

The Last Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women

Rev. Robert Gordon apparently was the pastor at the First Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas. This leaflet was written in response to efforts to defeat the constitutional amendment that would give Kansas women full suffrage in 1912. Gordon is a supporter of woman's suffrage and attempts to respond to arguments of those opposed to the amendment. Gordon states that "this organized, highly-financed, eleventh-hour assault is not inspired by honest conviction. It is a desperate effort born of a craven fear of good women on the part of men who know what women will do"

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THE LAST BLAST of the TRUMPET AGAINST THE MONSTROUS REGIMENT OF WOMEN

GENESIS, 1:27, 28

REV. ROBERT GORDON

"God created man in his own image—male and female created He them;
and God blessed them and said—have dominion."

The First Baptist Church
Close to the Heart of Topeka

Roorback
"The First Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas, is the only church in the city that has ever been attacked by a woman." —Baron Roorback, "The Last Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," p. 10.

I am told the opponents of woman suffrage are going to send a roorback, by mail and telegram, all over Kansas tomorrow. Let me say a roorback isn't a rose-bouquet nor any other fragrant thing. In 1844 a story purporting to be an extract from "Baron Roorback's Tour Through the Western and Southern States" was circulated for political effect. Since then any fictitious report sent out just before election for the purpose of misleading voters has been called a "roorback." It might be better to use the shorter and uglier word. A misstatement sent abroad at the last hour, when there is no time for refutation, is the meanest and most cowardly sort of lying.

This attack reminded me of the famous pamphlet written by John Knox to prove that to permit a woman to rule is contrary to both reason and Scripture. We speak proudly of Knox as "one who never feared the face of man." With "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment (government) of Women" sounding in our ears, we may exalt his courage by thinking of him as a man who never feared the face of woman! A woman, holding the power of life and death, sat upon the throne when Knox with such vehemence uttered his convictions.

Though our views are diametrically opposed to his, we honor him tonight for he spoke sincerely and fearlessly. So also do we respect those who sincerely are opposed to woman suffrage. But this organized, highly-financed, eleventh-hour assault is not inspired by honest conviction. It is a desperate effort born of a craven fear of good women on the part of men who know what women will do when given proper weapons with which to defend themselves and those whom they love better than themselves.

What the opposition will say to the State tomorrow, I cannot tell exactly. They have a decided advantage over others in the freedom with which they draw upon imagination for argumentative data and statistics. But judging from what they have done in other States at similar crises, I can tell you the sort of stones their sling will carry. "Dirty politics is no place for lovely woman." "Good women won't vote; bad women will." "It is an imposition to force the ballot upon women. They do not wish it." "Neither mother nor grandmother ever voted."

We all know what would happen were it possible to get those who maintain such propositions to appear in debate with anyone of you women

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interested in this cause. They would be in an even worse plight than that celebrated Scotch vocalist who narrowly escaped with his life, his carriage having been upset near Edinburgh; "but," the newspaper declared, "he was able to appear the same evening in three pieces!" If politics is a "dirty game," then bring in good women and changed conditions will ensue. One of the most striking electric signs in Chicago is a large, life-like representation of a Dutch woman with a stick of fire in her hand. "Old Dutch Cleanser" is driving away the dirt. The only places on this globe really sweet and clean are the places where women have gone with broom or brush or other cleansing power. I have known men to avoid political affairs, fearing contamination, but the virtue that will not keep its shape while one does his duty is a thin and hollow thing not worth preserving. Washington, Lincoln and Garfield went through raging furnaces of political strife and came out without so much as the smell of fire upon their garments. Women have voted in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington and California and who will say they have thereby lost aught of womanly grace or charm?

It is said to be unchivalrous to force political responsibilities upon unwilling women. Have you not yet learned they want to vote? What will it take to prove that to you? For fifty years and more they have been writing, pleading, laboring for suffrage. Two years ago they presented at Washington a petition signed by over 400,000 citizens asking that woman be granted this right. Do you enquire what class of women are seeking the ballot? Listen, Clara Barton says, "I ask the ballot for myself and my sex." Mrs. Maud Ballington Booth writes, "All the evils that affect the home are largely dependent upon politics. Women should have the power to deal with them." Francis E. Willard, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, all believed in woman suffrage. Time would fail me to give the names of even the leaders in this city and State who are laboring for this cause and you know that these women are foremost in all noble enterprises. Many women do not wish to vote, but that constitutes no good reason why those who do should be refused their desire.

No doubt many of us must grant that mother and grandmother lived and died content without the ballot, but it is equally true they lived and died happy with the ox-cart, the hand loom, and tallow candles. Thought fashions change like styles in woman's hats. It is vain to try to stop the progress of the world. Those who endeavor to hinder and thwart the growing purpose of the Almighty sooner or later find themselves up against as real a difficulty as did that excited officer who shouted to his men, "When I give the command, halt! you will bring the foot which is on the ground to the side of the one which is in the air, and remain motionless."

If our business is "to justify the ways of God

to man," we may be expected to explain why, having "made man in His own image," male and female, the Creator gave to "them dominion." Suffice it now to say the divine intention is clear and therefore our duty equally plain. In the beginning He gave man and woman dominion. When and where did Heaven ever abrogate the woman's right to rule with man? There are endless reasons, it seems to me, why this divine program should be set in practical operation. I will mention only three.

First, I would say, we should give women the opportunity of exercising their God-given right to vote, because **we believe in the spirit of fair play.** Henry Van Dyke says if we wish to understand the nature of American democracy we must trace it to its origin in the spirit of fair play. "At bottom," he writes, "fair play is a man's recognition of the fact that he is not alone in the universe, that the world was not made for his private benefit, that the law of being is a benevolent justice which must regard and rule him as well as his fellow-men with sincere impartiality, and that any human system or order which interferes with this impartiality is contrary to the will of the Supreme Wisdom and Love." In this spirit of fair play we have separated Church and State; we have, in theory at least, made all classes equal before the law; and at this hour all parties are pledged to labor that every citizen may have fair play in the industrial realm. We, as Americans, believe in fair play. Is it fair that women should be compelled to pay taxes and not given opportunity to suggest how her money shall be used? Is it fair to force her to suffer under a bad government for which she is not responsible and which she cannot directly remedy? Is it fair to put her in the humiliating position of one who must beg others to vote for the things she desires? Is it fair that her requests should be contemptuously dealt with by those who make our laws? That happens and will happen so long as she has not vote to command respect. Is it fair that she should be under the necessity of striving decades indirectly for improved conditions which could be secured in as many months had she voting power? Is it fair that in this twentieth century, in the United States of America, those who are debarred from political privileges are children, aliens, idiots, lunatics, criminals and women? In the name of the square deal and fair play, give women the opportunity to vote.

Because of the character of woman she should be granted the franchise. Our women are better educated than our men; they are more law-abiding, and, as a class, more devoted to high ideals. On a Monday morning two preachers exchanged greetings. One said, "The world is going to the bad. In the city church where I preached yesterday there were only a handful of men; the congregation was made up of women." The other replied, "That's strange, for my congregation was exclusively of men. There were more than



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nine hundred of them at the service." He had spoken at the penitentiary. There are more men criminals than women—twenty to one. We all know that women do far more than their share of church work. There is more truth than poetry in the oft-quoted verse:

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
You will find the Christian soldier
Represented by his wife."

All are ready to agree that in some respects women are better qualified than men. To admit them to the polls will improve the electorate. The state cannot afford to forego the reaction of woman's thought upon governmental affairs. For instance, all know that woman is more adept at caring for a baby than is man. Now listen, in the great hygienic exposition held last month at Washington and attended by scientists and medical experts from all lands, one exhibit drew more attention than any other. It consisted of an electric globe into which light flashed every ten seconds with a notice that every time the light flashed a child died somewhere in the civilized world. The suffering and sorrow thus suggested cast a spell over all who watched the light in the globe flash out with tragic regularity. All about were exhibits showing how most of these lives might be saved. They are dying unnecessarily because of unsanitary dwellings, unwholesome milk, infected water, fly-breeding alleys and dirty streets. Necessary changes can only be secured through politics. As a natural result of woman's primary interest in the children the rate of infant mortality has gone down wherever she has been granted voting power. In Australia the rate has been lowered from 111 per 1,000 to 77 per 1,000. Read the record of woman's work in any State in which she has the right to vote, whether Utah, Idaho, Colorado, or elsewhere and you will find she has proven a moral power, securing better laws for the protection of minors, the higher compensation of working women, and the promotion of municipal and governmental house-cleaning.

The place on earth most like heaven is the one place where woman reigns as queen. Why not extend the home boundaries? Why not spread the home atmosphere? What thrilling words we would hear were I to call now for testimonies regarding mother's place and power! The other night I heard a citizen tell of early experiences through hard times in Kansas. One day when the hot winds were withering everything and the grasshoppers ravaging, his father and the boys went into the house utterly discouraged and resolved to quit. They found the table spread with clean linen, a good meal served, and then, supplementing all by that which kept her own courage up, mother sent them to their work again with new heart and hope by quoting the ancient promise, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Recall Rudyard Kipling's tribute to Mother Love—

"If I were hanged on highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were cursed of body and soul,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose prayers would make me whole!
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

That that mother love and all woman's lofty sentiments may find more adequate expression in laws and institutions I ask you to place the ballot in woman's hands.

But the one reason which should move all good citizens to vote for woman suffrage if every other reason fails is the fact that the most stubborn and persistent opponents of this movement everywhere are the brewers and distillers, the gamblers and crooked politicians, the men who are exploiting the community and oppressing the poor. It should be a standing policy with us that whatever the brewers are for we are against. They have called on all their followers to work against the enfranchisement of women. They are afraid of woman's high sense of decency and morality. Of course, there are good people who are convinced that woman suffrage is wise, but unpaid, organized, aggressive opposition comes from the evil sources I have named.

Men, with whom are you going to line up? With the brewers or against them? Against the brewers you will stand with Phillips Brooks. He said, "I am in favor of woman suffrage." You will stand with Wendell Phillips who declared, "I claim the ballot for women." You will take your place with Henry Ward Beecher, for he announced, "I stand tonight the advocate of MAN'S RIGHTS. Because WE need it, woman should be eligible to all public trusts, and should have the same liberty of suffrage that man now has." Vote for woman suffrage and you will express the sentiment of Abraham Lincoln when he said, "I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens, by no means excluding the women."

It is a curious fact that "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," written to prove a woman could not successfully rule, was published the very year that Elizabeth's reign began, the reign of a woman, the most illustrious reign in British history, excepting only the glorious record of Queen Victoria. How thoroughly facts have refuted the theories of Knox! Give our women the right to vote now and I will safely predict that fifty or a hundred years hence men looking back upon this week's achievement will see that here began the most illustrious epoch in all the history of Kansas.

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