THE
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

VOLUME 54 JULY 1971 NUMBER 3

# SPEAKERS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

L. E. PRESTON

## I. QUAKERS MAKE THE OPENING REMARKS

"WHY! folks talk about women's preaching as tho' it was next to highway robbery — eyes astare and mouth agape," wrote Theodore Weld, a staunch abolitionist, to the famous Grimké sisters on July 22, 1837. "Pity women were not born with a split stick on their tongues! Ghostly dictums have fairly beaten it into heads of the whole world save a fraction, that *mind* is *sexed,* and *Human rights* are *sex'd, moral obligation sex'd;* and to carry out the farce they'll . . . all turn in to pairing off in couples matrimonial, *consciences,* accountabilities, arguments, duties, philosophy, facts, and theories in the abstract." [1]

Angelina Grimké agreed, "My auditors literally sit sometimes with 'mouths agape and eyes astare,' " she wrote in reply to Theodore Weld on August 12, 1837, "so that I cannot help smiling in the midst of 'rhetorical flourishes' to witness their perfect amazement at hearing a woman speak in the churches." [2]

The sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, were pioneers in opening the way for public speaking to women. There were many "mouths

---

Dr. Preston, associate professor in the Speech Department at the Pennsylvania State University, is also a playwright with eleven published plays. His special interests in teaching are radio and television production.—Editor

1 *The Letters of Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1934), 412.
2 *Ibid.,* 414.

agape and eyes astare" for the daughters of a southern slaveholding family when they joined the abolitionist movement. Sarah Grimké broke away from Charleston society first and joined the Orthodox Quaker sect in Philadelphia. Her younger sister, Angelina, joined her there. Their initial cause was anti-slavery and since slavery was an institution they knew firsthand, they could speak with conviction; but they could not help linking the two issues of slavery and the position of women.[3] Their advocacy of women's rights brought mixed reactions from their anti-slavery friends and before long their position called down upon them thundering denunciations from the pulpits, although many of the churches had been opened to the sisters when they spoke on the subject of slavery alone.

Their voices were heard for only a few years; soon Angelina married Theodore Weld and they retired from public speaking and reform platforms; but the sisters had left their marks as speakers. William Lloyd Garrison, a noted abolitionist, declared that Angelina had a "rare gift of eloquence, a calm power of persuasion, a magnetic influence over those that listened to her, which carried conviction to hearts that nothing before had reached." [4] Wendell Phillips, another abolitionist, recalled her effectiveness as a speaker, saying: "she swept the chords of the human heart with a power that has never been surpassed and rarely equalled. I well remember, evening after evening, listening to eloquence such as had never then been heard from a woman." [5] The strongest evidence of their effect as public speakers is indicated by the huge crowds of women who came to hear the sisters speak on women's rights.

Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) has been called the "Soul of the Woman Suffrage Movement." [6] She was a Philadelphia Quaker and her early interest was the same as that of the Grimké sisters, but her speaking stretched over a lifetime. Lucretia and her husband, James, were charter members of the American Anti-Slavery Society, organized in Philadelphia in December of 1833. Out of this came the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Mrs. Mott was one of four women of that society selected as delegates to the World's Anti-Slavery

3 Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), 45.
4 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (eds.), *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester, New York: Charles Mann, 1889), I, 2nd ed., 399.
5 Address. *Memorial Meeting for Angelina Grimké Weld,* 1880, 28.
6 Thomas Woody, *History of Woman's Education in the United States* (New York: The Science Press, 1929), I, 410.

Convention to be held in London in June 1840. All seven women delegates to the convention were denied seats and after a hot debate they were required to withdraw to the visitors' gallery, although they had all been duly elected by their societies. The fact that they were denied their seats brought about the first women's rights convention. It was while in London that Lucretia Mott, already a noted speaker, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a young bride attending the convention with her abolitionist husband, met and discussed the problem. They came to the conclusion that women would have to fight for their own rights.[7]

An announcement for a convention to consider these rights appeared in the *Seneca County Courier* on July 14, 1848. This announcement stated in part that "Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia and other ladies and gentlemen will address the convention." For her part of this undertaking Mrs. Stanton paraphrased the Declaration of Independence and called it the Declaration of Sentiments. The Seneca Falls Convention was held on July 19, 1848. This convention made history not only because it was the first convention of its kind in the world, but because it set a precedent for the next three generations of women.

The first Women's Rights convention in Pennsylvania was held in Horticultural Hall in the quiet Quaker town of West Chester, June 2-3, 1852. The convention was open to "those who desire the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of mankind."[8] During the middle years of the century Chester County was noted as a center for a number of reform movements, many of which women were actively supporting, and so was an ideal selection for the first women's rights meeting in the state. A "temple of reform" was later built at Longwood by the Pennsylvania Meeting of Progressive Friends after their first yearly meeting held there in 1853. During the next decade many discussions about women's rights were held in this receptive "temple of reform."

The President of the West Chester convention was Mariana Johnson, but the leadership behind the organization came from the Motts, who were already recognized over the state for their fearless and independent anti-slavery work. It was Lucretia Mott who read the "call" at West Chester. "The friends of Justice and Equal rights are earnestly invited to assemble in Convention to consider and discuss the present position of Women in Society, her Natural Rights and

7 Stanton, 50-62.
8 *Ibid.*, 351.

Relative Duties."[9] By the middle of the nineteenth century Lucretia Mott was eagerly sought by reformers to be the main speaker on their programs. Her name was generally announced in headlines and was sure to draw a crowd.[10] Since she usually spoke extemporaneously, there is little to show exactly what she said. She never made notes, even when she knew beforehand the essential points of her remarks. Fortunately she had a good memory. As a Quaker she spoke when the "spirit moved." In religious meetings of Friends the presence of a reporter would have been unseemly, so there were no records of these speeches.[11]

There are records, however, of the impression made on her contemporaries. Susan B. Anthony was impressed by the way Mrs. Mott used "beautiful and apt citations" from her favorite authors in all her public remarks. She recalled how Lucretia Mott had made a lifelong habit of committing to memory lines and verses she found inspiring in what she read.[12] Elizabeth Cady Stanton said that as a speaker Mrs. Mott was "calm, clear, and unimpassioned," depending on earnestness and simplicity rather than on "wit, humor, or pathos."[13] The editor of the *Pennsylvania Farm Journal,* Wilmer Atkinson, who knew Lucretia Mott in her later years and who heard her speak many times, recalled that she was "a most graceful and charming speaker and preacher, who had a vein of humor, often in evidence, and whose words carried conviction to so many."[14]

Lucretia Mott was fortunate in having a husband who was in sympathy with her speaking activities. He was a successful businessman and was noted for his ability to handle "meetings for business" for the women, but he was not a preacher and he seldom spoke in the Quaker meetings. This dignified Quaker presided at the first convention in Seneca Falls, New York.

Another young Quaker woman from Pennsylvania, Mary Grew (1813-1896), was also a delegate to the London Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. She attended with her father, the Rev. Henry Grew. She became dedicated to the Women's Rights movement and served it in many ways from the beginning. When the Pennsylvania Woman

9 *Ibid.,* 350.
10 Otelia Cromwell, *Lucretia Mott* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), preface.
11 Anna Davis Hollowell, *James and Lucretia Mott; Life and Letters* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 302.
12 Stanton, 414.
13 *Ibid.,* 426.
14 Wilmer Atkinson, *An Autobiography: Founder of The Farm Journal* (Philadelphia: Wilmer Atkinson Co., 1920), 347.

Suffrage Association was organized in December of 1869, Mary Grew was the president. She continued to serve that organization until 1892, when, at the age of eighty, she resigned the presidency and was succeeded by Mrs. Lucretia L. Blankenburg. As a lecturer Mary Grew was considered acute, forceful and earnest. She often spoke at length at conventions in an earnest and impressive manner, "presenting forcibly those familiar yet solid arguments." [15]

James and Lucretia Mott were in the audience when a seventeen-year-old girl made her first impassioned speech on "The Rights and Wrongs of Women." [16] The young girl who caught the attention of the Motts was Anna Dickinson, when, on the evening of February 27, 1861, she addressed eight hundred people in Concert Hall, Philadelphia. It was her first appearance before such a large audience, and she had the sole responsibility of entertaining them for the entire evening. For two full hours she spoke extemporaneously. Her speech was pronounced a success, not only by the critical press, but also by the officials present.[17]

Anna Dickinson (1842-1932) was also a Philadelphia Quaker, who earned for herself the title of "Joan of Arc" of the feminists. She gained the height of her meteoric career after the Civil War, on the lecture circuit. In her speeches Miss Dickinson used an overpowering array of facts, examples, and testimony. She emphasized these with her sense of the dramatic as well as by a vividness of expression. However, what she said was hardly new; and she did not present any distinctive ideas of her own. She always spoke extemporaneously or from the briefest of notes scratched on any piece of paper.[18] During her speaking career she appeared in practically every sizable town in the nation, speaking often on the rights of women to enter the professions, to participate in government, to live full, well-rounded lives free from domination. Countless thousands of Americans heard Anna Dickinson speak. They were favorably impressed, and perhaps, as a result, had a greater sympathy for the movement for rights for women.[19]

## II. Editors Push Their Pens for Reform

In Pennsylvania the rhetoric of writing rushed to the rhetoric of

15 *Ibid.*, III, 457.
16 Katharine Anthony, *Susan B. Anthony: Her Personal History and Her Era* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954), 176.
17 Stanton, II, 41.
18 Giraud Chester, *Embattled Maiden: The Life of Anna Dickinson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), 24.
19 *Ibid.*, 94.

the platform. By the middle of the century Philadelphia was one of the leading centers of literary activity in the country. During these years several interesting journals edited by women gave assistance to the movement of women's rights. *Woman's Advocate,* edited by Anne E. McDowell (1826-1901), published in Philadelphia in 1855, was said to have been the first paper owned and published by women. All work on the *Woman's Advocate,* including typesetting, was done by women and the publication was owned by a joint stock company of women.[20] Editor McDowell did not plead directly for women's right to suffrage, but rather presented it indirectly, by showing up her wrongs. Later Miss McDowell edited the "Woman's Department" in the *Philadelphia Sunday Republic,* where she continued her pleas for the "redress of all the wrongs of humanity." [21]

Editor Jane Grey Swisshelm (1815-1884) was of a different stamp. She was a direct fighter for abolition and women's rights and fought with voice as well as with pen and printer's ink. She had an ear for colloquial speech and wrote with the punch of authority. In 1848 she established the *Pittsburg Saturday Visiter.* For this publication she was responsible for news, politics, anti-slavery propaganda and information on women's rights. The *Saturday Visiter* merged into the *Family Journal and Visiter* in 1852.

In the days when it was shocking for women to be in the newspaper business, Jane Grey Swisshelm struggled to keep her presses working. When her newspaper plant was mobbed and wrecked, she continued battling from the lecture platform.[22] In her memories of *Half a Century* Mrs. Swisshelm stated that her speech on "Women and Politics" was always well received and that it was always effective. She declared she was seldom interrupted by anything but applause; and when hissing arose she knew how to turn the situation to her advantage. Once while lecturing in Stillwater, Oklahoma, she was hissed for denouncing Buchanan's Administration. She wrote, "I waited a moment, then lowered my voice and said I had raised a good many goslings, and thought I had left them all in Pennsylvania, but found some had followed me, and was sorry to have no corn for them." After this sharp report, Mrs. Swisshelm proudly recalled, there were no more interruptions.[23]

---

20 Gertrude B. Biddle and Sarah D. Lowrie (eds.), *Notable Women of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942), 167.
21 Stanton, I, 358.
22 Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half a Century,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: McClurg & Co., 1880), 187.
23 *Ibid.,* 141.

Jane Grey Swisshelm had an unhappy marriage and, because women did not have property rights, when she left her husband, she lost all that she had. She joined Lucretia Mott and Mary A. Grew in an endeavor to obtain passage by the Pennsylvania legislature of a woman's property bill. Judge John Bouvier of Philadelphia, as well as Governor Francis R. Shunk, gave the movement their support. Part of the program was enacted in 1847-1848, when a law was passed permitting a married woman to own property and to dispose of it as she saw fit.[24]

The woman editor who made her influence felt over almost the whole of the opening years of the movement was Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879). In 1827 she was said to have published the first woman's periodical in America, the Boston *Ladies Magazine.* In 1837 this magazine was merged with a Philadelphia publication and became *Godey's Lady's Book,* which Mrs. Hale edited until 1877. *Godey's Lady's Book* was the leading magazine for women during the middle decades. Editor Hale was an enthusiastic advocate of the social and intellectual advancement of women, although she claimed to oppose women's suffrage. She never took a definite stand on any conflict, not even the Civil War, yet in her demure way she was a fanatical feminist and, while *Godey's Lady's Book* was considered the symbol of everything prim and pretentious in Victorianism, the publication acquired the largest circulation of any American magazine. This was partly because the editor praised women for what they were and at the same time quietly tempted them to be different. Editor Hale promoted education for women.[25] She declared language to be a field for women to study, maintaining that since women taught children to speak they should be well trained in the mechanics and should know grammar and style.

Sarah Josepha Hale's influence extended into the lives of almost every middle-class household in the United States. She achieved a kind of immortality with a small poem that has become traditional of all childhood, "Mary's Lamb," although her authorship has been disputed at times.[26] Among other things, she advanced the idea of a national Thanksgiving Day, the building of the Bunker Hill Monu-

24 Charles W. Dahlinger, "The Dawn of the Woman's Movement: An Account of the Origin and History of Pennsylvania Married Woman's Property Law of 1848," WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL MAGAZINE (1918), I, 68-84.

25 Isabelle Webb Entrikin, *Sarah Josepha Hale* (Philadelphia: University Press, 1956), 101-103.

26 *Ibid.,* 130.

ment, and the disuse of the word "female."[27] One example of this was her pressure on Matthew Vassar, a close friend, who was going to call his College the Vassar Female College until she convinced him the term was derogatory, as no one would ever qualify a "male" college in such a way.

In Philadelphia there appeared other small papers. The *New Century* was interesting because it was edited and published under the auspices of the Women's Centennial Committee of the Exposition held there in 1876. The paper was made up and printed by women on a press of their own, in the Woman's Pavilion at the Exposition. In 1877 Mrs. Theresa Lewis started the *Woman's World* in Philadelphia.[28]

Jane Campbell (1845-1928) edited for several years the monthly *Woman's Progress* and then conducted a column for the Philadelphia *Record*. She wrote many folk tales for children, and she was noted as a poet. She was for years the president of the very active Philadelphia County Society of the Citizens' Suffrage Association, started in 1872. Miss Campbell was an avid speaker at all the conventions. On one occasion she presented a speech called "The Unbiased Editor," in which she struck out harshly against what was being printed in various publications. The speech made such a big hit with her audience the national officers were afraid the press of the country would be more than offended and give the convention poor publicity. The speech "bristled with the humorous sarcasm in which she was unsurpassed," was the report. Miss Campbell shot her shafts mostly at Editor Bok, of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* when she said that the unbiased editor "was actuated by a desire to serve the best interest of women . . . he almost weeps when he pictures the dire consequence that would inevitably result would women enter the uncleanly pool of politics."[29]

## III. Educators Seek Opportunities to Be Heard

One of the earliest rights women claimed was the right to equal educational opportunities. Dr. Benjamin Rush (1746-1813), a physician, scientist, and professor of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, was aware of a need to facilitate the education of women. He served as a member of an all-male Board of Visitors of the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia. He was one who sought to establish a new pattern of education for women that went beyond the usual read-

27 *Ibid.*, 124.
28 Stanton, I, 47.
29 Ida Huster Harper (ed.), *The History of Woman Suffrage* (New York: J. H. Little & Ives Co., 1922), V, 145.

ing and writing offered on the elementary school level.[30]

At the close of the quarterly examination period at the Young Ladies' Academy on July 28, 1787, Dr. Rush was invited to deliver the major address. He spoke on "Thoughts Upon Female Education Accommodated in the Present State of Society, Manners, and Government, in the United States of America." [31] In this address Dr. Rush urged more practical training to prepare girls for a more rewarding domestic, social and religious life. This was a very liberal viewpoint for the times and his words had a tremendous effect. His address was published and extensively quoted. In many ways he influenced opinion on education for women throughout the century.

This academy was the first to be incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania, its charter being dated January 9, 1792.[32] Part of the commencement program had "a salutatory oration" and "selected pieces well adapted to the female character" by the young women. The valedictory was delivered "with decency and propriety." The speeches by the young women at these events were interesting because of their defense of their right to an education as well as their right to speak. In 1792, Molly Wallace had something to say in the defense of women orators when she informed her audience, "We look not for a female Pitt, Cicero or Demosthenes," then asked why it was boys studied carefully Latin, Greek, or Hebrew when they would not use them. These subjects she claimed were studied to learn habits of study, "So a young lady, from the exercise of speaking . . . may acquire some valuable habits." [33]

Teaching was the first of the "professions" opened to women and the only common one outside of literature for intelligent women before the middle of the nineteenth century. Even the conservatives accepted the schoolmistress role for women as a temporary mother of the children of others. The Philadelphia Normal School for Girls was started in 1848, but this and other early schools did not match the education received by young men.[34] There were several outstanding women of the nineteenth century who spoke out against these inequalities.

---

30 Nathan Goodman, *Benjamin Rush* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 313.

31 "Thoughts Upon Female Education Accommodated to the Present State of Society, Manners, and Government, in the United States of America" (Philadelphia, 1787), 32 pp.

32 Woody, I, 337.

33 *Ibid.*, 302.

34 *Ibid.*, 480.

M. Carey Thomas (1857-1935) was a pioneer in demanding for women the right to receive an equal education. She was one of the first to return from abroad with a doctoral degree and while still in her twenties became the first dean of Bryn Mawr College. This college for women was established in 1885 by Joseph Wright Taylor, a Quaker, who wanted to found a school that would give women the same education men were receiving on the higher level. Dr. Thomas became the second president of Bryn Mawr and served for twenty-eight years. She was a vigorous and forceful speaker, sometimes roughshod in her comments, but always with the power of expression that kept her in the forefront of modern education. Her major theme was the full rewards of deserving scholarship.[35] She was the first to fight successfully for graduate work in women's colleges. In her middle and later years she delivered many speeches for the support of woman suffrage, the League of Nations, hostels for young persons traveling abroad, and a myriad of other movements that led toward a more intelligently ordered world for women. In a speech called "What Woman Suffrage Means to College Women," she said, "It is the educated woman who is making the fight for equality and our hope lies in education, of both men and women." [36]

While colleges especially for women were being established over the country, there was also an interest in co-educational institutions. Swarthmore was started in 1896. This co-educational school was of special interest to Lucretia and James Mott, as it was founded by a Society of Friends. Mrs. Mott was on the platform during the dedication, was elected an honorary life member, and was one who helped to plant the dedication trees. James was a member of the Board of Managers of the college until his death.[37]

The first medical school for women was founded in 1850. Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania was the first of its kind in the world. Two noted women speakers were in its first graduation class, Hannah E. Longshore and Ann Preston.

Dr. Hannah E. Longshore (1819-1902) delivered many popular lectures on the medical education of women. Her friend Lucretia Mott often presided at these lectures. Dr. Longshore frequently spoke on the topics of physiology and hygiene. Her daughter, Lucretia Longshore Blankenburg (1845-1937), was for sixteen years the

---

35 Cornelia Megis, *What Makes a College? A History of Bryn Mawr* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956), 92.
36 Harper, V, 321.
37 Hollowell, 413.

president of the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, and because of her efforts for the movement and other causes she earned the title of "Grand Old Lady" of Philadelphia.[38]

Dr. Ann Preston (1813-1872) became the first woman member of the faculty of Women's Medical College, as professor of physiology and hygiene. She later became dean. She was an ardent and indefatigable worker for the success of the institution; especially did she strive to impress on young women the need for propriety in their actions. "Ladies, I am very jealous for the honor of my sex in its connection with the study of medicine. I would have it . . . clear even from the taint of suspicion. . . . Every woman who enters this department of life will be the more narrowly watched and severely criticized because she is a woman. If she bear not herself wisely and well, many will suffer for her sake." [39]

Dr. Preston's lectures were called models of clearness, strength and simplicity. To her goes the credit for establishing in 1861 the Woman's Hospital of Philadelphia, partly because of the great need of her students to have a place to work. From the first, women medical students encountered considerable hostility, particularly when they needed the use of hospital clinics. Dr. Preston fought long and hard to obtain all possible training for young women. On one occasion in 1869 the first dean of the college remembered seeing Dr. Preston leading a small band of women medical students in a forced march down the middle of Chestnut Street, only slightly protected from a mob of malevolent male students who had hooted them out of a clinic which the women had been given permission to attend.[40] Dr. Preston possessed a considerable degree of poetic and literary ability. She often read her speeches "impressively" at women's rights conventions.[41]

One of her greatest services was in the support rendered to the struggle of women to enter professional careers. In 1869 she made a report on the faculty of the Women's Medical College saying, "We maintain . . . that science is impersonal, and that the high relief of suffering humanity sanctifies all duties; and we repell . . . the assertion that the physician who has risen to the level of his high calling need be embarrassed . . . by the presence of earnest women." [42]

In 1880 Pennsylvania built a new State Hospital for the Insane

38 Biddle and Lowrie, 224.
39 Woody, 354.
40 Inez Haynes Irwin, *Angels and Amazons* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1934), 133.
41 Stanton, I, 350.
42 *Ibid.*, III, 452.

at Norristown, to serve and to be staffed by women. The first woman Physician-in-Chief at this hospital was Dr. Alice Bennett. Dr. Bennett ran a model hospital with a staff of women physicians. She was an authority on mental diseases and lectured constantly over the state.[43]

By 1900 there were forty colleges and universities in Pennsylvania, one-half of which were co-educational, with three for women. Only one of the sixteen theological seminaries admitted women. And only for the study of law did the University of Pennsylvania admit women freely and fully.

Still the main training ground for speakers was the many meetings that were held for the purpose of discussing women's rights. From the small beginning at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 almost every year there was a "call" sent out for a national convention as a focal point for the year's activities. Between these events states held their own conventions. Such meetings gave women new opportunity to be heard on the public platform.

The national leaders, from 1848 to ratification, were Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Anna H. Shaw, and Carrie Chapman Catt. All these women lived past their seventies and were continuously active in the movement. Only two of these outstanding national leaders belonged to Pennsylvania, Lucretia Mott and Dr. Anna H. Shaw, by reason of settling at Moylan in Delaware County in the later part of her life.

Dr. Anna Howard Shaw (1847-1919) had a natural gift for oratory, along with a remarkable number of accomplishments. She held not only the D.D. degree but the M.D. as well, obtaining them in times when it was next to impossible for a woman to do so. Very early she answered the call to the ministry, an almost unheard-of vocation for women even today. For some years she was pastor of two churches. She studied medicine because of the sickness she found in her ministry to the slums. Later she became a devoted friend of Susan B. Anthony and took up the cause of women's rights.[44] Even before she made Pennsylvania her home she came many times to speak in the state. The reports she made at the National American Convention of 1893 illustrate her yearly speaking activities. During that year alone she gave 215 lectures. Twenty-five were for suffrage associations across the country. The rest were for temperance and literary organizations. These, she declared, were really suffrage lectures, too. She

43 Irwin, 140.
44 Anna Howard Shaw, *The Story of a Pioneer* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1915), 57.

knew, for instance, that the Redpath Bureau, for whom she often spoke, did not want to send out a suffrage speaker. The list of her speeches included such titles as "The Fate of Republics," "The American Home," and "The New Man." Dr. Shaw confessed that under these broad titles she gave her unknowing audience a strong dose of suffrage.[45]

A great deal has been recorded of Dr. Anna H. Shaw's effect and power as an outstanding orator of the period. A Portland paper, in 1905, called her "the best and foremost woman speaker in the world," and urged its readers to go hear her because she was a "woman of deep learning, a cogent reasoner and a brilliant thinker," adding, "she has wonderful magnetism and a rare voice of round, rich tones . . . great for carrying capacity." [46] In 1908, the *Buffalo Express* reported she was a speaker "with a mind as quick for a joke as for the truth. She points her arguments with epigrams and tips the arrows of her persuasion with a jest." [47]

Reporters did not always write this way about the women who took to the speaking platform. In the early years the reporters did not regard the women as public speakers at all, if one is to consider what they recorded. They gave detailed descriptions of dress rather than information on subject matter or effectiveness of communication. The public could read that one woman "spoke in dark bangs and Bismark brown"; and another "in black and gold with angel sleeves, boutonniere and ear-drops"; another "in a basque polonaise and snake bracelets." It would be possible to learn what was fashionable by checking on the reports that a speaker at the convention appeared "in black silk dress and bonnet, gold eye-glasses and black kid gloves," or that another wore "a small bonnet made of gaudy-colored bird's wings." If the reporters did mention that they also spoke, it was in a roundabout manner, by mentioning that one who "spoke with a pretty lisp, was attired in a box-pleated satin skirt"; or that another "addressed the meeting in low tones and a poke bonnet"; while another "discussed the question in a velvet bonnet and plain linen collar." One reporter declared gravely that "there was not a pair of earrings on the platform, but most of the ladies wore gold watch-charms." [48] One briefly noted that all the participants had short hair and wore bloomers. This was odd since Lucretia Mott always wore the soft colors and

45 Anthony, IV, 322.
46 Harper, V, 125.
47 *Ibid.*, 216.
48 Anthony, IV, 56.

quiet dress of the Quakers, as did many of the other women.

Years later the proceedings of the national conventions gained importance and there was seldom one line in print concerning the dress of the speakers. By 1900 the attitude had changed some toward women and the petty personalities of the past were eliminated. They were presented from an intellectual standpoint, to be judged upon their merits as speakers and not by the clothes they wore. The leaders felt that this one point alone was worth the fifty years of struggle.

## IV. Speakers Find Ways to Get Attention

The years around the turn of the century brought about a lull in the national movement for women's rights, and interest in the Anthony Amendment was at an all-time low. There was, however, some interesting speaking opportunities in Pennsylvania, giving women who were not national figures the chance to be heard. One of these was the open-air meetings in Philadelphia started by two young American women with scholarly backgrounds, who came to the state fresh from a vigorous apprenticeship as "militants" in the British movement. Alice Paul was a Quaker and a flaming idealist. She wrote her thesis for her doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania on the status of women.[49] Her speeches were aimed primarily at the intellect of an audience but in such a way that she could win an emotional response. She appeared cold, austere and a little remote, but when she spoke she seemed to light up, and her voice was low with a "kind of interrogative plaintiveness." [50] While working with the "militant" group in Great Britain, Miss Paul had made friends with Lucy Burns. This young woman was said to have been the voice of the new suffrage movement. Miss Burns was by nature a rebel and this carried over into her speaking, which had a high emotional quality.[51] She wrote and spoke with an elegance that was appealing and persuading but at the same time clear and concise.[52]

With the help of Miss Paul and Miss Burns the first open-air meeting was held Tuesday, July 25, 1911, in Philadelphia. Seven women bravely ventured out in a one-horse cart. The cart served them as the speakers' platform. To advertise the event they covered a sandwich man sign with yellow satin and painted on it in large black letters: "VOTE FOR WOMEN." They gathered a crowd of about

---

49 Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 10.
50 Irwin, 14.
51 Stevens, 175.
52 Irwin, 17.

three hundred, and Miss Paul introduced the speaker, Mrs. Churchman Morgan, who spoke on "Woman in the Home." The other women moved through the crowd giving out leaflets.[53]

The following evening the women tried again. This time they traveled in their "one-hoss shay" to Front and Diamond Street and drew an even better crowd. The third try at an open-air meeting was held on July 27. This time the corner was Germantown and Lehigh Avenue, and the women were again successful in drawing an audience. The "one-hoss shay" was rather a clumsy speakers' platform, partly because it was not easy for the women to step up and down gracefully in their long skirts; so for the next meeting the women borrowed a stand from a Socialist group, which often held meetings on street corners. That evening the women met on the north side of City Hall Plaza, and Lucy Burns spoke for an hour, followed by Alice Paul for an hour and a half. Both of these young women knew how to handle crowds and how to answer questions from hecklers.[54]

No matter where the women spoke there were usually men there trying to break up the meeting. Sometimes it would be gangs of boys imitating their elders. When women carried signs: "VOTE FOR WOMEN," the boys had signs and sang out their slogans in thin high voices: "Vote for Boys." It took courage and strength of purpose for speakers to continue over the opposing voices. Alice Paul and Lucy Burns had learned from experience how to control such an audience.

After these initial tries many outdoor meetings were held. Some in the middle of the day were to catch the lunch-going crowds. One interesting speaker for these was Bertha Sapovits, a clerk. She had a strong voice that could be heard above the noise of busy Ninth Street. The young speaker appeared to enjoy being heckled by the crowd, because she had a quick wit and gave as good as she received, always to the delight of the crowd which stopped to hear her. Bertha Sapovits worked in Gimbel Brothers store and gave up her lunch hour to speak. Since she often had an extended lunch hour, and was never docked for the time by the store officials as was the usual practice, it rather indicates that Gimbel Brothers were making a small contribution to the movement.[55]

The major speaking at first had to be done by Alice Paul and

---

53 Caroline Katzenstein, *Lifting the Curtain* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., 1955), 45.
54 *Ibid.*, 47.
55 *Ibid.*, 152.

Lucy Burns since only a few of the women in the local organization could match their experience. But before long there were many Philadelphia women using the "Halligan Stumpsters." This term came about from a gift of Mrs. Katherine G. Halligan, who designed moveable platforms, several feet high, with low wheels. Speakers could gracefully mount these low stands and be easily seen by the crowd. Philadelphians quickly identified the platforms — all that was needed to draw a crowd and to get a meeting under way was to have a boy roll a "Halligan Stumpster" to a previously selected corner. The open-air meetings in Philadelphia in 1911 were brought to a close in September by one held in Independence Square, with five "Halligan Stumpsters," eighteen speakers and a crowd of two thousand.[56] The importance of these outdoor meetings was the fact that the women were able to reach an audience which would never attend an indoor meeting; this was especially true of the men who could vote and who would never dare go to a meeting held by women. These meetings also gave a number of Philadelphia's women the first opportunity to gain needed experience on the public platform.

In January 1913 Miss Paul and Miss Burns went to Washington and established the Congressional Union Group. They had the blessing of Dr. Shaw, but Mrs. Catt felt their "militant" ideas out of character with the national objectives and this brought about a separation in the organization. In 1916 the Congressional Union became the National Woman's Party, with Miss Paul as its dramatic leader.

One of the means the Woman's Party used to bring attention to women's rights was to picket the White House with banners. Women from all classes took turns marching up and down, carrying the banners in all weather. They were violating no law but they were arrested for obstructing sidewalk traffic. As soon as one group was arrested another would arrive to take their place, only to be also arrested. The resulting jail terms, hunger strikes and forced feedings brought about another interesting speaking opportunity for Pennsylvania's women. This was the "Prison Special." [57] This term was applied to a special railroad car which carried many women who had served prison terms across the country on a speaking tour. Of the eighty-one imprisoned women, sixteen were from Pennsylvania. The press called the women "Prison Specialists." The women wore their little "prison pins," small silver replicas of a prison cell door awarded them at a mass meeting which

56 *Ibid.*, 52.
57 Stevens, 326.

Miss Paul arranged at the Belasco Theatre, and they were dressed in replicas of their prison uniforms.[58] The great "Prison Special," draped in purple, white, and gold banners, drew crowds wherever the train stopped as they made their way across the country. The women from Pennsylvania who spoke from this special car included Mary H. Ingram, Ella Riegel, Elizabeth McShane, and Mary Winsor.[59]

This was not the only speaking the women did from a railway car. Some years earlier another was called the "Suffrage Special."[60] On this trip there were twenty-three Pennsylvanian women, their main speaker and manager being Ella Riegel, who was later to take the "Prison Special" trip.

During the Pennsylvania campaign in 1915, Mrs. Charles Wister Ruschenberger had a replica cast of the Liberty Bell, which she called the "women's liberty bell," sometimes called the Justice Bell. This bell did not have a clapper and the publicity about it claimed the bell could not ring until women obtained justice. The Justice Bell traveled 3,935 miles on a special truck to every county of the state. Hundreds of appeals were made by speakers who stood around the traveling bell. In rural communities it was received as a big event. In some places it was regarded with the reverence and ceremony that might have been given the real Liberty Bell. Collections from the sale of novelties, moulded in the likeness of the bell, helped to pay for the truck, to cover speakers' expenses, and the cost of the literature they gave out to the crowds.[61] The bell made a big hit at the Perry Celebration in Erie and later was taken to New York for an elaborate parade there. Hundreds of women marched ahead of the decorated truck carrying the Justice Bell. Each woman held a yellow satin ribbon attached to the bell, making what the women called their "golden lanes."[62]

The Speakers Bureau offered another speaking opportunity, and much of the credit for its successful operation in Pennsylvania belonged to Miss Clarissa A. Moffitt. An important part of the operation was a study of the industrial and agricultural characteristics of each county, a study of the population, and of major Party politics. This information helped Miss Moffitt to send out speakers acceptable to the community and the particular type of meeting to be held. During 1915,

---

58 Katzenstein, 315.
59 Irwin, 407.
60 Katzenstein, 188.
61 Harper, V, 555.
62 Katzenstein, 98.

for instance, fifty-six counties were supplied with speakers. This involved sixty-four different speakers, of whom fourteen were men, thirty-three were from the state, fourteen contributed their services, and only twenty-seven were paid their expenses.[63]

The Men's League of Woman Suffrage also had a speakers' bureau. All through 1916, for example, it maintained two full-salaried men lecturers, who spoke in churches, mills, plants, and other places where they could gain the attention of the voters of the areas. At this time the Men's League numbered over fifty thousand.[64]

Debating was also very popular. Debates were encouraged among young people of various churches and young men's literary societies. To encourage strong arguments and proof for their cause, the organization gave prizes and awards to those who were successful on the side of women's suffrage.[65] Another form of debate was called "three-cornered." For these debates, there were three leaders, each with a second. The leaders each had ten minutes to speak on the affirmative and their seconds five minutes. When the six speakers had presented their arguments, there would be free discussion from the floor. The debate did not end there, for after all the questions had been discussed each leader would have ten minutes more to answer the opposition to her point of view. It was reported that "the discussions were vigorously carried on and the rebuttals were made with much spirit." [66] The "three-cornered" debates made a very full evening of speaking.

Plays were offered, mostly to earn money for the movement, but they offered another opportunity to appear before the public to local women, who never would otherwise have done so. A play called *Everywoman* was popular, as well as another called *Bunty Pulls the Strings*. Another successful play was written for the occasion by Mrs. Wilfred Lewis, called *Election Day*.[67]

Opportunities for speaking developed through the days of ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Pennsylvania was the seventh state to ratify and did so on June 24, 1919. The resolution was signed by Governor William C. Sproul. In August 1920, ratification was completed and the Nineteenth Amendment became a law. It was a long way from 1848 and the Seneca Falls meeting in New York.

---

63 Harper, VI, 554.
64 Katzenstein, 354.
65 Harper, V, 898.
66 *Ibid.*, 486.
67 Katzenstein, 77.

What were the rights that women felt were so important they were willing to suffer humiliation and occasional violence to obtain? At the Seneca Falls convention these were listed as "equal rights in the universities, in trades and professions; the right to vote; to share in all political offices, honors and emoluments; to complete equality in marriage, to personal freedom, property, wages, children; to contracts; to sue, and be sued; and to testify in courts of justice." [68]

Perhaps many of these rights would have come about as the natural development of time. From the early days of the women's rights movement to 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, American society underwent drastic changes. It changed from an unexplored agrarian country to industrialization, with international responsibilities. The role of women changed also. But, as a recent study in the emancipation of the American woman sums it up, "If most women continue to see themselves chiefly as reproductive females, they will work within the limitations of the weaker sex and the better half. If they choose to see themselves chiefly as human beings, they will live and work as human beings for the better whole." [69]

---

68 Stanton, 73.
69 Andrew Sinclair, *The Better Half, The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 367.