

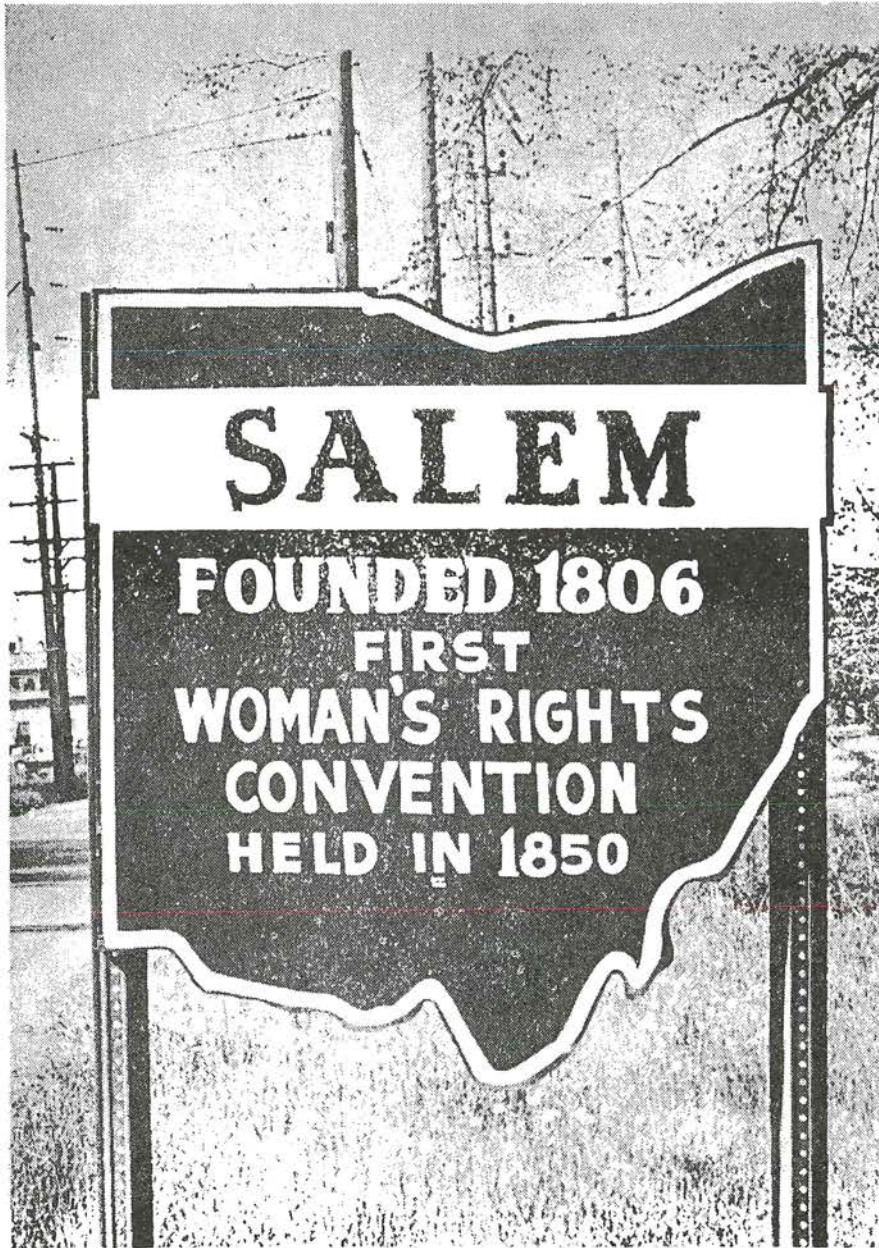
**THE SALEM, OHIO 1850 WOMEN'S
RIGHTS CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS**



BETSY MIX COWLES, President of the Salem Convention
(From a picture in the Betsy Mix Cowles Papers,
American History Research Center, Kent State University).

Compiled & Edited by
ROBERT W. AUDRETSCH

Salem Area Bicentennial Committee
and
Salem Public Library



Historical Marker on the outskirts
of Salem, Ohio

(Conventions were held in Salem in 1850 and 1892. The 1850 Convention was the first held in Ohio and the second in the U.S.).

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RIGHTS CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS**

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ROBERT W. AUDRETSCH

1976

Published by
SALEM AREA BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
and
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PREFACE

The impulse to publish the proceedings of the 1850 Salem Women's Rights Convention resulted from two circumstances. First was the universal librarian's dilemma of not having enough material on a given subject. In this case there has been a continual, steady demand, seemingly independent of age, sex or education, for authoritative information. Yet there was nothing "in print" or easily accessible to fill these demands.

The other circumstance arose as I read one of the better known books on anti-slavery, which listed some incorrect as well as incomplete information about an early Salem newspaper, the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. (The *Bugle* was a radical Garrisonian abolitionist weekly published without major interruption from 1845 to 1861). I was also reading a Masters thesis that seemed to make the most sense out of this. The thesis, *The Western Anti-Slavery Society: Garrisonian Abolitionism in Ohio* (Ohio State University, 1970) by Douglas Gamble, contended that historians have tended to ignore these radical abolitionists. Have not historians also ignored the early women's *rights* activists in favor of the later women's *suffrage* activists?

Perhaps the republication of the primary sources of the Salem Women's Rights Convention will promote some rethinking.

* * *

Many people have aided in this effort.

Special thanks must go to Phyllis Welsh of the Salem Public Library who spent countless hours typing, proofreading and performing numerous other jobs connected with publication of this book.

To Harry Stewart of the *Salem News* I am grateful for his help with all the photographs in this book. I am also grateful to Norman Weingart, Alice Fitch and Ruth Loop of the Salem Area Bicentennial Committee for their assistance with the publication of the book and their support of the *idea* of publication from the very beginning.

Publication of the record of the convention could not have been possible without the financial help, in the form of a \$1,000 grant, from the Ohio American Revolution Bicentennial Advisory Commission (OARBAC) and the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA). Nor could it have been accomplished without the endorsement and sponsorship of the Board of Directors of the Salem Area Bicentennial Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Salem Public Library.

I am grateful to the Ohio Historical Society, the Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, American History Research Center, Kent State University and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for permission to use both photographs and other materials from their collections. I am also indebted to Peggy Scheetz for researching the 1850 pamphlet of proceedings, to Diane VanSkiver Gagel for allowing me to read her two unpublished papers on the Salem convention, and to Beth Woodrow of ORBAC for her assistance throughout the project.

Robert W. Audretsch
Salem, Ohio
May, 1976

INTRODUCTION

*The Womans Convention was a perfect jam
—all enthusiasm; they did honor to their sex;
cursed be the pitiful whining politicians that
still persist in withholding from her, her political rights.*

April 19, 1850
Daniel Howell Hise, *Diary*

It is fitting that Salem, Ohio was the scene of the first women's rights convention west of the Alleghenies. For years Salem and surrounding communities had active abolitionist as well as temperance societies. Salem's newspapers, such as the *Anit-Slavery Bugle*, were well-known for their sympathy with abolition, temperance, pacifism, abolition of capital punishment, and women's rights. The *Salem Village Register* featured articles on women's rights as early as November 1, 1842.

The Salem Women's Rights Convention was called for April 19-20, 1850 because a Constitutional Convention was due to open on May 6, 1850 to consider alteration of Ohio's Constitution. The women who called the Salem Convention felt that women were being discriminated against in a number of ways. Some of these included the denial of the right to vote, unequal wages for the same work, unequal educational opportunities, different standards of morality for men and women, married women not having control over their own property and children, and taxation of women's property without representation.

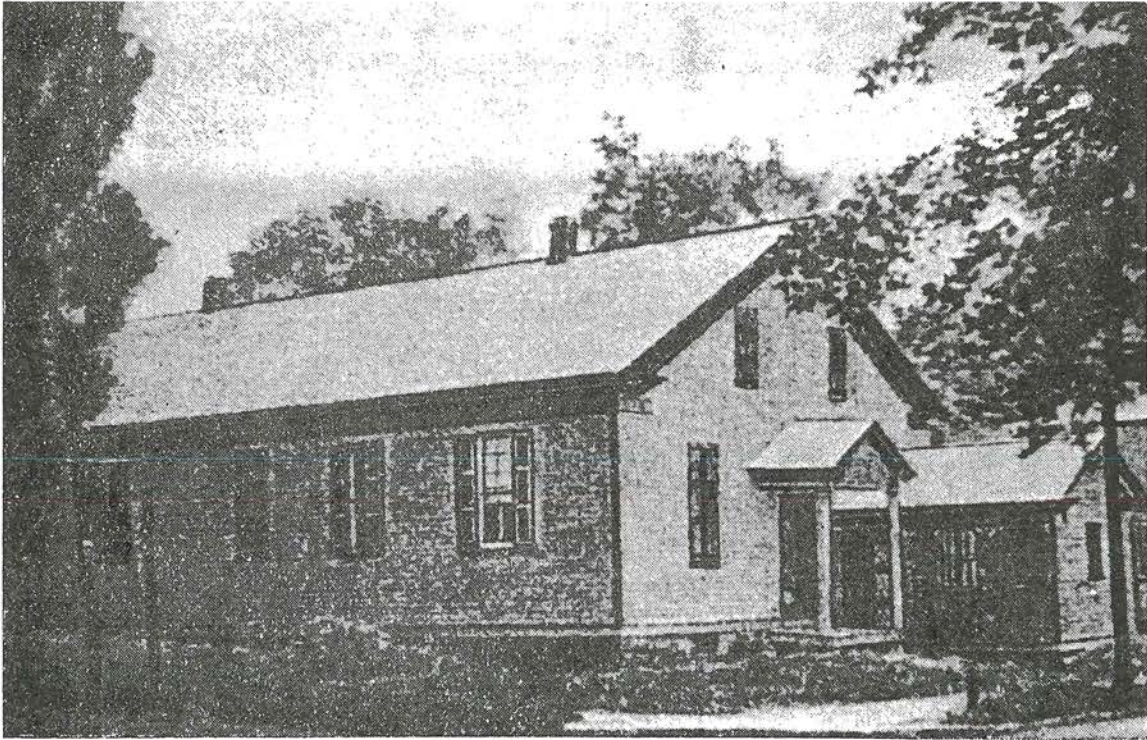
Both the women that called the Salem convention and those that attended were from different locations in Ohio, from different religious backgrounds, and from different occupations. One thing that they had in common was that their

consciousness had been raised either through educational work, temperance work, abolition work, or church work. In many cases they were the backbones of the organizations — without their work, fund raising, and leadership the organizations surely would have failed.

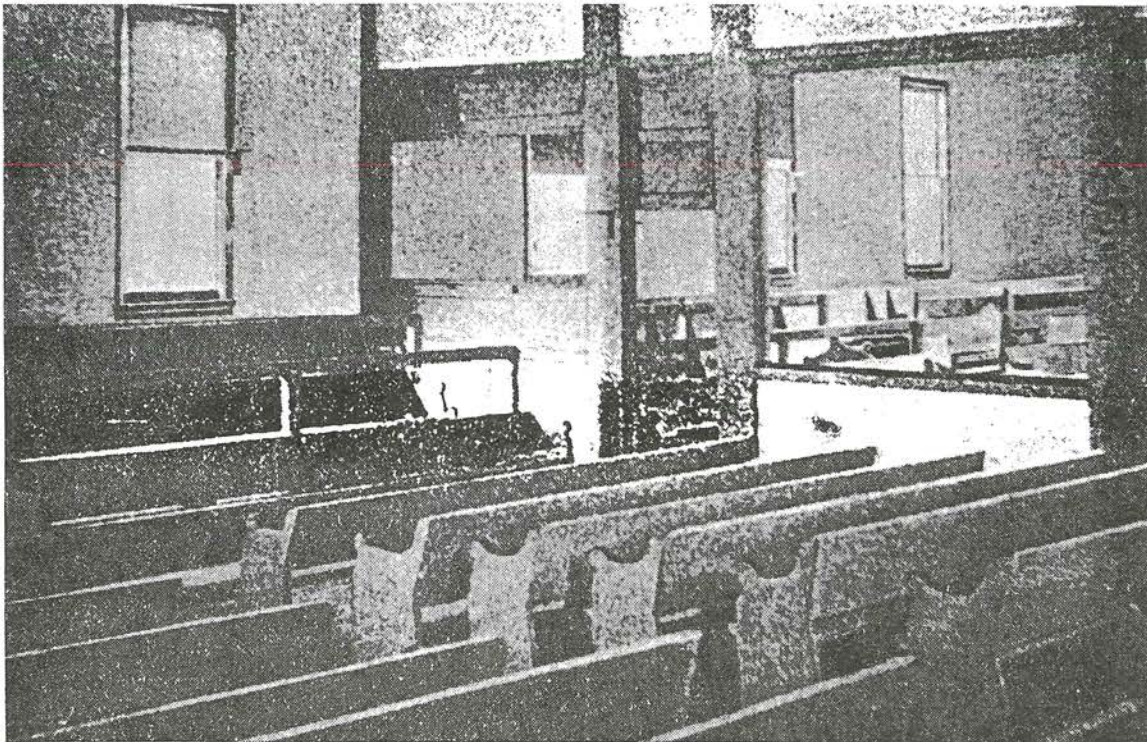
The Convention began on April 19 in the Second Baptist Church. However that church was an old log structure and unable to accommodate all those who wanted to participate. Consequently the remaining day and a half of the Convention were held at the Hicksite Friends Meeting House a short distance away.

Both of the structures have been razed. The site of the Second Baptist Church is just west of the northwest corner of Second and Ellsworth and is now occupied by a food market. The site of the Hicksite Friends Meeting House is just east of the southeast corner of Second and Ellsworth and is now a parking lot.

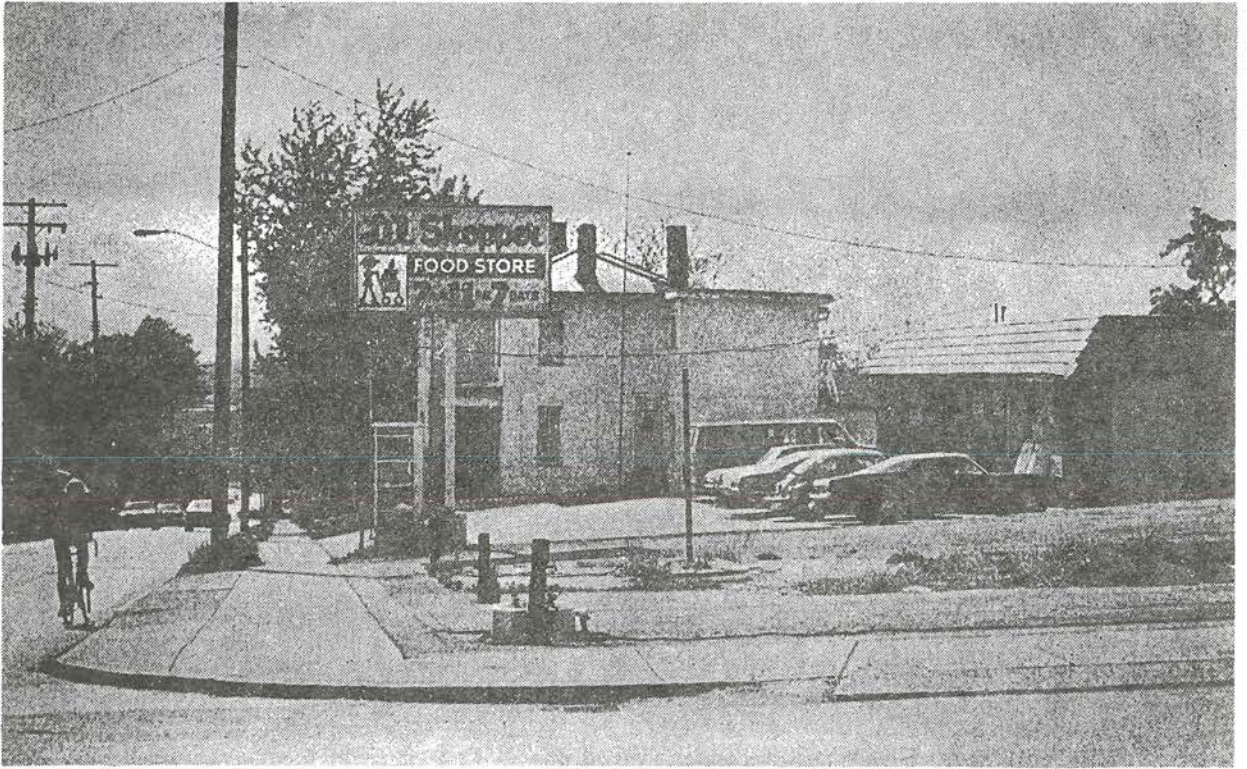
It is quite likely that the women who met in Salem for the convention did not realize the history they were making. It was the first women's rights convention held west of the Alleghenies; it was very likely the second such convention held in the U.S.; and it is probably the first public meeting in the U.S. where the planners, participants and officers were exclusively women.



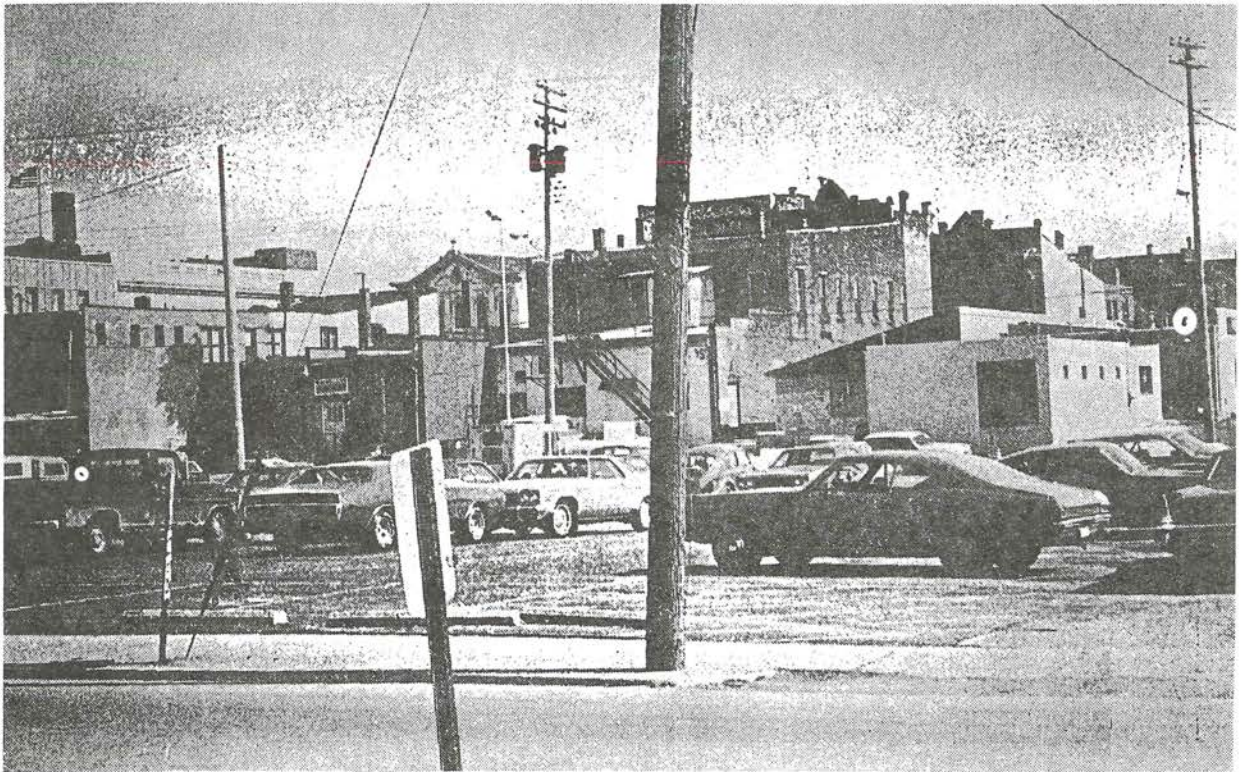
Hicksite Friends Meeting House, Outside
(Photograph from a post card at the Salem Public Library)



Hicksite Friends Meeting House, Inside
(Photograph from a post card at the Salem Public Library)



Site of the Second Baptist Church



Site of the Hicksite Friends Meeting House

PART I

THE CONVENTION

Chapter I

THE CALLS

The first announcement, or Call, for a Convention appeared in the March 30, 1850 *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. The Call was repeated in the Salem *Homestead Journal*, a moderate anti-slavery newspaper, and in the April 6 and April 13 *Anti-Slavery Bugles*. To the latter two Calls were added eight additional names, the women from Jefferson and Litchfield, Ohio.

In addition to the two Calls in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* there were also strong supportive editorials and a Call for a Universal Suffrage Convention at the same time in Salem. (The latter Convention met as male observers of the Women's Convention and issued a statement of support printed in this work as Chapter 9). The Call to the Women's Convention, two of the editorials and the Call to the Universal Suffrage Convention follow:

TO THE WOMEN OF OHIO

The undersigned earnestly call on the Women of Ohio to meet them in Convention on

Friday, the 19th day of April next,
at 10 o'clock, A.M., in the town of Salem, to concert measures to secure to all persons the recognition of Equal Rights, and the extension of the privileges of Government without distinction of sex or color:—To inquire into the origin and design of the rights of humanity, whether they are coeval with the human race, of universal heritage, and inalienable, or merely conventional, held by sufferance, dependent for a basis on location, position, color and sex, and like government scrip or deeds on parchment, transferrable, to be granted or withheld, made immutable or changeable, as

caprice, popular favor, or the pride of power and place may dictate; changing ever as the weak and the strong, the oppressed and the oppressor, come in conflict or change places.

Feeling that the subjects proposed for discussion are vitally important to the interests of humanity, we unite in most earnestly inviting every one who sincerely desires the progress of true reform to be present at the Convention.

The meeting of a Convention of men to amend the Constitution of *our* (?) State presents a most favorable opportunity for the agitation of this subject. Women of Ohio! we call upon you to come up to this work in womanly strength, and with womanly energy. While woman is not permitted to attain that expansion of her immortal nature which is her highest privilege, who will withhold any effort which will aid in the elevation of our sex? Don't be discouraged at the probability of difficulties. Remember that contest with difficulty gives strength. Come and inquire if the position you now occupy is one appointed by wisdom, and designed to secure the best interests of the human race.—Come and let us ascertain what bearing the circumscribed sphere of Woman has on the great political and social evils that curse and desolate the land. Come! for this cause claims your every talent, your most invincible perseverance. Come in single-heartedness and with a personal self-devotion that will yield every thing to Right, Truth and Reason, but not an iota to dogmas or theoretical opinions, no matter how time-honored, or by what precedent established.

RANDOLPH.

Elizabeth Steadman, Cordelia L. Smalley,
Cynthia M. Price, Ann Eliza Lee,
Saphrona Smalley, Rebecca Everet.

NEW GARDEN—E. A. Lukens.

RAVENNA.

Lucinda M. King, Mary Skinner,
Frances Luccock.

DEERFIELD—Ann Clarke.

MASSILLON—Ann Shreeve.

MARLBORO'.

Elizabeth Lukens, Hannah L. Brooke,
Esther Hayes, Jane E. Paxson,
Elizabeth Wileman, Emily Robinson,
Matila T. Walton, M. A. W. Johnson,
J. Elizabeth Jones, Sarah Coates.

SALEM.

Mary T. Harris, E. P. Heaton,
Sally B. Gove, Maria B. Garrigues,
Caroline Stanton, Mary H. Stanton,
Harriet J. Weaver, Sarah T. Smith,
Ruth Ann Lightfoot, Sarah Gibbons,
Laura Barnaby, Susan B. Smith.

AKRON.

Sarah T. Swift, H. M. Myers,
L. V. Bierce, E. B. Townsend,
A. L. Elkins, S. H. Abbey,
Emeline E. Warner, M. Berry,
B. Cummings, N. Green,
Ermena H. Ladd, E. S. Bloget,
Sarah Adams, H. B. Spelman,
Helen D. Ladd, Mrs. Dr. W. T. Hunt-
L. Fay, ington,
Calista Cummings, G. N. Abbey,
Emily Cummings, D. G. Sandford,
N. Robinson, T. W. Felt,
R. K. Howe, Rana M. Dota,
Emily McMaster, Martha J. Tilden,
Louisa D. Bennett, Sarah L. Tilden,
Julia Babcock, Hattie B. Platt,
Elizabeth S. Burnep, Charlotte Todd,
Mrs. Dr. A. Coburn, Almena Paine.

CANTON.

Mary Whiting, Susan B. Grant,

NEW LISBON—Lydia Irish.

JEFFERSON.

L. Maria Giddings, L. S. McIntyre,
Mary Webb.

LITCHFIELD.

Josephine S. Griffing, Mary Woodworth,
Almira Maynars, Catherine Ayers,
Harriett J. Woodworth.

CONVENTION OF WOMEN

In another column will be found a Call for a Women's Convention, to be held in Salem on the 19th of April, to discuss the whole subject of Woman's Rights, Duties and Position, and to adopt such measures as may be thought wise in view of the present crisis in the affairs of the State and the Country.

We hardly need say that this measure has our most hearty concurrence, and if any words of ours could add force to the sentiments so admirably expressed in the call, they should not be withheld. Let heartless bigots scowl, and brainless fops and simpering misses sneer, if it suits them; but we hesitate not to declare, that such a Convention is pre-eminently necessary at the present time, and that the objects for which it is called are of the highest importance, concerning as they do the welfare and happiness of the whole human race. Too long has Woman been a party to her own degradation in consenting to be the toy of the other sex, instead of asserting her equality and demanding free scope for the exercise of her noblest faculties;—too long has she regarded as her 'lord and master' him who, by the law of Nature and of God, is only her peer; too long she has played a subordinate part in the great Drama of Life, and sacrificed her Reason and Conscience on the altar of her Affections. Not until she is free can she labor effectually to strike the chains from the limbs of the slave; in proportion as she understands and appreciates her rights and responsibilities, will she augment her moral power and thus effectually qualify herself for the mission assigned her by Providence.

The present moment is auspicious. For several years the interest in the subject of Woman's Rights has been widening and extending, until the cause has at length acquired a momentum that can be no longer resisted. It has arrested the attention of the Student and the Philosopher, the Philanthropist and the Politician. Many leading minds in our country are awakened to a sense of the injustice of holding Woman amenable to laws which she has no voice in making—of taxing her for the support of Government, and yet denying her right to participate in its administration. In this State a Convention is about to be held to revise the Elementary Law, and hence the subject comes legitimately before the People.—Now, therefore, is the time to agitate the subject, to hold meetings, circulate petitions, and adopt such other measures as may be adapted to work the necessary change in the public mind.

This is a reform in which Women themselves must take the lead. Men indeed can and ought to co-operate, but the work is mainly one of Self-

Elevation on the part of Woman herself. We hope, therefore, that the Convention will bring together a large body of true and devoted minds, and lead to an organized movement which will cease only when the great object is attained. Does any one ask, 'What good will it do?' We answer, it will excite thought, promote discussion at the fireside, through the press, and in the public assembly; and though you may not, and doubtless will not, attain at once the great end which you have in view, you will at least make the task an easier one to those who shall come after you. Away then with all hesitation and despondency!

"Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt."

To the Women of Ohio, whose ears our Bugle-blast may reach, we therefore say, come one and all to the Convention. Let no false modesty, no fear of the frowns of an unenlightened Public Opinion, no shrinking from your responsibility as intelligent and immortal beings, deter you from a work whose success involves the highest happiness and welfare of the whole Human Family.

Anti-Slavery Bugle, March 30, 1850

Notices.

To the Women of Ohio.

The undersigned earnestly call on the Women of Ohio to meet them in Convention on

Friday, the 19th day of April next,
at 10 o'clock, A. M., in the town of Salem, to concert measures to secure to all persons the recognition of Equal Rights, and the extension of the privileges of Government without distinction of sex or color:—To inquire into the origin and design of the rights of humanity, whether they are coeval with the human race, of universal heritage, and inalienable, or merely conventional, held by sufferance, dependent for a basis on location, position, color and sex, and like government

Anti-Slavery Bugle, Call to the Convention, April 13, 1850. (From the Salem Public Library)

THE WOMEN'S CONVENTION

The Call for this Convention was issued in so much haste that multitudes, friendly to the object, had no opportunity to sign it. If there had been time, the list of signatures might have been swelled to hundreds. We append this week a large number of names forwarded to us from Akron. Among

them are those of Mrs. Tilden, wife of the former Member of Congress, Mrs. Swift, wife of the State Senator, Mrs. Spelman, wife of the member of the Legislature from Medina County, and Mrs. Sanford, Editor of the True Kindred. We mention these, not invidiously, but to show that the movement has the hearty concurrence and cooperation not only of those who are known as ultra Abolitionists and Reformers, but of many others, who agree with them in believing that the time has come for Woman to assume her true position as the equal companion of Man, not less in matters of Government than in the relations of domestic life. From all that we can learn, we believe the Convention cannot fail to be a large one; and we will not permit ourselves to doubt that its proceedings will do honor to the Women of Ohio and greatly promote the cause which the originators of the measure have so much at heart. True, we are not able to promise the attendance of any distinguished speakers from abroad, but we think that among the intelligent and earnest minds which will compose the Convention there will be many who will prove themselves fully capable of pleading the cause with credit to themselves and to their sex.

As the Convention has been called distinctly as a *Women's* Convention, we hope it will be such in fact, and that no patronizing *male* orators will be called in to set copies for it, or in any way control its proceedings. Let it not be said of the Women of Ohio that, having called a Convention, they were unable to carry it on, and were obliged to cry to the 'lords' for help. When they have finished their proceedings and adjourned, there will be time enough for another meeting, composed of both sexes, in which men can find abundant opportunities for the display of their superior (!) eloquence and wisdom. Such a meeting, it will be seen by a communication in another column, has already been provided for.

Anti-Slavery Bugle, April 6, 1850

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

At a meeting of the friends of reform, from Randolph, Marlborough and vicinity, held in Marlborough, Stark County, Ohio, for the purpose of inducing the extension of the rights of SUFFRAGE to all adult members of society, the undersigned were appointed a committee to prepare and publish a call for a mass meeting, to deliberate on the subject, and adopt such measures as may seem best adapted to the attainment of this end.

The fact that a Convention for the revision of our State Constitution is to be held in Columbus on the 6th of May next, that the question most sacred to a free people—EQUAL SUFFRAGE

Chapter 2

THE MINUTES



Betsy Mix Cowles, President of the Salem Convention
(From a photograph in the Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, American History Research Center, Kent State University)

Pursuant to a Call for a Convention of the Women of Ohio, to be held in Salem on the 19th of April, 1850, to concert measures to secure to all persons the recognition of Equal Rights, and the extension of the privileges of Government, without distinction of sex or color; the meeting convened in the Second Baptist Church, at 10 o'clock, A.M.

On motion of Emily Robinson, of Marlboro', the meeting was organized by appointing MARY ANNE W. JOHNSON, of Salem, President *pro tem*, and SARAH COATES, of Marlboro', Secretary *pro tem*.

On motion of J. Elizabeth Jones, of Salem, a Committee, consisting of Martha J. Tilden of Akron, Emily Robinson of Marlboro, J. Elizabeth Jones and Jane Trescott of Salem, and Josephine Griffing of Litchfield, was appointed to nominate permanent officers of the Convention.

The Call of the Convention was then read by the President *pro tem*., after which the Committee to nominate officers reported as follows:

President—BETSEY M. COWLES, of Canton.

Vice Presidents—LYDIA B. IRISH, of New Lisbon; HARRIET J. WEAVER, of Salem; RANA DOTA, of Akron.

Secretaries—CAROLINE STANTON, of Salem; ANN ELIZA LEE, of Randolph; SALLIE B. GOVE, of Salem.

Business Committee—Mary Anne W. Johnson, of Salem; Josephine Griffing, of Litchfield; Mary H. Stanton, of Salem; Esther Ann Lukens, of New Garden; Cordelia Smalley, of Randolph; Emily Robinson, of Marlboro', J. Elizabeth Jones, of Salem.

The report was accepted, and the persons named elected officers of the Convention.

J. Elizabeth Jones read a letter addressed to the Convention by Lucretia Mott, enclosing a copy of her 'Discourse on Woman,' delivered at the Assembly Buildings, Philadelphia, Dec. 17th, 1849.

It was voted that the Discourse be also read, which was done by J. E. Jones. It was listened to with marked interest by the whole Convention.

Martha Jane Tilden moved the appointment of a Committee to prepare an Address to the Women of Ohio; and Emily Robinson and Mary Gilbert of Marlboro', and Esther Ann Lukens of New Garden, were appointed that Committee.

Mary Anne W. Johnson read an interesting letter from Lucy Stone, of West Brookfield, Mass.

On motion adjourned till 2 o'clock, P.M., at the Friends' meeting-house.

AFTERNOON SESSION

The meeting being called to order, the Business Committee reported several resolutions, which were laid upon the table to give way for the reading of communications to the Convention from abroad.

The Convention then listened with deep attention to letters from Lydia Jane Pierson, Editor of the 'Lancaster (Pa.) Literary Gazette'; Mercy L. Holmes, of Selma, Clark Co.; A. Brooke, of Oakland; and Elizabeth C. Stanton, of Seneca Falls, New York, which were followed by an able address by J. Elizabeth Jones.

The preamble and first six resolutions were then taken up and discussed by Ann Clark of Deerfield, Jane and Rachel Trescott, Mary Anne W. Johnson, Martha Hillman and J. Elizabeth Jones of Salem, Jane and Sarah Paxson, Sarah Coates and Hannah Wileman of Marlboro', Rana Dota of Akron, Josephine Griffing of Litchfield, and others, and were adopted.

On motion adjourned till 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

SATURDAY MORNING

According to adjournment, the Convention assembled at 9 o'clock, A.M. The minutes of yesterday's proceedings were read and adopted.

Letters from Emma Steer, of Cadiz; Ruth Dugdale, of Selma; Sarah Pugh, of Philadelphia; Frances D. Gage, of McConnellsville; Mrs. Sanford, of Cuyahoga Falls; Elizabeth Wilson, of Cadiz, Author of 'A Scriptural View of Woman's Rights and Duties'; and Harriet N. Torrey, of Parkman, were read and received with great acceptance.

The Business Committee reported various resolutions, which, after being discussed by Ann Clark, Sarah Coates, Mary Anne W. Johnson, Ann Shreve, Jane Trescott, Ann Hambleton, Ann Eliza Lee and others, were unanimously adopted, and are hereunto annexed.

On motion of Mary Anne W. Johnson, a Committee of three was appointed to bring forward names for a Standing Committee for the coming year, and also names for a Committee on Publication. J. E. Jones, Cordelia Smalley and Emily Robinson formed the Committee.

The Committee on a Memorial to be presented to the Constitutional Convention, reported, and their report was accepted and adopted.

The Committee to bring forward names for a Standing Committee for the year, reported the following:

Mercy L. Holmes, Ruth Dugdale, Selma; Ann Shreve, Massillon; Mary Grissell, Esther A. Lukens, New Garden; Maria B. Garrigues, Sallie B. Gove, Salem; Josephine Griffing, Litchfield; Maria L. Giddings, Jefferson; Cordelia L. Smalley, Cynthia M. Price, Randolph; Lydia B. Irish, New Lisbon; Jane Lewis, Jessie Pullen, Cincinnati; Martha J. Tilden, Rana Dota, Akron; Elizabeth Wilson, Jane McNealy, Cadiz; Frances D. Gage, McConnellsville; Susan Marshall, Painesville; Harriet N. Torrey, Parkman; Sarepta Brown, New Lyme; Sarah Foster, Cleveland; Elizabeth Brooke, Oakland; Susan Donaldson, New Richmond; Susan E. Wattles, Clermont; Rachel Nichols, Walhonding; Elizabeth Wileman, Mary L. Gilbert, Marlboro'; Eliza Holmes, Columbiana.

The Committee also reported the names of Maria B. Garrigues, Sallie B. Gove, and Caroline Stanton for a Committee on Publication.—The reports were accepted and adopted.

On motion of M.A.W. Johnson, a Committee of three was appointed to procure funds to meet the expenses of publication.

The Committee on An Address to the Women of Ohio reported the article prepared by them, which was adopted.

On motion of Hannah Wileman, a resolution was passed thanking the friends who have so largely contributed to the interest of the meeting by their interesting communications. Likewise resolved, that the thanks of the Convention be given to the Friends, and also to the members of the Second Baptist Church, for the use of their meeting-houses for the sessions of the Convention.

Adjourned *sine die*.

BETSEY M. COWLES, *Pres't.*

LYDIA B. IRISH,

HARRIET J. WEAVER, *Vice Pres'ts.*

RANA DOTA,

CAROLINE STANTON,

ANN ELIZA LEE, *Secretaries.*

SALLIE B. GOVE,

Chapter 3

THE RESOLUTIONS AND MEMORIAL

RESOLUTIONS

WHEREAS, all men are created equal and endowed with certain God-given rights, and all just government is derived from the consent of the governed; and whereas, the doctrine that 'man shall pursue his own substantial happiness' is acknowledged by the highest authority to be the great precept of Nature; and whereas, this doctrine is not local, but universal, being dictated by God himself; therefore

1. Resolved, That all laws contrary to these fundamental principles, or in conflict with this great precept of nature, are of no binding obligation, not being founded in equity or justice.

2. Resolved, That the prohibition of Woman from participating in the enactment of the laws by which she is governed is a direct violation of this precept of Nature, as she is thereby prevented from occupying that position which duty points out, and from pursuing her own substantial happiness by acting up to her conscientious convictions; and that all statutes and constitutional provisions which sanction this prohibition are null and void.

3. Resolved, That all rights are *human* rights, and pertain to human beings, without distinction of sex; therefore justice demands that all laws shall be made, not for man, or for woman, but for mankind, and that the same legal protection be afforded to the one sex as to the other.

4. Resolved, That the servile submission and quiet indifference of the Women of this country in relation to the unequal and oppressive laws by which they are governed, are the fruit either of ignorance or degradation, both resulting legitimately from the action of those laws.

5. Resolved, That the evils arising from the present social, civil and religious condition of women proclaim to them in language not to be misunderstood, that not only their *own* welfare, but the highest good of the race demands of them, as an imperative duty, that they should secure to themselves the elective franchise.

6. Resolved, That in those laws which confer on man the power to control the property and person of woman, and to remove from her at will the children of her affection, we recognize only the modified code of the slave plantation; and that thus we are brought more nearly in sympathy with the suffering slave, who is despoiled of all his rights.

7. Resolved, That we, as human beings, are entitled to claim and exercise all the rights that belong by nature to any members of the human family.

8. Resolved, That all distinctions between men and woman in regard to social, literary, pecuniary, religious or political customs and institution, based on a distinction of sex, are contrary to the laws of Nature, are unjust, and destructive to the purity, elevation and progress in knowledge and goodness of the great human family, and ought to be at once and forever abolished.

9. Resolved, That the practice of holding women amenable to a different standard of propriety and morality from that to which men are held amenable, is unjust and unnatural, and highly detrimental to domestic and social virtue and happiness.

10. Resolved, That so long as women oppose the examination of the position and duties of woman in all the various relations of human life, they do not enhance and perpetuate their own degradation, and put far off the day when social laws and customs shall recognize them as equally entitled with men to a voice in creating and administering the governmental and religious institutions under which they and those who are dear to them live.

11. Resolved, That the political history of Woman demonstrates that tyranny, the most degrading, cruel and arbitrary, can be exercised and produced the same in effect under a mild and republican form of government as by an hereditary despotism.

12. Resolved, That while we deprecate thus earnestly the political oppression of Woman, we see in her social condition, the regard in which she is held as a moral and intellectual being, the fundamental cause of that oppression.

13. Resolved, That amongst the principal causes of such social condition we regard the public sentiment which withholds from her all, or almost all, lucrative employments, and enlarged spheres of labor.

14. Resolved, That in the difficulties thus cast in the way of her self-support, and in her consequent *dependence* upon man, we see the greatest influence at work in imparting to her that tone of character which makes her to be regarded as the 'weaker vessel.'

15. Resolved, That as all things work in a circle, such places as we have spoken of will only be opened to woman as she shows by the cultivation of her own mind, and the force of her own character, that she is capable of filling them, and that herself must prove her courage by calmly putting forth her hand to grasp them, in disregard of the usages which have hitherto withheld them from her.

16. Resolved, That we regard those women who content themselves with an idle, aimless life, as involved in the guilt as well as the suffering of their own oppression; and that we hold those who go forth into the world, in the face of the frowns and the sneers of the public, to fill large spheres of labor, as the truest preachers of the cause of Woman's Rights.

WHEREAS, one class of society dooms woman to a life of drudgery, another to one of dependence and frivolity; and whereas, the education she generally receives is calculated to cultivate vanity and dependence, therefore—

17. Resolved, That the prevalent ideas of female education are in perfect harmony with the position allotted her by the laws and usages of society.

18. Resolved, That the education of woman should be in accordance with her responsibility in life, that she may acquire that self-reliance and true dignity so essential to the proper fulfilment of the important duties devolving on her.

19. Resolved, That, as woman is not permitted to hold office, nor have any voice in the government, she should not be compelled to pay taxes out of her scanty wages to support men who get eight dollars a-day for taking the right to *themselves* to enact laws *for* her.

20. Resolved, That we, the Women of Ohio, will hereafter meet annually in Convention to consult upon and adopt measures for the removal of various disabilities—political, social, religious, legal and pecuniary—to which women as a class are subjected, and from which results so much misery, degradation and crime.

21. Resolved, That we appoint a Committee to attend to all the interests of this Cause, and to fix upon the time and place of holding our next Convention.

22. Resolved, That we will personally interest ourselves in promoting the circulation of those periodicals which endeavor to promote this great cause of Justice and Equal Rights.

MEMORIAL

The Memorial of the Ohio Women's Convention, held in Salem, Columbiana County, April 19th and 20th, 1850, respectfully represents:

We believe the whole theory of the Common Law in relation to Woman is unjust and degrading, tending to reduce her to a level with the slave, depriving her of political existence, and forming a positive exception to the great doctrine of Equality as set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

In the language of Walker, in his 'Introduction to American Law,' "Women have no part or lot in the formation or administration of the government. They cannot vote or hold office. They are required to contribute their share, by way of taxes, to the support of the government, but are allowed no voice in its direction. They are amenable to the laws when made, but are allowed no share in making them. This language, when applied to males, would be the exact definition of political slavery." Is it just or wise that Woman, in the largest and professedly the freest and most enlightened Republic on the globe, in the middle of the nineteenth century, should be thus degraded?

We would especially direct the attention of the Convention to the legal condition of married women. Not being represented in those bodies from which ename the laws to which they are obliged to submit, they are protected neither in person nor property. "The merging of Woman's *name* in that of her husband is emblematical of the fate of all her legal rights." At the marriage altar the law divests her of all distinct individuality. Blackstone says, "The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during mar-

riage, or at least is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband." Legally she ceases to exist, and becomes emphatically a new creature, and is ever after denied the dignity of a rational and accountable being. The husband is allowed to take possession of her estates, as the law has proclaimed her legally dead. All that she has becomes legally his, and he can collect and dispose of the profits of her labor without her consent as he thinks fit, and she can own nothing, and have nothing, which is not regarded by the law as belonging to her husband. Over her person he has a more limited power. Still, if he render life intolerable, so that she is forced to leave him, he has the power to retain her children, and "seize her and bring her back, for he has a right to her society, which he may enforce either against herself, or any other person who detains her."—*(Walker, p. 226.)*

Woman, by being thus subject to the control and dependent on the will of man, loses her self-

dependence, and no human being can be deprived of this without a sense of degradation.—The law should sustain and protect all who come under its sway, and not create a state of dependence and depression in any human being. The laws should not make Woman a mere pensioner on the bounty of her husband, thus enslaving her will, and degrading her to a condition of absolute dependence.

Believing that Woman does not suffer alone when subject to oppressive and unequal laws, but that whatever affects injuriously her interests is subversive of the highest good of the race, we earnestly request that in the New Constitution you are about to form for the State of Ohio, Women shall be secured not only the Right of Suffrage, but all the political and legal rights that are guaranteed to men.

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Convention.

Chapter 4

ADDRESS TO THE WOMEN OF OHIO

*Adopted by the Women's Convention, at Salem,
April 20, 1850.*

How shall the people be made wiser, better and happier? is one of the grand inquiries of the present age. The various benevolent associations hold up to our view special forms of evil, and appeal to all the better feelings of our nature for sympathy, and claim our active efforts and co-operation to eradicate them. — Governments at times manifest an interest in human suffering, but their cold sympathy and tardy efforts seldom avail the sufferer until it is too late. Philanthropists, Philosophers and Statesmen study and devise ways and means to ameliorate the condition of the people. Why have they so little practical effect? It is because the means employed are not adequate to the end sought for. To ameliorate the effects of evil seems to have been the climax of philanthropic effort. We respectfully suggest that lopping the branches of the tree but causes the roots to strike deeper and cling more closely to the soil that sustains it. Let the ameliorating process go on, until evil is exterminated root and branch; and for this end the people must be instructed in the Rights of Humanity; not in the rights of men and the rights of women, the rights of the master and those of the slave, but in the perfect equality of the *Rights of Man*.

The Rights of man! whence came they? what are they? what is their design! How do we know them? They are of God. Those that most intimately affect us as human beings are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Their design is happiness. The human organization is the charter-deed by which we hold them.—Hence we learn that rights are coeval with the human race, of universal heritage, and inalienable, that every human being, no matter of what color, sex, condition or clime, possesses those rights upon a perfect equality with all others. The monarch on the throne, and the beggar at his feet, have the same; man has no no more, woman no less. Rights may not be usurped on one hand, nor surrendered on the other, because they involve a responsibility that can be discharged only by those to whom they belong, those for whom they were created; and because

without those certain inalienable rights, human beings cannot attain the end for which God the Father gave them existence. Where and how, can the wisdom and ingenuity of the world find a truer, stronger, broader basis of human rights?

To secure these rights, say the Declaration of Independence, "governments were instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," and "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to substitute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

The government of this country, in common with all others, has never recognized or attempted to protect women as persons possessing the rights of humanity. They have been recognized and protected as appendages to men, without independent rights or political existence—unknown to the law except as the victims of its caprice and tyranny. This government having therefore exercised powers underived from the consent of the governed, and having signally failed to secure the end for which all just government is instituted, should be immediately altered or abolished.

We cannot better describe the political condition of woman, than by quoting from a distinguished Lawyer of our State, Prof. Walker, in his 'Introduction to American Law', says:

Of Husband and Wife—"We have a few statutory provisions on the subject, but for the most part the law of husband and wife is *common law*, and you will find that it savors of its origin in all its leading features. The whole theory is a slavish one, compared even with the civil law. I do not hesitate to say, by way of arousing your attention to the subject, that the law of husband and wife, as you gather it from the books, is a disgrace to any civilized nation. I do not mean to say, that females are degraded in point of fact.

I only say, that the *theory of the law* degrades them almost to the level of slaves."

We thank Prof. Walker for his candor. He might have added that the *practice* of the law does degrade woman to the level of a slave. He also says:

"With regard to political rights, females form a positive exception to the general doctrine of equality. They have no part or lot in the formation or administration of government. They cannot vote or hold office. We require them to contribute their share in the way of taxes for the support of government, but allow them no voice in its direction. We hold them amenable to the laws when made, but allow them no share in making them. This language applied to males, would be the exact definition of political slavery; applied to females, custom does not teach us so to regard it."

Of married women he says:

"The legal theory is, that marriage makes the Husband and wife one person, and that person is the husband. He the substantive, she the adjective. In a word there is scarcely a legal act of any description she is competent to perform. If she leaves him without cause," (legal) "he may seize and bring her back, for he has a right to her society which he may enforce either against herself or any other person."

"All her personality in regard to property becomes the husband's by marriage, unless the property has been specially secured to her. If the property be not in his possession, he may take measures to reduce it to possession. He can thus dispose of it in spite of her. If debts were due to her, he may collect them. If he was himself the debtor, the marriage cancels the debt. If she has earned money by her own labor during marriage, he may collect it.—In regard to realty (real estate) he controls the income, and without her consent he cannot incur or dispose of the property beyond his own life."

Women, married or single, have no political rights whatever. While single, their legal rights are the same as those of men. When married their legal rights are chiefly suspended.

"The condition of the wife may be inferred from what has already been said. She is almost at the mercy of her husband; she can exercise no control over his property or her own. As a general rule, she can make no contracts binding herself or him. Her contracts are not merely voidable, but absolutely void. Nor can she make herself liable for his contracts, torts or crimes. Her only separate liability is for her own crimes. Her only joint liability is, for her own torts committed without his participation, and for contracts for which the law authorizes her to unite with him. She has no power over his person, and her only claim upon his property is for a bare support. In

no instance can she sue, or be sued alone in a civil action; and there are but few cases in which she can be joined in a suit with him. In Ohio, but hardly anywhere else, is she allowed to make a will, if haply she has any thing to dispose of."

Women of Ohio! whose cheek does not blush, whose blood does not tingle at this cool, lawyer-like recital of the gross indignities and wrongs which government has heaped upon our sex? — With these marks of inferiority branded upon our persons, and interwoven with the most sacred relations of human existence, how can we rise to the true dignity of human nature, and discharge faithfully the important duties assigned us as responsible, intelligent, self-controlling members of society?

No wonder that so many of our politicians are dough-faced serviles, without independence or manhood; no wonder our priests are time-serving and sycophantic; no wonder that so many men are moral cowards and cringing poltroons, without self-respect. What more could be expected of a progeny of slaves? Slaves are we, politically and legally. How can we, who it is said are the educators of our children, present to this nation any thing else but a generation of serviles, while we ourselves are in a servile condition, and padlocks are on our lips? No! if men would be men worthy of the name, they must cease to disfranchise and rob their wives and mothers; they must forbear to consign to political and legal slavery their sisters and the daughters; and would we be women worthy companionship of true and noble men, we must cease longer to submit to tyranny. Let us rise in the might of self-respect and assert our rights, and by the aid of truth, the instincts of humanity and a just application of the principles of equality, we shall be able to maintain them.

You ask, would you have woman, by engaging in political party bickerings and noisy strife, sacrifice her integrity and purity? No, neither would we have men do it. We know that the natural tendency of the constitution of society is to this end, but it is wrong, disgraceful and wicked, and destructive of human happiness. We want to revolutionize the constitution of society by the application of the principles of eternal truth, right and justice.—We hold that whatever is essentially wrong for a woman to do, *cannot* be right for man. If deception and intrigue (the elements of political craft, be regarding to woman, can they be ennobling to man? If patience and forbearance adorn a woman, are they not equally essential to a manly character? If anger and turbulence disgrace woman, what can they add to the dignity of man? Nothing, because nothing can be morally right for man that is morally wrong for woman. Woman, by becoming the executioner of man's

vengeance on his fellow-man, could inflict no greater wrong on society than the same done by man; but it would create an intenser feeling of shuddering horror, and would, we conceive, rouse to more healthful activity man's torpid feelings of justice, mercy and clemency. And so also, if woman had free scope for the full exercise of the heavenly graces that men so gallantly award her, truth, love and mercy would be invested with a more sacred charm. But while they continue to enforce obedience to arbitrary commands, to encourage love of admiration and a desire for frivolous amusements; while they crush the powers of the mind by opposing authority and precedent to reason and progress; while they arrogate to themselves the right to point us to the path of duty, while they close the avenues of knowledge through public institutions, and monopolize the profits of labor, mediocrity and inferiority must be our portion. Shall we accept it? or shall we strive against it?

Men are not destitute of justice or humanity; and let it be remembered that there are hosts of noble and truthful ones among them that deprecate the tyranny that enslaves us; and none among ourselves can be more ready than they to remove the mountain of injustice which the savageism of ages has heaped upon our sex. If, therefore, we remain unemancipated and degraded, the cause may justly be traced to our own apathy and timidity. We have at our disposal the means of moral agitation and influence, that can arouse our country to a saving sense of the wickedness and folly of disfranchising half the people. Let us no longer delay to use them.

Let it be remembered, too, that tyrannical and illiberal as our government is, low as it places us in the scale of existence, degrading as is its denial of our capacity for self-government, still it concedes to us more than any other government on earth. Woman, over nearly half the globe, is now and always has been but a chattel. Wives are bargained for, bought and sold, as other merchandise, and as a consequence of the annihilation of natural right, they have no political existence. In Hindostan, the evidence of woman is not received in a court of justice. The Hindoo wife, when her husband dies, must yield implicit obedience to the oldest son. In Burmah, they are not allowed to ascend the steps of a court of justice, but are obliged to give their testimony outside of the building. In Siberia, women are not allowed to step across the foot-prints of men or reindeer. The Mahomedan law forbids pigs, dogs, women and other impure animals to enter a mosque. The Moors, for the slightest offence, beat their wives most cruelly. The Tartars believe that women were sent into the world for no other purpose but to be useful, convenient slaves. To these heathen pre-

cedents our Christian brethren sometimes refer to prove the inferiority of woman, and to excuse the inconsistency of the only government on earth that has proclaimed the equality of man. An argument worthy its source.

In answer to the popular query, Why should Woman desire to meddle with public affairs? we suggest the following questions:

1. Is the principle of taxation without representation less oppressive and tyrannical than when our fathers expended their blood and treasure rather than submit to its injustice?

2. Is it just, politic and wise, that Universities and Colleges, endowed by government, should be open only to men?

3. Is it easier for government to reform lazy, vicious, ignorant and hardened felons, than for enlightened, humanity-loving parents to "train up a child in the way it should go"?

4. How can a mother who does not understand and therefore *cannot* appreciate the rights of humanity, train up her child in the way it should go?

5. Whence originates the necessity of a penal code?

6. It is computed that over ten millions of dollars are annually expended in the United States for the suppression of crime. How much of this waste of treasure is traceable to defective family government?

7. Can antiquity make wrong right?

In conclusion, we make our appeal to our sisters of Ohio to arise from the lethargy of ages, to assert their rights as independent human beings, to demand their true position as equally responsible co-workers with their brethren in this world of action and responsibility. We urge you by your self-respect, by your love of your offspring, by every consideration of regard for the human race, to arise and take possession of your birthright to freedom and equality. Take it not as the gracious boon tendered by the chivalry and gallantry of superiors, but as your right on principles of justice and equality.

The present is a most favorable time for the Women of Ohio to demand a recognition of their rights. The organic law of the State is about undergoing revision and alteration. Let it not be our fault, if the rights of humanity, and not alone those of 'free white male citizens', are recognized and protected. Let us agitate the subject in the family circle, in public assemblies and through the press. Let us flood the Constitutional Convention with memorials and addresses, trusting to truth and a righteous cause for the success of our efforts.

Chapter 5

LETTERS READ TO THE CONVENTION

From Mercy L. Holmes
SELMA, April 12th, 1850.

To the Women's Convention, assembled in Salem,
April 19th.

DEAR SISTERS; ***There are a number of us in this vicinity who would rejoice to be with you; nay more, who would feel it among the proudest acts of our lives, could we hear and be heard in this first great meeting of "*Western rebels*," but circumstances do not seem to justify it now. We should, however, be very happy to meet a committee of your appointment before the Delegates to the State Convention, the first of next month. To many this may seem like rather a bold move, but from the hasty thought I have given it, it strikes me as decidedly judicious. Something, it is true, may be effected by resolutions and *petitions*, but not *half* the agitation and discussion would be elicited that a Committee of Women would call forth, should they appear and *address* the Convention on behalf of their sex. Men have so long been accustomed to disregard the prayers and remonstrances of women, except as they tend to promote their own selfish and *despotic* ends, that I presume, should a petition be presented, it would serve no higher purpose than to call out a little of their obscene and vulgar wit. But let us go, in the language of the call, "in womanly strength and with womanly energy," and *demand* of them as a *right*, not *beg* of them as a privilege, an equal participancy in all that concerns us as rational intelligencies, and who among us can predict the sensation it would occasion — the thought it would elicit, and in fine, the impetus that would be given to the great car of Universal Freedom and emancipation? Should such a course be deemed prudent, do not let us shrink from it because of unpleasant consequences to which it may subject us. We must expect these—they are the *necessary* attendants to healthy action on the part of morbid and diseased organs. But perhaps it may be said, a majority even of our *own sex* would revolt at such a move. What if they do—what does it argue? A *melancholy truth* — one that a true woman can never record without a blush. In these, slavery and degradation have done their work, have made sad havoc of God's holy image; yet there is still vitality even there. The waning spark of liberty and true womanhood may

be rekindled resuscitated. The moral and intellectual heavens will yet glow with bright worlds from these obscure and unresolved nebulae. Let us then be *hopeful*, confident in the omnipotence of *truth*, and *victory* will crown our efforts. There may be those in existence to-day who will bask in the sunshine of this dawning orb of liberty—who will bear home to the spirit-land glad tidings of a *practical* recognition of the universal brotherhood of the race.

The *origin* and *design* of the rights of humanity, as suggested in the call, is an important question for discussion. It is indeed *the* question, for it is only by going back to the common source of *all* our rights, that we can prove conclusively the position we take. The query there arises, what is it that gives us a right to the use of any faculty or organ we possess? Evidently the end to be achieved. We were never placed here by a good and wise Father for a specified purpose, and then forbidden the use of such instrumentalities as would enable us to attain that purpose. This I presume will be granted. The question then occurs, what evidence have we that the end to be achieved is the same in the different sexes? I answer, the common *instrumentalities* conferred upon them. Woman possesses every faculty that man does, and moreover, these faculties are subject to the same laws of development. If then we have a common destiny, are endowed with common instrumentalities for the achievement of that destiny, and our rights have their origin there, how dare *man* presume to wrest them from us? It is *impious*—is assuming a prerogative that neither *God* nor man has a right to, while we are constituted as we are. To admit such a right in our good Parent, would be to admit in Him a right and power to do *wrong*, something wholly inconsistent and at variance with his nature. If the position taken be true, then, whence comes man's boasted superiority, the intellectual pre-eminence he claims?—Clearly from his superior circumstances—superior discipline. Extend to woman equal privileges and discipline, and she will not lag behind him, and those equal privileges must and *will* be extended. Nothing short of this will ever satisfy the demands of a noble and dignified spirit — one in which the spark of *Divinity* has indeed been kindled. This question, so vitally important to us all, is too often discussed

from wrong premises. For instance, it is contended that because certain organs, as a class, are larger in males than in females, (*wholly* the result of a difference in discipline,) therefore men have rights that *we* have not; just as though the *size* of the organ determined the right to its use. We might just as well say, that because one *man* is more intellectual than another, therefore he has superior rights. The argument is as applicable in one case as the other. But Oh! what a scene would ensue, should a *practical* application of this doctrine be made among the *self-created despots!* Not one of them from the *cowardly truckling spirited Webster* down to the veriest *idiot* that can run at large, but what would feel himself insulted at such a suggestion. The truth is, they do not believe what they say. It is only a kind of sophistry, resorted to blind those whom they have already enslaved and degraded. It matters not how little mental capability is possessed, (provided it belongs to the *pantaloon* sex), all the rights of humanity are claimed for it—aye, and more. Should he be fortunate enough, or some benumbed, distorted spirit *unfortunate* enough, to become his wedded wife, he has almost exclusive right and control over *her* also. How many thousands of *intellectual* and *noble-minded* women are this day owned as it were by *petty tyrants*, not half as good or discerning as themselves! We are slaves—abject slaves,—for what else do we mean by the term than one whose *actions* and *earnings* are under the arbitrary control of another? Just read *Mansfield*, or another writer on the “legal rights” of women. Ah! what a picture! it makes me shrink back ashamed and disgusted, when I see myself in such a horrible mirror. As *unmarried* women, we have taxation without representation; labor *almost* without remuneration; as married women we are mere *machines* to be used at the discretion of our owners. Should we possess property, we lose all control over it, and as a general thing all *right* or *title* to it. Our *personal* rights are wrested from us to that extent that *coercion* may be used to compel obedience to the demands, just or unjust, of our *so-called protectors*. Heaven save us from such protection: Again, as if to add insult to injury, the marriage *contract*, as it is falsely called, is such that woman in addition to being degraded by previously existing *laws* to the condition of a slave, is pledged to *obey* her *husband*. What cool and deliberate wickedness! Is it not enough that all the laws and physical strength of the land can be commanded to *compel* this obedience? What need of this heartless insult? This additional badge of degradation and servility

is not even stamped upon the victims of the southern planter.

But why gaze longer upon this *humiliating* picture? My soul sickens at the sight—yes, *doubly* sickens, when I recur to the *hollow pretences* on which such despotism is based. We are often cited to the wives and daughters of *wealthy* lordlings, who luxuriate in all the ease and indolence their torpid, half-grown souls desire, and tauntingly asked, is this *slavery?* Just as though we could not be as much slaves in a king’s palace as in a peasant’s cot. The same insulting, degrading laws meet us there as elsewhere. That high prerogative of human nature the faculty of self-government is still denied us; without it the high and noble-minded cannot exist. They will either pine away and die, or at whatever risk, break “the infernal bonds of slavery.”

Another objection frequently urged to our title to humanity is, our *physical* inferiority. But this is as unmeaning and hypocritical as the rest. Do we find men objected to on such ground? Nay, verily. Yet if the argument is worth any thing in one case, it is in the other also. Small physical stature has as deteriorating or rather enervating influence upon the mind of man as woman; yet there are thousands to-day, in this enlightened liberty-loving Republic, who possess no larger physical structures than I or a third of my sex do; nevertheless they are clothed with all the rights of humanity, and would feel their *little dignities* greatly insulted should any one presume to place them on no higher platform than that occupied by the “women and niggers.”

In conclusion, dear sisters, let me again exhort you to noble and independent action. Let not the fear of man or his vile threats restrain the expression of a single word of truth that ye may deem it right to utter. In the language of the poet:

“Be ye like the first Apostles—
Be ye like heroic Paul;
If a free thought seek expression,

Speak it boldly; speak it all!
Face your enemies—accusers;
Scorn the prison, rack, or rod!
And if ye have *truth* to utter,

SPEAK! and leave the rest to God.”

Yours for equal human rights,

MERCY L. HOLMES

From Emma Steer.

DEAR SISTERS: Permit an ancient and feeble sister to address you, and bid you God-speed in the work wherein you are engaged for the elevation of Woman.

Impressed with a sense of the importance of a better moral and literary training for her to whose care the earliest and most important part of the education of both sexes is assigned, we cannot wonder that the world abounds with men deficient in goodness and true greatness of soul, when the "first impressions" that "seldom are effaced," are not of a character tending to this important event. Can it be expected that their first tutors can be able to give them such instruction, when the greater part of *their* life to this period has been directed and employed to adorn the exterior, and fit them to please the eye, and become the toys of the other sex? And further, we cannot look for such mothers to give their daughters better training than they themselves have received.

Let this subject, dear sisters, be fully canvassed: let woman's early education be improved; and the seed sown in good ground will spring up and grow—then will she be able to labor for the further improvement and elevation of her sex, and thereby assist in promoting the welfare of the whole human race. Men, having received their first impressions and continued instructions from noble-minded Mothers, will grow up in intelligent goodness, be willing to assist in releasing woman from the chains with which custom has held her bound, and join hand in hand with her as natural allies in the great work of reform. There are such men and women now; and we hope, through the faithfulness of those engaged to labor for Woman's elevation, that a noble phalanx will arise, and that the time will come, when, instead of a community resembling briars and thorns, pricking against each other, and encouraging War, Slavery, &c., there will be "peace on earth and good will to men," bearing resemblance to a garden of flowers and precious fruits.

And now, dear sisters, who may come to hear this very important discussion, be entreated to enter deeply into the examination of the momentous subject, that you may see its bearings and be able to labor for a change in the education of Woman. If you could see the benefit that the world or mankind would derive from such an improvement, we are persuaded you would go forth as an army with banners, regardless of the world's dread laugh at your simplicity, while seeking to enrich your minds with useful knowledge, instead of spending your time in adorning the ex-

terior. Let this subject of the elevation of Woman be considered and discussed; and intelligent and virtuous men will aid in exposing the futility of the education which females generally have heretofore received. Slight not their remarks but endeavor to improve your time—let the search extend from mother to mother, and from sister to sister; for if the season of youth can be spent in gaining more moral and literary instruction than has been generally attained by Woman, she will not only shine with more lustre in what is called her proper sphere, but be able to labor for the attainment of her just rights of every kind, till her efforts are crowned with success. Adieu, dear sisters, and may the God of Love and Peace be with you, and crown your assembly.

Your friend,
EMMA STEER.

Colerain, Belmont Co., O.,
4th mo. 11th, 1850

From Elizabeth Wilson

CADIZ, OHIO, April 12th, 1850.

DEAR MRS. ROBINSON: I thank you for the kind and earnest invitation you have honored me with on behalf of the Committee of Arrangements, my much esteemed friend your husband uniting in the solicitation to attend the Convention of Women to assemble in Salem on the 19th and 20th instant. It is perhaps unnecessary for me to say, that I heartily concur in the measure, as my opinions on this question are already before the public. But I regret to say it will be out of my power to have the pleasure of attending on that occasion. The object of the Convention, the Elevation of Woman, is one in which I take an intense interest, as it deeply involves the interest and well-being of the whole human family. Woman has been *long* the *victim* of *oppression* and *wrong*, and God has so ordered matters in this world that we cannot inflict an injury on our fellow-creatures without inflicting a greater injury on ourselves. Man has inflicted a greater injury on himself by the assumption of arbitrary power than he has on woman, though it is extremely injurious to both. Arbitrary power has always been a curse both to the possessor and its victim.—Woman is little more than an automaton, well nigh pushed off the platform of humanity, so that she is not "an help-meet for man." This lays a responsibility on man which he is unqualified to meet. In no department of life does man manifest this more strikingly, than in his administration of civil government; more particularly his moral

impotency is manifest to a humiliating extent. The contaminating moral influence of the political arena is urged, as a reason why woman should not engage in it, lest she would become contaminated like a majority of Political man—thus men yields to her the supremacy in morals. Would not woman's moral influence be a corrective of its contaminating effects? "It is not good for man to be alone," and the Great Sovereign of the Universe has assigned woman political duties. What! does God require political duties of women! yes, political duties.—'Queens shall be your nursing mothers' is a scripture prediction, as well as 'Kings shall be your nursing fathers.' Where might we most naturally have expected the fulfilment of this prediction to commence, but in *Christian, Republican America*, the world's best hope. As the sovereignty is vested in the people in a Republican form of government, all who enjoy political rights in a Republic are constituent parts of the Sovereignty, and may be called kings or queens; and in the character of queens does God require service of woman. But our model Republic tells God that queens shall not be a constituent part of its sovereignty, to be nursing mothers to his Church and people, and has denied women political rights in to-to. The government of the United States with respect to women is but a great hereditary aristocracy, which governs them by arbitrary laws without their own consent; thus giving the lie to their *own principle*, that government receives its legitimate powers from the consent of the governed. Has any person liberty when he is governed by laws he has no voice in making? It is a direct step toward enslavement. It would be an anomaly, that such a class would be governed by just and equitable laws; hence the unequal and oppressive laws which govern women. It is said that the right of suffrage is a conventional right, and not a natural right; and people may be lawfully divested of conventional rights. The principle that government receives its legitimate powers from the consent of the governed overturns this opinion. We deny that the right of suffrage is a conventional right—it is a natural and inalienable right—forming conventions gives no right to exercise authority over those who are not members of the association. Conventions can give no rights; it is God that gives us our rights. The province of civil government is to protect us in our God-given rights. And women have inherent and inalienable rights the same as men, and have corresponding duties, and should have a direct voice in all matters which effect their interest.

It is said that women's rights are safe in the hands of their affectionate fathers, husbands and brothers. Do the facts in the case testify that this is true? After a woman becomes a wife, she *loses her identity* in the eyes of the law, she is a being

of the law's own creation—a monster, a fictitious being, not having human rights as before.—The laws that govern the wife and the slave differ in degree, but *not* in kind. Instead of the civil law being the protector of the wife, or widow, it is her adversary, her tyrant and oppressor. We are convinced that if there were no organized civil government, in our present enlightened civilized condition, the wife and widow would enjoy more rights from the common sense of the community than they do from the civil powers. The common sense of an enlightened community would award to the wife a right to acquire and own property.

The virtuous woman spoken of in the good old book, considered a field and bought it. Prov. 31, 16. An enlightened community would brand a man as a despicable tyrant, who would exact the personal labor of his wife and pocket her earnings—it would brand a man as a savage, who would bind his wife with cords, lock her up in a closet, and if she resist his lordly authority and brute force, maim her! The husband a licensed woman-whipper! Magnanimity sustained by our Republican chivalry! She a nursing mother queen! Alas! she is stripped of her crown and dignity. A most shameful violation of a constitutional guaranty, that no person shall be deprived of liberty without due process of law. And were it not for legal enactments, who would ever think of pouncing on the poor widow's property, wresting it from her, dealing out her apportionment, as if she were a salaried domestic, and making such a disposition of the residue as they see proper? No, the common sense of an enlightened community would say, that the widow was the proper person, after the husband's exit, to have the sole control and management of that property, and that she is the God-ordained guardian of her children, the same as the husband, after the wife's death. Are not the moral and intellectual training of the children under their mother's control, and why cannot she manage their pecuniary interests? This interference of the law is *professedly* for the purpose of securing to children their inheritance. This is only a mere pretext. When there are no children to provide for, the husband's relations come in as legal heirs to two-thirds of all real estate, the same as when there are children. In many instances, turning the widow out of house and home, a dependant on the cold charities of an unfeeling world. Thus we see that the civil law is the wife and widow's tyrant and oppressor.

These are some of the fruits of women being denied the right of suffrage. How gallant our republicans are to the "fair sex." Are they governed by the golden rule? A government that is entitled to allegiance will have no class legislation.

The laws will not be made for man, nor for woman, but for mankind. A right to acquire and own property is most emphatically a natural right and inalienable; and a right which distinguishes man from the brute. If life itself is a natural right, the means to support it are also natural rights. And God gave woman an inheritance in the earth and all it contains, the same as man. Gen. 1: 28,29; and she has obligations to perform to her fellow creatures, arising out of these rights, the same as man. "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat," &c. &c., Math. 25; 35,45. A woman of correct information and sound judgment, who would acquiesce in such exactions does not deserve to enjoy her liberty; she does not know how to appreciate it, nor the exalted position she occupies as a human being, and the consequent responsibility. It is time that woman should arise from her legal tomb and let men know that woman cannot, more than man, be divested of any of her rights by the marriage contract.—Marriage is intended to extend her influence and duties, not to curtail them. She has inalienable rights, the same as man, and has political duties assigned her by her Creator; consequently, she must have political rights: the first of which is the elective franchise, "White male," must be stricken out of our State Constitution as a qualification for the right of suffrage, and *person* substituted in its place. Does not woman feel that she is degraded by being divested of her rights, and to be placed in the same category, with idiots, or the insane, or those who have committed flagitious crimes, such as robbers, malefactors and other gross offenders? Are women too degraded to have any aspirations after a higher and better condition? We know a goodly number are not thus degraded. Let women arise in the majesty of their womanhood and assert their rights, and we have no doubt they will be placed in a position in which they could perform their duty as nursing mothers to the people of God, in the character of queens, a constituent part of the sovereignty of the United States of America. Coming events cast their shadows before them. Public sentiment is rapidly changing on this question; many distinguished men are taking an interest in it, and it is still deepening. Men will be powerful auxiliaries, but on woman rests the burden of this conflict. We do not suppose that women will obtain their rights without a struggle, and a great effort between moral and physical power. But the promise is, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

Yours, for progress and human liberty,

ELIZABETH WILSON.

From R.M.M. Sanford.

CHAGRIN FALLS, April 10th, 1850.

Officers and Women of the Convention: Unavoidable duties at home will prevent my being able to attend this Session of your Convention.

It is not a sudden and evanescent impulse, attributed so generally to our sex, which now moves woman to think and act for civil liberty, for citizenship.

Look through the history of the mighty past, and you will find that a long train of circumstances, linked to some unimportant movement at first, brought about a stupendous result. Every national question, which heaped event upon event and joined resolution to resolution, rose from the sole voice or act of one person. Reform's last clarion-sounds have always swelled from a flute-like note. Woman's voice years ago whispered 'enthralment,' and though ridicule, intellect, defiance and power have sought to smother it, yet, higher and higher the tone has risen, till State after State now catches the chorus, and to the tenor call for freedom is joined the clear full bass of man's justice.

If from the events of the past we can draw a conclusion, so from the excitement of the present there will be a result worthy our deepest consideration. It is for us to make the present tend towards equality, justice, goodness and religion for the whole human race. That is a grand and boundless duty, to prepare mankind for eternity. It is not exclusively to enfranchise and elevate white women, but it is through that to elevate and enlighten the enslaved and benighted of every race and nation.

The sphere and destiny of woman. The most succinct way to appreciate this subject is to answer the objections usually raised.

1st. "Woman's constitutional delicacy has formed her sphere." The taste of man and the restrictions of the law have formed her sphere, and that sphere has formed her constitutional delicacy. It has been proved by emigration that in all the hardships of the wilderness, in all the dangers of the border warfare, and all the trials common to both sexes in domestic life, woman's "constitutional delicacy" endured as much as man's bravery, generated by his freedom to act in any and every direction. FACT has written with a pen of iron upon the face of Time woman's energy against man's energy, with her constitutional delicacy operating to the contrary.

2d. "It is improper for her to legislate, speak and vote." Why? Because she is a woman. Ask man what it is that legislates, and he will answer justice, knowledge, common sense; what it is that speaks, and he will answer, intellect, moral power; what is it that votes, and he will reply, understanding. To sustain his objections and his answers, woman is an idiot, or less than a chattel. His position in reality upon this point is confused and ridiculous.

3d. "As a citizen she would lose her present maternal duties and her many charming graces." That position man nor woman cannot sustain from experience, for, wherever woman has acted she has thrown all the dignity of a mother and all the refinement of her sex around the cause and circumstance. In fashionable life she has lost her maternal duties, and the charming grace of simplicity and truth. Her better nature must be called from this desecrating contact and applied where the refinement and purity of woman is needed. It is not necessary for her to go to the same ballot-box, before the same Judges and Jury, before the same Speakers and President with man. But her votes, decisions and enactments should be secured for future peace and blessing to the world.

4th. "Woman's duty is her sphere, and her duty is to stay at home, mind her house, and keep quiet." There we agree, as well as join issue. Woman's duty is to mind her domestic concerns, and it is to make her better in that, that we wish to elevate her. It is her duty as a wife to obey and seek to be taught in all things pertaining to her moral, social, and spiritual welfare. A judicious husband should stand next to God as a director. As a mother she should teach and be kind, as a daughter considerate and obedient, as a sister loving and watchful. Still God gave woman charity, and she must exercise it; he gave her judgment, it must come into action; he gave her grace and energy, harmony of action and purpose; he endowed her with refinement, intellect and moral strength, and it is not for man to say, "woman shall be restricted."

Woman's destiny is a blank as she now stands in relation to civil privilege. She sees immorality degrading the human race, and with all perception and energy to check it, cannot effectually lift a finger; she sees intemperance pushing her kindred and neighbors into the grave, and with all desire and will to controvert it cannot, for the law-axe, is beyond her reach. Slavery, that might be hurled from the American pedestal once

raised to liberty, will rest in 'masterly inactivity,' for there is a power lying powerless in woman's hands. But take courage. Calhoun once remarked, that he had watched the abolition cause from its first agitation, a ripple then, expecting it would become an overwhelming wave. So it will be with Woman's Rights—a tiny bubble now, but it may, yes and will be an overwhelming current. The convention to be called in May will be one of vital interest to the triumph of these rights. May a strong and earnest voice and petition go up from the women of Ohio.—Pass it not idly by, you who have been lapped in the seat of dependence and non-interference. Interference is now our duty.—If God ever planted equality of thought and equality of right in all portions of his human creations, it is time that one portion should stand by the Magna Charter the Creator gave.

The right cannot be denied to any person of legislating, if legislated upon, of taxing if taxed, of voting if counted. The woman who ridicules or flinches now that the great trial is coming, is sunk below the power of appreciating RIGHT. It is not that woman has been forgotten that I speak so strongly. It is because revolution is surging, and if effort is not greater and continually greater, it will die away and woman lose the vitality of progress. The rock moves—ease not exertion, combine and push on, and the New Constitution will be one for man to venerate and God to bless.

It is not necessary for me to admonish you to be moderate and prudent, or urge you to firmness and resolution. BE STRONG IN THE RIGHT.

Yours, for equal laws,
R.M.M. SANFORD.

Miss A. E. Lee.



Lucy Stone

(From an engraving in *The History of Woman Suffrage*)

From Lucy Stone

For the Women's Rights Convention: DEAR FRIENDS: The friends of human freedom in Massachusetts rejoice that a Woman's Rights Convention is to be held in Ohio. We hail it as a sign of progress, and deem it especially fitting, that such a Convention should be held *now* when a new State Constitution is to be formed. It is easier, when the Old is destroyed, to build the New right, than to right it *after* it is built.

The statute books of every State in the Union are disgraced by an article, which limits the right to the elective franchise to "*male* citizens, of twenty-one years of age and upwards," thus excluding one half the population of the Country from all political influence—subjecting Woman to laws, in the making of which she has neither vote, nor voice. The lowest drunkard may come up from his wallowing in the gutter, and, covered with filth, *reel* up to the ballot-box, and deposit his vote, and *his* right to do so is not questioned. The meanest foreigner who comes to our shores—who cannot speak his mother tongue correctly—has secured for him the right of suffrage.

The Negro — crushed and degraded as if he were not a brother man—made the lowest of the low—even he in *some* of the States can vote; but Woman, in *every* State, is politically plunged in a degradation lower than *his* lowest deep.

Woman is taxed under laws made by those who profess to believe that taxation and representation are inseparable, while in the use and imposition of

the taxes, as in representation, she is absolutely without influence. Should she hint that the profession and practice do not agree, she is gravely told, that "Woman should not talk politics." In most of the States, the married Woman loses, by her marriage, the control of her person and the right of property, and if she is a mother the right to her children also; while she secures what the town paupers have, the right to be maintained. The legal disabilities under which women labor have no end, I will not attempt to enumerate them. Let the earnest women, who speak in your Convention, enter into the detail of this question, nor stop to "patch fig-leaves for the naked truth," but "before all Israel and the sun," expose the atrocity of the laws relative to women, until the ears of those who hear shall tingle, and so that the men, who meet in Convention to form the new Constitution for Ohio, shall, for every shame's sake, make haste to put away the last remnant of the barbarism which your statute-book, (in common with those of the other States) retains, in its inequality, and injustice to woman.—We know too well the stern reform spirit of those who have called this Women's Rights Convention, to doubt for a moment that what can be done by you, to secure equal rights for all, will be done.

Massachusetts *ought* to have taken the lead in the work you are now doing, but if she chooses to linger, let her young sister of the West set her a worthy example; and if "the Pilgrim spirit is not dead," *we'll pledge Massachusetts to follow her.*

Yours for Justice and Equal Rights,

LUCY STONE.

At Southampton, April 10th, 1850.

From Lydia Jane Pierson

LANCASTER, PA., April 12, 1850.

To the members of the Convention: LADIES: Most earnestly do I thank you for the kind confidence and good will with which you have invited me to be present and take part in the proceedings of an Equal Rights Convention, to be held at Salem, Ohio, on the 19th and 20th of the current month. Joyfully would I hasten to be present with you, but am prevented by insurmountable obstacles from profiting by your wisdom, or lending my insignificant aid in the good cause you have in hand.

No person can be more deeply impressed than I am with the utterly wrong basis on which society at present rests. To use the words of Scripture, "The foundations of the earth are out of course." You express a fear that I am not as

radical as you could wish. I fancy that no person sees more plainly, or feels more deeply, the wrongs which the strong inflict upon the weak, than my humble self. I have in my own person suffered almost every wrong and sorrow. I am sometimes accused of speaking with bitterness; but I have been fed on bitter bread, and waters of Marah. How should I speak honied words?

Yet, as a reformer, my views differ from those of some, being, as I fancy, more radical, as I would strike at the root of the evil. I would not dictate to any person, much less to a society, yet in my view knowledge is power. Education of itself will make us free; ignorance is not fit to be entrusted with freedom. If the Slave States would educate their young blacks, give them trades, and suffer them, at a certain age, to go out free, they would do their duty, but in these slaves, in their present ignorance and degradation, unused as they are to provide for their own wants, were to day set at liberty, it would, in my opinion, be a deed to be deplored. A few of them would make a living, but the great mass would prove incapable of providing for themselves, and the poor-houses and jails would be full of them, from one end of the land to the other. Yet we do not understand why a black skin should prevent a man from being a man, any more than a black eye. We are sure that education is able to raise the black to an intellectual level with his white brother, and we believe that the time is near, when the slave will be free from his master. But we are constitutionally averse to all violent measures, even to bring about good ends. We would qualify men for freedom, and then it will not be possible to retain them in bondage. Slaveholders have opposed the education of their human 'cattle,' (impious assumption,) from this conviction; and for the same reason man has opposed the intellectual progress of woman. But look at the results. The slaveholder's children are debased by domestic intercourse with his 'cattle' and the whole race of man is inferior in consequence of the incompetence of mothers, who form the young mind and effect the only indelible impressions upon the intellect and heart. Thus man's idiotic pride, and injustice to woman, reacts upon himself; and the degradation of a part of the population debases a whole country. Right education will eradicate these evils.

Do not be offended, but I am constrained to utter my belief, that the great majority of my own sex are at present incapable of doing service to their country or honor to themselves in public stations. When we consider the deplorable ignorance of every thing but household drudgery of the great mass, and the miserable tinsel that is palmed off as education in the most favored, we see only here and there one, whose God-given intellect, with a supernatural power has overleaped all ob-

stacles, and caught a living coal from the altar of science. These would honor their country in any station; but for every one such, there are thousands of poor, weak imbecile, helpless things, no more fit to touch the chariot of Liberty than a leper was to carry the Ark of God's covenant.

But I insist that woman possesses naturally mental capacities every way equal to those of man. And I will never relinquish this belief, until, having enjoyed all advantages in common with him, she shall fail to equal him in attainment. The gates of science have always been kept shut against her by popular prejudice, and the fashionable schools for girls have been infinitely worse than none, for it has been their effort to smother, under affectation and morbid delicacy, the little common sense that survived the restraints of the nursery. After being taught etiquette, the hypocritical conventionalities of fashion, a little music, and a few French phrases—all by rote—they are turned out to use their accomplishments for the purpose for which they have been taught to value them, namely, to win a husband and secure a settlement. They are married at seventeen, soon become mothers, are consigned to oblivion, or kept alive by a round of vanity and dissipation. This picture, however humiliating, is a true representation. Such women are fit for nothing but to die, as they have lived.

We sometimes hear men, advocating the cause of woman, talk of elevating and educating her, as if she must receive all things at his hand. We only ask to be allowed to enjoy the common gifts of Heaven. We have no patience with the phrenologist, who attempts to establish woman's inferiority by pretending a difference of formation in the heads of males and females. That such teaching is libelous, any person can convince himself by noticing the heads of those around him; especially let him go into a school of young children. We know that he will find no one distinguishing, general characteristic. This assumption of phrenology has made the whole science false and contemptible in my estimation. Women have heads as large, in proportion to the size of their persons, as men have; and until it shall be proved that the ox is more intelligent than the dog, because he is larger, we will never believe that man is wiser than woman because he has more bulk of flesh, blood, and bones.

The evils of society are attributable to false systems of education. Boys are miserably neglected in the domestic training, and girls in the scholastic. If the boys received the same lessons of gentleness, submission, self-denial, endurance, truth, and purity, which are deemed indispensable to girls, and girls were permitted to attend Schools and Colleges, as boys do, until they are twenty-

four or five, we should need no conventions for revolution or reform; and I very much fear, that until education shall have done her work, no reformatory efforts will greatly benefit society. The greatest bane of woman, and the strongest obstacle to her elevation, is the deplorable manner of early marriages. Very few girls attain their growth, fewer still maturity of constitution and intellect, before they are made wives and mothers. Every man knows that such a course must of necessity deteriorate any breed of domestic animals; and does he suppose himself an exception to the immutable laws of nature? Woman, however she may appear so, is not mature earlier than man; and in all marriages the nearer of an age the parties are, the greater is their chance of happiness, prosperity, long life, and healthy, good-tempered children.

Early marriage, more than any other cause, prevents the development of the female intellect. The reasons that support this truth are obvious.

Woman will never be qualified to fill the positions for which her Creator endowed and designed her, until, rejecting early marriage, she shall devote to study the same season of her life that is appropriated to the same end by man. Suppose that boys uniformly left school at the age of seventeen, or eighteen at farthest, just as the intellect becomes capable of understanding and grasping learning, and were then immediately devoted to some all-engrossing business; how many learned men would the world have to boast? We are bold to say, not one more than it now has of women.

I would not, like revolutionary France, depose a tyrant, educated to the throne, and substitute ignorance, drunk with a newly acquired power, and the emancipated slave, in whose hand freedom is like a sword in the grasp of a madman. I would not revolutionize, but reform.

As regards the Right of Suffrage, and all government rights, I do not understand by what rule woman can be excluded. She is amenable to the laws in her own person; she is in common with her family subject to all the ills consequent upon a wrong administration of public affairs; if she has property, she is subject to all taxes, whether levied for purposes of peace or war; and she is certainly as much interested in the future welfare of her children and of posterity as their other parent can be.

As to qualifications, even now, the great mass of women are as capable of forming a right judgment as the great mass of men.—We know that all elections are carried by the rabble, who, without knowledge or principle, follow such leaders as are able to secure their confidence, and the vote of a drunken fool counts against that of the most

able statesman. It is hardly worth while then to plead incompetent understanding.

At all events, woman could not be led by the potent bridle of demagogueism, which is a free dispensing of intoxicating drink, which drowns the consciousness of right in the muddy heads of half our sovereign people, who, because they are allowed to say aye to the scheme of some plotting villain, imagine they exercise a voice in the government.

We see no power able to reform all abuses, and place all mankind on a level, but the great expositor of God's truth, Education.

Thus, my dear friends, I have given you a hasty sketch of my opinions upon these vital subjects; and I earnestly pray that your Convention may be guided in its action by the Spirit of Divine Wisdom; and be made instrumental in opening the way to Universal Emancipation, and thus hastening the Millennium of Virtue, Brotherhood and Peace.

Once more, tendering my thanks for your invitation and expressions of kindness and confidence, I write myself

Your Co-Worker,

LYDIA JANE PIERSON.

From Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

SENECA FALLS, N.Y. April, 7th

DEAR MARY ANNE:—How rejoiced I am to hear that the women of Ohio have called a Convention preparatory to the remodeling of their State Constitution. The remodeling of a Constitution, in the nineteenth century, speaks of progress, of greater freedom, and of more enlarged views of human rights and duties. It is fitting that, at such a time, woman, who has so long been the victim of ignorance and injustice, should at length throw off the trammels of a false education, stand upright, and with dignity and earnestness manifest a deep and serious interest in the laws which are to govern her and her country. It needs no argument to teach woman that she is interested in the laws which govern her. Suffering has taught her this already. It is important, now that a change is proposed, that she speak, and loudly too. Having decided to petition for a redress of grievances, the question is *for what shall you first petition?* For the exercise of your right to elective franchise—nothing short of this. The grant to you of this right will secure all others, and the granting of every other right, whilst this is denied, is a mockery. For instance: What is the right to property, without the right to protect it? The enjoyment of that right to-day is no security that it will be continued tomorrow, so long

as it is granted to us as a favor and not claimed by us as a right. Woman must exercise her right to the elective franchise and have her own representatives in our national councils, for two good reasons :



Elizabeth Cady Stanton
(From an engraving in *The History of Woman Suffrage*)

1st. Men cannot represent us. They are so thoroughly educated into the belief that woman's nature is altogether different from their own, that they have no idea that she can be governed by the same laws of mind as themselves. So far from viewing us like themselves, they seem from their legislation to consider us their moral and intellectual antipodes; for whatever law they find good for themselves, they forthwith pass its opposite for us, and express the most profound astonishment if we manifest the least dissatisfaction. For example: our fore-fathers, *full of righteous indignation*, pitched King George, his authority and his tea chests, all into the sea, and because forsooth they were forced to pay taxes without being represented in the British government. "Taxation without representation" was the text for many a hot debate in the forests of the new world, and for many an eloquent oration in the parliament of the old. Yet in forming our new government they have taken from us the very rights which they fought, and bled, and died, to secure to themselves. They have not only taxed us, but in many cases they strip us of all we inherit, the

wages we earn, the children of our love; and for such grievances we have no redress in any court of justice this side of Heaven. They tax our property to build Colleges, then pass a special law prohibiting any woman to enter there. A married woman has no legal existence; she has no more absolute rights than a slave on a Southern plantation. She takes the name of her master, holds nothing, owns nothing, can bring no action in her own name; and the principle on which she and the slave is educated is the same. The slave is taught what is considered best for him to know—which is nothing; the woman is taught what is best for her to know—which is little more than nothing; man being the umpire in both cases. A woman cannot follow out the impulses of her own immortal mind in her sphere, any further than the slave can in his sphere.—Civilly, socially, and religiously, she is what man chooses her to be—nothing more or less—and such is the slave. It is impossible for us to convince man that we think and feel exactly as he does, that we have the same sense of right and justice, the same love of freedom and independence. Some men regard us as devils, and some as angels; hence one class would shut us up in a certain sphere for fear of the evil WE might do, and the other for fear of the evil that *might be done to us*; thus, except for the sentiment of the thing, for all the good it does us, we might as well be thought the one as the other. But we ourselves have to do with what *we are* and what *we shall be*.

2nd. Man cannot legislate for us. Our statute books and all past experience teach us this fact. His laws, where we are concerned, have been, without one exception, unjust, cruel, and aggressive. Having denied our identity with himself, he has no data to go upon in judging of our wants and interests. If we are alike in our mental structure, then there is no reason why we should not have a voice in making the laws which govern us; but if we are not alike, most certainly we must make laws for ourselves; for who else can understand what we need and desire? If it be admitted in this government that all men and women are free and equal, then must we claim a place in our Senate chambers and Houses of Representatives. But if after all, it be found that even here we have classes, and caste—not "Lords and commons," but Lords and women—then must we claim a lower House, where our Representatives can watch the passage of all bills affecting our own welfare or the good of our country.—Had the women of this country had a voice in the government, think you our national escutcheon would have been stained with the guilt of aggressive warfare upon such weak defenceless nations as the Seminoles and Mexicans? Think you we should cherish and defend, in the heart of our na-

tion, such a wholesale system of piracy, cruelty, licentiousness and ignorance as is our slavery? Think you that relic of barbarism, the gallows, by which the wretched murderer is sent with blood upon his soul, uncalled for, into the presence of his God, would be sustained by law? Verily no, or I mistake woman's heart, her instinctive love of justice and mercy, and truth.

Who questions woman's right to vote?—We can show our credentials to the right of self-government; we get ours just where man got his; they are all Heaven-descended, God-given. It is our duty to assert and reassert this right, to agitate, discuss and petition, until our political equality be fully recognized. Depend upon it, this is the point to attack, the stronghold of the fortress—the *one* woman will find most difficult to take—the *one* man will most reluctantly give up; therefore let us encamp right under its shadow—there spend all our time, strength and *moral* ammunition, year after year, with perseverance, courage and decision. Let no sallies of wit or ridicule at our expense, no soft nonsense of woman's beauty, delicacy and refinement, no promise of gold and silver, bank stock, road stock, or landed estate, seduce us from our position, until that one stronghold totters to the ground. This done, the rest will they surrender *at discretion*.—Then comes equality in Church and State, in the family circle, and in all our social relations.

The cause of woman is onward. For our encouragement, let us take a review of what has occurred during the last few years. Not two years since, the women of New York held several Conventions. Their meetings were well attended by both men and women, and the question of woman's true position was fully and freely discussed. The proceedings of those meetings and their Declaration of Sentiments were all published and scattered far and near. Before that time, the newspapers said but little on that subject.—Immediately after, there was scarcely a newspaper in the Union that did not notice these Conventions, and generally in a tone of ridicule. Now, you seldom take up a paper that has not something about woman; but the tone is changing—ridicule is giving way to reason. Our papers begin to see that this is no subject for mirth, but one for serious consideration. Our literature also is assuming a different tone. The heroine of our fashionable novel is now a being of spirit, of energy, of will, with a conscience, with high moral principle, great decision and self-reliance. Contrast Jane Eyre with any of Bulwer's, Scott's or Shakespeare's heroines, and how they all sink into the shade compared with that noble creation of a woman's genius! The January No. of the Westminster Review contains an article on Woman, so liberal and radical, that I sometimes think it must have crept

in there by some mistake.—Our fashionable lecturers, too, are now, instead of the time-worn subjects of 'Catholicism,' 'The Crusades,' 'St. Bernard' and 'Thomas a Becket,' choosing Woman for their theme. True, they do not treat this new subject with much skill or philosophy; but enough for us that the great minds of our day are taking this direction. Mr. Dana, of Boston, lectured on this subject in Philadelphia. Lucretia Mott followed him, and ably pointed out his sophistry and errors. She spoke to a large and fashionable audience, and gave general satisfaction. Dana was too sickly and sentimental for that meridian.—The women of Massachusetts, ever the first in all moral movements, have sent, but a few weeks since, to their Legislature, a petition demanding their right to vote and hold office in that State. Woman seems to be preparing herself for a higher and holier destiny. That same love of liberty which burned in the hearts of our sires is now being kindled anew in the daughters of this proud Republic. From the present state of public sentiment we have every reason to look hopefully into the future. I see a brighter, happier day yet to come; but Woman must say how soon the dawn shall be, and whether the light shall first shine in the East or the West. By her own efforts the change must come. She must carve out her future destiny with her own right hand. If she have not the energy to secure for herself her true position, neither would she have the force or stability to maintain it, if placed there by another.

Farewell! yours, sincerely,

E. C. STANTON.

From Ruth Dugdale.

*Dear Friend, CYNTHIA M. PRICE:—*Thy interesting favor, received the evening previous to our setting out on a journey to Pennsylvania, caused a thrill of joy truly inexpressible, that the subject of Woman's Position was claiming the attention of gifted minds—minds alive alike to the deep responsibilities of our common nature, and the injustice, the *debasement* influence existing legal enactments exert on us. Good will result from agitating the subject; seeds of truth (even though they may be long germinating,) will not be scattered in vain, but will finally yield fruit. Long and patiently has woman submitted to flagrant injustice, and the cruelly debasing "male-created laws" that govern her, without raising her voice in remonstrance; laws that tax her property, jeopard her *liberty*, and even *destroy life* itself, without having had the slightest share in their enactment. Is this just?—is it generous? Was it not taxation without representation that caused our revolutionary sires to denounce as

tyrannous the British government, and finally severed the ties that bound them to the mother country? What show of justice is there in rational intelligences being held amenable to laws to which their consent was never asked or given? I was delighted with a remark of our talented sister, Jane G. Swisshelm, touching this subject: "If we are too angelic to the politicians, we are too sublime to be subject to taxation; if we are too silly to see thro' State affairs, we are too simple to count per centage with the tax-gatherer."

The witling will sneer, the politician smile with supreme contempt at our efforts to emerge from our debasing and false position, (which has its influence on themselves, tho' they see it not,) yet let us not falter, tho' we may not speedily attain a redress of wrongs. While a May, a Johnson, a Garrison and a Wright, with the true spirit of Christian feeling, advocate Woman's claims to equality of rights, and claim for her the same privileges they so highly prize themselves, may we not be cheered with the hope that a brighter day is dawning, when her petition for redress of time-honored grievances will be met with manly argument instead of ridicule, (so oft wielded against her,) and instead of fulsome flattery, the simple *justice* we claim will be conceded her by a more enlightened public opinion?

I should have esteemed it a high privilege to have assembled with my sisters on this highly interesting occasion, had circumstances admitted, and will be pleased to learn the result of your deliberations, which from the talent I hope will be enlisted, will be beneficial to the cause in which we are so deeply interested.

May the spirit and temper that was in Jesus so clothe yours with meekness and wisdom, that your efforts for the *oppressed* may not be in vain, but may be instrumental in "opening the blind eyes and unstopping the deaf ears" of our self-assumed law makers and judges.

Ye have my prayers and hearty God-speed in your work. Farewell.

Thine, in the bonds of womanhood,
RUTH DUGDALE.

Lloydsville, Belmont Co., O.,
4th mo. 6th, 1850

From Sarah Pugh.

"Lawrencian Villa is extremely beautiful; the grounds full of shubbery and flowers, the splendid dairy, the green houses and conservatories, four or five of them appropriated to fruit and flowers and rare plants in large numbers—the whole presenting great taste and skill.—*Mrs. Lawrence's* improvements are not completed; she is extend-

ing her shubbery and walks. She is undoubtedly one of the most skilful cultivators and florists in the country—(a country abounding with them)—and carries off more prizes at the Horticultural Exhibitions than almost any one else. I am told Mr. Lawrence is an eminent surgeon in London, and the whole of the country place is under *Mrs. Lawrence's* management." — *Colman's Letters from Europe.*

DEAR FRIENDS :—As I finished reading this paragraph, your letter inviting me to your Convention, to be held the 19th inst., was handed me. I cannot, as I gladly would, be with you. That my mite may not be wanting in aid of the cause, taking the above extract for my text, I would add as a commentary, that according to the laws and usages of a large portion of Christendom, in the event of the death of Mr. Lawrence, Mrs. Lawrence, the one whose skill and taste has formed this elegant establishment, would be left by the 'will' of Mr. Lawrence an income from a *part* of the estate and the 'privilege' of occupying 'during her natural life' two or three rooms in the large mansion, but powerless as a stranger, in the beautiful demesne made valuable by her industry and skill! This is not 'supposing a case,' only in the application of it to Mrs. L. In this country, where, as a general rule, women take their full share of the labor and responsibility of a household, and thus by their constant assiduity contribute their full proportion to the means by which a comfortable competence is secured, do we not see the disposal of it assumed as a matter of right by the male partner of the firm?

That women contribute their full share in the building up of an estate by *labor* — the only rightful mode—no one that is capable of taking an enlightened view of the prevailing condition of things will deny. True, she may not wield the axe or guide the plow, braced by the invigorating air—for hers is the wearisome task, and the one which requires the most skill, to attend to the complicated machinery within doors; she may not handle the awl or the plane for 'ten hours a day,' with but a small tax upon the intellectual powers; but by per *perpetual* oversight and unvarying labor she may make one dollar two or more.

This is one form of the many grievances to which women are subjected, all arising from the false assumption of their inferiority by nature and by the 'ordination of Providence.' May your Convention aid in dispelling this delusion from the minds of men—but chiefly from the minds of women—for to themselves in a great degree is their degraded position owing. Rouse them to a belief in their natural equality, and to a desire to sustain it by a cultivation of their noblest powers.

There is much that crowds on me for utterance, but there will be those among you that will be able to give a fuller and fitter expression to the thoughts that cluster round this all important question—the 'Rights and Duties of Women'—her rights equal to those of man—she alone the judge of her duties.

May your Convention hasten the day when these rights shall be acknowledged as equal to those of man, and independent of him, and when men and women shall equally cooperate for the good of all mankind.

With great interest, your friend,
SARAH PUGH.

To the Ohio Convention of Women.
Phila., 15th April, 1850.



Frances D. Gage

(From an engraving in *The History of Woman Suffrage*)

From Frances D. Gage.

MOUNT AIRY, April 8th, 1850.

CYNTHIA M. PRICE: Your favor, bearing date March 25th, came to hand yesterday, having been a long time loitering by the way. In reply to your kind invitation to attend 'The Women's Rights Convention,' to be held at Salem, I must say, that it will not be possible for me to do so, though I do most earnestly desire it, having never at any time in my life had the privilege or opportunity of attending any thing of the kind, and

but seldom of meeting with one whose thoughts and feelings answered to my own upon that subject. Women need elevating, both socially and politically, and yet I do not hope much from any thing but a remodeling of public opinion. The laws of public opinion are now more oppressive, if possible, than the written law of the land; and I find more men ready and willing to lend the helping hand than of my own sex. If women could be thrown more upon their own responsibility, made to realize their own strength and inherent power, the rest, it seems to me, would be of easy accomplishment. But that she can scarcely be expected to do while the laws of our State barely make her an accountable being. If she is married, she can hardly be said to have a legal existence.—All this, in my view, tends to paralyze the energies and weaken the understanding; for few persons, either men or women, make any great effort without an ultimate object, and woman's highest object *now* is to fill a subordinate place in the household though she should possess energy and talent to soar to the sun. The highest and holiest duty of life to woman is her duty as a wife and mother—the highest and holiest duty of man that of husband and father. If his capacity fits him for other duties, let him perform them—never neglecting these first named. And the same with woman. If she has been blessed with domestic cares sufficient to fill up the whole measure of her time and capacity let her stand at her post. If not, let common law and public opinion give to her, as to man, the privilege of following out her own desire according to her own sense of duty and her own judgment of right and wrong and abide the consequences even as man, without being compelled to waste three-fourths of all her mind, talent and strength in combatting public opinion, as she is now forced to do. Give to woman equal rights with man; if she is superior, let her stand as such; if inferior, she will find it out, and take her place accordingly.

Thanks for your confidence in asking of me an address. But, unaccustomed to writing or speaking upon this subject, I feel that I am not equal to the task. But most earnestly do I wish you success in your efforts. Let them be guided by wisdom, gentleness, moderation, and the true dignity and purity of Woman; for, whatever position we may be doomed to hold, let us not resign the high elevation we have already attained for morality and humanity.

Yours, truly,

FRANCES D. GAGE.

From Harriet N. Torrey.

PARKMAN, O., April 13th, 1850.

DEAR FRIEND:—Your letter of the 31st ult., containing an invitation for me to attend your "Women's Convention," to be held in Salem on the 19th inst., or, failing to attend, to write an address to be read upon the occasion, was duly received. Most deeply do I regret my inability to comply with your wishes in either respect; but I must write a few lines, or the ghost of a neglected duty will haunt me for a fortnight. Rest assured that I should be right glad to meet with you, and to participate in your consultations; but such a "movement" on my part is not among human possibilities. * * *

Permit me to offer you the right hand of fellowship. My sympathies are with you; and you may rest assured of my cordial cooperation with you, to the extent of my ability in carrying out all measures which are calculated to secure, or to forward the desired object. It has even been a mystery to me how any thing so simple as the theory of Human Rights could become involved in so many contradictions and absurdities; and I really believe that accident has had less to do in bringing about such a state of affairs than design. Now, I am fully persuaded that all *women*, as well as men, are born with certain inalienable rights, among which are, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." But we have never been permitted to enjoy them; and we never shall be until we claim them in such a manner that the "powers that be" will see that we are in right good earnest; and that we are determined to press our claims with unflinching resolution until we obtain full possession of all that rightfully belongs to us. A vitiated public opinion has kept us evolving round in a contracted and subordinate circle, like flies in a spider's web, about long enough. But the fact is, we have ever evinced so much forbearance and magnanimity, that our keepers have had occasion to think that we considered our rights perfectly safe in their keeping, and had no desire to get possession of them ourselves. But when they find out that we know what rights belong to us, and are fully determined to get possession of them, they will probably surrender them back to us with good grace; for they will wish to keep upon good terms with the 'ladies,' of course. Now, it seems to me that the best way by which to get an amicable, as well as equitable arrangement of our affairs, is, in the first place, to ascertain just what our position is; and in the next place, to decide just what it ought to be; then get a fair start, and press onward for

the goal, with an unwavering determination to overcome all intervening obstacles. For no one will help us, if we do not possess energy enough to help ourselves.

But I cannot write a readable letter now, and there is no use in trying. * * * I am not worth much for pulling ahead, but am a first-rate hand for *pushing*. So when you get your measures matured and developed, your forces organized, and the campaign fairly open, if you find the rear guard pressing hard upon the middle and front ranks, you may guess who is there without being at the trouble to look round.

And now, let me exhort you to work with strong hearts, and unyielding wills; for many of you are undoubtedly destined to see the consummation of the present movement, and to enjoy the fruits of victory.—May the time soon come when we shall emerge from our present contracted and uncertain sphere into the enjoyment of Equal Rights, with the privilege of using them according to the dictates of our own consciences, independent of delegates or proxies. Believe me truly and respectfully thine.

HARRIET N. TORREY.

From Lucretia Mott.

To the "Woman's Convention," to be held in Salem, Ohio, on the 19th inst.

The call for this Convention, so numerously signed, is indeed gratifying, and gives hope of a large attendance. The letter of invitation was duly received, and I need scarcely say, how gladly I would be present if in my power. Engagements in another direction, as well as the difficulty of travel, at this season of the year, will prevent my availing myself of so great a privilege.

You will not, however, be at a loss for speakers in your midst; for among the signers of the Call are the names of many whose hearts "believe unto righteousness;" out of their abundance, therefore, the mouth will make "confession unto salvation."

The wrongs of Woman have too long slumbered. They now begin to cry for redress. Let them be clearly pointed out in your Convention; and then, not *ask* as favor, but *demand* as right, that every civil and ecclesiastical obstacle be removed out of the way.

Rights are not dependent upon equality of mind: nor do we admit inferiority; leaving that question to be settled by future developments, when a fair opportunity shall be given, for the equal cultivation of the intellect, and the stronger powers of the mind shall be called into action.

If in accordance with your call, you ascertain "the bearing which the circumscribed sphere of woman has on the great political and social evils that curse and desolate the land," you will not have come together in vain.

May you indeed, "gain strength" by your "contest with difficulty"! May the whole armor of "Right, Truth, and Reason" be yours! Then will the influence of the Convention be felt in the

assembled wisdom of *men*, which is to follow; and the good results, as well as your example, will ultimately rouse other States to action in this most important cause.

I herewith forward to you 'a Discourse on Woman,' which, though brought out by local circumstances, may yet contain principles of universal application.

Wishing you every success in your noble effort, I am yours for woman's redemption and consequent elevation,

LUCRETIA MOTT.

Philadelphia, 4th mo. 13th, '50.

Chapter 6

LUCRETIA MOTT'S "DISCOURSE ON WOMAN"

Delivered at

THE ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS,

December 17, 1849.

and read to Salem Convention, April 19, 1850.

There is nothing of greater importance to the well-being of society at large—of man as well as woman—than the true and proper position of woman. Much has been said, from time to time, upon this subject. It has been a theme for ridicule, for satire and sarcasm. We might look for this from the ignorant and vulgar; but from the intelligent and refined we have a right to expect that such weapons shall not be resorted to,—that gross comparisons and vulgar epithets shall not be applied, so as to place woman, in a point of view, ridiculous to say the least.

This subject has claimed my earnest interest for many years. I have long wished to see woman occupying a more elevated position than that which custom for ages has allotted to her. It was with great regret, therefore, that I listened a few days ago to a lecture upon this subject, which, though replete with intellectual beauty, and containing much that was true and excellent, was yet fraught with sentiments calculated to retard the progress of woman to the high elevation destined by her Creator. I regretted the more that these sentiments should be presented with such intellectual vigor and beauty, because they would be likely to ensnare the young.

The minds of young people generally, are open to the reception of more exalted views upon this subject. The kind of homage that has been paid to woman, the flattering appeals which have too long satisfied her — appeals to her mere fancy and imagination, are giving place to a more extended recognition of her rights, her important duties and responsibilities in life. Woman is claiming for herself stronger and more profitable food. Various are the indications leading to this conclusion. The increasing attention to female education, the improvement in the literature of the age, especially in what is called the "Ladies' Department," in the periodicals of the day, are among the proofs of a higher estimate of woman in society at large. Therefore we may hope that the intellectual and intelligent are being prepared for the discussion

of this question, in a manner which shall tend to ennoble woman and dignify man.

Free discussion upon this, as upon all other subjects, is never to be feared; nor will be, except by such as prefer darkness to light. "Those only who are in the wrong dread discussion. The light alarms those only who feel the need of darkness." It was sound philosophy, uttered by Jesus, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

I have not come here with a view of answering any particular parts of the lecture alluded to, in order to point out the fallacy of its reasoning. The speaker, however, did not profess to offer anything like argument on that occasion, but rather a *sentiment*. I have no prepared address to deliver to you, being unaccustomed to speak in that way; but I felt a wish to offer some views for your consideration, though in a desultory manner, which may lead to such reflection and discussion as will present the subject in a true light.

In the beginning, man and woman were created equal. "Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam." He gave dominion to both over the lower animals, but not to one over the other.

"Man o'er woman
He made not lord, such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free."

The cause of the subjection of woman to man, was early ascribed to disobedience to the command of God. This would seem to show that she was then regarded as not occupying her true and rightful position in society.

The laws given on Mount Sinai for the government of man and woman were equal, the precepts of Jesus make no distinction. Those who read the Scriptures, and judge for themselves, not resting satisfied with the perverted application of the text, do not find the distinction, that theology and ecclesiastical authorities have made, in the condition of the sexes. In the early ages, Miriam and Deborah, conjointly with Aaron and Barak, enlisted themselves on the side which they

regarded the right, unitedly going up to their battles, and singing their songs of victory. We regard these with veneration. Deborah judged Israel many years — she went up with Barak against their enemies, with an army of 10,000, assuring him that the honor of the battle should not be to him, but to a woman. Revolting as were the circumstances of their success, the acts of a semi-barbarous people, yet we read with reverence the song of Deborah: "Blessed above woman shall Jael, the wife of Heeber, the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. * * * She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; she smote Sisera through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down dead." This circumstance, revolting to Christianity, is recognized as an act befitting woman in that day. Deborah, Huldah, and other honorable women, were looked up to and consulted in times of exigency, and their counsel was received. In that eastern country, with all the customs tending to degrade woman, some were called to fill great and important stations in society. There were also false prophetesses as well as true. The denunciations of Ezekiel were upon those women who would "prophesy out of their own heart, and sew pillows to all armholes," &c.

Coming down to later times, we find Anna, a prophetess of four-score years, in the temple day and night, speaking of Christ to all them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Numbers of women were the companions of Jesus,—one going to the men of the city, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Another, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Philip had four daughters who did prophesy. Tryphena and Tryphosa were co-workers with the apostles in their mission, to whom they sent special messages of regard and acknowledgment of their labors in the gospel. A learned Jew, mighty in the Scriptures, was by Priscilla instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly. Phebe is mentioned as a *servant* of Christ, and commended as such to the brethren. It is worthy of note, that the word *servant*, when applied to Tychicus, is rendered *minister*. Women *professing* godliness, should be translated *preaching*.

The first announcement, on the day of Pentecost, was the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, that God's spirit should be poured out upon *daughters* as well as sons, and they should prophesy. It is important that we be familiar with these facts, because woman has been so long circumscribed in her influence by the perverted application of the text, rendering it improper for her to speak in the assemblies of the people, "to edification, to exhortation, and to comfort."

If these scriptures were read intelligently, we should not so learn Christ, as to exclude any from a position, where they might exert an influence for good to their fellow-beings. The epistle to the Corinthian church, where the supposed apostolic prohibition of women's preaching is found, contains express directions how woman shall appear, when she prayeth or prophesyeth. Judge then whether this admonition, relative to *speaking*, and asking question, in the excited state of that church, should be regarded as a standing injunction on woman's *preaching*, when that word was not used by the apostle. Where is the Scripture authority for the advice given to the early church, under peculiar circumstances, being binding on the church of the present day? Ecclesiastical history informs us, that for two or three hundred years, female ministers suffered martyrdom, in company with their brethren.

These things are too much lost sight of. They should be known, in order that we may be prepared to meet the assertion, so often made, that woman is stepping out of her appropriate sphere, when she shall attempt to instruct public assemblies. The present time particularly demands such investigation. It requires also, that "of yourselves ye should judge what is right," that you should know the ground wheron you stand. This age is notable for its works of mercy and benevolence—for the efforts that are made to reform the inebriate and the degraded, to relieve the oppressed and the suffering. Women as well as men are interested in these works of justice and mercy. They are efficient co-workers, their talents are called into profitable exercise, their labors are effective in each department of reform. The blessing to the merciful, to the peacemaker is equal to man and to woman. It is greatly to be deplored, now that she is increasingly qualified for usefulness, that any view should be presented, calculated to retard her labors of love.

Why should not woman seek to be a reformer? If she is to shrink from being such an iconoclast as shall "break the image of man's lower worship," as so long held up to view; if she is to fear to exercise her reason, and her noblest powers, lest she should be thought to "attempt to act the man," and not "acknowledge his supremacy," if she is to be satisfied with the narrow sphere assigned her by man, nor aspire to a higher, lest she should transcend the bounds of female delicacy; truly it is a mournful prospect for woman. We would admit all the difference, that our great and beneficent Creator has made, in the relation of man and woman, nor would we seek to disturb this relation; but we deny that the present position of woman, is her true sphere of usefulness: nor will she attain to this sphere, until the disabilities and disadvantages, religious, civil, and social,

which impede her progress, are removed out of her way. These restrictions have enervated her mind and paralysed her powers. While man assumes, that the present is the original state designed for woman, that the *existing* "differences are not arbitrary nor the result of accident," but grounded in nature; she will not make the necessary effort to obtain her just rights, lest it should subject her to the kind of scorn and contemptuous manner in which she has been spoken of.

So far from her "ambition leading her to attempt to act the man," she needs all the encouragement she can receive, by the removal of obstacles from her path, in order that she may become a "true woman." As it is desirable that man should act a manly and generous part, not "mannish," so let woman be urged to exercise a dignified and womanly bearing, not womanish. Let her cultivate all the graces and proper accomplishments of her sex, but let not these degenerate into a kind of effeminacy, in which she is satisfied to be the mere plaything or toy of society, content with her outward adornings and with the tone of flattery and fulsome adulation too often addressed to her. True, nature has made a difference in her configuration, her physical strength, her voice, &c—and we ask no change, we are satisfied with nature. But how has neglect and mismanagement increased this difference! It is our duty to develop these natural powers by suitable exercise, so that they may be strengthened "by reason of use." In the ruder state of society, woman is made to bear heavy burdens, while her "lord and master" walks idly by her side. In the civilization to which we have attained, if cultivated and refined woman would bring all her powers into use, she might engage in pursuits which she now shrinks from as beneath her proper vocation. The energies of men need not then be wholly devoted to the counting house and common business of life, in order that women in fashionable society, may be supported in their daily promenades and nightly visits to the theatre and ball room.

The appeal of Catharine Beecher to woman some years ago, leading her to aim at higher pursuits, was greatly encouraging. It gave earnest of an improved condition of woman. She says, "The time is coming, when woman will be taught to understand the construction of the human frame, the philosophical results from restricted exercise, unhealthy modes of dress, improper diet, and other causes, which are continually operating to destroy the health and life of the young. * * * Woman has been but little aware of the high incitements which should stimulate to the cultivation of her noblest powers. The world is no longer to be governed by physical force, but by the influence which mind exerts over mind. * * * *"

Woman has never wakened to her highest destinies and holiest hopes. The time is coming when educated females will not be satisfied with the present objects of their low ambition. When a woman now leaves the immediate business of her own education, how often, how generally do we find her, sinking down into almost useless inactivity. To enjoy the social circle, to accomplish a little sewing, a *little* reading, a little domestic duty, to while away her hours in self-indulgence, or to enjoy the pleasures of domestic life,—these are the highest objects at which many a woman of elevated mind, and accomplished education aims. And what does she find of sufficient interest to call forth her cultivated energies, and warm affections? But when the cultivation and development of the immortal mind shall be presented to woman, as her especial and delightful duty, and that too whatever be her relations in life; when by example and experience she shall have learned her power over the intellect and the affections, * * * * then we shall not find woman, returning from the precincts of learning and wisdom, to pass lightly away the bright hours of her maturing youth. We shall not so often see her, seeking the light device to embroider on muslin and lace, (and I would add, the fashionable crochet work of the present day;) "but we shall see her, with the delighted glow of benevolence, seeking for immortal minds, whereon she may fasten durable and holy impressions, that shall never be effaced or wear away."

A new generation of women is now upon the stage, improving the increased opportunities furnished for the acquirement of knowledge. Public education is coming to be regarded the right of the children of a republic. The hill of science is not so difficult of ascent as formerly represented by poets and painters; but by fact and demonstration smoothed down, so as to be accessible to the assumed weak capacity of woman. She is rising in the scale of being through this, as well as other means, and finding heightened pleasure and profit on the right hand and on the left. The study of Physiology, now introduced into our common schools, is engaging her attention, impressing the necessity of the observance of the laws of health. The intellectual Lyceum and instructive lecture room are becoming, to many, more attractive than the theatre and the ball room. The sickly and sentimental novel and pernicious romance are giving place to works, calculated to call forth the benevolent affections and higher nature. It is only by comparison that I would speak commendatory of these works of imagination. The frequent issue of them from the press is to be regretted. Their exciting contents, like stimulating drinks, when long indulged in, enervate the mind, unfitting it for the sober

duties of life.

These duties are not to be limited by man. Nor will woman fulfil less her domestic relations, as the faithful companion of her chosen husband, and the fitting mother of her children, because she has a right estimate of her position and her responsibilities. Her self-respect will be increased; preserving the dignity of her being, she will not suffer herself to be degraded into a mere dependant. Nor will her feminine character be impaired. Instances are not few, of woman throwing off the incumbrances which bind her, and going forth in a manner worthy of herself, her creation, and her dignified calling. Did Elizabeth Fry lose any of her feminine qualities by the public walk into which she was called? Having performed the duties of a mother to a large family, feeling that she owed a labor of love to the poor prisoner, she was empowered by Him who sent her forth, to go to kings and crowned heads of the earth, and ask audience of these; and it was granted her. Did she lose the delicacy of woman by her acts? No. Her retiring modesty was characteristic of her to the latest period of her life. It was my privilege to enjoy her society some years ago, and I found all that belonged to the feminine in woman — to true nobility, in a refined and purified moral nature. Is Dorothea Dix throwing off her womanly nature and appearance in the course she is pursuing? In finding duties abroad, has any "refined man felt that something of beauty has gone forth from her?" To use the contemptuous word applied in the lecture alluded to, is she becoming "*mannish*?" Is she compromising her womanly dignity in going forth to seek to better the condition of the insane and afflicted? Is not a beautiful mind and a retiring modesty still conspicuous in her?

Indeed, I would ask, if this modesty is not attractive also, when manifested in the other sex? It was strikingly marked in Horace Mann when presiding over the late National Educational Convention in this city. The retiring modesty of William Ellery Channing, was beautiful, as well as of many others, who have filled dignified stations in society. These virtues, differing as they may in degree in man and woman, are of the same nature and call forth our admiration wherever manifested.

The noble courage of Grace Darling is justly honored, leading her to present herself on the coast of England, during the raging storm, in order to rescue the poor, suffering, shipwrecked mariner. Woman was not wanting in courage, in the early ages. In war and bloodshed this trait was often displayed. Grecian and Roman history have lauded and honored her in this character. English history records her courageous women

too, for unhappily we have little but the records of war handed down to us. The courage of Joan of Arc was made the subject of a popular lecture not long ago, by one of our intelligent citizens. But more noble, moral daring is marking the female character at the present time, and better worthy of imitation. As these characteristics come to be appreciated in man too, his warlike acts, with all the miseries and horrors of the battleground, will sink into their merited oblivion, or be remembered only to be condemned. The heroism display in the tented field, must yield to the moral and Christian heroism which is shadowed in the signs of our times.

The lecturer regarded the announcement of woman's achievements, and the offering of appropriate praise through the press, as a gross innovation upon the obscurity of female life—he complained that the exhibition of the attainments of girls, in schools' was now equal to that of boys, and the newspapers announce that "Miss Brown received the first prize for English grammar," &c. If he objected to so much excitement of emulation in schools, it would be well; for the most enlightened teachers discountenance these appeals to love of approbation and self-esteem. But, while prizes continue to be awarded, can any good reason be given, why the name of the girl should not be published as well as that of the boy? He spoke with scorn, that "we hear of Mrs. President so and so; and committees and secretaries of the same sex." But if women can conduct their own business, by means of Presidents and Secretaries of their own sex, can he tell us why they should not? They will never make much progress in any moral movement, while they depend upon men to act for them. Do we shrink from reading the announcement that Mrs. Somerville is made an honorary member of a scientific association? That Miss Herschel has made some discoveries, and is prepared to take her equal part in science? Or that Miss Mitchell of Nantucket has lately discovered a planet, long looked for? I cannot conceive why "honor to whom honor is due" should not be rendered to woman as well a man; nor will it necessarily exalt her, or foster feminine pride. This propensity is found alike in male and female, and it should not be ministered to improperly, in either sex.

In treating upon the affections, the lecturer held out the idea, that as manifested in the sexes, they were opposite, if not somewhat antagonistic; and required a union, as in chemistry, to form a perfect whole. The simile appeared to me far from a correct illustration of the true union. Minds that can assimilate, spirits that are congenial, attach themselves to each other. It is the union of similar, not opposite affections, which are necessary for the perfection of the marriage

bond. There seemed a want of proper delicacy in his representing man as being bold in the demonstration of the pure affection of love. In persons of refinement, true love seeks concealment in man, as well as in woman. I will not enlarge upon the subject, although it formed so great a part of his lecture. The contrast drawn seemed a fallacy, as has much, very much that has been presented, in the sickly sentimental strains of the poet, from age to age.

The question is often asked, "What does woman want, more than she enjoys? What is she seeking to obtain? Of what rights is she deprived? What privileges are withheld from her? I answer, she asks nothing as favor, but as right, she wants to be acknowledged a moral, responsible being. She is seeking not to be governed by laws, in the making of which she has no voice. She is deprived of almost every right in civil society, and is a cypher in the nation, except in the right of presenting a petition. In religious society her disabilities, as already pointed out, have greatly retarded her progress. Her exclusion from the pulpit or ministry—her duties marked out for her by her equal brother man, subject to creeds, rules, and disciplines made for her by him—this is unworthy her true dignity. In marriage, there is assumed superiority, on the part of the husband, and admitted inferiority, with a promise of obedience, on the part of the wife. This subject calls loudly for examination, in order that the wrong may be redressed. Customs suited to darker ages in Eastern countries, are not binding upon enlightened society. The solemn covenant of marriage may be entered into without these lordly assumptions, and humiliating concessions and promises.

There are large Christian denominations who do not recognize such degrading relations of husband and wife. They ask no magisterial or ministerial aid to legalize or to sanctify this union. But acknowledging themselves in the presence of the Highest, and invoking his assistance, they come under reciprocal obligations of fidelity and affection, before suitable witnesses. Experience and observations go to prove, that there may be as much harmony, to say the least, in such a union, and as great purity and permanency of affection, as can exist where the more common custom or form is observed. The distinctive relations of husband and wife, of father and mother of a family are sacredly preserved, without the assumption of authority on the one part, or the promise of obedience on the other. There is nothing in such a marriage degrading to woman. She does not compromise her dignity or self-respect; but enters married life upon equal ground, by the side of her husband. By proper education, she understands her duties, physical, intellectual and

moral; and fulfilling these, she is a help meet, in the true sense of the word.

I tread upon delicate ground in alluding to the institutions of religious associations; but the subject is of so much importance, that all which relates to the position of woman, should be examined, apart from the undue veneration which ancient usage receives.

"Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,
Because delivered down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing."

So with woman. She has so long been subject to the disabilities and restrictions, with which her progress has been embarrassed, that she has become enervated, her mind to some extent paralysed; and, like those still more degraded by personal bondage, she hugs her chains. Liberty is often presented in its true light, but it is liberty for man.

"Whose freedom is by suffrance, and at will
Of a superior—he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Exposed to manacles, deserves them well."

I would not, however, go so far, either as regards the abject slave or woman; for in both cases they may be so degraded by the crushing influences around them, that they may not be sensible of the blessing of Freedom. Liberty is not less a blessing, because oppression has so long darkened the mind that it cannot appreciate it. I would therefore urge, that woman be placed in such a situation in society, by the yielding of her rights, and have such opportunities for growth and development, as shall raise her from this low, enervated and paralysed condition, to a full appreciation of the blessing of entire freedom of mind.

It is with reluctance that I make the demand for the political rights of woman, because this claim is so distasteful to the age. Woman shrinks, in the present state of society, from taking any interest in politics. The events of the French Revolution, and the claim for woman's rights are held up to her as a warning. But let us not look at the excesses of women alone, at that period; but remember that the age was marked with extravagances and wickedness in men as well as women. Indeed, political life abounds with these excesses, and with shameful outrage. Who knows, but that if woman acted her part in governmental affairs, there might be an entire change in the turmoil of political life. It becomes man to speak modestly of his ability to act without her. If

woman's judgment were exercised, why might she not aid in making the laws by which she is governed? Lord Brougham remarked that the works of Harriet Martineau upon Political Economy were not excelled by those of any political writer of the present time. The first few chapters of her 'Society in America,' her views of a Republic, and of Government generally, furnished evidence of woman's capacity to embrace subjects of universal interest.



Lucretia Mott

(From an engraving in *The History of Woman Suffrage*)

Far be it from me to encourage woman to vote, or to take an active part in politics, in the present state of our government. Her right to the elective franchise however, is the same, and should be yielded to her, whether she exercise that right or not. Would that man too, would have no participation in a government based upon the life-taking principle—upon retaliation and the sword. It is unworthy a Christian nation. But when, in the diffusion of light and intelligence, a convention shall be called to make regulations for self-government on Christian, non-resistant principles, I can see no good reason, why woman should not participate in such an assemblage, taking part equally with man.

Walker, of Cincinnati, in his Introduction to American Law, says: "With regard to political rights, females form a positive exception to the general doctrine of equality. They have no part

or lot in the formation or administration of government. They cannot vote or hold office. We require them to contribute their share in the way of taxes, to the support of government, but allow them no voice in its direction. We hold them amenable to the laws when made, but allow them no share in making them. This language, applied to males, would be the exact definition of political slavery; applied to females, custom does not teach us so to regard it." Woman, however, is beginning so to regard it.

"The law of husband and wife, as you gather it from the books, is a disgrace to any civilized nation. The theory of the law degrades the wife almost to the level of slaves. When a woman marries, we call her condition *coverture*, and speak of her as a *femme covert*. The old writers call the husband baron, and sometimes, in plain English, lord. * * * The merging of her name in that of her husband is emblematic of the fate of all her legal rights. The torch of Hymen serves but to light the pile, on which these rights are offered up. The legal theory is, that marriage makes the husband and wife one person, and that person is the *husband*. On this subject, reform is loudly called for. There is no foundation in reason or expediency, for the absolute and slavish subjection of the wife to the husband, which forms the foundation of the present legal relations. Were woman, in point of fact, the abject thing which the law, in theory, considers her to be when married, she would not be worthy the companionship of man."

I would ask if such a code of laws does not require change? If such a condition of the wife in society does not claim redress? On no good ground can reform be delayed. Blackstone says, "The very being and legal existence of woman is suspended during marriage, — incorporated or consolidated into that of her husband, under whose protection and cover she performs every thing." Hurlbut, in his *Essays upon Human Rights*, says: "The laws touching the rights of woman are at variance with the laws of the Creator. Rights are human rights, and pertain to human beings, without distinction of sex. Laws should not be made for man or for woman, but for mankind. Man was not born to command, nor woman to obey. * * * The law of France, Spain, and Holland, and one of our own States, Louisiana, recognizes the wife's right to property, more than the common law of England. * * * The laws depriving woman of the right of property is handed down to us from dark and feudal times, and not consistent with the wiser, better, purer spirit of the age. The wife is a mere pensioner on the bounty of her husband. Her lost rights are appropriated to himself. But justice and benevolence are abroad in our land, awakening the spirit of

inquiry and innovation; and the Gothic fabric of the British law will fall before it, save where it is based upon the foundation of truth and justice."

May these statements lead you to reflect upon this subject, that you may know what woman's condition is in society—what her restrictions are, and seek to remove them. In how many cases in our country, the husband and wife begin life together, and by equal industry and united effort accumulate to themselves a comfortable home. In the event of the death of the wife, the household remains undisturbed, his farm or his workshop is not broken up, or in any way molested. But when the husband dies, he either gives his wife a *portion* of their joint accumulation, or the law apportions to her a *share*; the homestead is broken up, and she is dispossessed of that which she earned equally with him; for what she lacked in physical strength, she made up in constancy of labor and toil, day and evening. The sons then coming into possession of the property, as has been the custom until of latter time, speak of having to *keep* their mother, when she in reality is aiding to keep them. Where is the justice of this state of things? The change in the law of this State and of New York, in relation to the property of the wife, go to a limited extent, toward the redress of these wrongs; but they are far more extensive, and involve much more, than I have time this evening to point out.

On no good ground can the legal existence of the wife be suspended during marriage, and her property surrendered to her husband. In the intelligent ranks of society, the wife may not in point of fact, be so degraded as the law would degrade her; because public sentiment is above the law. Still, while the law stands, she is liable to the disabilities which it imposes. Among the ignorant classes of society, woman is made to bear heavy burdens, and is degraded almost to the level of the slave.

There are many instances now in our city, where the wife suffers much from the power of the husband to claim all that she can earn with her own hands. In my intercourse with the poorer class of people, I have known cases of extreme cruelty, from the hard earnings of the wife being thus robbed by the husband, and no redress at law.

An article in one of the daily papers lately, presented the condition of needle women in England. There might be a presentation of this class in our own country, which would make the heart bleed. Public attention should be turned to this subject, in order that avenues of more profitable employment may be opened to women. There are many kinds of business which women, equally with men, may follow with respectability and success. Their

talents and energies should be called forth, and their powers brought into the highest exercise. The efforts of women in France are sometimes pointed to in ridicule and sarcasm, but depend upon it, the opening of profitable employment to women in that country, is doing much for the enfranchisement of the sex. In England also, it is not an uncommon thing for a wife to take up the business of her deceased husband and carry it on with success.

Our respected British Consul stated to me a circumstance which occurred some years ago, of an editor of a political paper having died in England; it was proposed to his wife, an able writer, to take the editorial chair. She accepted. The patronage of the paper was greatly increased, and she a short time since retired from her labors with a handsome fortune. In that country however, the opportunities are by no means general for Woman's elevation.

In visiting the public school in London, a few years since, I noticed that the boys were employed in linear drawing, and instructed upon the black board, in the higher branches of arithmetic and mathematics; while the girls, after a short exercise in the mere elements of arithmetic, were seated, during the bright hours of the morning, *stitching wristbands*. I asked, Why there should be this difference made; why they too should not have the black board? The answer was, that they would not probably fill any station in society requiring such knowledge.

But the demand for a more extended education will not cease, until girls and boys have equal instruction, in all the departments of useful knowledge. We have as yet no high school for girls in this state. The normal school may be a preparation for such an establishment. In the late convention for general education, it was cheering to hear the testimony borne to woman's capabilities for head teachers of the public schools. A resolution there offered for equal salaries to male and female teachers, when equally qualified, as practised in Louisiana, I regret to say was checked in its passage, by Bishop Potter; by him who has done so much for the encouragement of education, and who gave his countenance and influence to that convention. Still the fact of such a resolution being offered, augurs a time coming for woman, which she may well hail. At the last examination of the public schools in this city, one of the alumni delivered an address on Woman, not as is too common, in eulogistic strains, but directing the attention to the injustice done to woman in her position in society, in a variety of ways. The unequal wages she receives for her constant toil, &c., presenting facts calculated to arouse attention to the subject.

Women's property has been taxed, equally with that of men's, to sustain colleges endowed by the states; but they have not been permitted to enter those high seminaries of learning. Within a few years, however, some colleges have been instituted, where young women are admitted, nearly upon equal terms with young men; and numbers are availing themselves of their long denied rights. This is among the signs of the times, indicative of an advance for women. The book of knowledge is not opened to her in vain. Already is she aiming to occupy important posts of honor and profit in our country. We have three female editors in our state—some in other states of the Union. Numbers are entering the medical profession—one received a diploma last year; others are preparing for a like result.

Let woman then go on—not asking as favor, but claiming as right, the removal of all the hindrances to her elevation in the scale of being—let her receive encouragement for the proper cultivation of all her powers, so that she may enter profitably into the active business of life; employing her own hands, in ministering to her necessities, strengthening her physical being by proper exercise, and observance of the laws of health. Let her not be ambitious to display a fair

hand, and to promenade the fashionable streets of our city, but rather, coveting earnestly the best gifts, let her strive to occupy such walks in society, as will befit her true dignity in all the relations of life. No fear that she will then transcend the proper limits of female delicacy. True modesty will be as fully preserved, in acting out those important vocations to which she may be called, as in the nursery or at the fireside, ministering to man's self-indulgence.

Then in the marriage union, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal.

In conclusion, let me say, "Credit not the old fashioned absurdity, that woman's is a secondary lot, ministering to the necessities of her lord and master! It is a higher destiny I would award you. If your immortality is as complete, and your gift of mind as capable as ours, of increase and elevation, I would put no wisdom of mine against God's evident allotment. I would charge you to water the undying bud, and give it healthy culture, and open its beauty to the sun—and then you may hope, that when you life is bound up with another, you will go on equally, and in a fellowship that shall pervade every earthly interest."

Chapter 7

J. ELIZABETH JONES' "THE WRONGS OF WOMAN"

*Delivered before the Ohio Women's Convention,
at Salem, April 19th, 1850.*

There is not, perhaps, in the wide field of reform, any one subject so difficult to discuss as that of Woman's Rights. I use the term "Woman's Rights," because it is a technical phrase. I like not the expression. It is not Woman's *Rights* of which I design to speak, but of Woman's *Wrongs*. I shall claim nothing for ourselves because of our sex—I shall demand the recognition of no rights on the ground of our womanhood. In the contest which is now being waged in behalf of the enslaved colored man in this land, I have yet to hear the first word in favor of his rights as a colored man; the great point which is sought to be established in this, that the colored man is a human being, and as such, entitled to the free exercise of all the rights which belong to humanity. And we should demand *our* recognition as equal members of the human family; as persons to whom pertain all the rights which grow out of our relations to God, and to each other, as human beings; and when this point is once established, the term "Woman's Rights" will become obsolete, for none will entertain the idea that the rights of women differ from the rights of men. It is then *human* rights for which we contend.

But tho' woman has no rights peculiar to her sex—*none* which belong to her because she is a woman; yet she has wrongs, great wrongs, which are peculiar to her—wrongs political, wrongs social, aye, and wrongs religious. It is more difficult, I repeat, to exhibit those wrongs, and to awaken interest on this question, than on almost any other.—When we speak of American Slavery, we exhibit the literal chain that binds the captive, we show the iron collar that has galled his flesh, we bring to view the cutting lash dripping with gore, and with these emblems before us, no one dare deny that oppression exists. We speak of the mother who has been robbed of her little ones, and left in loneliness and desolation of heart; we show how man has been degraded by his brother, how he has been driven from the

abodes of men and forced to take refuge in the dens and the caves of the earth, and we never fail to excite sympathy in their behalf.

So on the subject of War; we speak of strong men laid low on the battle-field, of the wail of the dying, of the piercing shriek of the wounded, of surviving friends searching among the mangled bodies of the slain for a father, a son or brother who has fallen; and all the sympathies of those who listen are awakened in relation to such a fearful sacrifice of human life.

Then again in regard to Temperance; we have but to depict the evils, the brutality, the deep degradation growing out of this vice, and we awaken emotions of lively interest that result in energetic action.

But not so with the political, social and domestic wrongs of woman. She appears not before the world as a sufferer. Her very name is associated with happiness and hope, with freedom and love and beauty. She appears in public assemblies with a proud and lofty bearing, and scarcely any one can be made to believe that she is a victim of oppression. We meet her at her own fireside, and she seems, perchance, as happy, as buoyant and as free as tho' there were no clouds and no chains in existence. We see her in the social gathering, and men reverently bow at her shrine, and do homage to her surpassing loveliness. So invincible is her power, and so irresistible her influence, that she is often deemed the most favored of all the beings God ever created. Such, to a very superficial observer, appears to be the real condition of woman; and it seems perfectly absurd, little less than nonsense, to such observers, to speak of the wrongs that she endures. It would be almost as easy to convince them that the birds of the air are fettered, and completely under the dominion of man. Hence, when we speak of the injustice that is done her, of the disabilities under which she labors, we are met with incredulity, perchance with sneers and sarcasm. And the difficulty of advocating her cause is enhanced by her own protesta-

tions, for she assures us that she has all the rights she desires—she would exercise no more if she had them.

Of all the opponents to the agitation of this question, the most bitter that I have ever seen, have been women who had the appearance of enjoying entire freedom, but whose condition in the family relation was little better than that of slaves. Woman will sometimes submit to any sort of wrong, her spirit will daily wither under the restrictions of her husband, and then she will not only carefully conceal the secrets of her prison-house, but will ridicule the idea of woman's oppression. Do not misunderstand me: I am very far from considering it proper to expose all our domestic matters for the inspection of the curious and the gossiping world; we have a right to conceal all we choose to conceal; but we have *no* right to play the hypocrite and pretend to despise an enterprise whose success we well know would benefit the race. Why, the very fact that all the wealth of the family is in the hands of the husband, makes her a mere dependent — it places her in the most absurd and slavish position. She cannot even replenish her own wardrobe, or that of her children, without asking her husband for the means to do so. Should she desire to feed the hungry or clothe the naked, she must ask her husband for the means to enable her to do it. Should she desire the services of a seamstress or a nurse, she must ask her husband for the means to enable her to employ them. Is the babe of her bosom sick unto death, and she desires to secure the services of a skilful physician, she must ask her husband for the means to enable her to do it. If the cause of peace, temperance, or anti-slavery has her warmest sympathies and earnest prayers, and she desires to give pecuniary aid to these enterprises, she must ask her husband for the means to enable her to do so. Mrs. Kirtland very justly remarks, in relation to this matter:

“The Turk does not lock up his wives with more jealous care than the Christian husband his strong box from her whom he has formally endowed with all his earthly possessions. To this lock there is ever but one key, and that the master carries in his pocket.”

This is no fancy sketch; on the other hand, multitudes could be produced that would tell you this is only a faint shadow of the evil. And yet, woman has all the rights she desires! I have seen so much deception in regard to this matter, that when I hear a woman say that she has all the rights and privileges that she wishes to exercise, I strongly suspect she is living under the rule of a tyrant.

Let me say before I proceed further, that I do not mean to make any invidious comparisons between men and women. When I say that man acts the tyrant, I do not mean to deny that woman in similar circumstances would be as great a tyrant as he. Indeed I have known women who ruled the whole household with a rod of iron, as it were; and cases are not unfrequent in which the *wrongs* of man, rather than the rights of woman, should claim the sympathies of the philanthropist. I am very far from arrogating any degree of perfection for my own sex. Neither do I believe that men are any more to blame for the present degraded condition of woman, than the women are themselves. I cannot tell how it was in the beginning, but at the present time, there is on the part of a majority of women a passive yielding up of all their rights, a desire, I might say, to lose their individuality, and merge their existence into that of their husbands. It is feminine to feel dependent, to need protection; it is poetical to be like the clinging vine, unable to sustain one's self; it is very romantic to be weak and helpless, and have the gallantry and chivalry of man extended to us! We have not acted as though we were rational and accountable beings; we have tried to step aside from the battle-field of life, and rid ourselves of the responsibilities of an individual existence. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that man has taken the power into his own hands; no wonder that he has taken entire possession of the 'strong box'; no wonder that he has blotted the legal existence of the married woman from the statute book. Man is not naturally more of a usurper than woman; but power is corrupting. You know how it was with Nero; his heart was once as timid, and tender, and shrinking as was ever that of woman; but by the corrupting influence of irresponsible power, he at length took pleasure in deluging Rome with human blood!

The present relation between man and woman, so far as rights are concerned, is like that which some slaveholders maintain towards their slaves. I speak of those who have never gone out and reduced the free man to bondage, but who received by inheritance the power over the liberty, life and happiness of certain slaves, which slaves submitted their necks uncomplainingly to the yoke of a new master. But no matter what the circumstances were in respect to the enslavement of any human being, we say to the slaveholder, you have no right to exercise this power—no title-deed to your fellow-man was ever issued from the Court of Heaven! You are a tyrant, for you take away the liberty of your brother! you are a robber, for you deprive him of his property, and of his right to himself! No matter if the work of degradation be so completely that he

desires to be a slave, we still say to the slaveholder, you are verily guilty in the sight of God and man, for maintaining the relation of master. So we say to man, no matter if certain of our sex *are* satisfied with their chains, you are none the less guilty for having forged them. The very fact that woman does not rebel, that she does not rise and demand her rights, is the strongest argument that can be adduced in favor the agitation of this subject. What of all the aspects of Southern slavery gives you the deepest abhorrence of that institution? Who of all its victims gives you an idea of the deepest injury? Is it he who rises in the strength of his manhood, casts aside his fetters, and struggles for his liberty? Is it he in whose bosom the fires of liberty burn brightly, who is ever longing and ever wishing to regain his lost manhood? No! no! It is that man whose upward aspirations have all been crushed—that one in whose bosom there is no love of liberty, no hatred of slavery. I believe there are such. There are those who heed not the bolts and the bars that confine them; there are those who submit to the rule of others without even a thought of their own rights. These are the victims upon whom slavery has done its perfect work, and when the abolitionist beholds them, he ever renews his vows at the altar of liberty—he resolves never to leave the warfare till slavery shall cease to be.

I say the fact that woman does not know that she is robbed of her rights, shows the extent of her enslavement; it shows that a long train of abuses and usurpations has completed the work of degradation—has blinded her to a sense of justice and of equal rights. The opinions and feelings that prevail among women in regard to this subject are, of course, very various. There are those weak and dependent souls, of whom I was speaking, who have such a passion for gallantry that they would not think of taking their rights if offered them. Then there are those to whom I have referred, whose spirits are daily crucified by the rule and dominion of man; yet fearing to expose their own situation, vigorously oppose all efforts to destroy the rule and dominion. There is another class who feel, and feel very deeply, the wrongs of woman, but the fear of appearing masculine, the great dread of seeming to be out of their sphere, the unpleasant remarks, perchance the ridicule and sarcasm, which they expect to meet, prevent them from giving utterance to their real sentiments. Then again there are those who have no sense of injury, because they have never felt it in their own persons. All their wants have been duly supplied; fathers, brothers, husbands, perchance, have done all that could be done to render them happy; for there are husbands, not a few, who acknowledge the equal right of the wife in all domestic relations; consequently the attention of this class of women has not been called to this

subject, and we do not have their aid and their influence. There is yet another class—those who labor for a mere pittance because they are women; they suffer oppression little less than absolute slavery, and they feel it too; their prayers and their voice we shall ever have in favor of our enterprise.

Now with all this diversity of opinion and feeling on the part of women themselves, and being in this limited sphere which we have chosen, and which man now says we must not leave, it is very difficult to prosecute this reform. But without going into the whole question of woman's responsibilities and accountabilities, and disabilities, we will consider the question which this Convention was called together to discuss; *viz*, the political and legal condition of woman.

If we turn to the history of this nation, to the commencement of the contest between this and the mother country, we shall find standing prominent among the grievances of which the former complained, the wrongfulness of taxation without representation and from that day to the present time, taxation without representation has been theoretically abhorrent to every American Statesman. And we find also in the "political bible" of this people, the declaration that "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." But what, I ask, is the political condition of every woman in the land today? She is taxed without representation; and the government to which she is compelled to submit under penalty of death, hesitates not to exercise powers to which she, as one of the governed, never consented. It is true, the official tax-gatherer does not come and demand a percentage of that which a father or a husband had doled out to her—for the revenue of the general government, at least, is raised by duties on imports—but when she expends that money, she pays a tax upon every pound of tea, or yard of imported cloth, which she buys: and yet she has no voice in the regulation of the tariff by which that tax is imposed. Women, even those who are most interested in the success of this enterprise, are constantly asserting that they want nothing to do with the government, and perhaps it is very unfeminine for any one to demand the right to assist in imposing the tax which she has to pay. But I must say that when women better understand the equality of the sexes, and the interests of the body politic, they will learn and feel that the regulation of a tariff even is a matter that concerns them as much as it does their fathers and husbands. Does any one say this tax is so small, and affects us so little, that we will not contend against it? If so you are unworthy descendants of the fathers and mothers of '76. Three pence on a pound of tea was not much for them to pay, but there

was a principle involved in the taxation, and therefore they fought against it.—But besides this, there is the unmarried woman who has property, that is taxed directly and the married woman too, who in certain cases and by a certain statute of Ohio holds real estate; but unlike man, they are not allowed to choose a representative to attend to their interests. Does any one fail to see the injustice of this course?

The very first act of this nation was to deprive a majority of those whom it claimed the right to govern, of any lot or part in the government—its very birth-cry was a denial of woman's equality, and out of this denial—originated by other governments and perpetuated by our own—has proceeded all the political wrongs which woman is compelled to endure, and which are alike disgraceful to the statute-book upon which they are recorded and the community by which they are sanctioned. Let us consider for a few moments the common law concerning the relation of husband and wife. The law, according to Blackstone, declares,

“the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose *wing*, protection and care she performs every thing.”

When I brought up the condition of the slave to illustrate the condition of woman, I dare say some of you thought it was very absurd, and I do not wish now to be understood to say that she is, by any means, so deeply degraded and injured as is the slave; but so far as political rights are concerned, there is a very close analogy. In the law I have just quoted, the wife is completely absorbed in the husband, just as the slave is absorbed in her master.

“All contracts made with her, like those made with the slave by her owner, are a mere nullity”, except the contract be for the bare necessities of life suited to her condition.

Again, “If the wife be injured in her person or property, she can bring no action for redress without the husband's concurrence, and in his name as well as her own; neither can she be sued without making her husband a defendant. * * * In criminal prosecutions, the wife may be indicted and punished separately, unless there be evidence of coercion from the fact that the offence was committed in the presence, and by the command of her husband. A wife is excused from punishment for theft committed in the presence and by the command of her husband. * * * A woman's *personal* property, by marriage becomes absolutely her husband's, which at his death, he may leave entirely away from her.”—

Here are four points laid down by Blackstone as law,—and I might quote many more of a similar character—and which are sanctioned as such by the community in which we live. I will briefly recapitulate. 1st, Woman, by marriage *entirely* loses her legal existence. 2d, She cannot bring an action at law against the robber of her property, the defamer of her character, or the assaulter of her person; and yet, in the 3d place, she may be punished separately for her own wrong doings, unless the husband assumes the control of her moral responsibility, as he has of her person and property, 4th, the husband may will away the property he received by his wife, and leave her and her children to beggary. The convict who is immured in the Penitentiary, loses to a certain extent the rights of citizenship, when the prison doors close upon him, but not more wholly than does woman lose her legal existence when she enters the married state. Her name, her person, her property are no longer hers; the law gives them to another, and like the slave of the South “she can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire anything but what belongs to her master.”—The institution of marriage I regard as in harmony with the perfect law of our being, as calculated to promote the highest interests and happiness of our race; but human enactments strive to degrade every woman who marries, and a corrupt public opinion attaches odium to the name of every woman that does not marry. Is not the married woman degraded when her legal existence is stricken out—when the law ceases to regard her as an independent being? And is it not the inevitable tendency of such a course to destroy the self-respect of the victim? You heard of the drunkard as he was staggering home from his midnight revels:—“Now,” said he, “if my wife has gone to bed, I'll whip her for it; for what business has she to go to bed before I get home?—I want a comfortable fire and a warm supper.” After musing awhile he broke out again, “Now if my wife is up I'll surely chastise her, for what business has she to sit up till this time of night? She ought to go to bed and not meddle with my affairs.” So the woman was to be beaten in either case; and this is a good illustration of the condition of the sex. If we suffer ourselves to be absorbed by marriage, to have our individuality destroyed, we are of course, debased; and if we choose to maintain a separate existence, why, then we are accursed, at least by public opinion.

If the slave of Carolina is robbed by another than his master, of any property he may hold by sufferance, he has no redress at law for he has no legal existence; but his *owner* may enter suit and have the robber punished; and it is so with the married woman of Ohio, for the law says it is in her husband only she lives, and moves

and has her being. If foul-mouthed calumny assail her reputation, if the brightness of that which should be dearer to her than life becomes dimmed by the slanderer's breath, she may not demand an investigation of the charges before the legal tribunals of her country, for they recognize not her existence. If she approaches the courts and demands redress, she must do so, not as a wife, having equal rights, with her husband, not as a woman, not as an independent being; but as one whose being is absorbed by another in whose name, by whose permission, and through whose authority she can alone there speak. She can demand redress for no outrage whatever, unless the husband shall first grant her permission to appeal for justice to the courts, and consent that his name shall be used in the prosecution.

This is *law*; the law of a nation which professes to stand higher than all others in the scale of morality and republicanism; law in a so-called free and Christian country, and when the noon of the nineteenth century is shedding its meridian light; but is it *equity*? is it a recognition of the great doctrine of human equality upon which is founded every true system of religion, every sound theory of government? We must not forget the exception — the one instance in which the existence of the married woman is recognised; for though she may not herself sue at law, yet in all criminal prosecutions, she may be separately indicted, tried, convicted and punished—it is only in the infliction of suffering that the law recognises her existence as separate from that of her husband. In the meting out of penalties, it is true, it takes into consideration the question whether certain crimes—theft, for instance or murder,—were committed in the presence, and by the command of the husband, and if such was the case, the woman is held guiltless; her accountability as a moral being, in the eye of the law, ascending not to God her Creator, but to her husband—her lord and master in a legal point of view. To thus divest woman of a portion of her moral accountability, necessarily degrades her in public estimation, obliterates the stamp of equality from her brow, and marks her as an inferior.

The American people are said above all others to love money. Having no hereditary nobility in the land, no peers of the realm, they have sought to build up an aristocracy of wealth, a democratic nobility, whose power of gold shall compensate for titles and coronets. It would be too barefaced a robbery to take from the unmarried woman her property, so man waits until her legal existence is absorbed in that of a husband, and then, in the name of affection, shamefully filches that to which he has no moral right. If a woman who is about to marry contemplates securing for

her own use, while the law permits it, the means at her disposal, the world frowns upon her—she is told that her course evinces distrust, that she is practically impeaching the honor and the integrity of him who is about to become her husband. And thus is she duped by public opinion and debased by law. She is ashamed to maintain her rights before marriage, and she cannot maintain them afterward. Legislation has aimed to place the wealth of the nation in the hands of man; and in the right to hold property, as in many other things, to make the woman a mere cypher.

And not only does the law permit man to entirely control his wife's personal property and her daily earnings, but it declares, that to a great extent, the will of the dead husband is more to be regarded than the necessities of the surviving wife. By a stroke of the pen, he can reduce his wife from the opulence she enjoyed as his companion, to comparative poverty. And although the statute law of Ohio secures to her, at his death, a life-interest in one third of his real estate—and mark it, a life-interest only, no actual, bona fide right of property, the right to sell, to will away, or otherwise dispose of, even though it came through her hand—although, I say, it secures her this, he may by will dispose of the two thirds, even though it be upon the wanton, who, perchance, robbed her of a husband's love, and make provision for the final disposal of the other third after her life interest in it ceases. And the wife dies with the bitter consciousness pressing heavily upon her, that of all the property which was the gift of a father's love, there is none she can leave her children to save them from destitution.

But I will not dwell longer upon the points enumerated. Such is man's law—such are some of the evidences of his reverence for woman—such the spirit of chivalry upon which he prides himself! The fact that some men are better than their laws, that there are those who repudiate all legal rights not based on exact justice, who treat their wives as equals, as rational beings, does not lessen the injustice of the laws, or my abhorrence of the spirit that prompted them.

The entire course of man's legislation, not only in this country but in others, betokens an almost entire forgetfulness of the fact that woman has rights that should be respected, rights that belong to her by virtue of her humanity.

The common law, of which I have been speaking is in force every where, as I understand it except where there is a statute law, a special provision for the benefit of the wife. Such provision exists in Ohio. I have already intimated that preliminary arrangements may be made to obviate

the helpless and dependent condition in which a woman is placed as soon as she is married.

“Jointures and settlements may be made for the benefit of the wife. A jointure is a separate provision made by the husband for the wife’s support. A settlement is the separate provision made by the parents of the wife for her support. These may be made after marriage, but they are usually made before. The method is to place the portion set apart for the wife, under the control of trustees, who manage it independently of the husband for the benefit of the wife.”

Under the control of trustees, mark you! another assumption of incapacity on the part of woman to manage her own property.

“But if this precaution for her own benefit be not taken, then by marriage all the wife’s personal property becomes his absolutely. If not in possession, he may take measures to reduce it to possession. He can thus dispose of it in spite of her. If debts were due to her, he may collect them. If he was himself the debtor, the marriage cancels the debt. If she has earned money by her own labor, during the marriage, he may collect it. Thus her personal property is entirely at his control. In respect to real estate, he may not encumber or dispose of it without her consent, but he has control of the *income*.”

“On the other hand, the only claim the wife has upon her husband’s property, is for a bare support”—just the *necessaries* suited to her condition. If she has brought him uncounted heaps of gold, she has a legal right only to enough for a bare subsistence.

I have taken the above facts from Walker’s ‘Introduction to American Law.’

Then again, the same author says:

‘If the wife manifests a disposition to squander or destroy property, he may use the means necessary to prevent her.’

But how is it on the other hand? *He* may squander to any extent he sees fit, he may take bread from his children and sell it for rum, and she cannot restrain him. And again, the law gives him a right to her person; if she thinks he is too gross, and rude, and austere, and brutish to live with, and consequently leaves him, he can seize her and bring her back and compel her to stay with him. Such law needs no comment; it is a disgrace to any civilized people.

Let us fix the following points indelibly in our minds. Woman, married, or single, has no political rights whatsoever. While single her legal rights are the same as those of man. When married, her legal rights are chiefly suspended. When she becomes a widow, those rights revive, and

some provision is made for her support. She has a life interest in one third part of the real estate, owned by her husband. If there be only personal property, she has a certain share after creditors are satisfied, in case he has not willed it away from her.*

I have said that the first act of those who formed this government was, to deny to woman the right of the elective franchise. All lot or part she has in the government is, to be counted in the Congressional representation; an honor for which we—the free women—ought to be very grateful, seeing that each of us is counted as one, while the slave is counted as only three-fifths of a being.—No governmental offices of honor, trust or profit are accessible to us. The Executive chair, Legislative hall, and Judicial bench are not for woman. The duties and the salaries pertaining thereto belong exclusively to men. All the official honors that woman can hope to enjoy must come through her husband; his light alone must be like the self-created brightness of the sun.

So far from having access to the Judicial bench, she cannot hope to enter the jury-box; and there is not a woman in the land, who was ever brought before a court for trial, whether she was guilty or not guilty of the charges alleged against her, that has ever had such a trial as she had a right to claim.—First, a body of men prefer a charge against her; then another body of men are sworn to try her. All the officers of the court, from the tipstaff with his stave to the Judge upon the bench, are men. Her prosecutor is a man, and the lawyer who defends her case is a man. Now all this is wrong. Where a man is to be indicted, tried and sentenced, if he prefers it, let it be done by men; but when a woman has violated the law, I claim that she has a right, if she so chooses, to be indicted—if indicted at all—by women, and also to be tried by a jury of women. Who, I ask, gave man the exclusive right to sit in judgment upon us? Who gave him the exclusive authority to condemn and punish woman?

*The legislature of Ohio passed a law in 1846, securing to the married woman all the real estate she possessed at the time of marriage, or which may become hers by devise, or which she may purchase with her sole and separate money, against any incumbrance or sale without her consent, during her life or the lives of the heirs of her body; and that any furniture or household goods which she may become possessed of in like manner, shall be likewise secured, “unless the husband shall have reduced the same to possession, so as, by the rules of law, to have become the owner thereof in his marital rights.”

In very many trials, where women are arraigned as criminals, it is manifestly more in accordance with what the world calls propriety, and would better answer the ends of justice, if none but women were officially connected with them. But we must not hope for such a state of things, or for any material improvement in our condition, either legal, social or religious, while woman is content to be the mere plaything and toy of man, receiving from him fair speeches and prettily turned compliments in lieu of the acknowledgment of her God-given equality. Never did an Esau exchange his birthright for a poorer mess of pottage.

The occasion that has brought us together at this time is of no mean importance. The organic law of the State—the Constitution of Ohio, which imposes upon those of us who have property, in our own right, taxation without representation, which establishes laws for our government without our consent, either express or implied and threatens us with death if we resist them—this organic law is about to be revised, and it is hoped, corrected and improved. The Convention, to whose members this labor has been entrusted, will assemble on the 6th of May, and tho' the time for action on our part is short, it is long enough for us to express our opinions in regard to our own wrongs, and to exercise one of our few remaining rights, by petitioning for a redress of grievances. The very manner in which that Convention is to be constituted is a sufficient commentary upon the inferior position of woman. When a new form of government is to be framed, when the question is to be discussed and settled as to who are to comprise the government, who shall be admitted to the elective franchise, and who denied, why should it be left only to the voters under the present Constitution to decide who shall be the delegate to that Convention? This is a subject that deeply interests every inhabitant of the territory over which the new Constitution is to be established. For those who constitute the government to decide that they and they alone shall be represented in that Convention, is simply tyranny, and manifests a strong desire to retain in their own hands the power they have grasped.

But whatever may be the character of that Convention, whatever may be its decision upon those questions involving the rights of humanity, we know that the opinion and the action of those I am now addressing will, if conceived in a liberal spirit, enunciated with firmness, and unshrinkingly maintained, produce an effect upon the hearts of the people, and lead them to see, in a higher and truer light, the rights and the responsibilities that belong to us.

What then do we ask at the hands of the State Convention? Simply a recognition of our equal-

ity, a practical adoption of the doctrine, that as in Christianity, so in true Democracy, there is neither male nor female. *If* governments are necessary for the protection of mankind, *if* laws are essential to the well-being of society, we ask that our right to share in the formation and administration of governments be acknowledged; and that the laws to which we are compelled to submit shall emanate not from a favored class, but from the whole people. *If* universal suffrage be the safeguard to liberty—and we are assured it is—we ask that it be in truth universal, open alike to woman as to man. And should the Convention see fit to refuse compliance with our requests, we should demand of its members a sight of the charter, which gives man the exclusive right to rule. Let them meet the question fairly; let them tell if they can, what better right men have to establish a government, and deny women the right to participate in it, than women have to establish a government and deny men the right to participate in it. I desire that the question be settled by argument; and until it is thus settled, I, for one, shall not cease to aid in its agitation. Let us not be like children that can be pacified with toys, or like silly girls whose heads can be turned by a compliment; but let us act like women, rational reflecting women, who know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain them.

The divine right of kings to rule over their subjects, though now measurably exploded, was once universally believed; and so when the now received doctrine of the divine right of man to rule over woman, is examined and tested by the touch-stone of truth, the latter will be found to be as absurd, as baseless and as tyrannical as the former.

I am aware that many objections are urged against the propriety and expediency of woman participating in the affairs of government. I may not exercise my right so to do, after it is accorded me; indeed all who know my sentiments in relation to Constitutions and governments, know full well that I would not participate in a government, and you, Madam President, may not, and all whom I address may not; but that is no reason why others should judge for us, of the propriety and expediency of our so doing; *that* is a right I insist upon exercising for myself, and these 'Daniels' who have 'come to judgment,' have methinks, assumed an air of wisdom, as foreign to their own characters as it is derogatory to us.

If woman has a certain sphere, if there *are* certain bounds beyond which she may not pass, but which man may overstep with impunity, it is not unwise to conclude, that her Creator has given her sufficient intellect to enable her to keep within her proper orbit; or has else endowed her

with the same instinct he has bestowed upon beast and bird, and which keeps each in its appropriate sphere? So in case either conclusion is correct, it is a work of supererogation for man to define how far she may go, and where she shall stay. Man has become so accustomed to rule and control woman, telling her what she may do, and what she must leave undone, that he speaks about her appropriate sphere with the utmost *nonchalance*, and its boundaries appear to be as well defined in his mind, as are the great divisions of the globe in the mind of the young student.

As there has been so much talk about *woman's* appropriate sphere, it would seem that we ought to hear something about *man's* appropriate sphere; but this is a forbidden subject to woman — it would be like a heathen entering the holy of holies. Should we intimate to them that the burning of women for witchcraft; that the hanging of women for Quakerism; that the flogging of women at the cart's-tail for faithfulness to their convictions of religious duty; that the banishment of women for their belief in the Baptist creed, all of which were perpetrated in former days by the men of New England; or come down to a more recent time that the murdering of women for no other reason than because they were Mexicans; that the seducing and betraying of women who were before spotless and pure; that the buying and selling of women from an auction block, compelling them to endure the vilest insults and the grossest outrage — driving them along the highway like beasts to slaughter,—forcing them to unrequited toil under a burning sun and a cutting lash—robbing them of the children of their love, and crushing out their very heart's blood under the iron heel of slavery — I say, should we intimate that this is not precisely man's appropriate sphere, we should doubtless be told we were meddling with matters we could not comprehend. Oh, the wrongs of woman are piled heaven high. No wonder that Mrs. Hemans exclaimed,

"Her lot is on you, woman's tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear thro' suffering's hour,
And sunless treasures from affection's deep,
To pour on broken reeds a wasted shower;
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship, therefore, pray!"

It is painful to know how very much many women are influenced by the dread of doing something that man will pronounce unfeminine—a departure from her appropriate sphere. Every woman ought to know and feel, as strongly as she feels the movings of the soul within her, that *God* defined her appropriate sphere when he spoke her into being—that it is limited only by her accountability to her Creator—that it is

as extensive as the bounds of moral responsibility. And whenever any man or body of men, political, social, or religious, attempt to circumscribe its limits, she ought to feel that the authority thus assumed, is

"Authority usurped from God, not given,
He gave man only over beast, fish, fowl
Dominion absolute; that right he holds
By God's donation; but man o'er woman
He made not Lord, such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free."

Although the condition that woman occupies the world over, in nations that are savage as well as those which are civilized, is one of inferiority, there has been some improvement within a few centuries; the relative position of the sexes, however, has not been very much changed, but the advance of the age has changed her condition somewhat, and should encourage us to labor in faith for a still greater change. I know of no better way to effect this, than to continually claim our rights—assert our equality, and let our lives give evidence that we are not *naturally* inferior beings. And let us remember that to do this is no child's play.—It is a stern duty—a duty which we owe our sex, whose character we should vindicate, a duty which we owe our God, whose impartiality we should make manifest. Those of us upon whom the burden of female oppression sits least heavily, are not to be excused from this duty. If within our home reigns the equality that should every where prevail, if we feel that our condition is preferable to the mass of legal non-existents, then are the demands upon us for the proper employment of our one, or our ten talents, even more imperative. O that those who have talents and influence, would but vindicate the character of their sex, repelling the charge of *natural* inferiority, which has been so falsely made—a charge which has been converted into a means of oppression, robbery and degradation—a charge which is so universally adopted by those who have the wealth and power, that every woman in the land, who is obliged to earn her own living, feels that her energies are blighted by it and her wages lessened sometimes to one half.

What is the reason that female schoolteachers, who perform the same amount of labor as males, and do it as well, if not better, receive a far less compensation? Because woman is regarded as an inferior.—What is the reason, that at some, and perhaps all of the manual labor schools, the labor of the girls is valued at only one half of that of the boys? Because woman is inferior. What is the reason that in factories, in printing offices, in book-binding establishments, and in other places where the labor of females is sometimes employed, that they are expected to work for less than a

man would receive for the same amount of toil? Because woman is inferior. What is the reason that that large class of women in our cities who "work, work, work, stitch, stitch, stitch," from early dawn till the midnight hour, should be of all others the poorest paid? Because they are women, and woman is inferior. In view of their misery and degradation, no wonder they exclaim, in the language of the inimitable Hood:

"Oh, men with sisters dear,
Oh, men with mothers and wives,
It is not linen you are wearing out,
But human creatures lives,

Its O, to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work."

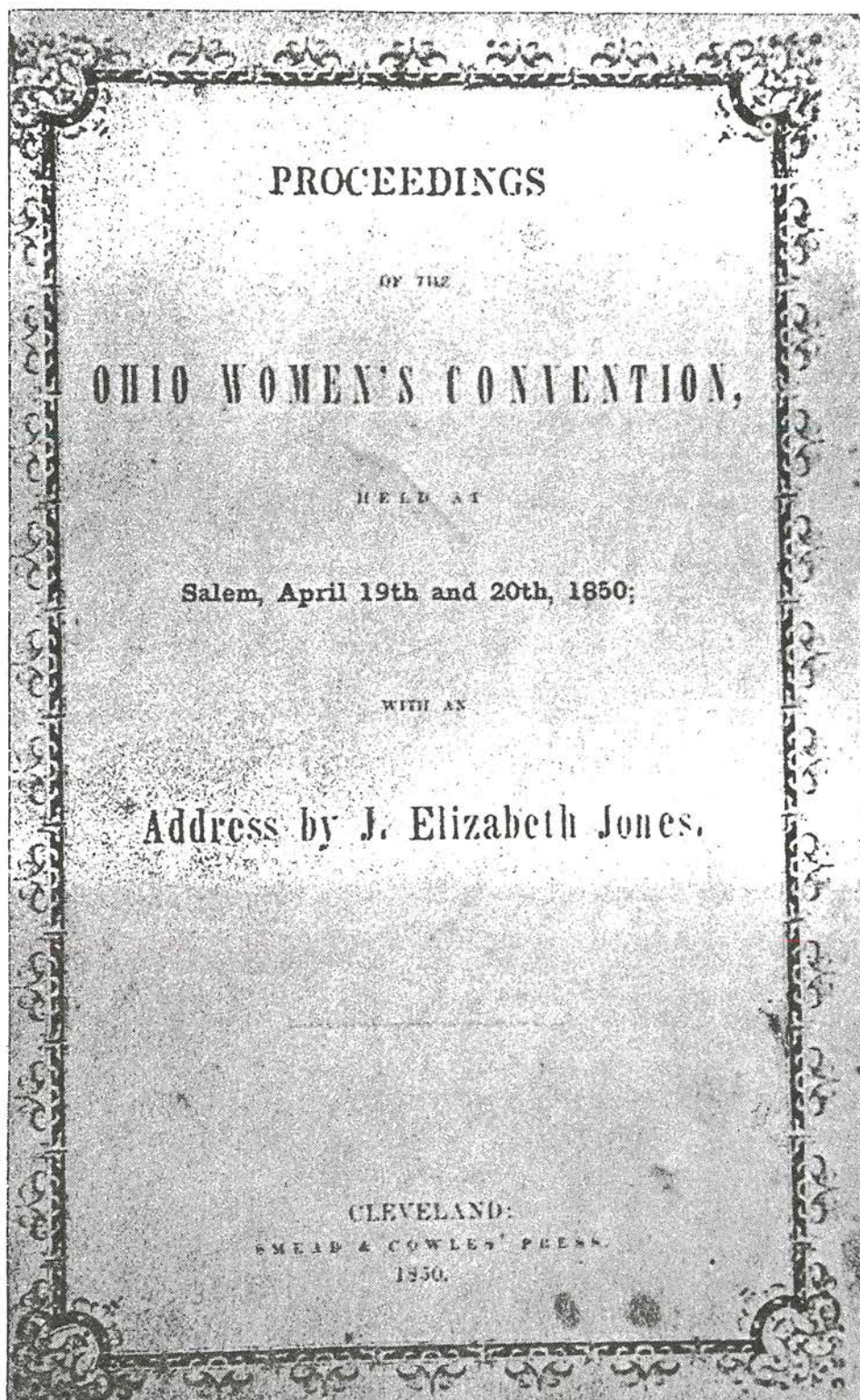
The pittance gained by these women is often insufficient to keep starvation from the door; so they must die of hunger in this Christian land, or else adopt the last resort for such as they—a life of infamy.

Whence, but from the idea of inferiority, arises the difference in the education of boys and girls? The boy must receive a far more finished and comprehensive education than the girl, because it is assumed that he is superior, and his appropriate sphere is limited only by the boundaries of his own will. He must be classically educated, must be made acquainted with many sciences which the girl must hardly know by name. And for this purpose colleges are built, professorships are endowed by private wealth or public bounty, and almost every facility offered that gold can purchase or intellect command.

When the girl's education is completed, if she wishes to earn her livelihood, she must choose among the few less profitable kinds of business in which it is considered proper for her to engage. She may be folder to a book-binder, a seamstress, a washer-woman, a factory operative, hired help in a family, or in some places a clerk in a store; but to these occupations, or such as these, must her ambition be confined, unless she is willing to risk the odium of wandering from her appropriate sphere, with the faint hope of so far overcoming the prejudices of society, which likes to see every one in her proper place, as to secure a reasonable share of public patronage. Not so with the man. Does he wish to become a physician, a lawyer, a minister, a mechanic, a sculptor or a painter? he has but to choose, and books of medicine, law or divinity are placed in his hands, and competent preceptors stand ready to give him instruction; the shop of the artisan unfolds its doors for his admission; the studios of the artists are opened to him; his eye is pleased and his taste

matured by living amid the productions of the old masters, or becoming familiar with the matchless statuary of other times. Does he incline to statesmanship? the course is open before him, and it is no departure from his appropriate sphere to pass through all its gradations, from that of the bar-room politician to President of the United States. Does the pursuit of literature most please him? he has but to stretch forth his hand and grasp its rewards. And the history of man's connection with every calling in which wealth may be realized, or fame or honor won—from the peaceful one of commerce to the bloody one of war—is the same; he has monopolized the lion's share and woman must be content with the jack-all's portion.

I do not wish to be understood to say that woman has not, in a few rare instances, been bold enough to overstep the bounds of what the world calls female propriety, and claim the laurels which man regards as his exclusive property. But these instances are the exceptions, and prove the rule. We now and then hear of a Douglass, a Bibb or a Brown, who has been reared under the crushing influence of Southern slavery, rising superior to his condition, and astonishing the world with the manifestations of his intellect and his genius. Such instances are but a foreshadowing of what the colored man might become if allowed an equal opportunity with his white oppressor. And so of woman.—There have been female artists, the productions of whose pencil have compelled universal admiration. There have been female astronomers, whose fame shines as brightly as the orbs they studied. There have been female rulers, who, history tells us, ruled wisely and well. The name of a HEMANS, a LANDON, a SIGOURNEY and a HOWITT are not unknown to the lovers of poetry. A MARTINEAU has taught the people political economy. A SEDGWICK and a CHILD have done much to refine and exalt the literature of our land, and render it subservient to noble ends. A FREDERIKA BREMER, by her simple yet graphic descriptions of life in Sweden, has become, as it were, a guest in every household; and a FANNY KEMBLE has, by the power of her magical genius, called back the spirit of Shakespeare, and without the aid of scenic decorations or stage effect, presented the thoughts and depicted the passions of his characters, as though they were themselves present, and thus thought, and spoke and felt. Nor is the pulpit eloquence of females an unheard of thing. Those who have listened to the calm, mild tones of LUCRETIA MOTT, pleading in gentleness and love, and enforcing by her speech, as in her life, the beauty and simplicity of practical righteousness, must have felt that they had rarely listened to one so gifted in intellect and in spiritual good. Then



Pamphlet of Convention Proceedings, Front Wrapper
(From the Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, American History Research Center,
Kent State University)

again, who has made the fires of freedom to burn more brightly in our land, and created a deeper hatred of slavery and all its baneful results, than MARIA CHAPMAN and ABBY FOSTER, by their fervent appeals and faithful denunciations? What Magazine is more worthily popular than that of which MRS. KIRKLAND is one of the editors? What newspaper is more eagerly sought than that of MRS. SWISSHELM? What young physician is better read, more thoroughly versed in the healing art, and more truly worthy of success in his profession than ELIZABETH BLACKWELL? Many others might be mentioned, who have distinguished themselves even when public opinion has been opposed to their winning and wearing honors. But these, after all, are the few exceptions to the universal law of woman's inferiority. And it is against this position of inferiority that every woman, who has a proper respect for herself, is bound emphatically to protest.

Though the politician may sneer at us, because we wish to have our rights acknowledged—our right to share in the government to as full an extent as he does—because we object longer to endure taxation without representation, because we desire to have a form of government instituted which shall derive its powers from the consent of the governed; let us not be moved from our position. And though in the social circle the finger of scorn may be pointed at us because we aspire to a wider field of action, to live a higher and a larger life—because we wish to show that a woman may not only give ample attention to the wants of her family, but also cultivate her mind even as man cultivates his; let us not be moved from our position. And tho' we may be laughed at because we insist that our business relations with the world should be different—that woman should be left as free as man to choose an occupation for herself, and that when she performs her labor that she should be paid for it, without any reduction in price because of her

sex; let us not be moved from our position. And tho' the church—while professing to believe that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but that all are one—declares that it suffers not a woman to teach in public, assigns her an inferior place in its membership and in its councils, and thus in the name of religion sanctions the legal disabilities and the social wrongs which now oppress her; let us not be moved from our position.

We but ask that our equality in point of rights be acknowledged; we ask that none shall strive to obliterate or deface the image and superscription our Creator stamped upon our souls. I am aware that the great mass of women in this country have no sympathy with the views I have expressed. I wish it were otherwise. I wish they could be led to see their true position, and be made to understand that the gallantry and devotion of man is offered them in lieu of a recognition of their rights, and that it is only in a few rare cases he approaches and converses with them as equals, as being as fully rational, intelligent and morally accountable as himself, endowed with the same rights and clothed with the same duties.

But I will not further extend my remarks. I have already said enough to secure the disapprobation which is always bestowed upon a woman who thinks and speaks for herself. I have said *more* than enough for those women who are contented with their rose-covered chains and gilded prison-bars; and I could hope that I have said something to encourage to earnest action those of my sex who feel that no length of legislation can sanction and sanctify the wrongs that have been inflicted upon them; that no social usages, however time-honored, can justify the oppressions they have been compelled to endure; that no religious creed, however sanctimonious its supporters, can find the least excuse for the inequality in the church.

Part II

AFTER

Chapter 8

EQUALITY OF WOMAN—A VOICE FROM MEN

Immediately after the adjournment of the Ohio Woman's Convention, at Salem, April 20th, the men who had attended as spectators organized a meeting by appointing WILLIAM STEADMAN of Randolph, Chairman, and LEWIS T. PARK, of Salem, Secretary.

The following resolutions were offered by OLIVER JOHNSON, and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the Convention of the Women of Ohio, whose sessions have now been brought to a close, by its exalted aims, its brave enunciation of long suppressed truths, its noble devotion to Duty, and by the talent, courtesy and dignity of its debates, and the practical wisdom of its measures has, awakened in our minds, as MEN, emotions of profound satisfaction and joy, and kindled new hopes of the speedy political enfranchisement and moral and intellectual elevation of the Human Race.

Resolved, That we hereby record over solemn conviction, that Women are entitled by the laws of Nature and of God to the same rights, civil, social, political and religious, which belong to men; and that as husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, we rejoice at the cheering evidence af-

forded by the Convention just closed, that they are at length awaking to a sense of their dignity as immortal and responsible beings, and manifesting a calm determination to throw off the trammels of a false education and assume the high position for which they were created.

Resolved, That we hereby avow the firm and unalterable purpose to co-operate with Women in attaining an acknowledgment of their rights in Church and State, to cheer them in the conflict with Oppression and Wrong, and to share with them alike the perils of the struggle and the joys of the victory which must ultimately crown their labors.

Resolved, That as friends of Universal Liberty, we proclaim our detestation of that spurious Democracy which denies to human beings the Right of Suffrage on account of sex or color; and that we will never relax our exertions until a perfect Equality of Rights shall be acknowledged as the foundation of all our social, political and religious institutions.

WM. STEADMAN, *Chairman*

LEWIS T. PARK, *Secretary*

Chapter 9

REACTIONS AND RESULTS

The Salem Women's Rights Convention was called in haste. The first public announcement of the April 19-20 convention was not made until the March 30, 1850 *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. In light of the fact that the telegraph had been invented only six years before and in light of the fact that railroad service to Salem had not yet begun, those attending the Convention had very little time to plan or to travel.

Those who called the Salem convention no doubt wanted to meet before the Constitutional Convention opened on May 6. But whatever their reasoning one must keep in mind not only the short amount of time between the "Call" and the convention, but also the newness of the *idea* of a women's rights convention.

What were the consequences in attendance, in short-term and long-term results, in ideological as well as political effects?

ATTENDANCE

The exact attendance at the convention, whether it be observers and participants or both, will probably never be known. The May 9, 1850 *National Anti-Slavery Standard* reported that there were four to five hundred women present, as did the *New York Commercial Advertiser* and the *Syracuse Daily Star*. The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in turn in its May 25, 1850 issue quoted the two latter newspapers in addition to five other newspaper accounts of the convention.

On the other hand if one looks at the pictures of the Hickside Friends Meeting House where most of the Convention was held one wonders whether that many could have comfortably fit into the building. In addition at least two individuals who have been in the Meeting House before it was razed have told this writer that it would have been extremely difficult to accommodate 400.

Judging by the fact that nearly 30 women are named in the Minutes as participants and keeping in mind attendance at similar abolitionist meetings this writer feels that attendance by both observers and participants probably totaled two hundred.

IMMEDIATE RESULTS

The overwhelming reactions in the newspapers of the time were negative. A few newspapers gave a positive account of the convention but these were newspapers that were known to be at least moderate reform papers. The abolitionist paper *North Star* thought that the women at the convention "must ultimately gain their object." The Cincinnati *Nonpareil* likened the attempt at reform to "a warfare of independence."

Despite the negative reaction in the press over 8,000 signatures were received as endorsements of the Memorial to the Constitutional Convention. After some debate in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* over who would present the Memorial and signatures to the Constitutional Convention the presentation was made early in 1851. (The debate was whether or not a famous, out-of-state woman such as Lucretia Mott should present the Memorial and signatures. All the women, such as Mott, declined. Exactly who made the presentation is unclear.)

One wonders whether the participants in the Salem Convention were prepared for the outcome. On February 8, 1851 the Constitutional Convention considered striking the word "white" from the article of the Ohio Constitution regarding voting. The result would have been to open up voting in Ohio to all males regardless of race. That move failed by a vote of 66 to 12. A move that same day to strike the word "male" from the same article of the Constitution and thus open up voting to white males and females failed by a vote of 73 to 7!

It wasn't until 1861 that one of the demands of the Salem convention was met. In that year Ohio passed a married women's property right law. Married women now had the right to real and personal property they owned before marriage.

LONG-TERM RESULTS

The long-term results of the Salem Convention were most important in the areas of galvanizing opinions and followers and of beginning formal organization and leadership.

One of the actions of the women was to set up a Statewide Standing Committee to call future meetings in Ohio. As a result women's rights conventions were held in Akron in 1851, in Massillon in 1852 and in Ravenna in 1853. In addition national Women's Rights Conventions were held

in Cleveland in 1853 and Cincinnati in 1855. By 1852 "The Ohio Woman's Rights Association" was formed. New leaders such as Josephine Griffing who were not experienced orators became more numerous.

Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in their *History of Woman Suffrage* credit the Salem Convention with having an international as well as national effect: "A favorable and lengthy Report found its way into the *New York Tribune* and other leading journals, both East and West, and the proceedings of the Convention were circulated widely in pamphlet form. All this made a very strong impression upon the public mind. From the old world, too, the officers of the Convention received warm congratulations and earnest words of sympathy, for the new gospel of woman's equality was spreading in England as well as America."

Sources

The most complete sources for the proceedings of the Salem Women's Rights Convention are the three issues of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* immediately following the Convention. The *Bugle* was a weekly newspaper published in Salem, Ohio from 1845 to 1861 and is for sale nearly complete on four reels 35mm microfilm from the Ohio Historical Society.

The account in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* is complete except for two items read to the convention: Lucretia Mott's "Discourse on Woman" and a letter from A. Brooke of Oakland (Ohio). A photocopy of the original "Discourse on Woman" in pamphlet form was supplied by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for this book. However nearly a two year search has not turned up a clue about the Brooke letter.

The pamphlet published immediately after the convention (*Proceedings of the Ohio Women's Convention Held at Salem, April 19th and 20th, 1850, with an address by J. Elizabeth Jones, 48 pp., Cleveland, Smead & Cowles Press, 1850*) lacks a number of documents read to the Convention. They are Lucretia Mott's "Discourse"

and letters from Frances Gage, Harriet Torrey, Ruth Dugdale, R.M.M. Sanford, Emma Steer, Mercy Holmes and A. Brooke. In addition the pamphlet is now a rare item. The only copies known to this writer include one at the Ohio Historical Society, one in the Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, American History Research Center, Kent State University and a copy sold at the famous Streeter Sale in 1969.

The monumental, six volume *History of Woman Suffrage* edited by Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton and others contains much of the proceedings of the Convention. However many of the resolutions adopted at the Convention and many of the letters read to the Convention are not included. The complete set may be purchased in a reprint edition from at least one well-known commercial publisher.

The most recent publication dealing with the Salem Women's Rights Convention is the 38 page *Women in Ohio History*, edited by Marta Whitlock and published by the Ohio Historical Society. The five page section on the Salem Convention was written by Diane VanSkiver Gagel.

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