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THE LEGISLATURE OF WASHINGTON.

THE SENIOR EDITOR AT OLYMPIA—THE TERRITORIAL SOLONS STRUGGLING WITH THE WOMAN QUESTION.

OLYMPIA, October 31, 1881.

TO THE READERS OF THE NEW NORTHWEST:

Ten years ago, while yet the public work of your correspondent was in its infancy, it was her good fortune to visit the seat of Washington Territory's law-making power in company with Miss Anthony, whose fame had preceded her, and who paved the way for much that has since been accomplished in effecting equal rights for women.

Ten years ago there was no railroad leading to Olympia, and we cannot forget the horrible staging between the Cowlitz Landing and this classic town. Now, the stages are removed to the farther frontier, the mud is covered by railway ties, the gulches are spanned by trestle-work, and the rivers are crossed by railroad bridges. Three hours are now occupied in compassing the distance that once required twenty-four. Nothing is natural but the rain, and that is as familiar to our senses as of yore, save that we are not exposed to its ravages now, as we sit comfortably in the railway coach and gaze in sympathy upon the trembling kine that arch their backs behind the sodden trees and shiver as it pelts their hairy hides.

It is Saturday afternoon, and the Legislature we have come to visit has adjourned for a half holiday. Everything, in fact, has adjourned except the rain. We alight upon a sodden plankway, built on piles in the Bay, and enter a dripping hack, take a seat under a dripping umbrella, and are drawn by a pair of dripping horses through the soggy streets to the Carlton House, where a genial landlady makes us welcome, and a number of Honorable Members—some of whom are old acquaintances—greet us cordially. Rev. P. S. Knight is also here, visiting the capital in the interest of the deaf and dumb asylum, with a prospect of success in his chosen work of philanthropy and justice. Among the members of the Legislature with whom we have the honor to claim old acquaintance are Messrs. Sharpstein, Evans and Stratton of the Council, and Messrs. Preston, Burke, Smith, and Smith, and Comegys of the House. Mr. Stratton is the President of the Council, and Mr. Comegys the Speaker of the House.

We spent Sunday in alternate conversation with the gentlemen named, listening to the rain, and visiting with Mrs. Sylvester, and on Monday domiciled myself by special invitation in this lady's hospitable home until 2 P. M., when we took advantage of shining skies and repaired to the Halls of Legislation, where we were courteously welcomed by the Honorables, none of whom seemed otherwise than pleased to meet an apostle of equality before the law.

The woman question had already been up for consideration in the Council, and had been voted down in the shape in which it had first been presented, the whole process to introduce and reach a final vote occupying the space of one minute and a half! But the members didn't deride the women, even though they snubbed them, which is an encouraging omen.

After the suffrage bill was scotched, the Council went to work to patch over the crazy piece of legislation known as "Bill No. 19," in which Mrs. Packard had attempted to substitute a "combination of disjointed things," which she styled an "emancipation bill," upon the women of the Territory, in lieu of the recognition of their inalienable right to equality before the law—a recognition which they demanded, and without which they are not to be quieted; hence the present agitation, that will continue to come up until the necessary point is gained, insane women to the contrary notwithstanding.

Evidently the present Legislature desires to be just to women; but it makes the mistake that all one-sexed bodies of law-makers must necessarily make when endeavoring to violate a law of nature by representing a class of which it is not a part, and this mistake consists in failing to comprehend the wants of said class from its own inherent standpoint.

The Council has patched the "emancipation bill" above alluded to, but the new cloth will not fit the old garment because the garment itself is a misfit and cannot be made acceptable to those for whose use it is destined. The material, even, has not been of their choosing, and some of the patches, which would fit well in a new garment, are sufficiently strong to rend the entire fabric in their present environment. Section first provides that marriage shall impose no pecuniary or legal disability upon the contracting parties that does not apply to the unmarried—a judicious act, which, if left untrammelled, would be satisfactory as far as it attempts to go. Section third refuses woman the right to vote or hold office; thus cutting off most of the ways of "acquiring, enjoying and disposing" of any property whatever. A

married woman's inalienable right to recover money for personal injuries is recognized in section eight, and the wages of her personal labor outside the home (if she be able to earn any) may belong to her by the provision of section ten. Separate contracts and divided interests are allowed and fostered by sections eleven, twelve, thirteen and fourteen. But seeds of divorce are sown broadcast by section fifteen, which gives the husband the "entire management and control" of "community property," "with a like power of disposition (other than testamentary) as he has of his separate personal property." Which, being interpreted in plain English, means that the husband may say, "Now I have it, and now you—don't!" It much reminds us of the old game of tossing the coin upon the principle, "Heads I win, tails you lose!" What a pity men cannot refrain from tempting women by legislation to pour melted lead into the ears of their niggardly and piggish husbands!

Under the hurry and confusion amid which we are compelled to scribble this letter within the half hour since the bill has been before us, we are unable to devote deserving attention to the many gleams of justice that flash and sparkle through it, further than to say that the eyes of men are set toward the light of justice which now glimmers feebly upon their vision from the mountain top of freedom, where sits the Goddess of Liberty in melancholy thrall, about her hands the chain of man's supremacy, and around her feet the manacles of a law-making power which she is taxed to maintain and to whose statutes she is held amenable, even while denied the right of "representation in the Legislature; a right inestimable to her and formidable to tyrants only."

The genial face of our good friend Hon. T. H. Brents beamed upon the Council just as the last line of the above was written. A ten minutes' recess was had amid general rejoicing, after which your correspondent repaired to the House, where the solons were busily engaged on a Sunday law, which was passed by a large Liberal vote, thereby proving that Liberals are willing to compel Christians to be good.

Whether Woman Suffrage will get a hearing at this session from the women's standpoint, we are not advised; but inasmuch as opposing members say they are willing for women to vote if they desire to do so, we cannot see how they can refuse to allow them a brief hour of representation from their own standpoint in which to proclaim that they do want to vote. A. S. D.

WOMAN AS A PHYSICIAN.

ESSAY READ BY MRS. DR. B. A. OWENS BEFORE THE OREGON STATE WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen and Ladies:—I feel much embarrassment in offering the few thoughts that suggest themselves to my mind as an answer to the courteous invitation to address this Convention on this occasion. Perhaps it were better for some one else to speak upon the subject I have chosen than myself. However, as I have assumed the task, I will devote a few minutes to the consideration of the subject of "Woman as a Physician."

We believe there are no general terms which apply to the world's progress that will not include woman as well as man in their meaning. We find many conventionalities that are no longer of any benefit, if they ever possessed a virtue. Circumstances have made the relation of man and woman what it is, and, relatively speaking, woman is regarded as the weaker person, and, as contrasted in darker periods, the slave. It is a characteristic of the American gentleman to respect woman and accord to her a high position in life. This feeling alone has had much to do in placing our country foremost among the civilized nations of the world. No nation can be great unless woman is placed upon the plane her merits qualify her to occupy. Were we to ask concerning a new nation of people, the first important question would be, "What of the women? Have they a rank that challenges our respect and admiration?" If answered in the affirmative, we take in at a glance the condition of the people, and consider them as possessing a high civilization. Conventionalities in these matters have been like hoops of iron around the body politic; and why? Because woman, from generation to generation, supposed that all these things must be. But in the light of the nineteenth century we are enabled to see that these supposed iron bands are but ropes of sand. When we consider that the development of ideas is the spirit of our civilization, we realize that great thought and action have seized the great throne of human mind and given to it wonderful power.

Do we stop to consider that woman is granted no part or lot in human progress?

Go back only a century, and the world stands

in wonder. The great deep of superstition has given up its dead. Science has been more thoroughly recognized. More surprising discoveries have been developed than ever before. Man has done more to benefit the race in its varied relations than at any former period. He has given importance to the sphere in which he moved. He has enlarged it and enriched it with invention and discovery. The earth wears gracefully her new dress woven by the inventor and the artisan. Time and space are subjected to the rapidity of thought, which now bounds the earth in a current as delicate as a tremor, but as potent as power. Commerce brings to our door her overflowing baskets of earth's treasure from every part thereof, and makes us feel that the human family is one domestic circle. Professions have grown more influential in the time mentioned, and were we to view the world's progress in detail, we would almost think there are no more worlds for science to conquer. In all this we see the persistent push of man. He stoops not to help or assist on either side, but whatever his specialty may be, he aims to perfect it and make it the charm of his life. We may say man works alone, and still the battle is not won.

Beneath the surface of all this we recognize the great fact that man has always had the helping hand of woman in his efforts to master the hidden mysteries that make up this wonderful life. In all of his inventions and discoveries woman has been an important auxiliary. But his glory has been his own. Woman has never faltered when opportunity offered to promote science. She respects and admires man for his wisdom. It is not alone that she through her agencies discovered the new world and brought imperishable renown upon her discernment and conquering will—and that, too, in a country where, and in an age when, woman could not claim that her valuable gifts were entitled to respect or consideration.

In more modern times we find that woman has been an active agent in the promotion of human progress. In the educational departments of the old and the new world we find her presence marked and distinguished. In charities her hand is the most tender and comforting. In the domestic life she is a queen; her throne is her private station. In art and science we find her of great aptitude and genius. In literature she is not excelled. And yet, in all the achievements of man, no credit is awarded to woman. It is ordained that she must work alone, and rise by her own intrinsic merit. In no profession has she been the child of fortune or favoritism. Is it ordered by Providence that those of whom the world expects the least shall rise by their own individual and independent effort to greater distinction and honor among men? This would seem to be the lot of woman. She has added her name to the patrons of law and medicine, but not by the aid of royal charter. The world, in its present gigantic strides of development, is but about one hundred years old. It is true that medicine and surgery were practiced long before the present century; but it is not our purpose to give the history of the efforts to preserve a system of medicine. We shall only speak of it as an incident in the progress of the human mind.

Whatever the standard of medicine might have been among the ancients, at the downfall of the Roman Empire it was as a science entirely lost. Gradually, from century to century, during the Christian era following the Middle Ages, the practice of medicine revived. We may infer, from the nature of woman, and the care and devotion she bestows upon every heart-work of her life, that the world during these dark periods would have been better off had she begun with man his scientific research. All the discoveries in medicine and surgery that were made prior to the eighteenth century seem insignificant as compared with those of the nineteenth. In the glory of this century we find woman with respectful fear, but confident in her ability, displaying talents of the highest order and presenting a mind capable of mastering the most difficult problems in science. Nothing daunted and still pursuing, woman has now fully presented her claims to the scientific world for recognition. It is not a quarter of a century since she has taken her place among the learned physicians and surgeons, and her progress in these sciences is of the highest order. The effort to produce skillful physicians and surgeons has been one of many failures and disappointments. At one time the effort wholly failed, and for centuries after the progress made in medical knowledge was slow and unreliable. The many obstacles to the development of these sciences have since been removed, and they stand out now in all the vigor of a healthful and continuous growth. Man, with all his labor, has not convinced the world that medicine is a true or an exact science. This, however, may be left for woman to achieve.

The question often asked, "Is woman suited to the life of a physician?" has been solved in her

favor. Experience is all the answer she desires to make. There is nothing in her nature that should exempt her from work which she can do as well as man. Hippocrates himself said, "Woman and suffering are synonymous." And I would ask, Who on all the earth can so fitly minister unto woman as woman? "Man's alphabet of suffering can never be woman's, and therefore her vocabulary can never be mastered by him." Woman is the first vehicle of human life, and then its devoted guardian. She removes or alleviates the physical evils which afflict the race, or patiently watches their wasting course, and tenderly cares for all that remain when they have wrought their results. This is her divinely appointed and universally conceded mission. By joint inheritance of all of human suffering, she has an equal share in all that can assuage it, and if knowledge is power, she too must share its amplest plenitude. To make a good physician, the beginning must be at the heart. It is that divine capacity to "share another's woe." With this capacity, woman always is everywhere more largely endowed than man. Even in the depths of African barbarity, Mongo Park found this divine endowment shining in woman's heart like a diamond in the dark. This profession is on trial before the bar of the world, and every case brought before it tests its strength. And we find that woman who has qualified herself for the practice of medicine has no reason to abate her energy to conquer, in the battle for the mastery, because she is a woman. On the contrary, from all professional experience by her, we find her fully possessed of all the requirements for success; and it is her success which has attended her in practice in the few years of her professional career that furnishes us with full and complete evidence of her superior fitness for this calling.

In order that we may test the strength and ability of woman, she must have equal acquirements or opportunities for learning. In the race so far she has lost nothing by comparison with the opposite sex in this profession. The fitness of woman for the office of physician and surgeon must be measured by the skill and knowledge she displays in that profession. No other rule would be just to either man or woman in medicine. With woman the incentives to the noblest virtues are found in her great desire to benefit her kind. From her standpoint, she is obliged to move on in her profession without any regard to the good or ill opinion of others; for she never finds rest until every battery loses its power to assail. Cradled in so many adversities, she feels that all the fame she wants is summed up in the words of Pliny, and "consists in doing what deserves to be written, in writing what deserves to be read, and in so living as to make the world happier and better for our own living in it." We believe that she is furnished with ability sufficient to recommend her actions to the admiration of mankind. And while she aims to become perfect in her chosen accomplishment, she never becomes defective in another. There are no habits or allurements to come in and compromise her standing or effect her great purpose to succeed.

In asserting that woman is always ready for duty, and always yielding to its exactions, we believe we present her true character. And to-day the world beholds her as she stands upon the great field of science, while the flag of victory floats above her. Among the foremost ranks of this goodly array we find our pioneer lady physicians, whose lives have been purified and beautified, broadened and ennobled by the great battle which was required to be fought and won in order that women as physicians might be considered respectable. To-day we honor and bless these noble mothers, while the world looks on with a smile that approves. These brave women, who have hewn down opposition and made more smooth the rugged road to science, have for the last quarter of a century been persistently knocking at every college and university door in this land. Repeated refusals have acted as a stimulus rather than a sedative. And these determined women set themselves about to build hospitals and medical colleges of their own. And to-day these institutions rank equal in standing with any in our republic, which to-day as a nation is the queen of the world.

Had I the time and space, I could fill pages with accounts of grand successes in the practice of medicine, and brilliant surgery as well as scientific productions of our women physicians and surgeons. Woman to-day works side by side with her brother man, and we prophesy that the day is not far distant when he will welcome her with pride and honor, and with his own strong right hand will open wide the doors of science, and with chivalric pride, found only in the highest type of manhood, will welcome his sister co-worker.

And may we not say, as a concluding word, that woman, dictated as she is by conscious duty, possesses resistless power, and may achieve the highest honor in the professions of medicine and surgery?