

## LUCRETIA MOTT

### *No Greater Joy Than to See These Children Walking in the Anti-Slavery Path*

In this speech to the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia in December 1863, the seventy-year-old Lucretia Mott looks back on the roots of the antislavery movement in the early 1700s and traces its progress. She rejoices that the abolitionists, for all the abuse they long endured for being too radical, have now been vindicated by the nation's commitment to ending slavery.

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WHEN I see these young men and strong coming forward with acknowledgments of their indebtedness to the cause, and rejoicing that they have been among its later advocates; and when I look around upon this platform, and see here a LUCY STONE, an ELIZABETH JONES, and a THEODORE TILTON, all laboring so effectively in the field, I feel that we older ones may indeed retire, and thank God that he who has blessed us all our lives long is now blessing the lads; for there is surely no greater joy than to see these children walking in the anti-slavery path.

I feared yesterday that we were dwelling too much upon the past. We were so deeply interested in the earliest movements of this Anti-Slavery Society, that we did not go back, except by mere incidental mention, to BENJAMIN LAY and RALPH SANGERFORD, who dwelt in caves and dens of the earth, of whom the world was not worthy, to ELIAS HICKS, THOMAS CLARKSON, and all those earlier laborers; we did not go back as far as that. I feared, however, that we were not enough leaving the things that were behind, and pressing forward toward those that were before. Although I did not entirely agree with our friend FOSTER, and was glad that he was answered as he was—for I have so large Hope that I always take encouraging views of things when I can—yet I felt that there were duties to be performed in our case in regard to freedmen as well as in regard to those still held as slaves in our land. It is of little consequence to us now what we have suffered in the past, what obloquy, reproach and contumely we have endured in

our religious societies, and in other relations in society. We might, as women, dwell somewhat upon our own restrictions, as connected with this Anti-Slavery movement. When persons interested in the cause were invited to send delegates to the London Convention of 1840, and some of those delegates were women, it was found out in time for them to send forth a note declaring that women were not included in the term "persons," but only men; and therefore, when we arrived in London, we were excluded from the platform. Yet, let me say, in justice to the Abolitionists there, that we were treated with all courtesy, and with a good deal of flattery in lieu of our rights. But all those things we may pass by.

Last evening, when we were listening, some of us, to the eloquent and earnest appeals made by HENRY WARD BEECHER, we saw in the assemblage some who, a few years ago, rushed from their seats in the church, because they could not bear to hear WILLIAM FURNESS speak so plainly on the subject of slavery, and who warned friends from abroad that they must not come to our houses because we were Abolitionists. When Madame PULSKY and her friends came, and were asked to go with me on a visit to the Penitentiary, and the carriage was at the door, word came that they were discouraged from coming, because we were Abolitionists! When I see those men coming forward now, and joining in the applause for the thorough anti-slavery sentiments of HENRY WARD BEECHER and others, so far from blaming them, or setting them at nought, I would rather welcome them at this eleventh hour, and I hope they may receive their full penny, if they work diligently to the end. I have felt sometimes almost, with the Apostle, willing to be accursed of my brethren for this cause's sake; but willing afterwards, when they come forward and mingle with us, to give them the right hand and invite them upon the platform, and glad to hear them, if they have any thing to say on the right side. When I saw these things last evening, I remembered the remark of RAY POTTER, one of the signers of the Declaration, who, in a speech in Rhode Island, said that Abolitionists had the great Temple of Liberty to rear, and must do all the rough and hard work; but when it was near the top, he said, then would come forth people to lay their little fingers upon it, and say, "We have got it up!" I could not but remember this last evening, and also a few weeks ago,

when I rejoiced to see the crowds listening to the words that proceeded out of the mouths of PHILLIPS BROOKS and others upon this very platform. When I heard some of the members of the Freedmen's Association, in this meeting, talking about the objections that were met and answered again and again by the Abolitionists years ago, of the duties connected with the liberation of the slave which we must perform, I felt that, after all, we were but unprofitable servants, and had not done as we ought to have done in regard to doing away with that deep-rooted prejudice which is the concomitant of slavery, and which we know can never be removed while slavery exists. Some of us women can perhaps more fully sympathize with the slave, because the prejudice against him is somewhat akin to that against our sex; and we ought to have been more faithful than we have been, so that when we hear the words applied to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," we might be ready to ask, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or in prison, and ministered unto thee?" It seems to me, therefore, as has been recommended here to-day, that we should keep on our armor. It may not be necessary to continue our operations in precisely the same way. But it will be necessary to multiply our periodicals, and scatter them, as we have done heretofore, with good effect. When our friends were talking of what was done, and how we were received in the beginning, and when Church and State were, as our friend GARRISON showed so clearly, arrayed against us, I remembered that then, just as in olden times, the common people heard us gladly. In truth, the original good heart of the people—excuse my theology—cannot resist the wisdom and the power with which Truth speaks to their understanding; and therefore it was that we were gladly received among them. Many have come and made their acknowledgments, that when we were mobbed, when Pennsylvania Hall was burned, they were in the wrong, they were in the mob; but now they say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see, and I am willing now to be faithful to what I see." Let us welcome them, hail them in their coming, and gladly receive them. And with all these coadjutors, the work will go on, emancipation will be proclaimed, and we may be just as confident and earnest as we were before our friend FOSTER reproved us. I think we may

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rejoice and take courage. I like a little addition to the rejoicing of good old Simeon: “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *of* thy salvation;” for the whole salvation has not come, but we have seen *of* the salvation.

(1863)