NELLIE BLY WITH THE FEMALE SUFFRAGISTS.

Attends Their Washington Convention, Reports Their Sayings and Doings and Discovers that Dress Reform Ideas Are Popular with the Women Who Want the Ballot.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY PRESIDES AND CRACKS SEVERAL JOKES.

Laws Governing Husband and Wife the Subject of Animated Discourse by the Suffragists, Few of Them Are Between the Ages of 18 and 25—One Man Spoke and Another Man's Hat Used to Take Up the Collection.

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE CONVENTION AT WASHINGTON.

(Special to The World.)

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25.—I pushed in the swinging door, noticing as I did that it was covered with yellow canton flannel, and stood within the Church of Our Father.

I had an instant impression of many women, standing in groups and seated in pews; a great mingling of voices in busy conversation and the flutter of yellow. I felt frightened and confused. Then I saw very clearly a sweet, smiling face, a face so untroubled, of such happy repose, that I ceased to fear.

"Will you tell me, please," I begun, "where can I sit so I can hear everything?"

"Are you . delegate?" she asked, kindly.

"No. I represent a newspaper," I answered.

"What paper?" she inquired.

"The New York World," I said.

"Oh!" she ejaculated. Then added: "Come with me. There are tables for the newspaper people down front, and I will find a place for you. You can hear and see everything there."

I followed her down the centre aisle of the church, which inclines like a theatre. Before the elevated platform were two plain tables. Two women and two men reporters sat around one. A woman sat alone at the other. My guide touched the solitary woman on the shoulder.

"Mrs. Colby," she said, as the woman turned. "Here is a representative of The World."

Mrs. Colby smiled a welcome and pulled out a chair for me to take. My guide, who proved to be Mrs. Jeannette M. Bradley, of Washington, smiled and left me.

Feeling quite at ease after this evidence of kindness and consideration, I very leisurely looked about me.

What the Convention Looked Like.

Before me was the platform. On it was a small table, evidently for the President, a little desk for the Secretary and some dozen chairs, mostly back upholstered in plush that formed a loft for an organ. A large flag looking very strangely with only three stars on it was draped across the projection. A small palm at either side of the platform and a vase of lilies and pinks on the Secretary's desk was the extent of the floral decorations.

Back of me the church was filled with women. Every pew was crowded, and from the slender rods fastened at the ends of the pews hung, like flags of distress, limp and ragged yellow pennants. The names of the different States were printed on them, and the delegates were expected to sit where their State was indicated.

The first thing I learned was that woman suffragists do not differ in one respect from women of lesser ambitions. The hour of the meeting was announced for 10 o'clock. And it was exactly 10.20 when the President, Susan B. Anthony, appeared upon the platform.

She wore a black silk dress and a white knitted shawl around her shoulders. Her head was bare, and her gray hair was parted in the middle and combed very smoothly down over her ears. Susan Anthony's face is thin, but it shows strength in its firm chin and strong, square jaw.

From a black cloth bag she laid upon the table she took a pair of spectacles, and while rubbing them with her handkerchief she stepped forward to the reporters' table.

"Boys," she called, smiling, "I want you to look up here. I got a present this morning." Some one sent me this white shawl."

She turned around, that they might have a good view of it, and seemed quite pleased.

But the reporters, men and women, began to beat the table with their pencils and to shout noisily:

"Red shawl! Red shawl! Red shawl!"

"Red shawl it shall be then," Susan Anthony said to humor them.

A red cashmere shawl hung over the back of her chair, and some one told me later that the red shawl and Susan Anthony had been inseparable for years, and that it had been spoken of so often that she had finally changed for a while one that she was wearing for the first time. I noticed she took off the white one, but later she put it on again.

This little business being attended to, the President turned to the convention by rapping upon her table.

"Delegates will please get their seats under their respective States," she said. "I am late," she added, "because the hackman said I'd get here sooner if I rode. And I rode!"

Various Sorts of New Women.

Laura Clay, of Kentucky, daughter of Cassius M. Clay, jr., led the convention in prayer. She rose to her feet and with eyes closed prayed, but the audience remained seated.

Then the Recording Secretary, Alice Stone Blackwell, read the proceedings of the previous day. She had a cold, sympathetic voice and wore frightful clothes. She wore a broadcloth coat of a style fully six years old. It was double-breasted, with two rows of enormous pearl buttons. And her black cashmere skirt was shocking. I never saw a skirt hang worse or one more badly made. It was short and showed her common-sense shoes, which was fair to look upon, but I know that it must have jarred upon the sensitive souls of those in front. And I judged without hesitation that Alice Stone Blackwell does not believe in confining the waist or encouraging any one part of the human body to a greater development than the other.

I never could see any reason for a woman to neglect her appearance merely because she is intellectually inclined. It certainly does not show any strength of mind. I take it rather as a weakness. And in working for a cause I think it is wise to show the men that its influence does not make women any the less attractive.

Alice Stone Blackwell is an able woman mentally. She is the editor of the Woman's Journal of Boston. In the evening Miss Blackwell put on a red silk waist and, though it was worn with the same atrocious skirt, she was so improved that I did not recognize her.

Rev. Anna H. Shaw, of Philadelphia, Vice-President-at-Large, sat on the right of the stage, watching the proceedings with smiling eyes. She is a little dumpling of a woman, filled with good nature and a quick and pleasing wit. Her clothes fit her and are refined and genteel. She wore a tailor-made suit of dark green cloth and a wee bonnet on her gray head that tied with black velvet ribbons under her double chin.

The President read letters and telegrams from different States and balanced on her toes and heels all the time she stood. At the conclusion a tall woman advanced to the front of the platform and was introduced by the President as Mrs. Emma Smith De Voe.

She was one of my flight-hand girls up in South Dakota," Susan Anthony added, as she laid her hand fondly on Mrs. De Voe's shoulder.

Did She Begredge It to Her Husband?

Mrs. De Voe read a report, of which I only recall one sentence.

"The time and labor, if given to any other man than her husband, would bring her money."

Susan Anthony smiled at this and made some remark to those around her.

Nothing is unimportant at this Woman's Suffrage Convention. So I beg to note that had Mrs. De Voe been a man she would not have spoken with her hat on. It was a large black hat, with plumes on it, very becoming, I acknowledge, but in striving to gain rights held selfishly by men it might be well to copy some of their few good points.

After the letters were read some woman rose and moved that the Secretary be instructed to write letters of greeting to all who had sent messages, and the motion was so ordered. Some one amended, and so many got up and sat down again, that I was completely lost and gave up all attempt to keep track of the matter.

Women's Parliamentarians.

This is what I caught and I give it for what it may be worth:

"Madam President, I would like to make a motion." "Madam President, I request that motion be reduced to writing." "Madam President, I would like to suggest that the matter be left to the discretion of the Chair." (Susan Anthony whispers to woman back of her regardless of the speakers. At last she turns.) "Mrs. Thompson seconded the motion—" the President said. "That was Mrs. Marble, and not Mrs. Thompson," corrected a woman. "Oh, that's all right," the President replied, up moved. "Madam President." "I've got one more, if you'll just wait, Miss Clay," said the President. (Then reads letter from Mrs. Houston, Texas.)

This was followed by a woman, whose name I did not hear, reading a paper. She was very plump, was dressed in black satin and wore a badge.

"Mr. President and friends," she began in a loud voice. She read of the work of a club and then finished up by saying:

"We women have a sort of fellow-feeling for those Cubans. We know what it is to have no voice; what it is to be taxed three or four times as much as men. I know women whose farms are taxed twice as much as the farms of men adjoining theirs. We can sympathize with the Cubans in wanting some rights."

The next speaker was from Michigan I gathered from one thing she said.

Michigan's Great Place for Men.

"In Michigan married women don't own their own clothes. They belong, with everything else, to the husband. If you live in Michigan and are going to part with your husband, try to get your good clothes out of the house first. If you don't, they'll help him to get a new wife."

Some women said "Ah!" surprisedly, some smiled and some looked blankly indifferent, but they were mainly the women from Michigan.

Stretch your imagination and picture a man introducing a speaker and then calling attention to the pin in his hat and telling what kind and how many he had at home. You can't! Neither can I. That's why I prefer a woman's convention. It is not so humiliating, so spicy and unique and, heaven knows, improved. For if there is anything stupid in this world it is a political convention. I believe that's the only kind they have to themselves.

Charlotte Perkins Stetson has a long name, a large vocabulary, a good voice, an attractive smile and magnificent thinking faculties. She hails from California.

I never remember hearing a more pleasant speaker. She certainly should be a walking delegate for the association.

She told how the Suffrage Club had been formed in California and what great progress it had made. She said after their first Congress the men on the coast declared they had no idea women were so intelligent.

As I looked at Mrs. Stetson I mourned. She has an ideal face, clear cut and poetic. She parts her hair and combs it smoothly back over her ears, which is a very becoming style for her.

But oh, how she dresses! I fear she is daft on dress reform or some other abomination. She was decidedly wilder at the waist than she was broad. We did not need to be told that she was corsetless, and, I fear, petticoatless! Her suit was a mud-colored cloth, the waist being low-necked and sleeveless, and the short skirt skimming every way but prettily.

With her high-bred and dainty face, Mrs. Stetson could have preached suffrage to all men and won favor if she only dressed becomingly.

In the matter of style, man's convention is the better off.

Suffrage Finances.

Mrs. Harriet Taylor Upton read the Treasurer's report. She said that the National Association had paid all its debts and had $300 to the good.

"That isn't so bad. We're not bankrupt," observed the President aloud.

Mrs. Upton brought a blackboard to the front of the stage, saying it had little black on it and that it belonged to the church, and from it she read the following table, showing which five States had contributed the most money to the association:

1897.		1898.	
New York	$142.50	New York	$155.50
Utah	102.30	Utah	107.00
Massachusetts	75.30	Massachusetts	76.20
Ohio	63.70	Colorado	64.00
Illinois	60.00	Ohio	61.00
		1896.	
New York	$160.00	New York	$170.70
Ohio	150.00	Massachusetts	115.00
Massachusetts	85.10	Pennsylvania	68.00
Illinois	65.00	Ohio	61.00
Pennsylvania	45.50	Illinois	60.00

Then I discovered the meaning of the three stars on the woman suffrage flag. They represent Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, the three States that have granted women the right to vote.

This report brought on a heated discussion of money and how money should be sent to the National Association. The dues are 50 cents a year, and 25 cents of this belongs to the National Association.

When one hears the women talk about being difficult to collect the dues and one realizes that it less than a cent a week, one feels that woman cannot be given suffrage too soon, or anything that will make her less the slave of poverty.

Miss Anthony and the New Man.

"I remember," said Susan B. Anthony, when this long and dreary discussion of money was ended, "that my father was once on a train and a man approached him and said: 'Are you the father of Susan B. Anthony?' He said the tables were turned. Women used to be the daughters of men, and now men were only daughters' fathers. You all know Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, our organization Chairman. Well, Mrs. Catt's husband is going to read a paper to us. It is the first time, I wish to add, that the husband of any of our women has appeared upon our platform. He is a specimen of the new man."

This announcement caused great laughter and hearty applause, during which Mr. Catt stepped to the front of the stage. He is a mild-looking man, with a brown mustache and straight collar. He wore a cutway and a four-in-hand scarf. He read a paper on the suffrage of women in Utah.

I could not see that he was one whit better, or, indeed, as good, as the majority of the women speakers. I had noted their stiffness of movement, but Mr. Catt was no better.

The women listened very attentively, and kept nodding her head in approval. Women in the audience got restless, and some moved about, whispering to each other.

The oldest woman in the audience was probably seventy-five. The youngest was six. She was in the gallery, and the desire to vote did not worry her very much. She spent her time straddling over the backs of benches, having a sort of a hurdle race all of herself.

A Request to the Association.

Mrs. Upton returned to say she had forgotten that Mrs. Doane, of Connecticut, has had Massachusetts added to the National Association. This did not rouse any feeling of gratitude that I could perceive, though the burden of debt may be lessened by it.

"Tell all rich women about to die to go and do likewise, only more so," commented the President, dryly.

Rev. Anna Shaw showed she could think of things physical as well as spiritual by announcing a place near by where luncheon could be had for 20 cents. The announcement was received with murmurs of approval.

A call was made for Mrs. Catt, and she was found whispering to another woman. However, she was drawn upon the stage, and then had to ask what she was there for.

"I guess it is to know if you agree with your husband," said the President, dryly, but another woman whispered to Mrs. Catt, who seemed at last to understand.

"This is apart from my husband," she said. "It is my own private business."

"The matter turned out to be something about the laws governing husband and wife. Mrs. Catt suggested employing a lawyer to tell them.

It was rather interesting to know that there were women lawyers, doctors and dentists among the delegates. There were editors, one an Assistant Attorney-General and one wife of a Governor, Mrs. Hughes, of Arizona. There was one colored delegate, Miss Lumkins, of Virginia. I don't think I saw one woman there between the ages of 18 and 25.

The afternoon session was devoted to instructions and suggestions on organization. There were fewer people present than in the morning. There were two solitary men in the gallery this time and a Quaker woman. A very old man, with snowy hair, came late and walked carefully down the aisle until he found the name of the State he wished to sit under. Rev. Anna Shaw came in beaming and carrying a large bouquet of pink and white roses.

The elderly man got up and said: "Mme. President," and she replied, "Mr. Ruser".

"I wish to suggest that it is a good thing to find out what portion of taxes are paid by women. In Philadelphia it is 23 per cent. in some wards. When this fact was told to some men they said, 'Why, if that's so, women should have some voice in matters.' It strikes them every time."

Club Talk of All Sorts.

Mrs. Addison, of Kansas, rose to say that clubs could not be financial success unless if they were social success. Rev. Shaw said so many good suggestions were made, but would be forgotten, because women had no paper or pencil. The old white-haired man rose to say that they should have a stenographer to take everything down. The colored delegate rose to ask how to select a name for a local club. Mrs. Johns said that informal meetings led to irreverent talk and gossip.

Dr. Cora Smith Eaton came from North Dakota. She was a very nice looking little thing and quite unassuming. She brought trouble upon herself by rising in the rear of the church to tell how the club in North Dakota had raised money.

"It is not money is a topic of such absorbing interest that she was immediately called on by all the delegates to come forward to the platform and explain how the money was secured.

"The ladies of North Dakota raised it by giving a ladies' minstrel show," she explained, as she stood diffidently upon the platform, her hands clasped behind her. "We blackened our faces and gave a minstrel show, and oh! it was so popular! The receipts were $800, and we had $200 net. The ladies hated to advertise themselves, so we called it The Daughters of Ham. The part first was a minstrel show; the second part a plantation scene. It was very, very comical. In part III. we had the Highland fling, and part IV. was a cake walk. Oh! it was very funny!"

Everybody roared with laughter and whispered to her neighbor.

"Madame President!" said a cold voice and in such great contrast was it to Miss Eaton's fresh, frank tones that we all turned to look.

A woman in deep mourning was standing. Her face was grim with displeasure.

"Madame President!" she continued sternly, "do you think a minstrel show stamps us with dignity. The Woman Suffragists should not do anything that will cause reflection to be made upon them. A minstrel show is rowdyism and lowers us."

Dr. Eaton quivered under this bitter attack, but she endeavored to rally.

"Well, that's the question," she said. "It brought us up, instead of lowering us."

"Madame President!" exclaimed another woman, "I've known churches to do the same for money, and their dignity didn't suffer."

Was It Unladylike?

"If you got the money, that's the main thing," the woman in mourning agreed at last when Mrs. Rachel Foster Avery rose to say she thought minstrel shows dangerous for Woman's Suffrage clubs.

"I should be sorry to see minstrels taken up," said another woman in black. "It hurts our dignity; but my roommate, Dr. Swift, suggested a good idea to get money."

"We had an Australian ballot," explained Dr. Swift in answer to the call. "We cleared over $49 net and considered we did not lose our dignity, and were instructing people in the way to vote. We sold tickets that cost five cents a ticket, and we could vote as often as we pleased."

That statement amused everybody, and for a few moments the church rang with laughter.

Then the woman in mourning rose again and said solemnly:

"Woman suffragists must follow on cautious lines. I suggest that they devote themselves to literary and intellectual debates."

It had grown late in the afternoon, and Mrs. Catt said that other business would be set aside, as there were some girls present who belonged to the High School and wanted to form a club of their own.

A name for the club was the first consideration. "Equal Suffrage, Jr.," suggested one at last. "High School Suffrage" was at last decided on. "Woman's Suffrage Club" was going to be chosen, when little Ethel Diggs said quickly:

"But the constitution says there is no distinction as to sex. How then can we call it a woman's club?"

The "Equal Suffrage Association" was agreed upon, and the work of electing officers was going on when the woman in mourning who had denounced Dr. Eaton's minstrel show came rushing in excitedly.

"I want to let you know," she said emphatically, "that my purse is gone. I missed it when I got to the door. It is easy to be mistaken, so I thought I would go to my hotel first to see if I had left it on my table. But I hadn't. I've come back. It is a little brown purse, and had $19 in bills and some silver in it."

Every woman present felt for her own purse and then looked rather unpityingly upon the woman in mourning.

"It is so easy to be mistaken," she repeated, as if she knew where the purse was, if she only made the break to tell. "I had it here, I sat in this pew right here, and now it's gone."

She got the janitor, and with several sympathizing women around her she went towards the door talking loudly and wildly regardless of the interruption to the proceedings.

I had thought the day's proceedings rather stupid, and I had not been fond of the unique manner in which it had been conducted. It would have had little interest for me.

At the Evening Session.

But the evening was great. Excepting a few dreary spots, it bubbled with freshness.

The meeting was set for 8 o'clock. I got there ten minutes after, and the church was packed to the doors. There were plenty of men present, and they seemed interested, and the women, old and young, homely and pretty, were all attention.

Charlotte Perkins Stetson had just been introduced by the President, who was looking very sweet in a black silk dress, with a white silk vest in her bodice matched her snowy hair. Across her knee lay a bunch of pink and white roses.

She talked well and pleased the audience. I wonder if she can realize how much more would be her power if she dressed well.

She was telling about California.

"There is no place so good to live in," she declared. "You come down in the morning and blow your cold fingers and look at the roses to comfort you. Our children out there get clean dirt and lots of it."

"Once," she continued, "men in public, fashionable places took in a clothes-line and would throw up their hats and cheer if they saw women hang clothes upon it. There are some men who would be shocked if women didn't wear so many clothes.

Mrs. Diggs, of Kansas.

Mrs. Diggs, of Kansas, whom Miss Anthony called "little Mrs. Diggs," spoke to refute the stories that had been circulated as to the number of Denver women on election day. Her dress was well made and she had a pathetic little voice and her hair was dressed becomingly, so that Mrs. Diggs created a very favorable impression. She was a good speaker, being distinct and impressive.

"I am an American citizen," she said, "and how can I sit passively while my rights when in my veins is the same blood that was in the veins of him who died? Well win the battle as Joan of Stark sleeps a widow to-night!"

Bulging sleeves prevailing and curious fashion followed by the women speakers. They all had large handkerchiefs stuck under the edge of their waists. I really believe women will never be emancipated until they abolish the handkerchief from sight. It suggests tears and weakness, and it gives the innocent view looks as if it were in constant demand.

Mrs. Margaret W. Kent, of Delaware, read a paper in a very wee, unemotional voice.

Delaware Not Silent.

"Rather than have Delaware silent, I'll speak," she said. "But I've the association's last-born child, and you can't expect it to be very strong yet. Don't think I'm the President. I'm not. I am sorry the President is not here, as I suppose she'll go equally sorry before I get through. We're a conservative State. Delaware is proud of it and boasts of it. Webster says conservatism is opposition to change. That's what's wrong with us. We've one thing to be proud of—Delaware was the first State to join the Constitution of the United States. And it was the last to complete the link of the Woman's Suffrage Association. We are the missing link."

Mrs. Springer, of Illinois, claimed she didn't know that she was expected to speak, which she wanted to do from the rear of the church, but vigorous cries of "Platform!" from everywhere brought her front.

She explained how the Illinois women had gained rights through the Republicans by going to congressional districts pealing to them. She said she didn't favor one party, but thought it legitimate to work any of them to gain the end in view.

"I don't think," Miss Anthony said dryly, as Mrs. Springer left the stage, "that any of us will be taking to-day's Yankee guess as to Mrs. Springer's politics."

Mrs. Devoe began to read a paper on how to get people to attend the lectures, when Mrs. Catt stopped her.

"We had that yesterday, when you were absent," she said.

"But I want to tell about my bonfire," urged Mrs. Devoe. "One way to advertise a meeting after you get in a town one night only to find it had not been announced. I began to wonder how people knew their meeting. I was said by skyrockets, but there were none in my town. So I had a bonfire, a large bonfire on three hills, and the people came from miles around to see what was wrong. I never had a larger audience."

"We heard about this for a full hour yesterday, Mrs. Catt said sternly.

"I'm sorry you won't let me tell how I did it," said Mrs. Devoe. "Once I had a boy with a bell, to go out and cry 'Go to the lecture!'"

Mrs. Reese was encouraged to proceed, so Mrs. Reese rose, saying slowly: "We get money just as must have a large audience. The Republicans gave us first in Pittsburg they sent two men down to Wheeling, W. Va., to speak there. They held a meeting, but it was attended only by the Chairman, the President and the Secretary. The Secretary read his report and said they had a large and respectable meeting. I wouldn't say that, John," said the President; "there were only two selves here." "Well," says John, "you are large and respectable." The report was published and the next night the place was packed."

Everybody laughed heartily at this.

Mrs. Kate B. Addison, of Kansas, is a

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