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WHEN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS PLEASE MENTION THE GUIDE

The History of Woman Suffrage

It is a popular mis-conception that woman's suffrage is a new idea born about six or seven years ago, but even in conservative old England it is claimed that women had the franchise prior to the passing of the reform bill of 1832 and that in that bill the substitution of the words "male person" for the word "man" deprived women of the right to vote. In 1850 an act was passed making the word "man" in all acts of Parliament include both men and women. Now in the reform bill of 1867, the words "male person" were abandoned and the word "man" was again used. Accordingly the women, on the advice of certain able lawyers, demanded to have their names put on the voters' lists and were refused, whereupon a test case was brought before the courts. It was admitted that the word man did include women, but decided that "this did not apply to the privileges granted by the State." In other words "man" meant men only for the purposes of voting, but for purposes of taxation it meant men and women. A very ungallant decision.

Women Thrown Overboard

As long ago as 1870 a woman's suffrage bill passed the British House of Parliament and in 1884 another bill was killed by Premier Gladstone for the same reason that politicians offer today—that the ship of state is loaded to capacity and they are consequently obliged to throw the women overboard. Politicians always lighten the cargo that way. Some of us believe the reason of this is that they are not obliged to depend on us for re-election.

Altogether thirteen woman suffrage bills have been introduced into the British House of Commons, some of which passed the second reading. At least 5,000 meetings were held in support of the conciliation bill alone. Demonstrations have been held in which 40,000 women marched. The largest petitions ever presented to Parliament in support of any measure have been presented by the suffragists. Between 1867 and 1884 they collected three million signatures.

It was not until they had been following these constitutional means for nearly forty years, with the result that their movement was about as much respected as the mother-in-law joke, that one section of the English suffragists became militant and began to demand the rights for which they had begged for nearly half a century in vain.

Have Voted Forty-four Years

But England is not the only country where the women have exercised themselves about the franchise. In 1869 the women of Wyoming got the franchise by an accident. When the first legislative council was in session, after the organization of Wyoming as a territory, Mrs. Esther Morris, a pioneer who had come from New York, appealed to the President of the council, Col. Wm. H. Bright, for a bill enfranchising women. As it happened, Col. Bright's wife was a suffragist and she aided and abetted Mrs. Morris and the Colonel got the bill passed, chiefly because the council was Democratic and it hoped to embarrass the governor, who was Republican, and whom they confidently expected to veto it. But the governor, John A. Campbell, signed it and when, two years later, the council repealed the bill, he vetoed the repeal.

But that is not the whole history of equal suffrage in Wyoming. In 1889 a convention composed entirely of men met to form a constitution for statehood and adopted unanimously as its first clause "equal political rights for men and women." This constitution was ratified by more than a three-fourths vote of the people and sent to congress for the approval of that august body. Congress fought for three days to have the equal franchise clause struck out and the territorial delegate wired to Wyoming that it looked as if this would have to be done, but the legislature then in session wired back that it would stay out of the union for a hundred years rather than come in without woman's suffrage. After the House of Representatives the Senate took up the hue and cry and threatened Wyoming and the whole federation with unspeakable things if this little state should be allowed to come into the union on its own conditions. But Wyoming just sat tight in its own little western way and refused to come in under any other conditions and so the senate was obliged to yield and that is how it happens that Wyoming has had woman's suffrage for 44 years.

When Colorado came into statehood in 1876, the women begged to be enfranchised and were refused, but the provision was made that it might be submitted to a vote at the first election after it became a part of the union. This was done in 1877 and the proposal was defeated. This discouraged the women so that they did not agitate very strenuously again until the early nineties. In 1893, when the legislature was in control of the Populist party, a woman suffrage bill was again sent to the voters, this time it carried by a majority of 6,347.

The women of Utah enjoyed the suffrage from 1870 until 1887, when the U.S. Congress deprived them of it with the idea of putting a stop to polygamy. In 1895 a convention of Utah men, Mormons and Gentile together, met to consider a constitution for statehood and included a strong woman's suffrage plank in their platform and this constitution was accepted without challenge by congress.

The struggle for woman's suffrage in the State of Idaho was brief. There was no organized effort until 1893. The Republicans in control of the legislature in 1895 voted unanimously in favor of a resolution to submit an amendment on woman's suffrage and it was carried in the November election by a vote of almost two to one.

In 1883 the territory of Washington gave the women the vote. In 1886 some question of legality having arisen, the legislature strengthened the act and in 1887, the vicious elements having secured a court verdict that the act was not properly titled, it was passed a third time perfect in every respect. In this year a convention was preparing a constitution for statehood and the vicious elements set themselves to block any suffrage plank being introduced. It was arranged that at the election of 1889, the vote of a certain saloon-keeper's wife should be refused. The case was rushed through the supreme court and two out of three of the judges decided that the equal suffrage law was not valid because the territory had no power to extend the suffrage, though the very act under which Washington was organized specifically gave it this right.

But in the year 1910, when the voters of Washington, in a veritable political revolution, threw off the machine yoke, woman's suffrage was submitted to a vote of the people by the unanimous vote of the legislature and carried in every county in the state.

With the granting of woman's suffrage in California, in 1911, this propaganda which had been confined mostly to pastoral countries started on a new epoch.

In 1912 Kansas, Oregon and Michigan passed constitutional amendments granting women the suffrage and since that the women of Illinois have acquired a partial suffrage.

And now to come away back to New Zealand which acceded to the women's demand for the vote as long ago as 1893, the same year that it was acquired in Colorado. There are many who declare that the women of New Zealand went to bed one night and got up the next morning to find themselves enfranchised without any struggle on their part. This is entirely untrue. The women of New Zealand began to work for the suffrage in 1851 and continued their effort until they acquired the franchise in 1893. The best proof that their efforts were strenuous is that there was a strong anti-suffrage party which even appealed to the governor not to sign the bill after it had been passed.

The women property holders in the Isle of Man secured the franchise in 1881 and those who paid rent or taxes in 1892, and have used it faithfully ever since. Equal suffrage came in South Australia in 1895, West Australia in 1900, New South Wales in 1902, Tasmania in 1903, Queensland in 1905 and Victoria in 1908, making Australia entirely for woman's suffrage.

But the granting of suffrage has not been confined to these quarters, for the women of Norway were enfranchised in 1907 and a portion of the women of Hungary were granted the suffrage in 1911, also all the women of Alaska. Women vote, too, in Denmark, Finland and Iceland.

So that woman's suffrage is not an awful experiment with terrible consequences to be only surmised by the present generation, but an accomplished fact in many quarters of the globe, where all the dire threats concerning its evil influences on the home and community have been disproved.