

SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGNS IN CALIFORNIA

THE GOLDEN STATE HAS BEEN THE FIELD OF HOT CONTESTS, AND THE LOCAL LEADERS OF TODAY ARE IN NO WISE DISCOURAGED.



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LAURA DE FORCE GORDON, AN EARLY CALIFORNIA LEADER.



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MRS. MARY SIMPSON SPERRY, PRESIDENT, CALIFORNIA EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.



CLARA SHORTRIDGE FOLTZ, AUTHOR OF THE FAMOUS 'WOMAN'S LAWYER BILL'.

By Barbara Houghton

THE strong fight waged in the eastern states for the enfranchisement of women seems to have made little or no impression on California until 1869, when Elizabeth T. Schenck and Emily Pitt Stevens called to order in San Francisco the first suffrage meeting ever held on the Pacific coast. Previous to this, in 1868, Laura de Force Gordon and Anna Dickinson had attempted a series of lectures on the subject, and Mrs. Stevens, through her interest in the Mercury, had published articles in favor of equal suffrage.

In 1870 these women, assisted by Mrs. J. M. Snow, formed the State Suffrage society, and the work began to take definite form. During that same year Mrs. Gordon, who was a gifted orator, made an extensive tour through the state, delivering lectures, and later, with Mrs. Emily Pitts Stevens, attended the inaugural suffrage convention held at Battle Mountain, Nev. In 1871 Mrs. Gordon extended her tour to embrace both Oregon and Washington territory, traveling mostly by stage, and making one night stops at small, out of the way places. While lecturing in Seattle she received news of her nomination by the independent party of San Joaquin county for the office of state senator.

Forthwith, she hastened back to California and boldly began her senatorial campaign, although her eligibility for the office was hotly disputed on all sides. The novel campaign attracted wide attention, and in the end Mrs. Gordon received as many as 200 votes from "good, regular male voters," and scored a signal triumph for the woman's cause.

In 1871, this same year, came what was termed the first big suffrage "boom" in California, owing to the presence of the two distinguished pioneers from the east, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, whose eloquent speeches brought out the first real crowds that had attended any of the suffrage gatherings.

innovation suggested by these suffragists was, indeed, too radical to meet with marked approval. Still, no strong anti-suffrage feeling seems to have been aroused in California in the early days. In truth, all the suffrage pioneers in the state were scarcely sufficient in number to give the movement any great prominence. Petitions were annually presented to the legislature without avail, and speeches were made at stated intervals. Meanwhile, however, the struggle for educational and professional advantages for women was meeting with hearty support on all sides. "The ballot—no!" proclaimed the legislators who were forced to puzzle their brains over the problem. "But educational advantages—yes! Why not?"

Withal, it was a hard fought battle in which the women came out victorious only after repeated effort. Bettie Tator, Laura de Force Gordon and Clara S. Foltz, California's pioneer women lawyers, made a test case of their own individual needs and were largely instrumental in bringing about the passage of what was termed the "woman lawyer bill," drafted by Mrs. Foltz in 1877. It was through these same women that the following clauses were later incorporated in the new state constitution: "Article 11, section 18. No person shall be debarred admission to any of the collegiate departments of the state university on account of sex." "Article 20, section 18. No person shall, on account of sex, be disqualified from entering upon or pursuing any lawful business, vocation or profession."

of so called "fanatics," who, "aiming at the skies," had verily shot beyond the housetops. Thoroughly encouraged by what they had already accomplished, the little band of workers set about making more strenuous efforts to educate the public up to an appreciation of their main motives in striving for the ballot. Already many of their recruits were engaged in journalistic work, and well written suffrage propaganda was soon flooding the papers. A few years later Hon. Leland Stanford and his wife, Jane Lathrop Stanford, gave public expression to their favorable attitude toward the woman's cause. Governor Stanford, in a letter relating to the management of the university, gave further emphasis to their views:

"We deem it of first importance that the education of both sexes shall be equally full and complete, varied only as nature dictates. The rights of one sex political and other are the same as those of the other sex, and this equality of sex ought to be fully recognized." For a number of years the suffrage movement centered in San Francisco and the surrounding counties, though individual workers did excellent service in other parts of the state. Clarina Howard Nichols of Mendocino county was early termed one of the ablest women in the reform; Eliza Farnham of Santa Cruz had made a host of converts in her own vicinity, while Mrs. Sarah Wallis of Santa Clara county and Mrs. Sarah Knox Goodrich of San Jose were almost militant in their efforts to advance the interests of the cause throughout the state. In 1885 the first woman's suffrage association of southern California was organized in Los Angeles under the

leadership of Mrs. Elizabeth A. Kingsbury, Mrs. Margaret V. Longley and Mrs. Alice Moore McComas. In 1892 the southern California woman's parliament was organized, while other minor clubs and leagues began to spring up like mushrooms all over the state. The adoption of equal suffrage by Colorado in 1893 gave fresh impetus to the California movement. The same year witnessed the forming of the equal suffrage league of San Francisco, the young woman's suffrage club, the political equality club of Alameda county, the Portia law club, with Mrs. Foltz, dean, and the woman's federation.

In 1894 came the great woman's congress, one of the most brilliant women's conventions ever held in San Francisco, contributed to, as it was, by the genius of the leaders in the movement, including Susan B. Anthony herself and the Rev. Anna Shaw. At the national American convention, held in Washington, D. C., in 1896, Miss Shaw paid glowing tribute to the California workers in her report: "The woman's congress at San Francisco was the most marvelous gathering I ever saw. The newspapers said the men were hypnotized, or they would not stand on a sidewalk two hours to get into a church. Every subject considered during the whole week, whether it was the care of children or the decoration of the home,

turned on the ballot for women, and Susan B. Anthony was the belle of the ball. The superintendent of San Francisco closed the schools that Miss Anthony might address the 900 teachers. We went the whole length of the state and the meetings were just as enthusiastic." This congress was the forerunner of the tremendous campaigns of 1895 and 1896, when the women of California so nearly gained full suffrage by an amendment to the constitution. Early in the autumn Miss Anthony and Miss Shaw returned from the east to lend their further aid to California workers, and enthusiasm ran high all over the state. Mrs. Ellen C. Sargent, who has succeeded Mrs. Nellie Holbrook Blinn to the presidency of the state association, flung open the doors of her beautiful home, and there the suffrage workers made their headquarters for three months. Mrs. Blinn, already prominent as a lecturer for the republican party, was a tireless worker and a vigorous campaigner throughout the long, tedious siege. In February Dr. Elizabeth Sargent, Mrs. Sargent's daughter, and Miss Lucy E. Anthony arranged a series of two days' conventions in every county in the state.

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The women's magnificent campaign drew to an abrupt close in the fall of 1896, and the amendment was submitted to a vote of the people. Thus ended the chapter gravely, for the measure was defeated. There were 247,454 votes cast; 110,355 for; 137,099 against; defeated by 26,744. It was defeated mainly by the vote of San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. All subsequent efforts to obtain suffrage for women in California—even school suffrage—have been lamentably unsuccessful. But for all that, the work goes steadily on. It may be written now that, "Once a suffragist, always an optimist." Susan B. Anthony's slogan, "Failure is impossible," is the creed by which her followers live. Perhaps not today; but always tomorrow! So they who know, and they who understand, will tell you that the fifth star on the woman's flag will stand for California.

Mrs. Ellen C. Sargent, the venerable honorary president of the California Equal Suffrage association, will tell you that organized work was never in better shape in the state than it is today. Mrs. Mary Simpson Sperry, president of the same organization, speaks as glowingly of the prospects for woman suffrage all over the United States. Her work is just now confined mainly to getting signatures to the mammoth petition that is later to be presented to congress by the national organization. Strong suffrage societies exist in all the bay cities and throughout the state. Since every county in the state organization gave a majority for the amendment in 1896, Los Angeles county leading with 4,600, the suffrage workers are especially enthusiastic in that section. The majority of the leagues and clubs are affiliated with the state organization, though a few are independent. A notable organization among these latter is the Wage Earners' suffrage league, which is quite an independent organization. It was formed last September by a body of women interested in the trade union movement. "There are 3,000 union women in San Francisco," states Miss Maud Younger of the executive board, "and these are the backbone of the suffrage movement." The league has 10 cent dues, and aims at a large enrollment of members. The president is

Mrs. E. H. O'Donnell. Other officers are Mrs. Will J. French, Miss Louise le Rue and Mrs. L. A. Bickell. Owing to the work it is accomplishing, interest is just now centered in the College and Professional Woman's Equal Suffrage league, which was organized in Boston. Since higher education for women is the direct result of the steadfast agitation of the early suffragists, the members of this league only pay their pioneers just tribute in now espousing their cause. President Carrie Thomas of Bryn Mawr, is president of the league, and among its distinguished workers is Mrs. Maud Wood Park, who graduated from Radcliff in '88. She has been especially interested in organizing most of the 25 or more branches of the league established in various states. Two branches of the league have been formed in California by Mrs. Park, covering the northern and southern sections of the state. Miss Fannie W. McLean is president of the northern branch, which this year established two undergraduate sections, one at Stanford and one at the University of California. Other officers of the league are Mrs. Walter Starr, Mrs. Caroline Jackson, Mrs. Alexander Morrison, Mrs. Charles Slack, Mrs. Frank P. Deering and Dr. Adelaide Brown.

Suffrage work throughout America has all been along more or less conservative lines—too conservative, claim some of the more ardent agitators, who have a yearning toward the militant methods employed by the English suffragettes. Despite the vigorous campaigning and splendid organization of the various societies, women in California possess no form of suffrage whatever. But your true suffrage worker does not brood—she merely works and waits. The officers in the state association besides Mrs. Sperry, the president, are Mrs. Mary M. Keith, Mrs. Shelly Tator, Mrs. Francis P. Fierco, Mrs. Nellie L. Scoville, Mrs. Coffin, Mrs. Ella Mitchell, Mrs. Adelaide Ballard and Mrs. Alma Kover. The honorary presidents are Mrs. Sargent, Mrs. Savanosa, Mrs. Rebecca Spring and Dr. David Starr Jordan. The equal suffrage league of San Francisco, a local organization, has for its president Mrs. Mary T. Gamage. In the Susan B. Anthony club, Fanny Kellogg has recently succeeded Nellie Holbrook Blinn, who resigned at the beginning of the year. The Political Equality club of Alameda county is the largest organization of its kind on the coast. Many other suffrage clubs and leagues too numerous to mention are to be found in all portions of the state.

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