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# A PLEA FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

BY WM. LLOYD GARRISON, JR.

[Delivered at Portland, Oregon, Oct. 20, 1881, at the second evening session of the Woman Suffrage Association of Oregon.]

Mr. Garrison, of Boston, was introduced by the Rev. T. L. Eliot, and spoke as follows.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—Holding both by inheritance and conviction the belief that human rights and responsibilities are not limited by the accident of sex, I esteem it a privilege to stand upon your platform. To a Bostonian, finding himself four thousand miles away from home, on what he has been accustomed to consider the outskirts of civilization, your city is a perpetual surprise. He finds here the same kind of people, the same books, the same homes he has left behind, and it is difficult for him to realize that Portland is not a city of New England. If anything more were needed to preserve the illusion, here is the familiar and time-honored Woman Suffrage convention. How well I know it! Year in and year out, through discouragement and ridicule and apathy, doomed to repeat the old argument, to answer for the thousandth time the objections raised by timidity and prejudice, the weary yet unwearied advocates of simple justice compel the attention of the public.

How many times with exhaustive eloquence and unanswerable reasons these stale objections have been demolished!

—“the time has been,  
That when the brains were out the man would die,  
And there an end; but now they rise again,”

and we are forced again and again to “slay the slain.” But tiresome as it is to continually repeat “line upon line and precept upon precept,” and to labor to prove that two and two make four, such is and always must be the work of the reformer.

In Massachusetts our cause moves upward and onward, steadily and surely. We have attained the partial School Suffrage for women, and every year petition the Legislature to submit the question of full Suffrage to the people's vote. It is customary now, when the question comes up in the Legislature for discussion, for the opponents to raise no objection, but simply vote it down. The report of the committee and the weighty speeches are on the side of woman's enfranchisement, but with a dogged persistence the majority continues in the negative, although with diminishing prepon-

derance. This year a woman was admitted as a delegate to the Republican State convention in the person of the eloquent and gifted Mrs. Mary A. Livermore.

It is a warfare, however, where no retreat can be sounded, and until the right is conceded the yearly appeal and agitation are as certain as the seasons.

In passing through Wyoming Territory recently, it was gratifying to hear from Governor Hoyt a testimony to the beneficial effect of Woman Suffrage there, in the interest of morality and good government. The Governor mentioned as a surprise the fact that no woman had yet made application to him for office. Not that any reason exists why competent women should not hold office, but it shows how little personal ambition has been stimulated by the attainment of the right to vote.

A few days ago, at Olympia, in Washington Territory, where it was my privilege to mingle with the members of the Legislature in a social way, I expressed my hope that before the Territory was ready to be admitted as a State, the constitution would provide for equal Suffrage and thereby avoid the agitation its omission was sure to entail. When we remember how difficult it is to eradicate a wrong once crystallized in organic law, and how absurdly binding bad precedents are, we cannot overrate the importance of a young State guarding, in the beginning, against such manifest injustice. But for the shortsightedness and willingness to compromise principle shown by the framers of the United States constitution, in allowing a recognition and protection of slavery in its famous obnoxious clauses, the long degradation of our politics and the incalculable sufferings of our civil war would have been averted.

A last refuge of many intelligent people, who are too enlightened to oppose the right of voting on the ground of sex, and yet not ready to accept impartial Suffrage, is the plea that the franchise is too broadly exercised already and should be limited. Although this is the essence of toriyism, and a distrust of the great principle that a republic is “a government of the people, by the people and for the people,” it is the fashion of many to urge it when the claims of woman are presented.

In the first place, if it were true that Suff-

