an effeminate life; and that with their superior physical strength it behooves them better to be actors out of doors, where the severity of climate and the elements is to be encountered, and leave indoor offices to women, to whom they more properly belong.

But, women, you are not educated for these offices. I hear bad reports of you. It is told me that the trouble in giving places to women is that they will not do their work well; that they do not feel the sense of conscience. They have been flattered so long, they have been called "women" so long, they have had compliments instead of rights so long, that they are spoiled; but when a generation 88 of young women shall have been educated to a stern sense of right and duty, and shall take no compliments at the expense of right, we shall have no such complaints as these. And when a generation of women, working with the love of God and true patriotism in their souls, shall have begun to hold office, meriting it, and being elected to it by those that would rather have a woman than a man in office, then you may depend upon it that education has qualified them for the trusts which are committed to them. We have tried "old women" in office, and I am convinced that it would be better to have *real* women than virile old women in public stations. (Laughter and applause.) For my own sake, give me a just, considerate, true, straight-forward, honest-minded, noble-hearted woman, who has been able, in the fear of God, to bring up six boys in the way they should go, and settle them in life. If there is anything harder in this nation than that, tell me what it is. A woman that can bring up a family of strong-brained children, and make good citizens of them, can be President without any difficulty. (Applause.)

Let me now close with one single thought in connection with this objection. I protest in the name of my country-women against the aspersion which is cast upon them by those who say that woman is not fit to hold office or discharge public trusts. The name of what potentate to-day, if you go around the world, would probably, in every nation on the earth, bring down most enthusiasm and public approbation? It I know, here in your midst, shall mention the name of Queen Victoria, your cheers will be a testimony to your admiration of 89 this noble woman. (Great applause.) Though it be in a political meeting, or any other public gathering, no man can mention her name without eliciting enthusiastic tokens of respect. And yet, the same men that cheer her will go home, and put on their spectacles, and argue that woman ought not to hold office. Was there ever a nobler specimen of woman than the Duchess of Sutherland? And is there a nobler than her daughter, the Duchess of Argyle—a friend to our cause, and one who our Minister, Mr. Adams, told me knew more of public affairs than he did? There are State occasions when she must stand in Parliament with her queen, and perform appropriate public duties; and who ever thought that in her doing it there was any derogation of her sex? Who ever thought that a duchess in France, or a queen in Russia, or an empress in Austria, or any aristocratic woman, was unsexed or demeaned by occupying a high position under the government?

It is a controversy to-day between woman aristocratic and woman democratic (applause); and I claim that what it is right for an aristocratic woman to do—what it is right for a duchess, or a queen, or an empress to do—it is right for the simplest and plainest of my countrywomen to do, that has no title, and no credentials, except the fact that God made her a woman. All that I claim for the proudest aristocrat I claim for all other woman. (Applause.) I do not object to a woman being a queen, or a president, if she has the qualifications which fit her to be one. And I claim that, where there is a woman that has the requisite qualifications for holding any office in the family, in the church, or in the state, there 90 is no reason why she should not be allowed to hold it. And we shall have a perfect crystal idea of the state, with all its contents, only when man understands the injunction, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." (Great applause.)