

COMMON SENSE.

She came among the gathering crowd,
A maiden fair, without pretence,
And when they asked her humble name,
She whispered mildly, "Common Sense."

Her model garb drew every eye,
Her ample cloak, her shoes of leather—
And when they sneered, she simply said,
"I dress according to the weather."

They argued long, and reasoned loud,
In dubious Hindoo phrase—mysterious,
While she, poor child, could not divine
Why girls so young should be so serious.

They knew the length of Plato's beard,
And how the scholars wrote in Saturn;
She studied authors not so deep,
And took the Bible for her pattern.

And so she said, "Excuse me, friends,
I find all have their proper places,
And common sense should stay at home,
With cheerful hearts and smiling faces."

TOO LATE.

Too late, too late was never said
Of morning sun, or bud, or flower;
The light is true to hill and glade,
The rose bud opens to the hour;
The lark ne'er asks the day to wait,
But man awakes too late, too late!

Too late, too late our anger burns—
The sun goes down before the flame
To gentle words of kindness turns,
And we are scourged with inward shame
To think our breasts have harbored hate,
And pride bowed down—too late, too late!

Too late, too late for public prayer,
The words of worship have begun—
Our cheeks are flushed with hastening there,
We enter as the chant is done;
And pausing at the temple gate,
We stand and say—"Too late, too late!"

"Too late, too late!" who has not said?
The post is out—the train has gone—
The time is fled—the debt not paid—
The aid not sought—the work not done:
Neglect makes up life's weary freight,
And then we cry—"Too late, too late!"

THE WOMAN MOVEMENT IN WYOMING.

During the last half decade the question of woman's enfranchisement has been thoroughly discussed from the rostrum and in editorial fields; and the object of this article is, not to theorize further, but rather to describe the practical operation of impartial suffrage in Wyoming.

This youngest of Territories, organized in 1890, occupies a portion of the continent's crest, and its waters, flowing eastward and westward, mingle with the Atlantic and Pacific. The inhabitants, numbering about eight thousand souls, exclusive of Indians and United States troops, are established on ranches and in villages along the Union Pacific Railroad and in the Sweetwater mining region near South Pass. A majority are of English descent, though the Milesian and Teutonic elements are well represented. Many of the earlier settlers have been citizens of the older Territories, especially Colorado and Montana; and of the entire white population, exclusive of soldiers, something over one-third are women.

The number of women is, however, constantly increasing in a greater ratio than the number of men, because the male pioneer, after having completed his home and established a business, sends for his wife; or, if still floundering in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of single cursedness, makes a raid across some Eastern threshold, captures its maiden divinity, and anoints her empress of his Western home.

In Wyoming the women, a majority of whom were born in the Middle and Western States, are representatives of the various social classes, and in point of culture and genuine womanliness are not excelled by the inhabitants of any newly-settled region. The number of unwedded though marriageable ladies is exceedingly limited, and few maidens are permitted to pass the Rubicon of girlhood without being speedily consigned to some matrimonial position. Nearly all the prominent literary journals of the East are widely circulated; the newspaper and book-stores in every village are well patronized; the Territory sustains ten churches and a sufficient number of excellent schools, both public and private. Some of the most noted Eastern lecturers have drawn crowded houses, and literary associations, temperance lodges, debating clubs, etc., have been started. The first Legislature, composed of elements common in border communities, assembled in the autumn of 1890, and proceeded to enact a code of laws, among which was a statute enfranchising women. The law in

question was not adopted in obedience to public sentiment, but because the Territorial lawgivers believed it would operate as a "first class advertisement;" that their action in the premises would be telegraphed throughout the civilized world, public interest thereby aroused, resulting in increased immigration and large accretions of capital to their new and comparatively unknown Territory. I am sure that up to that time not a score of suffrage disciples could be found within the Territorial limits. Even the women themselves did not appear as petitioners; no pungent satire, or unanswerable argument, or impassioned platform harangue fell from their lips in advocacy of political equality; but the suffrage was conferred, as has been said, solely for advertising purposes. The Council originated and adopted the measure, believing that the House of Representatives would disagree; but the last named body ultimately concurred, in anticipation of an Executive veto.

The bill, however, was finally approved, and the writer of this article, exercising at that time the appointing power, proceeded to select incumbents for county offices from among the newly-enfranchised citizens. Among others a lady was appointed to the office of Justice of the Peace in a thickly-settled mining locality, which theretofore had not been noted for strict adherence to legal tenets. She at once familiarized herself with the principles of common law and with the Territorial statutes, and for nearly a year performed her official duties with signal ability and success. Her court sessions were characterized by a degree of gravity and decorum rarely exhibited in the judicature of border precincts. Shortly after her appointment and qualification, an ineffectual attempt was made by certain unbelieving attorneys to demonstrate woman's unfitness for judicial position; and to this end the following case was submitted, with the belief that she would erroneously proceed to its adjudication. Her predecessor had performed some official act subsequent to her entrance upon judicial duty, and for this alleged misfeasance he was cited to appear before the court of his successor. Counsel presented exhaustive pleas, at the conclusion of which Her Honor decided, that the point in issue was a question as to whether her predecessor at the time alleged had a right to perform any official act; that such an issue could only be settled by some superior tribunal; that hers was not such a tribunal; therefore she had no jurisdiction and would dismiss the case.

Her decision in civil causes were sometimes appealed from by the parties deeming themselves aggrieved; but in nearly every instance they were confirmed by the appellate court. During her administration a decided improvement in the tone of public morals was noticeable, and the laws had never been so ably administered in that vicinity.

If any errors of judgment crept in, they were on the side of justice rather than mercy, especially when the opposite sex appeared as defendants or alleged criminals.

The inhabitants of new mining countries are prone to administer justice in accordance with their own notions of right, regardless of legal forms—preferring the ancient trial by battle rather than the interposition of pleas, petitions, and demurrers. This unfortunate public sentiment was happily neutralized through her influence, and it may be safely asserted that the pioneer female Justice was in all respects successful.

The office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has also been ably filled by representatives of the enfranchised sex. When it is remembered that women from time immemorial have been among the most successful teachers, this fact will not seem strange.

Shortly after the bill in question went into operation, women were summoned to serve as grand and petit jurors in the several courts of record, and in this particular field their participation in public affairs has been especially successful. Acting with men in the capacity of grand jurors, they secured the presentation of indictments that could not otherwise have been obtained; serving as petit jurors, they paid strict attention to testimony and argument, profoundly impressed with the new and important responsibilities that had been thrust upon them.

The circumstances of the first case tried by a jury impanelled regardless of sex were as follows: A young blade, who had imbibed the then prevalent notion that he could not hope to attain to the full stature of manhood without killing somebody, participated unnecessarily in a bar-room brawl, and accomplished the object of his ambition. Having been indicted for murder, he

sought to show a justifiable homicide, claiming that the act was done in self-defence. A jury, composed of equal parts male and female, was impanelled to try the case, and, after three days and nights of deliberation, at last agreed upon a verdict of manslaughter, and the culprit is now in the penitentiary meditating upon the swiftness and certainty of female justice. The male jurors were in favor of acquittal, but the ladies, believing that human life ought not to be held by any such unsafe and flimsy tenure, voted during three days and nights for conviction, until at last a verdict of manslaughter was agreed upon.

The Court, unlike some of its Eastern compeers, would not permit jurors to separate until after their final agreement and discharge. At nightfall, after the day's deliberation, adjacent rooms, communicating by a door, of which the sheriff held the key, were provided, and the women, attended by female constables, occupied one apartment, while the men deposited themselves in the other. When morning dawned, the two sexes met for deliberation, and so on from day to day until a final verdict was reached. It is alleged that the women passed a considerable portion of the night season in prayerful contemplation of the grave responsibilities resting upon them, while the men indulged in a cheerful game of draw-poker.

Some of the ladies were matrons whose domestic arrangements might have been temporarily in a chaotic state, while the spinsters enjoying their season of "maiden meditation fancy free," were not annoyed by any harrowing reflections concerning domestic eclipses. If *paterfamilias* was domestically disturbed and obliged to practise culinary arts, he had the consolation of knowing that his other physical half was administering stern and impartial justice for the benefit of society.

A lady with infant in arms appeared in obedience to a summons; and while the jury was being impanelled the child addressed the Court with impassioned though unintelligible eloquence, filling the entire court-room with volumes of incoherent sound, and effectually drowning all other attempts to be heard. Whether the young pilgrim was entering solemn protest against the new departure, or singing the praises of political equality, must always remain a mystery, but the Court promptly excused both mother and child from further attendance at that term. In all cases where husband and wife happened to be summoned upon the same jury, one or the other was invariably excused on grounds of public or private policy; and in the case of women, the present or prospective possession of very young children is regarded as sufficient cause for excuse, whether pleaded or not, and the Court is expected to take judicial notice of this fact. No divorces, or elopements, or other domestic calamities have been known to result from woman's introduction to the jury box.

During a period of more than two years women have served as jurors in civil and criminal cases at nearly every term of the various courts of record; and their influence, thus practically manifested on behalf of law and order, has been noticeably beneficial. This is especially true with reference to criminal trials. In border precincts at the West, the legal doctrine of excusable or justifiable homicide is carried far beyond its proper limits. For example, a couple of bellicose sovereigns indulge in wordy warfare, and, after having exhausted the vernacular of billingsgate, exchange shots, resulting perhaps fatally to one but not the other. The survivor is indicted for murder—claims that the act was done in self-defence, and in a majority of cases would be acquitted by a jury composed exclusively of males; but women jurors, unless satisfied that the deceased was beyond question an aggressor with murderous intent, are quite apt to find a totally different verdict. The women of Wyoming, regardless of race or previous condition of servitude, adhere to good government, seek the enforcement of wholesome laws, and, while bravely performing the onerous though unsought duties pertaining to their new condition, manifest no unwomanly ambition for place, emolument, or power.

In 1870 a fierce preliminary struggle for a Congressional nomination culminated in Convention at the Territorial capital. Bitter recriminations, sandwiched between blows and personal altercations, after the most approved Eastern fashion, enlivened the scene; and, while chaos was impending, the doorkeeper announced that a considerable force of the lately downtrodden but now enfranchised sex demanded admission. They were at once provided with front

seats in the political synagogue, and from that moment the men who had been rudely belligerent became calm, and contented themselves thereafter with an interchange of decent phillipic, unaccompanied with blows. But for female influence the lives of several estimable pot-house politicians might have been sacrificed on the altar of patriotism. The first election under the new law occurred shortly afterward, and the women very generally deposited their ballots, which, in this instance executed the freewoman's will as lightnings do the will of God.

To a venerable matron of more than fourscore summers belongs the honor of being the first of her sex who ever cast a legal ballot at a political election. She approached the polls with vigorous step, and deposited her vote, while the vast assemblage of men, with uncovered heads, respectfully contemplated the novel scene.

Until, as they gazed, there crept an awe
Through the ranks in whispers, and some men
saw
In the antique vestments and long white hair
The past of the nation voting there.

An aisleway was opened through the crowd, and three tremendous cheers were given as the aged grandam retired homeward.

Polling booths were located near a door or window fronting the street, thereby enabling voters to deposit their ballots while passing along the sidewalk. At an early hour the "lately downtrodden" debouched from their several homes, and with smiling faces wended their cheerful way toward the place where, thanks to a Legislature unanimously democratic, they could indulge the most sacred right of American free men and women. The streets were gay with brilliant costumes; coaches and carriages freighted with fair sovereigns flashed hither and thither; the poverty-stricken mother, through whose daily toil her children were supported, the lady of wealth who had been taxed without her consent, and the fashionable matron who enjoyed neither poverty nor riches, all expressed their views of political economy in a practical manner at the ballot-box, thereby presenting a touching illustration of perfect equality before the law.

Partisan strife to secure votes among the male adherents of rival candidates culminated in the afternoon, when a brace of colored sisters, hanging gracefully upon the arms of a deputy United States marshal of Irish birth, were escorted by him to the polls, and indulged in the right of suffrage. Was not this remarkable coalition a precursor of more harmonious relations between these heretofore bitterly antagonistic elements? The descendants of Ham and St. Patrick hobnobbing in political communion! Verily, "the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them."

The utmost freedom of speech and action characterizes pioneer elections, and political and personal differences are often settled by bowie-knife and revolver, without the interposition of legal forms; but these unpleasant instrumentalities were held in abeyance while the women voted, because of the latter's beneficial presence. Fisticuff engagements, accompanied by language not found in any current religious work, were dispensed with, while the women, in couples and detachments, approached the polls, and no lady listened to a syllable or observed an action that could by any possibility offend the most sensitive woman in the land. Border men are proverbially chivalric, and rarely forget what Americans everywhere are so apt to remember, that the gentler sex is always entitled to respectful consideration. All classes voted, without distinction of race or social status. Even those at whom society points the finger of scorn, and for whose safe transit back to the pure atmosphere of home our civilization has as yet failed to find a channel, were at the polls in large force, exercising their newly-conferred political rights.

Personal friendship for candidates, especially where the latter had conferred favors, was potent to influence political support with the gentler as with the sterner sex. It was, however, a noticeable fact that the women generally sustained candidates possessed of talent and character, in preference to those who without those qualifications had secured a partisan nomination.

Households were frequently divided in political sentiment, and voted in accordance with conviction or prejudice, regardless of marital ties. In at least one instance the wife was a candidate for office on one political ticket, while her husband's name enjoyed a similar prominence upon the other. A lively contest ensued; each voted for himself, or her-