

fairs. They went to the field of battle, and threw themselves between their Roman husbands and their Sabine kinsfolk, and brought about a peace. They averted the ruin of Rome, when Coriolanus Marcius with the Volscian legions was encamped but three miles off. They filled the public coffers with gold when the city was taken by the Gauls and held to ransom. It is no new thing, then, for our women to interest themselves in public matters—if the consul's book is to be believed. (Cheers and laughter.) Coming to recent times, did not even widows help fill the treasury in the war just closed, and when new gods were needed to help complete our victory, did not our matrons turn out to the last woman, to escort the Idaeian deity from the sea-side to Rome? (Hear.) The times, he says, are different. I propose to abolish the difference, and restore the *statu quo*. I am not introducing new legislation, I am a true Conservative (laughter) and only revert to old-fashioned principles. (Applause.) I ask for no new equal rights; I am not the champion of a new emancipated womanhood: I merely wish to restore to the sex their ancient privileges in a matter which especially concerns them, and, by the Eternal Thunderer, we carry our heads too high if we can give ear, as masters, to the complaints of our slaves, but get angry when our faithful wives present a reasonable request. (Volleys of cheers.) Now the consul should have been careful, when touching upon first principles, to tell you that while some laws are made to endure forever, others, which are made for an emergency, are as mortal and mutable as the men that make them. War annuls decrees promulgated in peace, and *vice versa*, just as some commands suit on a ship in a storm, but would be absurd in the succeeding calm. (Hear, hear.) Of what kind is this law we are going to repeal? An old one, coeval with the city, or, at least, as old as our twelve tables, ven-

erable through age, and one without which our ancestors thought matronly decency could not be preserved? Quite the contrary; everybody knows it was brought in only twenty years ago, and, if in the "old times," (laughter) women could do so well without it, why can't they now? If even it had been introduced to check extravagance, I might have been silent: but what are the facts? Hannibal had beaten us at Cannæ: he was in possession of Tarentum, Arpes, even Capua; he was thought to be marching upon Rome; our allies had fallen away; we had no men to fill up our ragged ranks, no sailor folk to man our fleet, no money in the treasury, and we were driven to arm even our slaves, and offer them freedom in recompense for service. We were casting our all into the public chest. Women—even widows with dependent families—did not spare themselves. That was when the Oppian law was passed, and do you believe for one moment it was so passed in restraint of feminine extravagance? No, our mothers were all in tears, in the deepest mourning, too wretched even to celebrate the joyful holidays in returning spring, and the Senate had to intervene on quite the other side, and order mourning to be abandoned after thirty days. (Sensation and applause.) All sorts and conditions of men now feel the improved condition of affairs, but our wives are not yet allowed to taste the pleasures of peace and public tranquillity. We men wear purple in civil and religious offices; so do the magistrates of neighboring towns: our children do; while the meanest official here in Rome has an embroidered uniform—but our wives—Oh, no! not even a scarlet cloak: our very horses are better caparisoned than our consorts. (Shame.) In rich vestments there may be a little waste, but in ornaments of gold there is none. Gold endures; it lasts for generations; it has historic value; it is a fine possession