

**SPEECH OF SARA BARD FIELD
FEBRUARY THE FIFTEENTH
MDCCCCXXI
AT WASHINGTON·D·C·**

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Sara Bard Field

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JAMES R. CALDWELL

THE SPEECH OF SARA BARD FIELD

PRESENTING TO CONGRESS ON
BEHALF OF THE WOMEN OF THE NATION
THE MARBLE BUSTS OF
THREE SUFFRAGE PIONEERS
LUCRETIA MOTT
ELIZABETH STANTON CADY
SUSAN BROWNELL ANTHONY



SAN FRANCISCO :
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THE speech of Sara Bard Field, delivered February fifteenth, nineteen hundred & twenty-one, at half past eight o'clock in the evening in the rotunda of the capitol at Washington, presenting to Congress on behalf of the Women of the Nation as a memorial the marble busts of three suffrage pioneers: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Brownell Anthony; Jane Addams presiding; Speaker F. H. Gillett responding on behalf of Congress.

CHAIRMAN JANE ADDAMS, RESPECTED AND BELOVED OF THE WHOLE WORLD, MR. SPEAKER AND FRIENDS:

The women of this country, through the representative organizations gathered here tonight, are celebrating their hard won political freedom by presenting to the nation a lasting memorial—the busts of three women, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Brownell Anthony—who were pioneers in the woman's revolution, leaders in the persecuted advance guard of that vast army of women, known and unknown, who have fought for political justice. Although we have taken the likenesses of three prominent women for this memorial, nevertheless in its deepest significance it

is a monument to women past, present and to come.

There is an historic moment in the career of Napoleon which lives in the heart of every Frenchman. Napoleon, having led his army into Egypt, came to the Pyramids and sitting on his horse gazed at the Sphinx and said, "Here forty centuries look down on us." Tonight as we look upon these marble busts of our Great Dead and realize the significance of this moment, what loving heart of us but does not feel that not forty centuries alone but all the centuries since Time was born are gazing down on us. The busts in themselves are not an ancient work like the Sphinx. They have been but recently completed by Adelaide Johnson. But the struggle for justice, the passionate struggle for freedom, of which these women have been so unique a part is as old as the dawn of self-consciousness in the twilight of man's first birth. And because it is a struggle which not only has endured throughout the centuries that have gone but in ever-changing form must endure, always, you and I, with prophetic vision, can see the centuries to come looking back at this moment as one of the milestones on the upward path of Progress. Here before us about to become the sacred property of the Nation are three women who are now part of that "Choir

Invisible who live again in minds made better by their presence.”

Mr. Speaker, we women who are uniting in this Presentation do not feel we are so much honoring these three rebel leaders as we are honoring Congress itself by committing these busts to its keeping. For, Mr. Speaker, we do not commit to your keeping merely a block of marble wrought into likenesses which in a chaste repose like Death itself will henceforth remain in Statuary Hall, but we commit to your keeping blood-red memories, alive and pulsing—the labor of these women by day and by night; the daring attack on entrenched Custom and Superstition and formidable Institution, the defying of even that religious sanction which like a whitened sepulchre had been built about the rotting bones of woman’s slavery, the gallant acceptance of the mysterious challenge to live a great life for others at the expense of self rather than a little life for self at the expense of others—with all the bitter loneliness this entailed—the persecutions, the misunderstandings, the slanders, the heartaches, the ever-deferred hopes and “the ability to take infinite pains,” which Goethe tells us is the mark of genius,—all these, Mr. Speaker, we bring in tender hands and commit to the keeping of Congress. To say that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth

Cady Stanton called the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848; to say that they were respectively President and Vice-President, and Susan B. Anthony Corresponding Secretary of the first American Equal Rights Association is merely to hint at the rich outpouring of lives which these women gave on behalf of women, and of the Nation, and of the human race, remembering as we must—"man that is born of woman."

And, Mr. Speaker, I do not feel I arrogate to my faith in women too much when I say that with the dedication of these busts of our pioneers there is presented tonight the renewed dedication of the women of this Land to the vast work of a greater freedom which lies before us. It is Universal Freedom for which the movement represented by these women has ever been. The Woman's Rights Movement was born in the very body of the Anti-Slavery Movement. Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony refused to narrow the suffrage agitation down to women alone while the negro but recently freed from chattel slavery remained in political bondage. The very first Suffrage Association was called the American Equal Rights Association and its object was to enfranchise the negro as well as the woman. Listen to these

words written by Susan B. Anthony and introduced as part of a resolution in the Convention which formed the first American Equal Rights Association: "Hence our demand must now go beyond women. It must extend to the farthest bound of the principle of the 'consent of the governed' as the only authorized or just government. We therefore wish to broaden our Woman's Rights platform and make it in name what it has ever been in spirit—a human rights' platform." Do you think that women who thought in those terms would sit idle today because political democracy has become an accomplished fact in this nation? Do you think that women like these who published a paper in the sixties called "Revolution" would not see the need of that brooding angel's presence still? Needless to say I do not speak in terms of bloody revolution any more than did they. But men and women are not yet free.

We have won political freedom and now man and woman, comrades in the experiment of political democracy, we stand ready to advance together. Men and women are not yet free. The slavery of greed endures. Little child-workers, the hope of the Future, are sacrificed to Industry; and the young men, the sons of Mothers, are sent out by the millions to die for Profits. It

makes my heart glad to realize that these busts, the first gift of women to the Nation's gallery, represent no military heroes. They represent those who gave life—not took it. Their battle was one of mind and soul. They came that they might give life and give it more abundantly. And so through their likenesses we are dedicating the woman's protest against War.

To effectively banish War forever we must destroy Industrial Slavery and build the Industrial Democracy. So long as the earth belongs to the few of each land, those few will, like dogs over a bone, fight for its possession and the young men will be sent out to die for the Few, and the Mothers will be left desolate. The people everywhere must come into possession of the earth so that there can be no bloody quarrels about that which belongs to all.

Someday without a trumpet call
This word shall o'er the earth be blown ;
The heritage returns to all ;
The myriad monarchs take their own.

And there is the slavery to Privilege in all its forms—that malign Power which dares to deny to the people of this Nation those Republican rights for which our fathers died—the right to free assembly, the right to free speech.

The History of Woman's Suffrage tells us how

again and again these three intrepid women fought for the right to give public utterance to their views. This is a sacred right and if it is sacred to women, women must feel that it is sacred to every group of every persuasion. There is not a doctrine that should be denied a tongue. Who knows in what shell of doctrine lies the pearl of truth? "Are we then to meet words with words or words with force?"

Mr. Speaker, you will see that if you thought you came here tonight to receive on behalf of Congress merely the busts of three women who have fought the good fight and gone to rest, you were mistaken. You will see that through them it is the body and the blood of a great sacrificial host which we present—the body and the blood of Revolution, the body and blood of Freedom herself. You will see that these women are presented to Congress in an invisible Temple in which they at once built and are built upon—the temple of Humanity. They who sit down in this Temple and refuse to build their part, retard its growth. But they hasten the day of its completion who like these women whose busts are before us, refuse to be kept from the higher calling to which they are called. Listen and in closing I will in the words of a brother-poet describe to you this Temple.

You must understand this is no dead pile of stones and unmeaning timber. It is a living thing. When you enter it you hear a sound—a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men's souls,—that is if you have ears. If you have eyes, you will presently see the church itself—a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder! The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes: the sweet human flesh of men and women is moulded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable: the faces of little children laugh out from every cornerstone. The terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building—building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness; sometimes in blinding light: now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish; now to the sound of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. Sometimes in the silence of the night-time

you can hear the tiny hammerings of the Comrades at work up in the dome—the Comrades who have climbed ahead.

Here are we living workers in the Temple and above us—these Comrades of ours who have climbed ahead. It is the likeness of them and all they mean in themselves and in us that we, the Women of the Nation, present through you, Mr. Speaker, to the People of the United States of America.

This Speech

was only fully reported in the Federated Press and did not appear in any San Francisco paper. Though not officially connected with the last convention of the National Woman's Party, the occasion for delivery of this address was really a prelude to it. Before the events great publicity had been given both to the presentation of the busts and to the convention to which came delegations from all over the United States and from Europe. This publicity and the absence of any report in the regular press led to many requests for the speech, which demand still continues, and some women, who feel that the speech is part of a notable event of especial interest to women, have caused it to be printed.

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