



"I WAS BORN TO MAKE BARRELS, BUT THEY WOULDN'T LET ME"

Address to the American Equal Rights Association

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It follows the full text transcript of Frances D. Gage's *Address to the AERA*, delivered at the first anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association, held at the Church of the Puritans, New York - May 9 and 10, 1867.

Transcript according to H.M. Parkhurst's phonographic report - Library of Congress.

First Day - Morning Session



I have but little to say because it is almost 2 o'clock, and hungry and weary people are not good listeners to speeches. I shall confine my remarks therefore to one special point brought up this morning and not fully discussed.

Sojourner Truth gave us the whole truth in about fifteen words:

"If I am responsible for the deeds done in my body, the same as the white male citizen is, I have a right to all the rights he has to help him through the world."

I shall speak for the slave woman at the South. I have always lifted my voice for her when I have spoken at all. I will not give up the slave woman into the hands of man, to do with her as he pleases hereafter. I know the plea that was made to me in South Carolina, and down in the Mississippi valley. They said, "You give us a nominal freedom, but you leave us under the heel of our husbands, who are tyrants almost equal to our masters."

The former slave man of the South has learned his lesson of oppression and wrong of his old master; and they think the wife has no right to her earnings. I was often asked, "Why don't the Government pay my wife's earnings to me?" When acting for the Freedman's Aid Society, the orders came to us to compel marriage, or to separate families. I issued the order as I was bound to do, as General Superintendent of the Fourth Division under General Saxton. The men came to me and wanted to be married, because they said if they were married in the church, they could manage the women, and take care of their money, but if they were not married in the church the women took their own wages and did just as they had a mind to. But the women came to me and said, "We don't want to be married in the church, because if we are our our husbands will whip the children and whip us if they want to; they are no better than old masters."

The biggest quarrel I had with the colored people down there, was with a plantation man because I would not furnish a nurse for his child. "No, Nero," said I, "I cannot hire a nurse for your child while Nancy works in the cotton field." "But what is we to do? I'se a poor miserable man and can't work half the time, and Nancy is a good strong hand; and we must have a nurse." He went away in utter disgust, and declared to the people outside that I had got the miserablest notion he had ever heard, to spoil a good field hand like his Nancy to nurse her own baby.

We were told the other day by Wendell Phillips, upon the Anti-Slavery platform, that it takes people forty years to outgrow an old idea. And he proved to us, if his silver words are good for anything, that it took five years to outgrow old ideas. The slave population of the South is not yet removed a hundred years from the barbarism of Africa, where women have no rights, no privileges, but are trampled under foot in all the savagism of the past. And the slave man has looked on to see his master will everything as he willed, and he has learned the lesson from his master.

Mr. Higginson told us that the slave-master never understood the slave. I know that to be the fact. Neither do men understand woman to-day, because she has always been held subservient to him. Now it is proposed to give manhood the suffrage, in all these Southern States, and to leave the poor slave woman bound under the ban of the direct curse of slavery to him who is the father of her children.

It is decreed upon all the statute books of slavery that the child shall follow the condition of the mother. That has been the decree from the beginning of this awful slave system; that the whitest woman, the child of a slave mother, whose hair curled down to her waist, and whose blue eyes of beauty were a lure to the Statesman of the South, should be a slave, though the Governor of the State were her

father. Are you to leave her there yet, and desecrate marriage, by making it such a bond of slavery that the woman shall say, "I do not want to be married to suffer oppression!" Are you to force prostitution and wrong upon those people by these unjust laws?" Are you to compel wickedness and crime? Are you going to let it stand upon the statute books of the southern States that the only woman free to work for her own child shall be the mother of illegitimate children? That is the consequence of what you are doing to the people who in all time past, since they have lived upon this continent, have been denied the right of sacred marriage; and who must have, as Wendell Phillips tell us, forty years to outgrow the past, or to educate them.

We are told by Mr. Phillips to flood the South with spelling-books. Who is to carry them there? Who, to-day, is teaching the southern people;--for I am talking now in behalf of the colored woman of the South, forgetting my own degradation. Who have carried the spelling-book to the South? The women of the North, gathering up their strength, have been sent down by all these great Societies to teach. The colored men of the South are to vote, while they deny the ballot to their teacher! It is said that women do not want to vote in this country. I tell you, it is a libel upon womanhood. I care not who says it. I am in earnest. They do want to vote. Fifty-two thousand pulpits in this country have been teaching women the lesson that has been taught them for centuries, that they must not think about voting. But when fifty-two thousand pulpits, or fifty-two thousand politicians, at the beginning of this war, lifted up their voices and asked of women, "Come out and help us," did they stand back? In every hamlet, in every village, in every cabin and every palace, in every home in the whole United States, they rose up and went to work. They worked for the government; they worked for the nation; they worked for their sons, their husbands, their fathers, their brothers, their friends. They worked night and day. Who found women to stand back when this great public opinion that had been crushing them so long and forbidding them to work, at last lifted itself up and said, "You may work?" (Applause.)

I have been travelling all winter long, with a few intervals of rest, talking not upon Equal Rights, but upon the subject of Temperance; and whenever I said to my crowded audiences that we must give to woman the right to vote that she may purify the nation of this great sin, there went up shouts and clapping of hands of men and women. They are ready for this work. What we want is to crystallize the public opinion of all ranks of society in its favor. There is great fear that if woman is allowed to vote, she will lose something of her high and excellent character. If it is right for woman to have the suffrage, it is not right to talk of expediency. If giving woman the ballot will cause her to lose her prestige, it is because she ought to lose it. If she gains physical strength, and loses that effeminate delicacy that provides for nothing and cares for nothing but its own selfish, quiet enjoyment, I shall rejoice with joy unspeakable. My strong hands have tilled the fields; and in my early childhood have harnessed the horse, and brought the wood to the door; have led him to the blacksmith's shop to be shod. These are things I do not often tell in public. I have braved public opinion; I have tilled my garden; I have brought myself up from fainting weakness occasioned by accident and broken bones. I have taken care of myself, supported myself, and asked nothing from the world; I find my womanhood not one bit degraded. (Applause.)

A thousand times in the last years, in this struggle for bread, have I been asked, "Why don't you let you sons support you?" My answer is, "My six sons have their own duties. My six boys have their own labors. God gives me strength to earn my own bread, and I will do it as long as I can." (Applause.)

That is what I want to teach the womanhood of the country. I did not mean to talk so long, but I assure you I talk in earnest. If I sometimes, by a slip of the tongue, make some little mistake--for I have not been educated in the schools, (a log cabin schoolhouse in the wilderness gave me all I have)--you will excuse me, for I mean no injustice to any one. And if to-night it will not crowd some better woman or man from the platform, I shall be glad to speak to you again.

Mrs. Mott:

The argument that has been made that women do not want to vote is like that which we had to meet in the early days of the Anti-Slavery enterprise that the slaves did not want to be free. I remember that in one of our earliest Woman's Rights Conventions, in Syracuse, the reply was made to this argument, that woman was not much to be blamed, because the power of the government and of the church, that was vested in man by the laws, made it impossible for woman to rise, just as it was impossible for the slave to rise while the chains were around him, and while the slaveholder's foot was upon his neck. The common and civil law of England made woman a cypher, and blotted out her civil existence upon her marriage. Blackstone, in his commentaries, says that the law made the husband and wife one person,

and that person the husband. This being the power of the husband over the wife, as established by law, that despotism followed which must ever be exercised, when power is vested in one over another, be it man or woman, to the great injury of the victim. The law had crushed woman; and the Church, supporting the law, had assumed that the bible forbade women from using her rights. And if she asked to be a religious teacher, the perversion of the words of Paul was presented to keep her back. When she became a wife, the Church stepped in, and asserted the authority of the husband, and made the wife acknowledge her inferiority and promise obedience to him. That extends down to the present time. That is the law of marriage now among the great body of religious professors in the land; and it is well for woman to know it. Until she can be brought to a sense of her natural and inalienable rights, to go forth and defend herself against these chains of society, she will be kept in this low state.

The resolution which was offered in Syracuse, as nearly as I remember it, was that as the assertion that the slave did not want his freedom, and would not take it if offered to him, only proved the depth of his degradation, so the assertion that woman had all the rights she wanted only gave evidence how far the influences of the law and customs, and the perverted application of the Scriptures, had encircled and crushed her. This was fifteen or twenty years ago. Times are altered since. In the Temperance reformation, and in the great reformatory movements of our age, woman's powers have been called into action. They are beginning to see that another state of things is possible for them, and they are beginning to demand their rights. Why should this church be granted for such a meeting as this, but for the progress of the cause? Why are so many women present, ready to respond to the most ultra and most radical sentiments here, but that woman has grown, and is able to assume her rights?

In regard to the remark of Mrs. Gage that by the want of the consecration of marriages by the Church, the sacred and holy ordinance of marriage is prostituted I wish to say that it does not follow that marriages unattended by religious ceremonies are therefore not true marriages. It is now two hundred years since George Fox took the ground, far in advance of the age in which he lived, that the parties themselves were sufficient for the marriage union; that marriage did not necessarily require either to be sanctified by the minister or legalized by the magistrate; but that the parties themselves, acknowledging the religious obligation of so sacred a union, were sufficient. And in that Society, the parties were at liberty to appoint their own time and place, and to invite such of their friends and neighbors as they wished to be present; then, in acknowledgment of the divine presence, their obligations to each other were announced, entirely reciprocal, with no assumption of authority on the one hand or promise of obedience on the other; but entire reciprocity, and a pledge of fidelity and affection until death should separate them. For two hundred years, the marriages in the Society of Friends thus conducted, have been held as sacred, the union has been as harmonious, and the management of the children as free from complaint, as any other marriages in the community. The Parliament of England, after a time, saw fit to legalize such marriages; and so in our own country do the laws of the several States.

In many of the States the laws have been so modified that the wife now stands in a very different position as regards the right of property and other rights, from that which she occupied fifteen or twenty years ago. You see the same advance in the literary world. I remember when Maria Edgeworth and her sister first published their works, that they were afraid to publish their own name, and borrowed the name of their father. So Frances Power Cobbe was not able to write under her own name, and she issued her "Intuitive Morals" without a name; and her father was so much pleased with the work, without knowing it was his daughter's, that it led to an acknowledgement after a while.

The objection has been made to me--"Here you assume equality and independence. Now, I feel dependent on my husband for everything." Women in our Society do not feel dependent for anything. There are independent themselves; and in the true relation of marriage the husband and wife will be equal. Let woman be properly educated; let her physically, intellectually and morally be properly developed; and then, in the marriage relation, in spite of law and custom and religious errors, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal.

I was delighted with the remarks made in our Anti-Slavery meeting by our friend Durant, that the conscience, and the sense of right in man, was the basis of law. The idea seemed rather new; but it occurred to me that our friend Burleigh told us that, twenty years ago. We were told, too, that when the work of the Anti-Slavery Society should be finished, there would still be work to do. And although Wendell Phillips is sensitive with regard to the introduction of this question upon the Anti-Slavery platform, adhering so strictly to the Constitution of that Society that he does not want anything attached to it of the other great reforms of the day which do not legitimately belong to it, I think we

shall find that he will continue to be as able an advocate for woman as he has been, and that he really does not lower our standard in any respect.

Stephen S. Foster:

Will you give us the evidence that the statement that the women of this country do not want the ballot is not true? I should be glad to believe that; but in my experience the worst opposition to the progress of Woman's Right has come from woman herself. The greatest indifference to the cause is to be found among women, and not among men. I wish it were not so. I hope I am mistaken. But I believe nine out of every ten of our public speakers will tell you that they find more help, more sympathy from men than from women.

Rev. S.J. May:

I should like to have that question settled, so far as the women present are concerned. Will as many of you as will vote when the right is awarded to you, please to manifest it by rising.

Nearly the whole of the ladies present immediately arose. Indeed, the reporter, from the platform, could not see a single lady who retained to seat.

Mrs. Gage:

During the last fifteen years, with the utmost industry I could use in ascertaining the public opinion in this country, I have never found one solitary instance of a woman, whom I could meet alone by her fireside, where there was no fear of public opinion, or the minister, or the law-maker, or her father, or her husband, who did not tell me she would like to vote. (Applause.)

I never found a slave in my life, who, removed from the presence of the people about him, would not tell me he wanted liberty--never one. I have been in the slave States for years. I have been in the slave-pens, and upon the plantations, and have stood beside the slave as he worked in the sugar cane and the cotton-field; and I never found one who dared in the presence of white men to say he wanted freedom. When women and young girls are asked if they want to vote, they are almost always in just that situation where they are afraid to speak what they think; and no wonder they so often say they do not want to vote.

[On motion, the meeting adjourned until 7 1/2 o'clock this evening.]

First Day - Evening Session

Mrs. President, it seems to be my fate to come in at the eleventh hour. We have been talking about the right to the ballot. Why do we want it? What does it confer? What will it give us? We closed our argument at three o'clock to-day by a discussion whether the women of this country and the colored men of this country wanted the ballot. I said that it was a libel on the womanhood of this country, to say they do not want it; and I repeat that assertion. Woman may say in public that she does not want it, because it is unpopular and unfashionable for her to want it; but when you tell her what the ballot can do, she will always answer you that she wants it. Why do we want it? Because it is right, and because there are wrongs in the community that can be righted in no other way.

After the discussions we have had to-night, I want to turn to a fresh subject. Last evening I attended the meeting of the National Temperance Association at Cooper Institute. A great audience was assembled there, to listen to the arguments against the most gigantic evil that now pervades the American Republic. Men took the position that only a prohibitory law could put an end to the great evil of intemperance. New York has its two hundred millions of invested capital to sell death and destruction to the men of this country who are weak enough to purchase. There are eight thousand licensed liquor establishments in this city, to drag down humanity. It was asserted there by Wendell Phillips that intemperance had its root in our Saxon blood, that demanded a stimulus; and he argued from that

standpoint. If intemperance has its root in the Saxon blood, that demands a stimulus, why is it that the womanhood of this nation is not at the grog-shops to-day? Are women not Saxons? It was asserted, both by Mr. Phillips and by President Hopkins, of Union College, that the liquor traffic must be regulated by law.

A man may do what he likes in his own house, said they; he may burn his furniture; he may take poison; he may light his cigar with his greenbacks; but if he carries his evil outside of his own house, if he increases my taxes, if he makes it dangerous for me or for my children to walk the streets, then it may be prohibited by law. I was at Harrisburg, a few days ago, at the State Temperance Convention. Horace Greeley asserted that there was progress upon the subject of temperance; and he went back to the time when ardent spirits were drunk in the household, when every table had its decanter, and the wife, children and husband drank together. Now, said he, it is a rare thing to find the dram-bottle in the home. It has been put out. But what put the dram-bottle out of the home? It was put out because the education and refinement and power of woman became so strong in the home, that she said, "It must go out; we can't have it here." (Applause.)

Then the voters of the United States, the white male citizens, went to work and licensed these nuisances that could not be in the home, at all the corners of the streets. I demand the ballot for woman to-day, that she may vote down these nuisances, the dram-shops, there also, as she drove them out of the home. (Applause.)

What privilege does the vote give to the "white male citizen" of the United States? Did you ever analyze a voter--hold him up and see what he was? Shall I give you a picture of him? Not as my friend Parker Pillsbury has drawn the picture to-night will I draw it. What is the "white male citizen"--the voter in the Republic of the United States? More than any potentate or any king in all Europe. Louis Napoleon dares not walk the streets of his own city without his bodyguard around him, with their bayonets. The Czar of Russia is afraid for his own life among his people. Kings and potentates are always afraid; but the "free white male citizen" of the United States, with the ballot in his hand, goes where he lists, does what he pleases. He owns himself, his earnings, his genius, his talent, his eloquence, his power, all there is of him. All that God has given him is his, to do with as he pleases, subject to no power but such laws as have an equal bearing upon every other man in like circumstances, and responsible to no power but his own conscience and his God. He builds colleges; he lifts up humanity or he casts it down. He is the lawgiver, the maker, as it were, of the nation. His single vote may turn the destiny of the whole Republic for good or ill. There is no link in the chain of human possibilities that can add one single power to the "white male citizen" of America.

Now we ask that you shall put into the hands of every human soul this same power to go forward and do good works wherever it can. The country has rung within the last few days because one colored girl, with a little black blood in her veins, has been cast out of the Pittsburg Methodist College. It ought to ring until such a thing shall be impossible. But when Cambridge, and Yale, and Union, and Lansing, and all the other institutions of the country, West Point included, aided by national patronage, shut out every woman and every colored man in the land, who has anything to say? There is not a single college instituted by the original government patronage of lands to public schools and colleges, that allows a woman to set her foot inside of its walls as a student. Is this no injustice? Is it no wrong?

When men stand upon the public platform and deliver elaborate essays on women and their right of suffrage, they talk about their weakness, their devotion to fashion and idleness. What else have they given women to do? Almost every profession in the land is filled by men; every college sends forth the men to fill the highest places. When the law said that no married woman should do business in her own name, sue or be sued, own property, own herself or her earnings, what had she to do? That laid the foundation for precisely the state of things you see to-day.

But I deny that, as a class, the women of America, black or white, are idle. We are always busy. What have we done? Look over this audience, go out upon your streets, go through the world where you will, and every human soul you meet is the work of woman. She has given it life; she has educated it, whether for good or evil. She it is that must lie at the foundation of your country, because God gave her the holiest mission ever laid upon the heart of a human soul--the mission of the mother.

We are told that home is woman's sphere. So it is, and man's sphere, too; for I tell you that that is a poor home which has not in it a man to feel that it is the most sacred place he knows. If duty requires him to go out into the world and fight its battles, who blames him, or puts a ban upon him? Men

complain that woman does not love home now, that she is not satisfied with her mission. I answer that this discontent arises out of the one fact, that you have attempted to mould seventeen millions of human souls in one shape, and make them all do one thing.

Take away your restrictions, open all doors, leave women at liberty to go where they will. As old Sojourner Truth said twenty years ago, at the first Women's Rights Convention in Ohio, "Leave them where God left them, with their inalienable rights," and they will adjust themselves to their convictions of their duties, their responsibilities, and their powers, and society will find harmony within itself. The caged bird forgets how to build its nest. The wing of the eagle is as strong to soar to the sun as that of her mate, who never says to her, "back, feeble one, to your nest, and there brood in dull inactivity until I give you permission to leave!" But when her duties called her there, who ever found her unfaithful to her trust? The foot of the wild roe is as strong and swift in the race as that of her antlered companion. She goes by his side, she feeds in the same pasture, drinks from the same running brook, but is ever true also to her maternal duties and cares.

If we are a nation of imbeciles, if womanhood is weak, it is the laws and customs of society which have made us what we are. If you want health, strength, energy, force, temperance, purity, honesty, deal justly with the mothers of this country; then they will give you nobler and stronger men than haggling politicians, or the grogshop emissaries that buy up the votes of your manhood.

Why is it that Republicans are so weak and wavering to-day? There is a law upon the statute book of every southern State that the child shall follow the condition of the mother. There is a law in the physical code of humanity, written by the finger of the Almighty, that never was and never will be repealed, that the child shall follow the condition of the mother. You have never taught the women of this country the sacredness of freedom. You have never called out the mother to generous action. You have never said to the motherhood of this country, "Upon you rests the responsibility of making the Republic what it should be. We invest you with the power; now assume that responsibility and act upon it, or we shall call you to account for your neglect of duty."

It has been charged upon woman that she does nothing well. What have you given us to do well? What freedom have you give us to act independently and earnestly? When I was in San Domingo, I found a little colony of American colored people that went ever there is 1825.

They retained their American customs, and especially their little American church, outside of the Catholic, which overspread the whole country. In an obscure room in an old ruin they sung the old hymns, and lived the old life of the United States. I asked how this thing was, and they answered that among those that went over so long ago were a few from Chester County, Penn., who were brought up among the Quakers, and had learned to read. Wherever a mother had learned to read, she had educated all her children so that they could read; but wherever there was a mother that could not read, that family had lapsed off from the old customs of the past.

Give us education. When we have a right to vote, there will not be a school-door in the United States shut to woman. When we have the right to vote, I believe that the womanhood that demanded that the dram-bottle should go out of the home, will demand that the dram-bottle shall be put away from among men. She will say, You have no right to take poison, and make my home a discomfort, or destroy the greenbacks, which should be the mutual possession of the household, by lighting your cigar. She will tell the world, under the new regime, that it is not the Saxon blood that demands a stimulant; but in the new morality it will be as wicked for a man to be drunken as for a woman to be drunken-- as disreputable for a man to be licentious as for a woman to be licentious-- as wicked and perverse for a man to go down to the lower depths of iniquity and folly as for a woman. And the great law uttered upon Sinai amid its thunders, will again be remembered, and will apply as much to man as to woman. Now, it is not so. One code of morality governs the voter, another the woman. As the slaveholder enacted laws that made his own vices crimes in the slave, so men enact laws that make their vices crimes in woman. And this is why we want suffrage for woman.

I ask the ballot, not because of its individual advantage to myself, but because I know and feel that individual rights, guaranteed to every citizen, must harmonize the world, if there is any power to do it this side of heaven. And so, not quite eighty years old, as old Sojourner said she was, but standing upon the brink of threescore, having looked this question in the face from my girlhood up-- having labored in almost every vocation in life that falls to the lot of womanhood, as a worker on the farm, a worker in the household, a wife, a mother, a seamstress, a cook-- and I tell you, my friends, that I can

make better biscuit than I can lectures-- as one who has tried to study what is for the best interest of society, I ask you candidly to survey this subject in all its bearings. Why may we not take our position as human beings enjoying all the privileges which the Creator bestowed, without restriction other than falls upon every other human being in the community?

A friend of mine, writing from Charleston the other day, just after the ballot went down there, says that he was told by a colored man, "I met my old master, and he bowed so low to me I didn't hardly know which was the negro and which was the white man." When we hold the ballot, we shall stand just there. Men will forget to tell us that politics are degrading. They will bow low, and actually respect the women to whom they now talk platitudes; and silly flatteries, sparkling eyes, rosy cheeks, pearly teeth, ruby lips, the soft and delicate hands of refinement and beauty, will not be the burden of their song; but the strength, the power, the energy, the force, the intellect and the nerve, which the womanhood of this country will bring to bear, and which will infuse itself through all the ranks of society, must make all its men and women wiser and better. (Applause.)

[The Association then adjourned until Friday morning, 10 1/2 o'clock.]

Second Day - Evening Session

It is not to-day as it was before the war. It is not to-day as it was before woman took her destiny in her hand and went out upon the battle-fields, and into the camp, and endured hunger and cold for the sake of her country. The whole country has been vitalized by this war. What if woman did not carry the bayonet on the battle-field? She carried that which gave more strength and energy. Travelling through Illinois, I saw the women bind the sheaf, bring in the harvest, and plow the fields, that men might fight the battles. When such women come up now and ask for the right of suffrage, who will deny their request?

In the winter of 1859, the law was passed in New York giving to married women the right to their own earnings. It was said frequently then that women did not want the right to their own earnings. We were asked if we wanted to create separation in families. But did any revolution or any special trouble grow out from this recognition of woman's right? You see women everywhere to-day earnestly striving to find a place to earn their bread. Madame Demorest has become a leader of fashion, teaching women to make up what Stewart imports; and she has a branch establishment in every large city in the Union clear to Montana. I do not know but some of those ladies cutting out garments, and setting the fashions of the day, might aspire to the Presidential chair; and perhaps they would be quite as capable as the present incumbent--a tailor. (Applause.)

The complaint comes up everywhere that woman is wedded to frivolity, and fashion, and idleness. Was there ever so busy a nation of human souls as our nation of women to-day? Within three months they have put on new trimmings, and turned their dresses inside out and upside down, and the whole country has been at work, as bees work in the hive, getting things ready for summer wear. Is this idleness? And why do they do this? Simply because the doors to more profitable employment are closed, and they have nothing else to do. Give them a chance to earn five dollars a day in honorable work, and crocheting would go by the board. Give woman the ballot, and no medical college will refuse her admission or deny her a diploma. Give woman the ballot, and every avenue of industry, everything that can give strength and life to her soul, will be as open to her as to man.

Three years ago I found myself without the means of life. I wanted a home. I had read about the beauties of a home, and woman's appropriate sphere; and so I got a little home, and went into it, and tried to get work. My old eyes would not see to sew nicely, I was too feeble to wash, and so I tended the garden. After a year had gone by I found that staying in this beautiful home, and placing myself in woman's sphere, had not brought me a dollar to pay my bills. So setting all these theories at defiance, I said I will go and lecture; and I went out into the lecturing field. I have money to pay my bills to-day; but I could not have it were I to cling to the sphere of home.

If a woman is doing the work of a good man's home, she is doing her part, and she will not desire to go out from it for any ordinary cause. But if she can make two dollars to his one, allowing him to carry out

his part of the appointments of life, why should not she do it? When we can be allowed to do the thousand things that womanly hands can do as well as those of men, we shall make our lives useful. But take my word for it, as an old mother, with her grandchildren gathered about her, you will not find woman deserting the highest instincts of her nature, or leaving the home of her husband and children.

Why do you scold us, poor weak women, for being fashionable and dressy, when snares are set at every corner to tempt us? What would become of your dry-goods merchants and your commerce if we did not wear handsome dresses--if the women of this country were to become thus sensible to-day? Your great stores on Broadway would be closed, and your stalwart six-foot men would have to find something else to do besides measuring tapes and ribbons. The whole country would undergo a transformation. But it would be better for the country. It would not take five years to pay the national debt, interest and all, if you will apply the money spent by men for tobacco and whiskey--if men will learn to be decent. I think it is a great deal better to wear a pretty flower or ribbon than to smoke cigars. It is a great deal better, and less damaging to the conscience, to wear a handsome silk dress, than for a man to put "an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains."

I honestly and conscientiously believe that we ought to make the rights of humanity equal for all classes of the community of adult years and of sound mind. I do not ask that the girl should vote at eighteen, because she should not be her own woman until she is twenty-one--at the same age with the boy; and having raised both boys and girls, I think I have a right to say that. Give us freedom from these miserable prejudices, these restrictions and tyrannies of society, and let us judge for ourselves. If it is true, as science asserts, that girls inherit more of the character of their father, while the boys follow in a more direct line their mother, then how is it possible that women should not have the same aspirations as men? I was born a mechanic, and made a barrel before I was ten years old. The cooper told my father, "Fanny made that barrel, and has done it quicker and better than any boy I have had after six months' training." My father looked at it and said, "What a pity that you were not born a boy, so that you could be good for something. Run into the house, child, and go to knitting." So I went and knit stockings, and my father hired an apprentice boy, and paid him two dollars a week for making barrels. Now, I was born to make barrels, but they would not let me. Thousands of girls are born with mechanical fingers. Thousands of girls have a muscular development that could do the work of the world as well as men; and there are thousands of men born to effeminacy and weakness.

[Mrs. Stanton then addressed the meeting. As her line of argument was a summary of that recently made before the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature, and already published, it need not here be repeated.

Miss Anthony announced that they would have another opportunity to hear Sojourner Truth, and, for the information of those who did not know, she would say that Sojourner was for forty years a slave in this State. She is not a product of the barbarism of South Carolina, but of the barbarism of New York, and one of her fingers was chopped off by her cruel master in a moment of anger.]