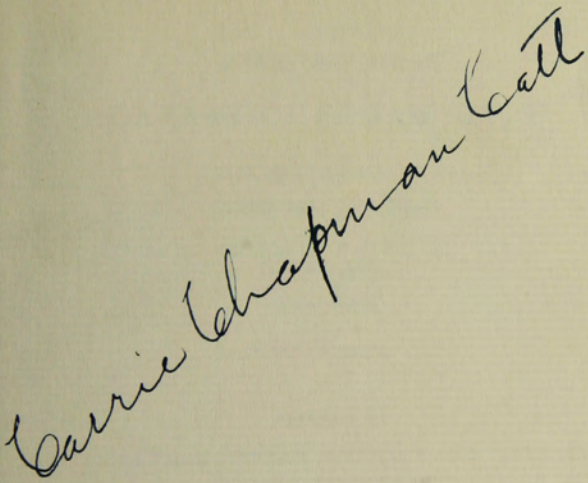
THEN . . . AND NOW

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT



SPEECH DELIVERED BY

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

AT THE CELEBRATION OF HER
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THE LESLIE WOMAN SUFFRAGE CONTINUING COMMITTEE

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National Women's Christian Temperance Union
National Women's Conference of American Ethical Union
National Women's Trade Union League

VICTORY!

THEN *and* NOW

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

IN a neat little house in the quiet town of Ripon, Wisconsin there lived a family named Lane in 1859. There, at 2 o'clock in the morning of January 9th, a new baby arrived, looking and acting like a million other babies born on the same day. This baby, however, had a brother, aged three, now eighty-three, and this little chap possessed a troublesome enthusiasm for kissing his new sister. When she was three weeks old, she was laid in the middle of a big bed to take a nap. Little brother, observing that the door of the bedroom was ajar, crept in and made heroic efforts to climb upon the bed in order to steal a kiss, but the bed was high and he was small. What happened no one ever knew but little sister caromed through space and lighted on the floor, head first. Frightened little brother squalled, the excited family gathered, the doctor was sent for, the news spread and the neighbors came running, while the sensible nurse in charge put the baby in a washbowl of warm water. For some time, it was uncertain whether the baby was going or coming. The event was regarded by the family as about equal in importance to the Battle of Bull Run and the baby believed that her parents retained the fear for a long time that any inherited common sense there may have been in that little head was hopelessly knocked out of it upon that occasion.

Not every baby, three weeks old and in a state of coma, would be picked out as a satisfactory landmark from which to measure the progress of the world, but take notice. At the very moment that the women of the neighborhood in Wisconsin were watching this

tragedy in a washbowl, stirring things were happening elsewhere. A convention of women was meeting in New York City and its business was to ascertain how a group of inexperienced women could persuade a legislature to pass a bill it did not want to pass. That bill was to grant the right to married women of the State to manage their own property and control the income thereof.

Another convention was held in 1859, in Massachusetts. Wendell Phillips addressed both of them and expenses were paid by charging ten cents admission. The women of New York, however, had no money at all and had to ask their husbands for it, whereas those of Massachusetts might have taken it from the rent received from their own houses.

On the date of the washbowl incident, the status of women the world around was this; six American states namely, Maine 1844, Pennsylvania 1848, Wisconsin 1850, New Jersey 1852, Massachusetts and Michigan 1855, had already granted married women the right to completely control their own property. Probably this liberty existed nowhere else in the world. Fourteen states permitted women to make a will, but most women thought it a small privilege to will property to others after they were dead, since they had none of its income while living. Fathers could, and frequently did, in Great Britain and the United States, will away, at their death, unborn children.

Three states only, Maine, Massachusetts, and Michigan, granted wives the right to collect and use their wages and it is believed that this precious liberty in 1859 existed nowhere else in the world. Again, most women thought this a small boon since they had no wages anyway. In all communities, however, there were numerous examples of delicate, over-worked women going out by the day to wash or clean for very

small wages, but when the money was brought home, their husbands quickly snatched it and hastened to the nearest bar room and this was in strict accordance with the law.

Probably no married woman anywhere in the world was permitted to be a guardian or co-guardian over her children. In many American states, and in other countries, husbands had a legal right to whip their wives if the stick used was not larger than the husband's thumb. The greatest gain yet made, however, was an organized, determined woman's rights movement, eleven years old. You know the story of the American women delegates denied seats at the London Anti-Slavery Convention after a bigoted and bitter controversy in 1840; you know how Mrs. Mott and Mrs. Stanton resolved, thereupon, to call a convention in the United States to discuss women's rights and how they did it in 1848, at Seneca Falls, although no woman was brave enough to sign the call or to preside over the convention; you know how a second convention was held in Rochester and how the nomination of a woman to be chairman shocked Mrs. Stanton and Mrs. Mott, the bravest women among them all. You remember Mrs. Abagail Bush, the first woman in the world to preside over a convention. I hope you remember the immortal words of her opening address. They began: "Friends, we present ourselves here before you, as an oppressed class, with trembling frames and faltering tongues." You know how Emily Collins went home from Seneca Falls in 1848 and organized the first Woman's Rights Club at South Bristol, and how the first petition to the Legislature followed shortly after from that town. You remember that in 1848 the first woman physician in the world, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, was graduated and that the first woman minister was graduated in theology in 1850.

The program of eighteen grievances as adopted at Seneca Falls was reduced to the six most outstanding ones and in 1859 women were working at all of them, namely:

Education for girls
The right to qualify for the professions
The right to make a will
The right to control property
The right to control wages — and
The right to vote.

The familiar later events need not be described, but, to be understood, a knowledge of the events of the preceding years are positively necessary.

Education The right which women wanted most was education, but the opposition was bitter and the opportunities limited. Yet, through the 18th Century education for girls made steady progress. In the United States, most liberal of all countries at that time, from 1789 to 1822 girls in Boston were only permitted to attend the public schools in the summer months and then only to the number of vacant seats created by the absence of boys. In many places, girls were accepted only for two hours in the afternoon when the boys were dismissed. In 1826, "amid a storm of opposition", a high school for girls was opened, but, "yielding to a clamor of defiance was closed in 1828" although every seat was full and no girl had left her place. The next high school for girls in Boston was opened in 1852. In excuse for the Bostonians, it may be said that, probably, the early high school was the first and only school of the kind in the entire world. The three Rs, "readin', ritin', and rithmetic" were considered the proper curriculum for girls. The first branch of higher learning was geography. The oppo-

sition was caustic and ridiculous, but the girls liked geography, and as it was taught in the private schools, these examples literally drove it into the public schools. I have known one woman who, in her early youth, was one of a very few girls who studied geography in the public school. When school was out, boys would chase these girls out of the schoolyard with boisterous shouts of "Hi there! Geography girl, O Ho! There goes a Geography girl."

In 1820 Emma Willard opened the "Troy Female Seminary". This school was incorporated by the Legislature and Miss Willard was known as the first leader of higher learning for women. It was the first instance of any government in this country giving legal assistance to education for girls. In 1829, a public examination in geometry took place at Troy in the presence of visitors. A murder could scarcely have created more caustic clamor than the condemnation of the press and the clergy, all agreeing that it was a wicked waste of time for girls to study branches of learning so entirely beyond the mental grasp of the female sex. The most astonishing opposition concerned physiology. It was introduced to the better high schools, probably in the 1820's but no girl studied it. A few women, among them Paulina Wright Davis and Mary Gove Nichol, lectured on it *to women only* and used a manikin for illustration. They reported that women frequently dropped their veils when the manikin appeared, shocked at the indelicacy, and sometimes women fainted at the sight of it. At Troy, as late as 1842, parents were so much shocked at the illustrations of the human body in text books, that they forbade their daughters to use them, whereupon the teachers pasted very thick pieces of paper over all the offending pictures. This information I had direct from Mrs. Russell Sage who was a student there. In a school, taught by one of Miss

Willard's graduates, "the mothers left the room in a body when the examination of physiology was announced." In fact, physiology was universally regarded as a highly indelicate and quite immodest theme in those early days.

In order to understand that the unbelievable has sometimes happened here, let me tell you that in 1832 a quiet Quaker woman started a small school in Canterbury, Connecticut, for colored girls. There was still bitter opposition to female education and even more to abolition. The combination produced indescribable persecution of this school. All shops and churches were closed to teachers and puppils, all seats in public conveyances of all kinds were denied them, not a shop would sell them a morsel of food, their well was filled with manure and water from other sources refused. The house was assaulted with rotten eggs and stones and after an unabated persecution of two years, it was set on fire and burned to the ground. "Sweet land of liberty in 1832-34". In 1833, the world arrived at the first college admitting women students, — Oberlin, Ohio. It was established on a coeducational plan for blacks and whites. Three girls, Mary Horsford, Elizabeth S. Pratt, and Caroline M. Rudd, were graduated there in 1841, — the first women in the world to be distinguished with College degrees.

In 1847, Lucy Stone graduated there, fourteen years after the College had been opened, and was told that one of the professors would read her graduating essay as it would be indelicate to read it herself before a promiscuous audience. Since she was not permitted to read it herself, she refused to have it read at all. Thirty-six years later the trustees of Oberlin invited her to give the chief address at the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the College. I hope she read the essay she had prepared for her graduation.

Thus education moved on from the dates of the American and French Revolution to 1848 as an experimental, controversial and much criticized institution. Looking backward, my greatest regret is that no woman has yet written the Evolution of Education for Women. This is a defect in the history of human progress. Today, education for girls is no longer a controversy.

Fundamental Liberties In the so-called Bill of Rights of the American Constitution, five fundamental liberties are guaranteed. As a standard, these have been upheld the world around as the most basic of all liberties. They are

(1) Freedom of Speech
(2) Freedom of Assembly
(3) Freedom of Religious Worship
(4) Freedom of Person
(5) Freedom of Work

When these liberties were placed in the Constitution, apparently no one thought that any woman would want to make use of them. Much might be said to show that women had to struggle for each of them, but I confine my illustrations to free speech only. Women had been the silent sex, but in the early years of the last century five reforms began:—Women's Rights, Anti-Slavery, Peace, Labor, Temperance, and, quite suddenly, women began to talk volubly all over the country on all five themes. They talked wisely, sentimentally, emotionally, logically, profoundly, and all together. The chief talking was on the side of the reforms and a battle royal followed through at least fifty years to make this liberty, guaranteed to men, apply to women. Probably, had women confined their first public speaking to new knitting stitches, no one would have objected,

but when they attempted to tell the public how, when, and where to eliminate all the iniquities of human society, the iniquitous arose in hot indignation. It is a long story and I will give you only a few illustrations.

Two sisters came from South Carolina. Their family were slave-holders, but they became vigorous opponents. They thought to tell the truth about slavery to the North, but neither had ever made a speech nor was any avenue to public speech open to any woman. In 1837, a few abolitionists proposed that these women should be invited to speak in New York church parlors to women only. A controversy stormed over the city and raged at will in every congregation. "Should women be permitted to hear these sisters speak?" was the question. At last, a few churches consented to invite the sisters, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, to hold a series of such meetings. Their biography says that no woman in New York City had heard any woman speak before these meetings were held and that no woman before had ever spoken in the city. The procedure was always the same. The minister of the church and an abolitionist came in at the beginning. The minister prayed, the abolitionist introduced the sisters, assuring the audience that they were guaranteed to be pious and virtuous women and then both departed. Arrangements were made for similar courses in Boston and other cities. These "deluded fanatical ladies" was a usual title. One clergyman gave out a notice of a coming meeting of women in his church. He said he gave it by request of his deacons, but against his own protest and then earnestly advised his women members not to attend the meeting. He should have known Eve better. They came. Another clergyman made an opening prayer at one of the meetings and then urged all women present to leave. Of course they stayed. In time, men respectfully broke into those

meetings and thus the women addressed what was called "a miscellaneous audience."

In Philadelphia, citizens, finding it difficult to engage places of meetings for reforms, built a great and beautiful hall in 1838. It cost $40,000 — a large sum for those days. Three days were set aside to dedicate it to free speech. On the first day, the ceremony of dedication took place. Women of the Female Anti-Slavery Society were occupying the hall the second day. A furious mob surrounded the building, hooting and beating drums, throwing stones at the windows and now and then breaking one. Angelina Grimke, spoke for two hours. On the third day, the meetings were closed, because the mob was growing dangerous. The mob came then with cans of oil and, throwing the contents over the building, set it on fire and by the end of the third day, the only free speech hall ever erected in this country was no more. This was freedom of speech guaranteed in the Constitution by this sweet land of liberty in 1838.

Angelina Grimke, an eloquent, powerful crusader, for reasons unknown, never spoke again after the destruction of the Pennsylvania hall, but Abby Kelly took her place and traveled up and down the country in greater freedom because of the teachings of the Sisters Grimke. Lucy Stone told me, when aged about seventy-five, that she, who came much later, often had eggs thrown at her, but she added "I never had any bad eggs as Abby Kelly had." So free speech for women moved forward through the prayerful opposition of earnest clergymen to the ferocity of wild mobs and through bad eggs to good eggs, and from good eggs to no eggs, and came out an established liberty.

Let me say for myself that I have held an office in a suffrage organization, — local, state, national and international — without a break for fifty-four years

and during that time I have visited and spoken in all the states, yet I have never seen a mob, nor an egg thrown nor a meeting broken up. In fact, I, and other women of my time, have seen few events calling for heroics of any kind. Our business was confined to drudgery and often to a very dreary variety of it.

Civil Rights For centuries all that a woman possessed, earned or inherited, her wedding gifts, her clothing, her engagement ring, her hairpins and shoelaces passed at the marriage ceremony to the legal possession of her husband and this was true the world around.

Instances of unbelievable injustice cropped up in all the states. Those stories were told and retold. More than any cold argument could have done, these actual examples awakened public opinion to a comprehension of the cruel wrong done women and finally the stories changed the law. One of my favorites was given me in Rhode Island by one who vouched for it.

A young woman taught a country school for twelve weeks at $1 a week and "boarded round". At the end of that time, she was to be married and decided to invest her hard earned $12 in a dozen silver teaspoons which cost $1 a piece. The parents of the bride and groom contributed to the "setting up" of the young couple, the bride's parents giving quite as much as those of the groom. An accident caused the death of the husband and he had made no will. The law took charge and made an inventory of all the two had possessed. The widow was entitled to one-third. She was permitted to choose the things she would prefer to keep and these might be applied on her third. Her first choice was the silver spoons for which the law credited her with $12 — their original cost. In time, she married again and her husband died. Again the law

appeared, took an inventory, and permitted her to make a choice of the things she wished to compose her third. Again she chose the spoons and again she was credited with $12 — the original cost. By and by, a widower came proposing. She listened respectfully to his plea, but her reply was stern. "I have bought my silver spoons three times already. I have paid $36 for them, although the original cost was only $12. I shall never run the risk of buying them again."

From 1848 to 1900 the women of every state were hard at work building up a new Woman's Code of law and everywhere there were ready illustrations to point the wisdom of the change asked. It was difficult to restrain myself from the temptation of telling you many of these stories. I have confined myself to two, not necessarily the best.

One woman in Massachusetts confessed to having lived with a man to whom she was not married. One day, in a state of drunkenness, he sent her out on an errand. When she returned, the man was drunker than he had been when she left him. He attacked her with a poker, stopping just short of murder. Some one came to her defence and arrested him for assault. The judge asked: "Why did you do it?" The prisoner replied: "I was in liquor, Sir." "Ah" said the Judge "do you not know you had no right to strike her. She is not — she is not —" But there he stopped in blushing embarrassment. Yet everyone in the room knew that what he might have said was: "You cannot legally strike this woman because she is not your wife."

Probably the story that was most widely spread and aroused most fury was that of Mrs. Caroline Norton, an English woman, who wrote an astonishing number of books which those who read them pronounced "gifted, high-minded and inspired." The men speakers loved to tell this story. Her husband procured a separa-

tion from her on the charge of infidelity, which the public declared unfounded. He arranged that all the profits of her copyrights be paid to him. She earned an average of $5,000 each year. He granted her $2,000 for her living expenses and kept $3,000 for his. Her father, dying, left her some money, whereupon the husband kept all her earned income until this inheritance had been exhausted. When this had gone on for eighteen years, he cut her allowance below the possible cost of her living. She then took the matter to Court. She could only ask for a larger proportion of her own earnings for the law gave all of them to her husband.

Bold, brave, alert, wise, wonderful, amazing women appeared, here and there, all the way through five and a half generations and each did what she could and it was much.

When Miss Anthony was old and I was still young, I took a trip with her in a campaign state. Once, when many things had gone wrong, I stepped to her door and said, "I think I have made the worst speech of my life to-night and I never want to make another. Did you ever feel that way?" "Oh yes!" said she, "I always feel that way, but when I come to my senses, I know that bad speeches help a cause much more than no speeches at all." This was the spirit of the movement. So, from first to last, we stumbled on for five generations and, collectively, were able to bring to the next generation some privileges and liberties we never had.

The women who, with Mary Wollstonecraft, in 1792, began the recognizable movement never saw the next generation which organized it in 1848, and few in that year saw any of these who closed the movement in 1920, and few of us, who were present at the close, knew any of those early workers. One exception there was. Rhoda Palmer attended the 1848 convention and

at the age of one hundred, voted at her home near Seneca Falls, New York.

The Victories The right to make a will came rather easily. Six states granted property rights in the Fifties or before; ten states in the Sixties; sixteen states in the Seventies; Territories came later.

The most difficult right to secure was the right of a married woman to collect and use her own wages.

3 states granted it in the Fifties
5 states granted it in the Sixties
15 states granted it in the Seventies
12 states granted it in the Eighties
and the rest in the Nineties.

Whenever a bill passed a Legislature, the women sang "Praise God", but before the last notes had died away, some woman had pulled another bill out of her pocket and was persuading a member to introduce it.

School Suffrage School suffrage could be granted in some states by legislative enactment, but not in all. Eighteen states granted woman the right to vote for school boards and the right to be elected to them in the eighties and nineties. The women in New York owe much to Lillie Devereux Blake who year after year, organized her troop and marched them to Albany to get a bill for woman's liberty passed and in due time, all was won.

At the close of the campaign in 1915, there was a parade and I shed tears, which I rarely do, when I saw the demonstration in that parade of the eternal never-surrender spirit of a great idea. Up the avenue came marching Katherine Devereux Blake, keeping up her mother's cause, Harriot Stanton Blatch, reminding us of what Miss Anthony called "The great State Papers

of the Movement" and Lucy Anthony, upholding her Aunt Susan's cause. Then came the New Jersey delegation, defeated in her election just before, but now sturdily marching on as though nothing had happened, while at the head marched Anna Howard Shaw, not connected by any family tradition, but the greatest woman orator of the century.

It was at about this time that the states felt much like a bus driver during one of the great suffrage parades in London. The paraders, the pedestrians, and the buses had got into such a jam, that no one could move. In a high, clear voice, the bus driver shouted out: "Hello! Hello, there! Hurry up and give the women the vote so we can get on with the traffic." So, our states began to move. Fourteen granted presidential suffrage; two, primary suffrage; and as we had twelve full suffrage states before, we suddenly began counting the states where women could vote for President and found them twenty-nine. Fifteen and a half million could so vote and the number of electoral votes to be decided by women and men together rose from ninety-one to three hundred and six within four years, or forty-one more than half the total. Then, like manna from Heaven, the resolutions from State Legislatures, asking the submission of the Federal Amendment, came dropping in,—fourteen State Legislatures in 1917 and twenty-six in 1919. That was a glorious time to be alive.

Federal Amendment The Amendment was submitted June 4, 1919 and ratified August 26, 1920 and therefore was on its way, one year two months and twenty-two days. The Twelfth Amendment made the shortest time of any yet added to the Constitution,—nine months and thirteen days, but there were only seventeen states then and thirteen ratified.

When our Amendment had been on its ratification journey for that length of time, it had been ratified by thirty-four of the forty-eight states, but the signficant point of this story is that twenty-five of these ratifications took place in specially called sessions. Our submission was postponed purposely to make the ratification more difficult.

I believe that all the splendid phalanx of women from Mary Wollstonecraft to Susan B. Anthony and all those of the "trembling frames and faltering tongues" who labored for the Great Cause would unite in saying that, at least, there was a splendid, triumphant close to the century long campaign.

What Next When the pioneer feminists asked for more employment, better wages and the right to collect and use those wages, it was all they expected; none dreamed that a new world was rapidly being evolved by the introduction of invention and machinery and was bringing with new problems with no precedents for their settlement. In those old days, when women were surrounded by a barrier of law through which they could neither go nor come, they were, nevertheless, equal or perhaps superior partners in the business of conducting a home and family. The women turned the grain of the field into food for the table . They spun the wool from the sheep into yarn and knitted it into stockings, mittens and hoods for their family. They wove the wool into cloth and from this homespun, they made every garment of clothing for the family. They made carpets to keep the floors warm, blankets, patchwork quilts and comforters for the beds. They dipped candles for the lights and many another item did they manufacture.

Through three generations the laws have been growing more lenient toward women, theology more gener-

ous, politics kinder, while, one by one, the occupations women once invented and which kept the race alive and comfortable through the centuries have crept out of the house and into the factory. For every employment that went out, there came in a demand for money to supply the need of the lost home product. The human race has now arrived at a stage where utterly new problems confront it and all the world around there are dissatisfied, restless, worried peoples, living as best they can from day to day. In this world disturbance women, despite their new rights, are a worried factor.

After the first convention in Massachusetts in 1850, a New York paper said editorially "that Woman's Rights Convention may be a thing for honest scorn to point its finger at, but a few years may prove that we pointed the finger not at an illuminated balloon, but at the rising sun." The sun did rise for us and so gloriously, we did not notice that it had risen over a different world. What five generations of men and women won for women is still ours. Now, however, armed with our hard-won equipment of education, our own pocketbooks, and a vote, it becomes our duty to find the status of women in the midst of the new confusion.

The Woman's Party proposes to put the word "Equal," by Federal Amendment into forty-eight codes of law, each different from the others. That, to my mind, would merely add confusion, worse confounded, since it would throw hundreds of laws into the courts for interpretation. The Code of Law which passed from Rome to Norman, from Norman to Anglo-Saxon, and into the British Common Law and the French Napoleonic Code, and thence onward to the new American States was founded on a universal belief that God had intentionally created women an inferior and subservient sex.

Let it not be forgotten that every hard problem solved strengthens the character and promotes the growth of those engaged in the struggle so let no woman dread what lies before. The woman's task is not completed. (1) We should have more members in Legislatures and Congress. (2) There is need, and always has been, of a general house-cleaning in all political party machinery in order to make our democracy a more worthy example to the world. (3) We need a rewritten and redefined Bill of Rights for all. It may prove a fatal mistake to put off that task too long. (4) It is highly desirable that women have a new national Code of Law with every taint of the false and barbaric philosophies in the old ones removed. A code for free citizens and responsible voters. There are university women, Business and Professional Women, Leagues of Women Voters, women lawyers, today. Among them there is, or will be soon the ability and also the determination to build this new code of laws for women for all the states. Women, are you ready now to gather as the women did at Seneca Falls and lay out a program of wrongs still to be righted and of rights to be attained? If so, let it be called and called soon. Or will you wait until the economic muddle is somewhat untangled and the lady lawyers a little older. There is so very much to be done for this limping, crochety old world that no one knows quite how or where to begin. These things call for conventions, great intelligence, much study, research. It is easier to wait, but let no one think our country can escape the responsibility of settling these questions some day or that waiting too long may not prove a fatal blunder.

There is still a greater problem than any other — the most menacing of all the world's problems—WAR —how to end it? Very much of all that is most unen-

durable in the world to-day has sprung from the psychosis of war. Throngs of refugees today are wandering from Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Spain, China, Palestine. This is not a new phenomenon. Repeatedly, through all the ages men, women and children, the sorrowful dregs of destroyed nations have been driven forth into the unknown spaces of the world to live like wild men and these evils have always slowed down the processes of evolution, changed its direction and often put an end to the growth of civilization. Now, the human race for its own safety and decency must sharpen its wits, energize its reason and indominatably fix its determination to make an end of this horrible savagery which takes possession of men and leads them to demoniacal deeds.

Friends, it is a hard future, but every problem can be solved and some of them must be solved. For your own sake, face the future cheerfully; for your friends' sake, be optimistic, for your children's sake, be confident and for the sake of all things, be bravely unafraid.

God bless you, good friends, fellow workers. God bless you all.