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WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN UTAH.

Address delivered by Mrs. Emily S. Richards before the National Woman's Suffrage Convention, at Washington, D. C., January 27th, 1896.

It may be said of Utah that with her contentions on religion and her progressive attitude on suffrage rights, she has developed more independence, liberty and equality than perhaps any other State that has been born into the Federal Union. She is a child of destiny. Within her social life are germs of untold progress. Her infancy has been rocked in the cradle of vicissitude. No single day has been uneventful. Her skies have been filled with portents. Her world has been one of mingled anxiety and beauty. There has been exhilaration of soul in the midst of a menacing environment. There has been a transcendent faith rising above worldly inhospitality and the cheerless companionship of the desert. Utah has always been a child of immortality groping in the shadows of time; yet in her dimmest twilight she has always beheld the stars of her eternal destiny. She is in the midst of the mountains. Our valleys have learned that the frozen peaks, the fragile clouds and the gentle sunlight are their foster mother to minister to their refreshment. Our diversity of surroundings insure us against the dull monotony of the meaningless and commonplace. Whatever we may become we shall be far removed from mediocrity.

It may be truly said of the suffrage cause in general that it has important illustrations in the development and progress of woman's suffrage in Utah. In no other State or territory has there been so clear and decided results ensuing from its temporary adoption. It is well known to all who have kept themselves informed of the progress of the suffrage movement that prior to 1887 woman's suffrage was authorized by law in the Territory of Utah during a period of about seventeen years; and that with the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887 the elective franchise for women was revoked by Congress. It is well known too, that now, after a lapse of ten years since the revocation, our Utah has been admitted into the Union as a sovereign state, and that its constitution makes absolute provision for the civil and political equality of its citizens irrespective of sex. Equal rights and privileges are made irrevocable in the fundamental law of our newly created commonwealth; and the burden resting upon us now is to nurture this tender plant until in its growth and efficiency, its

wisdom and necessity will be demonstrated.

Equal civil and political rights is largely the natural and normal outcome of Utah settlement and civilization. The primary reason is that throughout our history there has been a constant tendency toward independence, self-culture and self-reliance among women. In all the pilgrimages and hardships of the pioneer people, the women bore their part along with the men. It was necessary to do so, and their full share of every burden was always borne by them. The absence of great general wealth made the majority of the people industrious and self-provident. The early organization of women into independent and self-governing societies for religious and charitable purposes, and for mutual improvement tended to make the women avail themselves of the right of suffrage when offered to them twenty-five years ago, and to accept it now when incorporated in the Constitution.

The ballot in the hands of women was a substantial and important means of education. It enlarged the sphere of woman's thought and gave her an increased independence of action. It must be said too, that during the years that Utah women exercised the right of suffrage, they performed their part with singular earnestness and fidelity. They prized their privileges and discharged their duties with a full sense of their importance. And the records of those years show that Utah women were not disposed to be neglectful of public responsibilities, for the percentage of women's votes was nearly as great as men's. In no sense was there a corruption of public morals, or a lowering of the standard of womanly propriety and discretion.

Another consequence of the granting of equal suffrage was its complete appropriation and adoption by the masses of the people as a permanent feature of the civil and political life of Utah. Having had undisturbed trial for nearly a score of years, it was looked upon as congenial and proper; and when women were disfranchised by Congress in 1887, it was regarded by our people as an unjust and unmerited deprivation. All through the several succeeding years up to the formation of the state, the revocation of equal suffrage was regarded as arbitrary and unwarranted, an injury to be remedied, rather than acquiesced in. But the people were powerless to remedy the evil so long as Utah remained a Territory. State sovereignty alone could bring emancipation for women.

The way was paved for statehood by the discontinuance of plural marriages, which had been sanctioned by religious sentiment. When Wilford Woodruff, President of the Mormon Church issued

the Manifesto of 1889, and it was subsequently ratified by the body of the Church, future plural marriages were prohibited. As it inaugurated a great change in the social life of our commonwealth, I will quote briefly from the document:

"Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the Court of Last Resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land."

This Manifesto is an authoritative message to the Church from its recognized leader that plural marriages should be discontinued; and this message was received and ratified by the body of the Church at the ensuing general conference, and it has since been observed as an inspired revelation of the will of God for the guidance of the Church in practical religious duty.

The following provision of the Constitution of our new State for the prevention of polygamy, is now in force and is irrevocable without the consent of the United States and the people of this State.

"Perfect toleration of religious sentiment is guaranteed. No inhabitant of this State shall ever be molested in person or property on account of his or her mode of religious worship; but polygamous or plural marriages are forever prohibited." Article 3.

In Section 2, Article 24, of the Constitution, it is provided:

"The act of the Governor and Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah, entitled, 'An act to punish polygamy and other kindred offenses,' approved February 4th, A. D., 1892, in so far as the same defines and imposes penalties for polygamy, is hereby declared to be in force in the State of Utah."

The act referred to in the Constitution defines and punishes polygamy in the most emphatic and unmistakable language, and has become a part of the organic law of the State.

When the old Liberal and People's parties of Utah were dissolved in 1890, and the people pledged themselves into parties representing national issues—Democrats and Republicans—neither party could safely ignore the fixed sentiment of a fixed majority of the people in behalf of woman's suffrage. Neither party could hope to succeed in opposing it. It had become too deeply imbedded in the political consciousness and aspirations of the people. Hence, when the