

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. HENRY W. BLAIR,

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

December 8, 1886.

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WASHINGTON.

1886.

Woman Suffrage.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. HENRY W. BLAIR.

Tuesday, December 7, 1886.

On the joint resolution (S. R. 5) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, extending the right of suffrage to women.

Mr. BLAIR said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I ask the Senate to proceed to the consideration of Order of Business 122, being the joint resolution (S. R. 5) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States extending the right of suffrage to women.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The joint resolution will be read.

The Chief Clerk read as follows:

Joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States extending the right of suffrage to women.

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following article be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States; which, when ratified by three-fourths of the said Legislatures, shall be valid as part of said Constitution, namely*

ARTICLE —

SECTION 1. The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

SEC. 2. The Congress shall have power, by appropriate legislation, to enforce the provisions of this article.

Mr. BLAIR. Mr. President, the question before the Senate is this: Shall a joint resolution providing for an amendment of the national Constitution so that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State, on account of sex, and that Congress shall have power to enforce the article, be submitted to the Legislatures of the several States for ratification or rejection?

The answer to this question does not depend necessarily upon the reply to that other question whether women ought to be permitted to exercise the right or privilege of suffrage as do men. The legislatures of the several States must decide this in ratifying or rejecting the proposed amendment.

Upon solemn occasions concerning grave public affairs, and when large numbers of the citizens of the country desire to test the sentiments of the people upon an amendment of the organic law in the manner provided to be done by the provisions of that law, it may well become the duty of Congress to submit the proposition to the amending power, which is the same as that which created the original instrument itself—the people of the several States.



It can hardly be claimed that two-thirds of each branch of Congress must necessarily be convinced that the Constitution should be amended as proposed in the joint resolution to be submitted before it has discretion to submit the same to the judgment of the States. Any citizen has the right to petition or, through his representative, to bring in his bill for redress of grievances, or to promote the public good by legislation; and it can hardly be maintained that, before any citizen or large body of citizens shall have the privilege of introducing a bill to the great legislative tribunal, which alone has primary jurisdiction of the organic law and power to amend or change it, the Congress, which under the Constitution is simply the moving or initiating power, must by a two-thirds vote approve the proposition at issue before its discussion shall be permitted in the forum of the States. To hold such a doctrine would be contrary to all our ideas of free discussion, and to lock up the institutions and the interests of a great and progressive people in fetters of brass.

It is only essential that two-thirds of each House of the Congress shall deem it necessary for the public good, that the amendment be proposed to the States for their action. But two-thirds of the Congress will hardly consider it "necessary" to submit a joint resolution proposing an amendment of the National Constitution to the States for consideration, unless the subject matter be of grave importance, with strong reasons in its favor, and a large support already developed among the people themselves.

If there be any principle upon which our form of government is founded, and wherein it is different from aristocracies, monarchies, and despotisms, that principle is this:

Every human being of mature powers, not disqualified by ignorance, vice or crime, is the equal of and is entitled to all the rights and privileges which belong to any other such human being under the law.

The independence, equality, and dignity of all human souls is the fundamental assertion of those who believe in what we call human freedom. This principle will hardly be denied by any one, even by those who oppose the adoption of the resolution. But we are informed that infants, idiots, and women are represented by men. This can not reasonably be claimed unless it be first shown that the consent of these classes has been given to such representation, or that they lack the capacity to consent. But the exclusion of these classes from participation in the Government deprives them of the power of assent to representation even when they possess the requisite ability; and to say there can be representation which does not presuppose consent or authority on the part of the principal who is represented is to confound all reason and to assert in substance that all actual power, whether despotic or otherwise, is representative, and therefore free. In this sense the Czar represents his whole people, just as voting men represent women who do not vote at all.

True it is that the voting men, by excluding women and other classes from the suffrage, by that act charge themselves with the trust of administering justice to all, even as the monarch whose power is based upon force is bound to rule uprightly. But if it be true that "all just government is founded upon the consent of the governed," then the government of woman by man, without her consent, given in her sovereign capacity, if indeed she be an intelligent creature, and provided she be competent to exercise the power of suffrage, which is the sovereignty, even if that government be wise and just in itself, is

a violation of natural right and an enforcement of servitude and slavery against her on the part of man. If woman, like the infant or the defective classes, be incapable of self-government, then republican society may exclude her from all participation in the enactment and enforcement of the laws under which she lives. But in that case, like the infant and the fool and the unconsenting subject of tyrannical forms of government, she is ruled and not represented by man.

Thus much I desire to say in the beginning in reply to the broad assumption of those who deny women the suffrage by saying that they are already represented by their fathers, their husbands, their brothers, and their sons, or to state the proposition in its only proper form, that woman whose assent can only be given by an exercise of sovereignty on her part is represented by man who denies and by virtue of power and possession refuses to her the exercise of the suffrage whereby that representation can be made valid.

The claim, then, of the minority of the committee that woman is represented by the other sex is not well founded, and is based upon the same assumption of power which lies at the base of all government anti-republican in form. It can not be claimed that she is as a free being already represented, for she can only be represented according to her will by the exercise of her will through the suffrage itself.

As already observed, the exclusion of woman from the suffrage under our form of government can be justified upon proof, and only upon proof, that by reason of her sex she is incompetent to exercise that power. This is a question of fact.

The common ground upon which all agree may be stated thus: All males having certain qualifications are in reason and in law entitled to vote. Those qualifications affect either the body or the mind or both.

First, the attainment of a certain age. The age in itself is not material, but maturity of mental and moral development is material, soundness of body in itself not being essential, and want of it alone never working forfeiture of the right, although it may prevent its exercise.

Age as a qualification for suffrage is by no means to be confounded with age as a qualification for service in war. Society has well established the distinction, and that one has no relation whatever to the other; the one having reference to physical prowess, while the other relates only to the mental and moral state. This is shown by the ages fixed by law for these qualifications, that of eighteen years being fixed as the commencement of the term of presumed fitness for military service, and forty-five years as the period of its termination; while the age of presumed fitness for the suffrage, which requires no physical superiority certainly, is set at twenty-one years, when still greater strength of body has been attained than at the period when liability to the dangers and hardships of war commences; and there are at least three millions more male voters in our country than of the population liable by law to the performance of military duty. It is still further to be observed, that the right of suffrage continues as long as the mind lasts, while ordinary liability to military service ceases at a period when the physical powers, though still strong, are beginning to wane. The truth is, that there is no legal or natural connection between the right or liability to fight and the right to vote.

The right to fight may be exercised voluntarily or the liability to fight may be enforced by the community whenever there is an invasion of right, and the extent to which the physical forces of society



may be called upon in self-defense or in justifiable revolution is measured not by age or sex, but by necessity, and may go so far as to call into the field old men and women and the last vestige of physical force. It can not be claimed that woman has no right to vote because she is not liable to fight, for she is so liable, and the freest government on the face of the earth has the reserved power under the call of necessity to place her in the forefront of battle itself, and more than this, woman has the right, and often has exercised it, to go there.

If any one could question the existence of this reserved power of society to call the force of woman to the common defense, either in the hospital or the field, it would be woman, who has been deprived of participation in the government and in shaping the public policy which has resulted in dire emergency to the state. But in all times, and under all forms of government and of social existence, woman has given her body and her soul to the common defense.

The qualification of age, then, is imposed for the purpose of securing mental and moral fitness for the suffrage on the part of those who exercise it. It has no relation to the possession of physical powers at all.

All other qualifications imposed upon male citizens, save only that of their sex, as prerequisites to the exercise of suffrage have the same objects in view, and can have no other.

The property qualification is, to my mind, an invasion of natural right, which elevates mere property to an equality with life and personal liberty, and ought never to be imposed upon the suffrage. But, however that may be, its application or removal has no relation to sex, and its only object is to secure the exercise of the suffrage under a stronger sense of obligation and responsibility—a qualification, be it observed, of no consequence save as it influences the mind of the voter in the exercise of his right.

The same is true of the qualifications of sanity, education, and obedience to the laws, which exclude dementia, ignorance, and crime from participation in the sovereignty. Every condition or qualification imposed upon the exercise of the suffrage by the citizen save only sex has for its only object or possible justification the possession of mental and moral fitness, and has no relation to physical power.

The question then arises why is the qualification of masculinity required at all?

The distinction between human beings by reason of sex is a physical distinction. The soul is of no sex. If there be a distinction of soul by reason of the physical difference, or accompanying that physical difference, woman is the superior of man in mental and moral qualities. In proof of this see the report of the minority and all the eulogiums of woman pronounced by those who, like the serpent of old, would flatter her vanity that they may continue to wield her power.

I repeat it, that the soul is of no sex, and that sex is, so far as the possession and exercise of human rights and powers are concerned, but a physical property, in which the female is just as important as the male, and the possessor thereof under just as great need of power in the organization and management of society and the government of society as man; and if there be a difference, she, by reason of her average physical inferiority, is really protected, and ought to be protected, by a superior mental and moral fitness to give direction to the course of society and the policy of the state. If, then, there be a distinction between the souls of human beings resulting from sex, I claim that, by the report of the minority and the universal testimony of all men, woman is better fitted for the exercise of the suffrage than man.

It is claimed by some that the suffrage is an inherent natural right, and by others that it is merely a privilege extended to the individual by society in its discretion. However this may be, practically any extension of the exercise of the suffrage to individuals or classes not now enjoying it must be by concession of those who already possess it, and such extension without revolution will be through the suffrage itself exercised by those who have it under existing forms.

The appeal by those who have it not must be made to those who are asked to part with a portion of their own power, and it is not strange that human nature, which is an essential element in the male sex, should hesitate and delay to yield one-half its power to those whose cause, however strong in reason and justice, lacks that physical force which so largely has been the means by which the masses of men themselves have wrung their own rights from rulers and kings.

It is not strange that when overwhelmed with argument and half won by appeals to his better nature to concede to woman her equal power in the state, and ashamed to blankly refuse that which he finds no reason for longer withholding, man avoids the dilemma by a pretended elevation of his helpmeet to a higher sphere, where, as an angel, she has certain gauzy ethereal resources and superior functions, occupations, and attributes which render the possession of mere earthly every-day powers and privileges non-essential to woman, however mere mortal men themselves may find them indispensable to their own freedom and happiness.

But to the denial of her right to vote, whether that denial be the blunt refusal of the ignorant or the polished evasion of the refined courtier and politician, woman can oppose only her most solemn and perpetual appeal to the reason of man and to the justice of Almighty God. She must continually point out the nature and object of the suffrage and the necessity that she possess it for her own and the public good.

What, then, is the suffrage, and why is it necessary that woman should possess and exercise this function of freemen?

I quote briefly from the report of the committee:

The rights for the maintenance of which human governments are constituted are life, liberty, and property. These rights are common to men and women alike, and whatever citizen or subject exists as a member of any body-politic, under any form of government, is entitled to demand from the sovereign power the full protection of these rights.

This right to the protection of rights appertains to the individual, not to the family alone, or to any form of association, whether social or corporate. Probably not more than five-eighths of the men of legal age, qualified to vote, are heads of families, and not more than that proportion of adult women are united with men in the legal merger of married life. It is, therefore, quite incorrect to speak of the state as an aggregate of families duly represented at the ballot-box by their male head. The relation between the government and the individual is direct; all rights are individual rights, all duties are individual duties.

Government in its two highest functions is legislative and judicial. By these powers the sovereignty prescribes the law, and directs its application to the vindication of rights and the redress of wrongs. Conscience and intelligence are the only forces which enter into the exercise of this highest and primary function of government. The remaining department is the executive or administrative, and in all forms of government—the republican as well as in monarchy—the primary element of administration is force, and even in this department conscience and intelligence are indispensable to its direction.

If now we are to decide who of our sixty millions of human beings are to constitute the citizenship of this Republic and by virtue of their qualifications be the law-making power, by what tests shall the selection be determined? The suffrage which is the sovereignty is this great primary law-making power. It is not the executive power proper at all. It is not founded upon force. Only that degree of physical strength which is essential to a sound body—the home



of the healthy mental and moral constitution—the sound soul in the sound body is required in the performance of the function of primary legislation. Never in the history of this or any other genuine republic has the law-making power, whether in general elections or in the framing of laws in legislative assemblies, been vested in individuals who have exercised it by reason of their physical powers. On the contrary, the physically weak have never for that reason been deprived of the suffrage nor of the privilege of service in the public councils so long as they possessed the necessary powers of locomotion and expression, of conscience and intelligence, which are common to all. The aged and the physically weak have, as a rule, by reason of superior wisdom and moral sense, far more than made good any bodily inferiority by which they have differed from the more robust members of the community in the discussion and decisions of the ballot-box and in councils of the state.

The executive power of itself is a mere physical instrumentality—an animal quality—and it is confided from necessity to those individuals who possess that quality, but always with danger, except so far as wisdom and virtue control its exercise. And it is obvious that the greater the mass of higher and spiritual forces, whether found in those to whom the execution of the law is assigned or in the great mass by whom the suffrage is exercised, and who direct the execution of the law, the greater will be the safety and the surer will be the happiness of the state.

It is too late to question the intellectual and moral capacity of woman to understand great political issues (which are always primarily questions of conscience—questions of the intelligent application of the principles of right and of wrong in public and private affairs) and properly decide them at the polls. Indeed, so far as your committee are aware, the pretense is no longer advanced that woman should not vote by reason of her mental or moral unfitness to perform this legislative function; but the suffrage is denied to her because she can not hang criminals, suppress mobs, nor handle the enginery of war. We have already seen the untenable nature of this assumption, because those who make it bestow the suffrage upon very large classes of men who, however well qualified they may be to vote, are physically unable to perform any of the duties which appertain to the execution of the law and the defense of the state. Scarcely a Senator on this floor is liable by law to perform a military or other administrative duty, yet the rule so many set up against the right of women to vote would disfranchise nearly this whole body.

But it is unnecessary to grant that woman can not fight. History is full of examples of her heroism in danger, of her endurance and fortitude in trial, and of her indispensable and supreme service in hospital and field; and in the handling of the deft and horrible machinery and infernal agencies which science and art have prepared and are preparing for human destruction in future wars, woman may perform her whole part in the common assault or the common defense. It is hardly worth while to consider this trivial objection that she is incompetent for purposes of national murder or of bloody self-defense as the basis of the denial of a great fundamental right, when we consider that if that right were given to her she would by its exercise almost certainly abolish this great crime of the nations, which has always inflicted upon her the chief burden of woe.

It will be admitted that the act of voting is operative in government only as a means of deciding upon the adoption or rejection of measures or of the selection of officers to enact, administer, and execute the laws.

In the discharge of these functions it also must be admitted that intelligence and conscience are the faculties requisite to secure their proper performance.

In this day when woman has demonstrated that she is fully the intellectual equal of man in the profound as well as in the politer walks of learning—in art, science, literature, and, considering her opportunities, that she is not his inferior in any of the professions or in the great mass of useful occupations, while she is, in fact, becoming the chief educator of the race and is the acknowledged support of the great ministrations of charity and religion; when in such great organizations as the suffrage associations, missionary societies, the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and even upon the still larger scale of international action, she has exhibited her power by mere moral influences and the inspiration of great purposes, without the aid of legal

penalties or even of tangible inconveniences, to mold and direct the discordant thought and action of thousands and millions of people scattered over separate States, and sometimes even living in countries hostile to each other to the accomplishment of great earthly or heavenly ends, it is unreasonable to deny to woman the suffrage in political affairs upon the false allegation that she is wanting in the very qualities most indispensable and requisite for the proper exercise of this great right.

The advocates of universal male suffrage have long since ceased to deny the ballot to woman upon the ground that she is unfit or incompetent to exercise it.

There is a class of high-stepping objectors, like Ouida, who decry the sound judgment and moral excellence of woman as compared with man, but in the same breath these people deny the suffrage to the masses of men and advocate "the just supremacy of the fittest," so that no time need be wasted in refutation of those malignant and libelous aspersions upon our mothers, sisters, and wives, which, when carried to logical conclusions by their own authors, deny the fundamental principles of liberty to man and woman alike, and reassert in its baldest form the dogma that "the existing system of electoral power all over the world is absurd, and will remain so because in no nation is there the courage, perhaps in no nation is there the intellectual power, capable of putting forward and sustaining the logical doctrine of the just supremacy of the fittest."

In fact the minority of the committee, and this is true of all honest, intelligent men who believe in the republican system of government at all, concede that woman has the capacity and moral fitness requisite to exercise the ballot. That class of women represented by the author of "Letters from a Chimney Corner," whose work has been adopted by the minority as the basis of their report, speaking through the "fair authoress," say that "if women were to be considered in their highest and final estate as merely individual beings, and if the right to the ballot were to be conceded to man as an individual, it might perhaps be logically argued that women also possessed the inherent right to vote." Let me read from the views of the minority on page 1:

The undersigned minority of the Committee of the Senate on Woman Suffrage, to whom was referred Senate Resolution No. 5, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to grant the right to vote to the women of the United States, beg leave to submit the following minority report, consisting of extracts from a little volume entitled, "Letters from a Chimney Corner," written by a highly cultivated lady, Mrs. —, of Chicago. This gifted lady has discussed the question with so much clearness and force that we make no apology to the Senate for substituting quotations from her book in place of anything we might produce. We quote first from chapter 3, which is entitled "The value of suffrage to women much overestimated."

The fair authoress says:  
"If women were to be considered in their highest and final estate as merely individual beings, and if the right to the ballot were to be conceded to man as an individual, it might perhaps be logically argued that women also possessed the inherent right to vote. But from the oldest times, and through all the history of the race, has run the glimmer of an idea, more or less distinguishable in different ages and under different circumstances, that neither man nor woman is, as such, individual; that neither being is of itself a whole, a unit, but each requires to be supplemented by the other before its true structural integrity can be achieved. Of this idea, the science of botany furnishes the most perfect illustration. The stamens on the one hand, and the ovary and pistil on the other, may indeed reside in one blossom, which then exists in a married or reproductive state. But equally well, the stamens or male organs may reside in one plant, and the ovary and pistil or female organs may reside in another. In that case, the two plants are required to make one structurally complete organization. Each is but half a plant, an incomplete individual by itself. The life prin-



ciple of each must be united to that of the other; the twain must be indeed one flesh before the organization is either structurally or functionally complete."

This is a concession of the whole argument, unless the highest and final estate of woman is to be something else than a mere individual. It would also follow that if such be her destiny—that is, to be something else than a mere "individual being"—and if for that reason she is to be denied the suffrage, then man equally should be denied the ballot if his highest and final estate is to be something else than a "mere individual."

Thereupon the minority of the committee, through the "Fair Authoress," proceed to show that both man and woman are designed for a higher final estate—to wit, that of matrimony. It seems to be conceded that man is just as much fitted for matrimony as woman herself, and thereupon the whole subject is illuminated with certain botanical lore about stamens and pistils, which, however relevant to matrimony, does not seem to me to prove that therefore woman should not vote unless at the same time it proves that man should not vote either. And certainly it can not apply to those women any more than to those men whose highest and final estate never is merged in the family relation at all, and even "Ouida" concedes "that the project \* \* \* to give votes only to unmarried women may be dismissed without discussion, as it would be found to be wholly untenable."

There is no escape from it. The discussion has passed so far that among intelligent people who believe in the republican form—that is, free government—all mature men and women have under the same circumstance and conditions the same rights to defend, the same grievances to redress, and, therefore, the same necessity for the exercise of this great fundamental right, of all human beings in free society. For the right to vote is the great primitive right. It is the right in which all freedom originates and culminates. It is the right from which all others spring, in which they merge, and without which they fall whenever assailed.

This right makes, and is all the difference between government by and with the consent of the governed and government without and against the consent of the governed; and that is the difference between freedom and slavery. If the right to vote be not that difference, what is? No, sir. If either sex as a class can dispense with the right to vote, then take it from the strong, and no longer rob the weak of their defense for the benefit of the strong.

But it is impossible to conceive of the suffrage as a right dependent at all upon such an irrelevant condition as sex. It is an individual, a personal right. It may be withheld by force; but if withheld by reason of sex it is a moral robbery.

But it is said that the duties of maternity disqualify for the performance of the act of voting. It can not be, and I think is not claimed by any one, that the mother who otherwise would be fit to vote is rendered mentally or morally less fit to exercise this high function in the state because of motherhood. On the contrary, if any woman has a motive more than another person, man or woman, to secure the enactment and enforcement of good laws, it is the mother, who, beside her own life, person, and property, to the protection of which the ballot is as essential as to the same rights possessed by man, has her little contingent of immortal beings to conduct safely to the portals of active life through all the snares and pitfalls woven around them by bad men and bad laws which bad men have made, or good laws which bad men, unhindered

by the good, have defied or have prostituted, and rightly to prepare, them for the discharge of all the duties of their day and generation, including the exercise of the very right denied to their mother.

Certainly, if but for motherhood she should vote, then ten thousand times more necessary is it that the mother should be guarded and armed with this great social and political power for the sake of all men and women who are yet to be. But it is said that she has not the time. Let us see. By the best deductions I can make from the census and from other sources there are 15,000,000 women of voting age in this country at the present time, of whom not more than 10,000,000 are married and not more than 7,500,000 are still liable to the duties of the maternity, for it will be remembered that a large proportion of the mothers of our country at any given time are below the voting age, while of those who are above it another large proportion have passed beyond the point of this objection. Not more than one-half the female population of voting age are liable to this objection. Then why disfranchise the 7,500,000, the other half, as to whom your objection, even if valid as to any, does not apply at all; and these, too, as a class the most mature and therefore the best qualified to vote of any of their sex? But how much is there of this objection of want of time or physical strength to vote in its application to women who are bearing and training the coming millions? The families of the country average five persons in number. If we assume that this gives an average of three children to every pair, which is probably the full number, or if we assume that every married mother, after she becomes of voting age, bears three children, which is certainly the full allowance, and that twenty-four years are consumed in doing it, there is one child born every eight years whose coming is to interfere with the exercise of a duty of privilege which, in most States, and in all the most important elections, occurs only one day in two years.

That same mother will attend church at least forty times yearly on the average from her cradle to her grave, beside an infinity of other social, religious, and industrial obligations which she performs and assumes to perform because she is a married woman and a mother rather than for any other reason whatever. Yet it is proposed to deprive the women—yes, all women alike—of an inestimable privilege and the chief power which can be exercised by any free individual in the state for the reason that on any given day of election not more than one woman in twenty of voting age will probably not be able to reach the polls. It does seem probable that on these interesting occasions if the husband and wife disagree in politics they could arrange a pair, and the probability is, that arrangement failing, one could be consummated with some other lady in like fortunate circumstances, of opposite political opinions. More men are kept from the polls by drunkenness, or, being at the polls, vote under the influence of strong drink, to the reproach and destruction of our free institutions, and who, if woman could and did vote, would cast the ballot of sobriety, good order, and reform under her holy influences, than all those who would be kept from any given election by the necessary engagements of mothers at home.

When one thinks of the innumerable and trifling causes which keep many of the best of men and strongest opponents of woman suffrage from the polls upon important occasions it is difficult to be tolerant of the objection that woman by reason of motherhood has no time to vote. Why, sir, the greater exposure of man to the casualties of life actually



disables him in such way as to make it physically impossible for him to exercise the franchise more frequently than is the case with women, including mothers and all. And if this liability to lose the opportunity to exercise the right once or possibly twice in a lifetime is a reason that women should not be allowed to vote at all, why should men not be disfranchised also by the same rule?

But it is urged that woman does not desire the privilege. If the right exist at all it is an individual right, and not one which belongs to a class or to the sex as such. Yet men tell us that they will vote the suffrage to women whenever the majority of women desire it. Are, then, our rights the property of the majority of a disfranchised class to which we may chance to belong? What would we say if it were seriously proposed to recall the suffrage from all colored or from all white men because a majority of either class should decline or for any cause fail to vote? I know that it is said that the suffrage is a privilege to be extended by those who have it to those who have it not. But the matter of right, of moral right, to the franchise does not depend upon the indifference of those who possess it or of those who do not possess it to the desire of those women who desire to enjoy their right and to discharge their duty. If one or many choose not to claim their right it is no argument for depriving me of mine or one woman of hers. There are many reasons why some women declare themselves opposed to the extension of suffrage to their sex. Some well-fed and pampered, without serious experiences in life, are incapable of comprehending the subject at all. Vast numbers, who secretly and earnestly desire it from the long habit of deference to the wishes of the other sex, upon whom they are so entirely dependent while disfranchised, and knowing the hostility of their "protectors" to the agitation of the subject, conceal their real sentiments, and the "lord" of the family referring this question to his wife, who has heard him sneer or worse than sneer at suffragists for half a lifetime, ought not to expect an answer which she knows will subject her to his censure and ridicule or even his unexpressed disapprobation.

It is like the old appeal of the master to his slave to know if he would be free. Full well did the wise and wary slave know that happiness depended upon declared contentment with his lot. But all the same the world does move. Colored men are free. Colored men vote. Women will vote. A little further on I shall revert to the evidence of a general and growing desire on her part and on the part of just and intelligent men that the suffrage be extended to women.

But we are told that husband and wife will disagree and thus the suffrage will destroy the family and ruin society. If a married couple will quarrel at all, they will find the occasion, and it were fortunate indeed if their contention might concern important affairs. There is no peace in the family save where love is, and the same spirit which enables the husband and wife to enforce the toleration act between themselves in religious matters will keep the peace between them in political discussions. At all events, this argument is unworthy of notice at all unless we are to push it to its logical conclusion, and, for the sake of peace in the family, to prohibit woman absolutely the exercise of freedom of thought and speech. Men live with their countrymen and disagree with them in politics, religion, and ten thousand of the affairs of life, as often the trifling as the important. What harm, then, if woman be allowed her thought and vote upon the tariff, education, temperance, peace and war, and whatsoever else the suffrage decides?

But we are told that no government, of which we have authentic history, ever gave to woman a share in the sovereignty.

This is not true, for the annals of monarchies and despotisms have been rendered illustrious by queens of surpassing brilliance and power. But even if it be true that no republic ever enfranchised woman with the ballot—even so until within one hundred years universal or even general suffrage was unknown among men.

Has the millennium yet dawned? Is all progress at an end? If that which is should therefore remain, why abolish the slavery of men?

But we are informed that woman does not vote when she has the opportunity. Wherever she has the unrestricted right she exercises it. The records of Wyoming and Washington demonstrate the fact.

And in these Territories, too, as well as wherever else she has exercised the suffrage, she has elevated man to her own level, and has made the voting precinct as respectable and decorous as the lecture-room or the assemblies of the devout. All the experience there is refutes the apprehension of those who fear that woman will either neglect the discharge of her great duty, when allowed its fair and equal exercise, or that the rude and baser sort will overwhelm and banish the noble and refined.

But to my mind it seems like trifling with a great subject to dwell upon topics like this. It can only be justified by the continual iteration of the objection by the opponents of woman suffrage, who in the lack of substantial grounds whereupon to base their opposition to the exercise of a great right by one-half the community declare that there is no time in which woman can vote.

I will now read an extract from the report of the majority of the committee, showing to a certain extent the degree of consequence which this movement has assumed, its extent throughout our country, and something of its duration. I have not the latest data, for since this report was compiled there has been action in several States, and a great deal of popular discussion and a vast amount of demonstration from the action of popular assemblies.

The committee say:

This movement for woman suffrage has developed during the last half century into one of great strength. The first petition was presented to the Legislature of New York in 1835. It was repeated in the Northern States. Petition has been urged upon nearly every Legislature in the Northern States. Five States have voted upon the question of amending their constitutions by striking out the word "male" from the suffrage clause—Kansas in 1867, Michigan in 1874, Colorado in 1877, Nebraska in 1882, and Oregon in 1884.

The ratio of the popular vote in each case was about one-third for the amendment and two-thirds against it. Three Territories have or have had full suffrage for women. In two, Wyoming since 1869 and Washington since 1883, the experiment (!) is an unqualified success. In Utah Miss Anthony keenly and justly observes that suffrage is as much of a success for the Mormon women as for the men.

In eleven States school suffrage for women exists. In Kansas, from her admission as a State. In Kentucky and Michigan fully as long a time. School suffrage for women also exists in Colorado, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Nebraska, and Oregon.

In all these States, except Minnesota, school suffrage was extended to women by the respective Legislatures, and in Minnesota by the popular vote, in November, 1878. Not only these eleven States, but in nearly all the other Northern and Western States women are elected to the offices of county and city superintendent of public schools and as members of school boards. In Louisiana the constitution of 1879 makes women eligible to school offices.

It may also be observed as indicating a rising and controlling public sentiment in recognition of the right and capacity of woman for public affairs that she is eligible to such offices as that of county clerk, register of deeds, and the like in



many and perhaps in all the States. Kansas and Iowa elected several women to these positions in the election of November, 1885, while President Grant alone appointed more than five thousand women to the office of postmaster; and although many women have been appointed in the Departments and to pension agencies and like important employments and trusts, so far as your committee are aware no charge of incompetency or of malfeasance in office has ever yet been sustained against a woman.

It may be further stated in this connection that nearly every Northern State has had before it from time to time since 1870 a bill for the submission of the question of woman suffrage to the popular vote. In some instances such a resolution has been passed at one session and failed to be ratified at another by from one to three votes; thus Iowa passed it in 1870, killed it in 1872; passed it in 1874, failed to do so in 1876; passed it in 1878, and failed in 1880; passed it again in 1882, and defeated it in 1884; four times over and over, and this winter these heroic and indomitable women are trying it in Iowa again.

If men were to make such a struggle for their rights it would be considered a fine thing, and there would be books and even poetry written about it.

In New York, since 1880, the women have urged this great measure before the Legislature each year. There it takes the form of a bill to prohibit the disfranchisement of women. This bill has several times come within five votes of passing the assembly.

In many States well sustained efforts for municipal suffrage have been made, and, as if in rebuke to the conservatism, or worse, of this great Republic, this right of municipal suffrage is already enjoyed in the province of Ontario, Canada, and throughout the island of Great Britain by unmarried women to the same extent as by men, there being the same property qualification required of each.

The movement for the amendment of the National Constitution began by petitioning Congress December, 1865, and since 1869 there have been consecutive applications to every Congress praying for the submission to the States of a proposition similar to the joint resolution herewith reported to the Senate.

The petitions have come from all parts of the country; more especially from the Northern and Western States, although there is an extensive and increasing desire for the suffrage existing among the women in the Southern States, as we are informed by those whose interest in the subject makes them familiar with the real state of feeling in that part of our country. It is impossible to know just what proportion of the people—men and women—have expressed their desire by petition to the National Legislature during the last twenty years, but we are informed by Miss Anthony that in the year 1871 Senator Sumner collected the petitions from the files of the Senate and House of Representatives, and that there were then an immense number. A far greater number have been presented since that time, and the same lady is our authority for the estimate that in all more than two hundred thousand petitions, by select and representative men and women, have been poured upon Congress in behalf of this prayer of woman to be free. Who is so interested in the framing of the law as woman, whose only defense is the law? There never was a stronger exhibition of popular demand by American citizens to be heard in the court of the people for the vindication of a fundamental right.

Since the submission of the report the attempt has been made to secure action in several of the State Legislatures. One which came very near being successful was made in the State of Vermont. The suffrage was extended, if I am not incorrectly informed, so far as the action of the house of representatives of that State could give it, and an effort being made to propose some restriction and condition upon the suffrage it was defeated, when, as I am told by the friends of the movement, if it could have reached a vote in the Vermont Legislature on the naked proposition of suffrage to women as suffrage is extended to men, they felt the very greatest confidence that they would have been able to secure favorable action by the Legislature of that State.

Miss Anthony informs me since she came here at the present session (and I am sorry I have not had the opportunity of extended conference with her) that in the State of Kansas, where she spent several weeks in the discussion of the subject before vast masses of people, the largest halls, rinks, and places for the accommodation of popular assemblages in the State were crowded to overflowing to listen to her address. In every instance she has taken a vote of those vast audiences as to whether they were in favor of woman suffrage or against it, and in no single in-

stance has there been a solitary vote against the extension of the right, but affirmative and universal action of these great assemblies demanding that it be extended to women. And like demonstrations of popular approval are developing in all parts of the country, perhaps not to so marked an extent as these which I have just stated; but it is a feeling

growing in this country that woman should have this right, and above all woman and man demanding that she should have the opportunity to try her case before the American people, that this right of petition should be heeded by Congress and the joint resolution for the submission of the matter for discussion by the States should be passed by the necessary two-thirds vote.

It is sometimes, too, urged against this movement for the submission of a resolution for a national constitutional amendment that women should go to the States and fight it out there. But we did not send the colored man to the States. No other amendment touching the general national interest is left to be fought out by individual action in the individual States. Under the terms of the Constitution itself the people of the United States, having some universal common interest affected by law or by the want of law, are invited to come to this body and try here their question of right, or at all events through the agency of Congress to submit that proposition to the people at large in order that in the general national forum it may receive discussion, and by the action of three-fourths of the States, if favorable, their idea may be incorporated in the fundamental law.

I will not detain the Senate further in the discussion of this subject.

It should be borne in mind that the proposition is to submit to men the question whether woman shall vote. The jury will certainly not be prejudiced in her favor as against the public good. There can be no danger of a verdict in her favor contrary to the evidence in the case.

We ask only for her an opportunity to bring her suit in the great court for the amendment of fundamental law. It is impossible for any right mind to escape the impression of solemn responsibility which attaches to our decision. Ridicule and wit of whatever quality are here as much out of place as in the debates upon the Declaration of Independence. We are affirming or denying the right of petition which by all law belongs as much to women as to men. Millions of women and thousands of men in our own country demand that she at least have the opportunity to be heard. Hear, even if you strike.

The lamented Anthony, so long the object of reverence, affection, and pride in this body, among the last acts of his public life, in signing the favorable report of this resolution, made the following declaration:

The Constitution is wisely conservative in the provision of its own amendment. It is eminently proper that whenever a large number of the people have indicated a desire for an amendment the judgment of the amending power should be consulted. In view of the extensive agitation of the question of woman suffrage, and the numerous and respectable petitions that have been presented to Congress in its support, I unite with the committee in recommending that the proposed amendment be submitted to the States.

H. B. ANTHONY.

Profoundly convinced of the justice of woman's demand for the suffrage, and that the proper method of securing the right is by an amendment of the national Constitution, I urge the adoption of the joint resolution upon the still broader ground so clearly and calmly stated by the great Senator whose words I have just read. I appeal to you, Senators, to grant this petition of woman that she may be heard for her claim of right. How could you reject that petition, even were there



but one faint voice beseeching your ear? How can you deny the demand of millions who believe in suffrage for women, and who can not be forever silenced, for they give voice to the innate cry of the human heart that justice be done not alone to man, but to that half of this nation which now is free only by the grace of the other, and that by our action to-day we indorse, if we do not initiate, a movement which, in the development of our race, shall guarantee liberty to all without distinction of sex, even as our glorious Constitution already grants the suffrage to every citizen, without distinction of color or race.