

A TRIBUTE TO THE
AMERICAN WOMAN
FRANCES E. WILLARD



By Hon. ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE
OF INDIANA.

In the United States Senate, February 17, 1905, on the
occasion of the unveiling of the Willard
Statue in the U. S. Capitol.



A Tribute to
THE AMERICAN WOMAN

Frances E. Willard

By Hon. Albert J. Beveridge, of Indiana

In the United States Senate, Feb. 17, 1905, on the occasion
of the unveiling of the Willard Statue in the U. S. Capitol

Mr. President:

From the beginning woman has personified the world's ideals. When history began its record it found her already the chosen bride of Art. The things that minister to mankind's good have, from the very first, by the general judgment, been made feminine—the ships that bear us through storm to port; the seasons that bring variety, surcease of toil and life's renewal; the earth itself, which, through all time and in all speech, has been the universal mother. The Graces were women, and the Muses, too. Always her influence has glorified the world, until her beatitude becomes divine in Mary, Mother of God.

Mark how the noblest conceptions of the human mind have always been presented in form of woman. Take Liberty; take Justice; take all the holy aspirations, all the sacred realities? Each glorious ideal has, to the common thought, been feminine. The sculptors of the olden time made every immortal idea a daughter of the gods. Even Wisdom was a woman in the early concept of the race, and the unknown genius of the youthful world wrought Triumph itself into woman's form in that masterpiece of all the ages—The Winged

Press of
Levey Bro's & Co., Inc.
Indianapolis

By Hon. A. J. Beveridge. Sept 105

Tribute to Frances E. Willard

Victory. Over the lives and destinies of men the ancients placed Clotho, Lachesis, and Atrophos forever spinning, twisting, severing the strands of human fate.

In literature of all time woman has been Mercy's messenger, handmaid of tenderness, creator and preserver of human happiness. Name Shakespeare—Miranda and Imogen, Rosalind, Perdita and Cordelia appear; name Burns—the prayer "To Mary in Heaven" gives to the general heart that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin; name the Book of Books—Rachel and the women of the Bible, in beauty, walk before us, and in the words of Ruth we hear the ultimate formula of woman's eternal fidelity and faith.

So we see that through all time woman has typified the true, the beautiful, and the good on earth. And now Illinois, near the very heart of the world's great Republic and at the dawn of the twentieth century, chooses woman herself as the ideal of that Commonwealth and of this period; for the character of Frances E. Willard is womanhood's apotheosis.

And she was American. She was the child of our American prairies, daughter of an American home. And so she had strength and gentleness, simplicity and vision. Not from the complex lives that wealth and luxury force upon their unfortunate children; not from the sharpening and hardening process of the city's social and business grind; not from any of civilization's artificialities, come those whom God appoints to lead mankind toward the light.

By Senator Albert J. Beveridge

Moses dwelt alone on the summit of mystery and human solitude. The Master abode in the wilderness, and there the power descended on Him with which He put aside the tempter. In the forests the father of our country learned liberty's lessons from Nature, liberty's mother; and from the valleys and the heights, the fields and pouring streams, got understanding of the possibilities of this land, a knowledge of its uses, a perception of its people's destiny. We cannot imagine Abraham Lincoln coming to us from a palace. No! We can understand him only as he really was—man of the people and the soil, thinking with the people's mind the grand and simple truths, feeling with the people's heart an infinite compassion for and fellowship with all the race.

So, Mr. President, all the saints and heroes of this world have come, fresh and strong from the source of things, by abuses unspoiled and unweakened by false refinements. And so came Frances E. Willard, the American woman. The wide, free fields were the playgrounds of her childhood. The great primeval woods impressed her unfolding soul with their vast and vital calmness. Association with her neighbors was scant and difficult, and home meant to her all that the poets have sung of it, and more. It was a refuge and a shrine, a dwelling and a place of joy, a spot where peace and love and safety and all unselfishness reigned with a sovereignty unchallenged. And so this child of our forests and our plains, this daughter of that finest of civilization's advance guard—the American pioneers—

Tribute to Frances E. Willard

early received into her very soul that conception of the home to which as the apostle of universal womanhood, her whole life was dedicated.

To make the homes of the millions pure, to render sweet and strong those human relations which constitute the family—this was her mission and her work. And there cannot be a wiser method of mankind's upliftment than this, no better way to make a nation noble and enduring; for the hearthstone is the foundation whereon the state is built. The family is the social and natural unit. Spencer wrote learnedly of "the individual and the state;" but he wrote words merely. The individual is not the important factor in nature or the nation. Nature destroys the individual. Nature cares only for the pair; knows in some form nothing but the family. And so by the deep reasoning of nature itself Frances Willard's work was justified.

But her's was no philosopher's creed. She got her inspiration from a higher source than human thinking. In her life's work we see restored to earth that faith which, whenever man has let it work its miracle, has wrought victory here and immortality hereafter. Such was the faith of Joan, the inspired maid of France; such that of Columbus, sailing westward through the dark; such the exalted belief of those good missionaries who first invaded our American wilderness to light with their own lives on civilization's altar the sacred fire that never dies. The story of Frances Willard's faith in the conquest of evil by the good seems incredible to us who demand a map of all our future before we take a step.

By Senator Albert J. Beveridge

For Frances E. Willard knew no questioning. The Master's message was at once her guaranty and her command. The Bible was to her, in very truth, divine. What immeasurable and increasing influence that one book has wielded over the minds of men and the destiny of the world! If it be the word of God, as we profoundly believe, surely it comes to human ears with all the dignity and peace and power that His word should command. If it be the word of man, then even the doubter must admit that the ancient Hebrews had miraculous skill to cast a spell across millenniums which, strengthening with the years, spreads wider today than ever and embraces the future as far as even the eye of imagination can behold. Not all invention or all statesmanship or all of literature have so touched and bettered human life as this one book. And it was the Bible that gave Frances E. Willard her mission, her strength, her hope, her argument and her inspiration.

Thus prepared and thus equipped she went out into the world and to her work. No method can measure what she did. The half million of women whom she brought into organized co-operation in the Women's Christian Temperance Union is but a suggestion of the real results of her activities. Indeed, the highest benefits her life bestowed were as intangible as air and as full of life. She made purer the moral atmosphere of a continent—almost of a world. She rendered the life of a nation cleaner, the mind of a people saner. Millions of homes today are happier for her; millions of wives and mothers bless her;

Tribute to Frances E. Willard

and countless children have grown into strong, upright and beautiful maturity, who, but for the work of Frances E. Willard, might have been forever soiled and weakened.

Mother of all mothers, sister of all wives, to every child the lover, Frances E. Willard sacrificed her own life to the happiness of her sisters. For after all, she knew that with all her gifts and all the halo of her God-sent mission, nevertheless the humblest mother was yet greater far than she. But it was needful that she should so consecrate her strength and length of years. For how shall the service of utter unselfishness be achieved save in the utter sacrifice of self? So Frances E. Willard gave up her life and all the rights and glories of it that all of her sisters might lead fuller, richer, happier, sweeter lives themselves.

So, Mr. President, by placing her statue in the hall of our national immortals, a great commonwealth today forever commemorates the services of this American woman to all humanity. And the representatives of the American people—the greatest people in this world—in Congress formally assembled today are paying tribute to the little frontier American maid who heard and heeded the voices that came to her from the unseen world, and, obeying their counsels, became the first woman of her generation, the most beloved character of her time, and, under God, a benefactress of her race.