

ADDRESS

UPON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE in WYOMING,

DELIVERED AT

ASSOCIATION HALL, PHILADELPHIA,

BY

GOVERNOR JOHN W. HOYT,

(OF WYOMING TERRITORY, U.S.A.)

APRIL 3rd, 1882.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

Published by the
CENTRAL COMMITTEE of the NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,
64, Berners Street, London, W.

1882.

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR JOHN W. HOYT,
UPON
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN WYOMING.

After some introductory remarks, Governor Hoyt said :

In the territory of Wyoming, in the year 1869, the experiment was begun of giving to woman first of all the ballot ; giving her the weapon with which to fight her own battle, in other words. You know, at the end of the war, when there were millions of slaves emancipated, there was a proposition to give them civil rights, and these were accorded. It was then found that they were not sufficiently able to protect themselves ; that their rights were infringed upon ; and so there quickly followed upon the heels of that constitutional amendment another, giving to them the ballot. Statesmen on the floor of Congress said, "Give to these men the ballot, and they will then be better able to protect themselves in those civil rights, which have been confirmed by the former amendment." And that proposition, you will remember, was carried by an overwhelming majority.

Has this principle lost its force that we may not apply it to woman? Not so, thought one large-hearted man out in the territory of Wyoming, two thousand miles from the centre of the world, which I suppose is right here ; said he, one day, "Betty, it's a shame that I should be a member of the Legislature and make rules for such a woman as you. You are a great deal better than I am ; you know a great deal more, and you would make a better member of the Assembly than I, and you know it. I have been thinking about it and have made up my mind that I will go to work and do everything in my power to give you the ballot. Then you may work out the rest in your own way." So, he went over and talked with other members of the Legislature. They smiled. But he got one of the lawyers to help him draw up a short bill, which he introduced. It was considered and discussed.

LONDON :
WOMEN'S PRINTING SOCIETY, LIMITED,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.

People smiled generally. There was not much expectation that anything of that sort would be done; but this was a shrewd fellow, who managed the party card in such a way as to get, as he believed, enough votes to carry the measure before it was brought to the test.

I will show you a little behind the curtain, so far as I can draw it. Thus he said to the Democrats: "We have a Republican Governor and a Democratic Assembly. Now, then, if we can carry this bill through the Assembly and the Governor vetoes it, we shall have made a point, you know; we shall have shown our liberality and lost nothing. But keep still; don't say anything about it." They promised. He then went to the Republicans and told them that the Democrats were going to support his measure, and that if *they* did not want to lose capital they had better vote for it too. He didn't think there would be enough of them to carry it, but the vote would be on record and thus defeat the game of the other party. And they likewise agreed to vote for it. So, when the bill came to a vote it went right through! The members looked at each other in astonishment, for they hadn't intended to do it, *quite*. Then they laughed, and said it was a good joke, but they had "got the Governor in a fix." So the bill went, in the course of time, to John A. Campbell, who was then Governor—the first Governor of the Territory of Wyoming—and he promptly signed it! His heart was right. He saw that it was long-deferred justice, and so signed it as gladly as Abraham Lincoln wrote *his* name to the Proclamation of Emancipation of the slaves. Of course the women were astounded! If a whole troop of angels had come down with flaming swords, for their vindication, they would not have been much more astonished than they were when that bill became a law, and the women of Wyoming were thus invested with the rights of citizenship.

Well, they exercised the privilege of voting when occasion offered, and in two years there came another Legislature of about the same complexion as the preceding one, which thought to repeal the law and put things back where they were before, but which did not accomplish it; and from that day to this the women of Wyoming have exercised, not only the right of

suffrage, but all the powers of male citizens; for the first Legislature was broad enough in its views to frame laws to match the suffrage act. They enacted liberal laws to secure women in all their civil rights. * * * *

Almost on the first day of my arrival in Wyoming there was an election. It was a general election for all the officers of the city, town, county and territory, and I went early in the morning, you may be sure. I had assumed the *role* of student, and observed with great interest. I wanted to see what there was in this contact of delicate and refined women with the ruder elements of the population at the polls. The polls were opened in the office of the hotel, a very pleasant place. The window was on the side near the private entrance. There were steps there for the convenience of persons alighting from carriages, and they could pass easily to the window. Inside this pleasant office were the judges of the election—two women and one man. The secretary was a lady. There was considerable discussion of different questions outside, not boisterous, but lively and animated, and I was listening to it and observing. By-and-by I heard, running through the entire company, "Sh-h-h-h-h!" What does that mean? I turned, and saw ladies were coming to cast their ballots. Everything was quiet. Instantly the gentlemen pressed back, making a passage, and one of them, hat in hand, opened the carriage door. The lady stepped down and deposited her ballot, the gentlemen lifting their hats as she passed; she was politely helped back into the carriage, and drove away. I said, "*Surely that woman is not hurt.*" As soon as the ladies came in sight there was a transformation among the men, in every case. There could not have been a more quiet place in the world while those women were present. It was the same whether they came in carriages or on foot. There was always a ripple when they approached, succeeded by a "Sh-h-h-h-h," then all was as still as the unruffled sea. The women seemed to be pleased with so courteous a reception; they felt that they had acquired a new dignity, a new power. To me, a stranger, it was very unexpected that there should be found so real a gentility in this new country, where men are supposed to be of ruder manners than in the older communities,

but where they are in fact a noble, intelligent people from the East, with the best blood in their veins, and with much cultivation of the intellectual powers, as well as of the social amenities. How much of this was due to the influence of women I do not know, for this condition of things had existed a number of years before I arrived there. But I have no doubt that it should be in large measure ascribed to their influence.

I will say here, as a tribute due to my territory, that I have never met anywhere a people surpassing them in the matter of social courtesies. I have never seen even a hod-carrier or a man with a load on his back pass a lady in the streets of Cheyenne without taking off, or at least, touching his hat. And I regret to say that when travelling in many parts of the country, I have found some lack in these regards. I have found it even in what are generally considered very cultivated and refined communities. I am therefore inclined to ascribe the difference in some part to the superiority of women's influence when thus possessed of the dignity and the honour of full citizenship.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—Do all the women vote?

Gov. HOYT.—That probably is not true, if you mean absolutely every one. I know one or two ladies who prefer not to vote—that is, who told me some three years ago, that they had no inclination to vote, that it was a matter of indifference to them. They came from the East with probably a little prejudice on this subject, and were not quite cured. Otherwise I can answer the question affirmatively, that the women do all vote. Those ladies who are said to be “first ladies,” that is, who are acknowledged to be of the highest intelligence, are active participants in the elections, going to the polls and manifesting intelligent interest in the matter in hand. I think it may be said fairly that as many women vote as men, in proportion to the number in the territory.

The question has often been asked, and perhaps I had better anticipate it, in regard to the influence woman suffrage exerts upon certain moral questions. I have said lately, and it may have been quoted, that by reason of the ballot we have in Wyoming *better laws, better institutions, better officers.* This is

emphatically true. We have better laws, for although the women do not seek a place in the Legislature, do not assist in making the laws, they have a voice in advance, and hence of necessity influence legislation. I have also known cases in which the voice of women upon pending measures has decided their fate. Then again, we have better officers in consequence of woman suffrage, because, although the women do not attend the primary meetings, do not go into the caucuses and help to nominate the men who are to be chosen, they have the veto power in the ballot, and that is well understood. The men know that if they put up candidates who are unworthy, if they nominate dissolute men, irresponsible or incompetent men, woman will certainly be at the polls with her veto in the form of the ballot. They are not so wedded to party lines as to be willing to cast a vote for the candidate representing the party of their preference if he be decidedly unfit, and on the other side stands a worthy man.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—What is the condition of your schools?

Gov. HOYT.—Excellent. When I reached Wyoming and visited the schools I expressed my surprise at the excellent condition in which I found them. They were conducted by men from the Eastern colleges and taught for the most part by ladies, many of whom are graduates of the normal schools at the East. In towns like Cheyenne and Laramie ninety per cent. of the children are in attendance; for the schools are attractive enough to draw them, even without the help of the law, which makes attendance obligatory. We have school buildings that cost large sums of money, and the people are ever ready to vote liberal amounts for school purposes.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—What is the effect on temperance?

Gov. HOYT.—We have what is known as a Sunday Law. There has been no effort at prohibitory measures. Ours is a new country, where, as I said, the population is in larger part of men—men who live upon the plains or work in the mountains, a great many of whom are accustomed to the use, in some form, of spirituous and other liquors.

But it has been proposed that Sunday shall be kept sacred, and so places where these liquors are sold during the week are closed on that day. The Sundays are as quiet in the city of Cheyenne as in any village of Massachusetts. I have never known of a brawl or a disturbance, or of any loud talking even, in the streets of Cheyenne on Sunday during the four years of my residence there, and the same good order prevails elsewhere.

Questions have been asked as to various social evils, and the influence of women upon them; and while I have to say that there is room for improvement, I must also say, on the other hand, that in view of the fact that hitherto, during these early years, a large proportion have been young women, but recently arrived and without definite expectation of remaining there for life, are there to stay until their husbands can gather up a fortune, and naturally have not felt the same deep interest in social reforms which would be felt by women in a community where they were planted for life; activity in social reforms could hardly be expected. But as these women increase in years, and children are added to the family circle, the interest begins to deepen in all means of social advancement. Already women are taking hold of such matters and giving evidence that the explanation which I have suggested is the true one.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—What is the influence of women, if discoverable, upon business affairs? Do men, so far as can be seen, conduct their business more honestly?

Gov. HOYT.—I shall have to say, in reply to this question, that it is exceedingly difficult to make an answer that I would feel any certainty about. That is a matter one can hardly reach. How far they are influenced will have to be judged from the general influence of women upon men. But where men are surrounded with upright, honorable women, who have a voice as well as a special interest in public affairs, where they are in all respects equal, the influence of such women will be felt to a greater extent than that of women who are held to be inferior and who are hence denied the dignities and privileges of citizenship. That is the general conclusion I must draw, without being able to answer the lady's question very directly. I will further remark, however, that I have known nowhere

among any business people a higher toned class of business men than I find in Wyoming. I have remarked it repeatedly, that our men engaged in the cattle business, and our men in mercantile and other affairs, are what we sometimes call "square" men—that is, upright, straight-forward, manly, honourable men. I think it is so to a remarkable extent; but how far they are influenced from the feminine side I cannot say. I give the fact and the general philosophy bearing upon it.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—Is there any or much objection to woman suffrage in the territory?

Gov. HOYT.—After four years' residence there, with my ears open to every remark touching this subject, I have never heard a solitary citizen within the bounds of Wyoming object to woman suffrage.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—If your Excellency will permit, I would like to propose a question suggested to me by some persons seated near me. One of the most forcible objections to woman suffrage in this section of the country is that women are pre-eminently religious and fill up the churches; that they are very much under the control of the clergy, and it is feared that priests and ministers of religion will exert an undue influence upon the elections through the women voters.

Gov. HOYT.—I have never discovered any such tendency, and my attention, I ought to say, has been somewhat directed to that point, for I have endeavoured to view this subject from every side. But, after a little reflection, I thought I could understand how it should *not* be the case; because in proportion as woman is liberated as to person, property, children and all else, her mind is liberated and she thinks for herself. One of the best things in the world to save women from the domination of undue influence of any sort, whether religious or otherwise, will be to enlighten them and make them free. Let them understand these questions through investigation, and then they will not take the say-so of priest or king.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—Are those women who enjoy the same privileges that men do as easily bought as men?

Gov. HOYT.—I have never known one to be bought. I am

sorry to say that men are sometimes purchased, even in the best of communities.

THE VOICE.—It is very important.

Gov. HOYT.—Yes, that is an important point. I have never heard any intimation that any woman had been bought; and I do not believe that women as a class are as open to temptations of this sort as men. It is the theory of the world, whether just or false, that women are morally superior, that they live on a higher plane. It may be that it is this moral nature, this superiority of the spiritual in them, which takes them to the churches, and it may be that with much of false dogma they also get a strengthening of the moral nature by the inculcation there of those divine principles taught by Christ; and so we might expect that women in political affairs would be freer from the dangers to which reference has been made.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—When woman is met on the ground where the ballot will place her, will not all men treat her with more respect than if she had not that command?

Gov. HOYT.—This is the declaration of an important principle which I intended to dwell on if I found sufficient time. By the restoration to woman of the dignity which belongs to the human soul, but which has always been denied her, she would unquestionably gain in respect and influence. The question asked suggests one of the greatest wrongs that has been done her. That the wife and the mother of children, who is ranked as inferior before the law, has not the same influence with husband and child that she would have if she stood upon the same platform with the father is *most manifest*. I have seen that in a hundred homes, where a mother, intelligent and noble in every way, with the highest aspirations for her children, with a love beyond expression, desiring to stimulate and elevate them, was crippled in her powers, palsied in the presence of her children by some belittling remark of a displeased husband. I have known fathers to undermine the influence of a mother of the highest and noblest character by mere incidental denials of her equality of right and authority, by indirectly opening the eyes of their children to the fact that, before the law and before society, she was inferior to the father. Accord to woman all

the rights and privileges that are inherent in her because she is a woman, a person, because she is a constituent member of the nation, dignify and honour her as she deserves, and she becomes a new power.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—Will it hasten the time when arbitration shall be substituted for the arbitrament of the sword?

Gov. HOYT.—Just a moment before I come to that question. In continuation of the point I was making in answer to the previous question, let me say that there is no such thing as great and permanent influence without authority. Influence comes largely of authority—in the family, in the State, in the world. If one who has no authority speaks, of what avail is it? But when there is power behind it, the voice is heard. When the government which represents the nation speaks, the individual listens, because behind that are mailed men with power to compel the enforcement of the decree. So in the home, the mother, when she speaks, if she have the influence that she ought to have, I mean that the child needs she should have, must have *authority* to speak. It is often remarked that the mother's influence reaches on: that although it may not be felt at the hour, it is felt in after years; so that the boy, when he comes into trouble in subsequent life remembers the injunctions of the mother, and then respects her. But why does he then respect her? Because he has found by experience that the Eternal was behind the mother in the truths she uttered. When the man finds that it was God's voice speaking to him through her—that there is power, therefore, to enforce the injunction, and that he is to-day suffering the penalty which God, not the mother, has brought upon him, then it is that he bows with a new and larger respect to the memory of his mother.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—If a prohibitory liquor law were passed in Wyoming by a small portion of the men and the solid vote of the women, would it be possible to enforce it?

Gov. HOYT.—Unquestionably; for the people of Wyoming are, as I said, among the most law-abiding people I have ever known.

In concluding, I desire to say that it is not alone for woman's sake that this restoration of rights, the full emancipation of

woman, is necessary. Observe, I do not say "conferring" of rights; it is not in the power of men to *give* rights to women. God gave her these when He gave her existence. There are certain rights which are inherent. We call them natural because they lie in the nature of man; they lie in the nature of woman, at the foundation of personality. If I am a person I am allied to the Infinite; I have my existence from Him; He has conferred upon me certain powers; He has given me certain prerogatives, and no man can *give* them. Man may usurp what God has bestowed; man may rob woman of the *exercise* of a natural right, but of the right itself he cannot rob her, for that is inherent, it dwells in her; it is a part of her moral existence. God himself cannot take away that which He has decreed shall be an inherent, constituent part of the human soul; and so I use the word purposely, *restored* exercise of rights. If a man has robbed another, if he has stolen from another, he may restore the property taken; so if man has taken from woman the privilege of exercising a right, the power to bring her right into play, he must restore it to her, or the Almighty will hold him a robber. Can I make it stronger?

Returning from this digression, I say again, not alone for *woman's* sake is reform demanded. It is demanded in the interest of man also. Man himself cannot stand before God in his uprightness, man himself cannot develop into his completeness while he is halved, while he is less than himself, because of denying the full development and exercise of powers to her whom God gave to be his completement. A woman who is only half a woman, who is cramped, suppressed, restricted and restrained; she cannot be all that a man needs; and so I plead in the interest of my own sex while pleading for her. I shall walk freer myself when I know that no denial is made to woman of what belongs to her—not to my wife only, but to every woman on the earth. I shall be more a man; I shall stand up in the presence of mankind and before the Father of all, with an uprightness, with a conscious dignity and nobility, which I cannot possess so long as aught is denied to her.

Again, the enlargement of woman's privileges is demanded in the interest of the nation. The nation is not a mechanical

contrivance; it is not a piece of machinery with wheels and cogs and shafts; the nation is an organic something; a living personality; it is a moral personality. The nation has a being, a moral, spiritual existence; and it cannot be a grand nation, it cannot be a true nation, it cannot fulfil a grand and glorious mission among men in the development of men to their perfectionment so long as the nation is diseased in spirit—so long as it carries in its heart this denial of God-given rights. Let then, the restoration be made, and this nation, without a slave, without a limitation of powers for any individual composing it, will arise in its dignity and glory, put on its crown and go forth to the fulfilment of a mission worthy of the American Republic.

Finally, the emancipation of woman is needed in the interest of all mankind, of nations abroad as well as the nation at home. We are a nation favored of heaven as no other on the earth. Foreign people assent to this. The people of all nations love their country; patriotism is a sentiment of the human soul; it belongs to it naturally, for man, as Aristotle said, is a political being. The nation is a necessity of man, to aid in the development of his powers. The nation must, therefore, be a whole nation, a grand nation, that its influence upon the world may be pure and ennobling. We have a mission to other nations as well as to our own people. Every nation has a mission just as every man, every soul has a mission. And what is the mission of our nation? Was it not indicated in the Declaration of Independence, that grand proclamation of freedom and of equal rights? The great doctrine of equality was promulgated there, and the doctrine of equality is that upon which we stand as a republic. That is the corner-stone, is it not, of the American republic—the equality before God, of all men? It was the power of this truth that made some of us burn for the day to come when the shackles should be knocked from the limbs of four millions of slaves; it is that which makes our hearts burn yet more that the shackles may be struck from the person and powers of twenty-five millions of women. Can we preach liberty to the captive in foreign lands while we have captives at home? Dare we boast of equal rights, and proclaim the glory of free institutions to other lands while we deny them

to half of our own people? If we would be true to our mission as a nation, as the promulgator of great principles to other countries, we must ourselves obey the command of the Almighty, "Loose the bands and let the oppressed go free." When we have reached this high level, when the women of this and of all enlightened countries have come, as *come they will*, to the exercise of their God-given rights, then, my dear Sir (addressing one of his interrogators) the day of war will have passed for ever; for in the bosom of woman rests, with folded wing, the sweet dove of peace.

A VOICE FROM THE AUDIENCE.—I would like to ask one question. It has been urged by the opponents of this measure in this State, and in this very city, that we already have too much suffrage and too little intelligence, and that, if we extend the suffrage, we will make the matter worse, instead of better.

Gov. HOYT.—They claim that the women are less intelligent than the men?

THE VOICE.—Oh, yes; of course.

Gov. HOYT.—I thank the gentleman for calling my attention to an objection which I am satisfied is felt to be serious by not a few liberal-minded citizens, men who cherish no prejudice against woman suffrage *per se*, but who recognize the danger that lurks in a ballot undirected by intelligence.

A number of answers suggest themselves. First of all, the experience of Wyoming has shown that the only actual trial of woman suffrage hitherto made—a trial made in a new country where the conditions would not happen to have been exceptionally favorable—has produced none but the most desirable results. And surely none will deny that in such a matter a single ounce of experience is worth a ton of conjecture.

But since it may be claimed that the sole experiment of Wyoming does not afford a sufficient guarantee of general expediency, let us see whether reason will not furnish a like answer. The great majority of women in this country already possess sufficient intelligence to enable them to vote judiciously on nearly all questions of a local nature. I think this will be conceded. Secondly, with their superior quickness of perception, it is fair to assume that when stimulated by a demand for a knowledge of political principles—such a demand as a sense of

the responsibility of the voter would create—they would not be slow in rising to at least the rather low level at present occupied by the average masculine voter. So that, viewing the subject from an intellectual standpoint merely, such fears as at first spring up drop away, one by one, and disappear.

But it must not be forgotten that a very large proportion of questions to be settled by the ballot, both those of principle and such as refer to candidates, have in them a *moral* element which is vital. And here we are safer with the ballot in the hands of woman; for her keener insight and truer moral sense will more certainly guide her aright—and not her alone, but also, by reflex action, all whose minds are open to the influence of her example. The weight of this answer can hardly be over-estimated. In my judgment, this moral consideration far more than offsets all the objections that can be based on any assumed lack of an intellectual appreciation of the few questions almost wholly commercial and economical.

Last of all, a majority of questions to be voted on touch the interests of woman as they do not those of man. It is upon her finer sensibilities, her purer instincts and her maternal nature that the results of immorality and vice in every form fall with more crushing weight. Aye, it is woman who hath given hostages to fortune of all that is most precious on earth. Trust her, then, oh ye doubting men! Trust her, and so receive, in countless ways ye know not of, the unfailing benediction of Heaven.

Fellow citizens:—This movement for the emancipation of woman is in a right line toward that universal freedom which is the ideal condition of the human race. To doubt of its ultimate success is to question the wisdom and justice of God. It cannot fail, for the good of mankind demands that it triumph. It is a work which, in this enlightened Christian land, should, and I believe will, have early accomplishment. It but remains with us who are men to decide, with the least of further delay, whether this grandest of all the struggles for freedom since the beginning of history, shall be carried through by woman alone, or whether, turning our backs on the false prejudices and groundless fears of the past, we too, will join heroic hands for its furtherance.