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# SUSAN B. ANTHONY: THE WOMAN AND HER WORK.

BY IDA HUSTED HARPER.

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THE world in its progress reached a period about the middle of the last century when it needed just such a reformer as Susan B. Anthony. The time had come for the regeneration of that half of humanity neglected in the struggle for existence through which the race had evolved from savagery to civilization. In this struggle, woman, handicapped by motherhood, domestic requirements and physical limitations, had not been able to keep pace with man, and, as the natural result, had become wholly subject to his laws, customs and commands. When the claims of material necessities began to grow less strenuous, there came an opportunity for the more spiritual forces to gain recognition, and thus dawned the era of a free womanhood.

A few prophets among women had been crying in the wilderness for a number of years when Elizabeth Cady Stanton sounded her trumpet-call for a gathering of the believers in 1848. Its echoes reached to the East and the West, and slumbering forces were roused to action. The spirit of unrest continued to spread; women began to wonder and ask questions; the time was ripe for a revolution, and the one to direct it was at hand, for, just as the century turned into its second half, came Susan B. Anthony. No one who makes a careful study of the great movement for the emancipation of women can fail to recognize in Miss Anthony its supreme leader. Her powers of speaking and writing were surpassed, perhaps, by the splendid abilities of Mrs. Stanton; but, as a planner, an organizer, a manager, a politician in the best sense of the word, Miss Anthony was unequalled. The qualities of these are even more essential in the campaign

work necessary to a cause which enters the domain of politics than are those of the orator or the writer. But there were other traits possessed by Miss Anthony which made her leadership pre-eminent. She had a keen discernment of special gifts in other women which could be utilized and a faculty for bringing and keeping them in the work. Almost beyond any other, she had the power to create a following which would remain unwaveringly loyal and devoted in the face of repeated disappointments and defeats. She was endowed, as few others have been, with an unflinching courage, determination and spirit of personal sacrifice, which were needed more in her especial work than in any other ever undertaken by woman. But the strongest reason why Susan B. Anthony will be ever acknowledged the general-in-chief of this long contest for the freedom of woman is that she is the only one who gave to it her whole life, consecrating to its service every hour of her time and every power of her being. Other women did what they could; came into the work for a while and dropped out; had the divided interests of family and the social relations; turned their attention to reforms which promised speedier rewards; surrendered to the forces of persecution which assailed them. With Miss Anthony, the cause of woman took the place of husband, children, society; it was her work and her recreation; her politics and her religion. "I know only woman and her disfranchised," was her creed.

In a comprehensive article entitled "Woman's Half-Century of Evolution,"\* written soon after the death of Mrs. Stanton, Miss Anthony set forth in detail the conditions existing at the time they began their work together, and the gradual steps in progress to the close of the century. She gave the Declaration of Independence and the resolutions adopted at that first Woman's Rights convention in 1848, and showed that all the demands then made, so radical that they were denounced and ridiculed from one end of the country to the other, have now been granted practically in full, except the one for the suffrage; and that this has been recognized to such an extent as to place its ultimate success beyond question. The object of the present article is to study the character of Miss Anthony herself and her part in the revolution which has taken place in the status of woman.

Miss Anthony came from English stock and many generations

\* NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, December, 1902.

of New England ancestors, the first of them settling in Rhode Island in 1634. Her grandparents and parents were born in Massachusetts, those on the paternal side belonging to the Society of Friends from the time it came into existence. The maternal grandparents were Baptists, but the grandfather, Daniel Read, became a convert to the Universalist faith. His wife, it is said, "wore the skin off her knees" praying that God would make him see the error of his ways, but he never did, and to the end of his life he found his chief enjoyment in setting forth the merits of free salvation. He served with honor through the entire Revolutionary War, was in the expedition against Quebec, at the capture of Ticonderoga, the battle of Bennington and the fatal fight at Stone Arabia. After the war he became a member of the Massachusetts Legislature. Both grandfathers had excellent farms and comfortable homes near Adams, Massachusetts, acquired a competency, educated their children and represented the best type of the sturdy New-Englanders of early times.

At Adams, in the Berkshire Hills, overlooked by "Old Greylock," that glorified mountain peak, was born Susan B. Anthony, the second of eight children, February 15th, 1820. Her father was a prosperous cotton-manufacturer, and in 1826 he removed to Battenville, Washington County, New York, to form a partnership with Judge John McLean and conduct his business on a larger scale. He was a liberal and public-spirited man, progressive far beyond his times. He belonged to the so-called "Hicksite" Friends, but, although their religious beliefs were broad enough to suit him, he was several times "disciplined" for disregarding their strict usages; first, for marrying outside the faith; then for wearing an overcoat with a cape and a colored handkerchief around his neck; and, finally, he was "disowned" because he allowed the young people to dance in his house. He felt this very keenly but would not give up his own ideas of right and wrong, and continued to attend the Friends' meetings. He loved this form of religion, as did his wife and daughter, and Miss Anthony always attributed very largely to its influence her strong belief in the equality of the sexes, her hatred of slavery in any form, her tendency toward public speaking and the final adoption of her career. Her father believed in the education of women and their economic independence; and in giving her the one he prepared her for the other.

In 1837-8, the commercial panic practically destroyed the cotton-manufactures, and in 1845 the Anthony family removed to Rochester, New York, which was henceforth their home. Although Miss Anthony was born in Massachusetts, she lived in New York from the time she was six years old, and she identified herself fully with the interests of that State, loved it, was proud of it, shed lustre upon it; and yet never was she permitted the smallest part in its laws or its government.

Miss Anthony was a successful teacher until she was in her thirtieth year; but in the summer of 1849, she returned home with an intense desire for a wider field of work. To most women the prospect would have been hopeless, for there was literally no vocation except teaching for an educated woman. But she was a Quaker, her aunt had been a noted "preacher," something in her soul was striving for expression, and she had been taught that a woman's right to speak was exactly the same as a man's. As temperance work was then the only outlet for women's activities in public life, she took it up with great zeal. Outraged by the way men treated women in the conventions, she enlisted Mrs. Stanton's cooperation, and they formed a State Women's Temperance Society in which men had no part. It held several successful conventions, but by 1852 Miss Anthony had become thoroughly convinced that the conditions of women must be radically changed before they could do effective work in great reforms, and that their paramount duty was to secure their own rights, legal, educational, civil, industrial and political. She attended for the first time, in September of that year, a Woman's Rights Convention, met the able women connected with it, heard their arguments for the franchise, and came away fully satisfied that the underlying right, the one which would secure to women every other, was the right of suffrage. Her Biography says:

"A sense of the terrible helplessness of being utterly without representation came upon her with crushing force. The first, great cause of the injustice which pressed upon women from every point was clearly revealed to her, and she understood, as never before, that any class which is compelled to be legislated for by another class must always be at a disadvantage."

In this opinion Miss Anthony never wavered. By 1854 all other work was laid aside, and from that time to the end of her long life she devoted herself, body, mind and soul, to the one

task of securing the rights of women. Well might the little band of reformers stand appalled at the situation which confronted them. The masses of women were almost wholly uneducated. Not only were the colleges closed against them, but not even a high school was open. Outside of teaching (for a beggarly pittance) they could earn a living only at menial occupations. The first fight to be made was to secure for them the right to speak in public, to ask for the redress of their own wrongs. Everywhere the English common law prevailed, which had been adopted by the colonies and never changed. The wife had no legal existence, or, as Blackstone expressed it, "the very being, or existence, of the woman is suspended during marriage." She could not own property, buy or sell, sue or be sued, make a contract, testify in court or control her own wages. The father could apprentice young children without the mother's consent and dispose of them by will at his death. There was but one cause for divorce, and the husband, though the guilty party, could retain the property and the children.

Miss Anthony and her associates clearly saw that, if women had power to elect lawmakers, these laws could be speedily swept from the books; but, since the right of the franchise is the one it has been impossible to obtain, half a century has been required to replace them with juster statutes, and the work is yet far from finished, as a part or all of these laws are still in force in various States. But that conditions have immeasurably improved is everywhere evident. Women have as good and as many opportunities for education as men have. Their right to speak in public is gladly recognized, and through their great organizations they wield a vast influence. All avenues of employment, except political, are open to them, not always on equal terms with men, but for millions of them economic independence is assured. In many States the laws are nearly fair, and in all but two or three they have been much improved. Miss Anthony lived to see all this as, in a measure, the direct result of her own labors. There are many reasons why the franchise has not been gained, but two of them are amply sufficient: (1) The right of suffrage is the only one entrenched in the Constitution and requires the consent of a majority of all the men in a State to grant it; (2) Men understand that the ballot is the source of their power, and they are determined not to share it.

It would be impossible in this brief space to go into the details of Miss Anthony's more than fifty years of hard, continuous work, they fill two volumes of a thousand pages. A few events, however, stand out with such striking prominence as to call for especial attention. Miss Anthony was instrumental in creating not only the first State, but also the first National, organization of women—the National Woman Suffrage Association, formed in New York in 1869. It has been for thirty-seven years the vital force in the movement for securing the franchise, and through its State auxiliaries in obtaining many improvements in conditions for women and children. Miss Anthony was ever its mainstay, never missed but two annual conventions, always held official position and was president after Mrs. Stanton's retirement in 1892 until her own eightieth birthday in 1900, when she became honorary president. The Association supports the States in their suffrage campaigns, furnishes money and workers, keeps organizers constantly in the field, maintains a press bureau, from its headquarters sends out tons of literature every year, and, with its board of able women, gives great power and stability to the movement. Miss Anthony loved it as her child, guided its footsteps, watched its growth, rejoiced in its achievements, and made the last journey of her life to attend its convention at Baltimore in February.

Miss Anthony's one deviation from her work for woman suffrage was her effort to render every possible assistance in the struggle for the abolition of slavery. Her home was a meeting-place for the "Garrisonians," and, if not a station on the "underground railroad," certainly in close touch with some that were. Here she met in intimate acquaintance Garrison himself, Phillips, Pillsbury, Douglass, the Fosters and others who were stirring the conscience of the country by their fiery eloquence, and they found in her an ardent sympathizer. Recognizing her unusual ability, the American Anti-Slavery Society engaged her in 1856 as organizer, speaker and manager, and from then until the breaking out of the Civil War she divided her time between the work of freeing the slaves and that of securing freedom for women. In 1863, at the urgent request of many prominent men, she went to New York and, with the cooperation of Mrs. Stanton and many other patriotic women, organized the Women's National Loyal League. For fifteen months they labored without

ceasing to secure petitions for the abolishment of slavery by Congressional action. Miss Anthony superintended this great work, took the entire financial responsibility and secured the necessary funds. The 400,000 names obtained by women, Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson many times declared, were the bulwark of the authority by which Congress submitted the Thirteenth Amendment that forever abolished slavery.

The Amendment was declared ratified in December, 1865, but, even before this glorious result of their work was accomplished, the women learned to their amazement and indignation that Congress was about to submit another amendment for the purpose of enfranchising these newly freed negro men which was to be carefully worded for the express purpose of excluding all women! Miss Anthony, ever on the watch-tower, was the first to sound the alarm. She hastened to Mrs. Stanton in New York, and the two instantly set to work to arouse the friends of woman suffrage to this new and most formidable danger. The National Constitution was silent on the question of the franchise, and the women therefore had only to reckon with the State constitutions, but it was now proposed to add a suffrage amendment to the former document which should include the word "male," and thus deliberately put up against women the insurmountable barrier of the Federal Constitution! Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton called public meetings, they made speeches, they circulated petitions, they wrote hundreds of letters protesting against this outrage, but to their intense surprise and anguish they were met with coldness and opposition. Garrison, Phillips, Curtis, Tilton, Higginson, Douglass, Gerrit Smith, Thaddeus Stevens—all the eminent men who had aided them so faithfully in the past—turned against them now. Even the women, with but few exceptions, yielded to the frantic appeals that they would not imperil the chance of the negro men by intruding their own claims. That the enfranchisement of these would intrench the Republican party in a position of apparently permanent power was carefully kept in the background. "Would you have us lose all we have gained by the war?" was the argument used to the women. "This is the negro's hour. When he is secured in his rights, then your turn will come."

Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton never yielded one inch of their position. They had no faith in the promises; they knew that this



amendment would add another million to the millions who already had political sovereignty over women, and that their enemies henceforth would have only to barricade themselves behind the National Constitution. They were willing negro men should be enfranchised, but not at the expense of all women. Deserted and denounced by their former friends and fellow workers, they never ceased their protests against this terrible injustice until the Fourteenth Amendment was finally declared adopted in 1868; and they lived to see their predictions verified to the letter.

Up to this time, those who were working for woman suffrage had considered no plan except to obtain it through a change of constitution in each State. They now had learned that the National Constitution itself could be so amended as to enfranchise an entire class of citizens, and henceforth that part of them who had followed the standard of Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton, and who soon returned to it, directed their efforts wholly to obtaining the suffrage by this method. "The Revolution," that fearless, radical and independent paper, established in New York in 1868, with Mrs. Stanton as editor and Miss Anthony as business manager, advocated this procedure with great earnestness. The National Association, formed in 1869, as noted above, adopted this plan of action exclusively, held all its conventions in Washington, and had its ablest speakers appear before Congressional Committees to urge the submission of an amendment to enfranchise women. The Fifteenth Amendment, which almost immediately followed the Fourteenth, confirmed the opinion that this was the most practicable way. Miss Anthony herself was unalterably convinced of it, and she addressed Committees of every Congress from 1869 to 1906, with logical argument and impassioned pleading that they would do as much for all women as they had done for negro men. Limited space prevents the reproduction in full of any of these matchless addresses, but a quotation from one, made in March, 1884, will illustrate their power and pathos:

"This is the fifteenth year we have appeared before Congress in person, and the nineteenth by petitions, asking national protection for women in the exercise of their right to vote. In the winter of 1865 and 1866 we sent your honorable body a ten-thousand prayer, asking you not to put 'male' in the second section of the proposed Fourteenth Amendment; and again we appealed to you by thousands of petitions that you would add 'sex' after 'race or color' in the Fifteenth, but all to no avail. Then by an eighty-thousand petition in 1871 we demanded the

enactment of a declaratory law that women had the right to vote under the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment. This, too, was denied us, not only by Congress, but by the Supreme Court, which held that the framers of the amendment had only 'colored men' in their thought, therefore none others could come within its purview. From 1876 to the present we have from year to year poured into Congress hundreds of thousands of petitions asking you to take the initiative step for another amendment which shall specifically prohibit the disfranchisement of women.

"But, you say, why do you not go to your several States to secure this right? I answer, because we have neither the women nor the money to make the canvasses of the thirty-eight States, school-district by school-district, to educate each individual man out of the old belief that woman was created to be his subject. Four State legislatures submitted the question of striking 'male' from their constitutions—Kansas, Michigan, Colorado and Nebraska—and we made the best canvass of each which was possible for a disfranchised class outside of all political help. Negro suffrage was again and again overwhelmingly voted down in various States; and you know, gentlemen, that if the negro had never had the ballot until the majority of white men, particularly the foreign born, had voted 'yes,' he would have gone without it until the crack of doom. It was because of this prejudice of the unthinking majority that Congress submitted the question of the negro's enfranchisement to the legislatures of the several States, to be adjudicated by the educated, broadened representatives of the people. We now appeal to you to lift the decision of *our* question from the vote of the populace to that of the legislatures, that thereby you may be as considerate and just to the women of this nation as you were to the freedmen.

"Every new privilege granted to woman has been by the legislatures. The liberal laws for married women, the right of the wife to own and control her inherited property and separate earnings, the right of women to vote at school-elections in a dozen States, full suffrage in two Territories, all have been gained through the legislatures. Had any one of these beneficent propositions been submitted to the vote of the rank and file do you believe a majority would have placed their sanction upon it? I do not; and I beg you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, that you will at once recommend to the House the submission of the proposition now before you, and thus place the decision of this great constitutional question of the right of one-half the people of this Republic to a voice in the Government, with the legislatures of the several States. You need not fear that our enfranchisement will come too suddenly or too soon by this method. After the proposition shall have passed Congress by the requisite two-thirds vote, it may require five, ten or twenty years to secure its ratification by the necessary three-fourths of the State legislatures; but, *once submitted by Congress, it always will stand until ratified by the States.*

"It takes all too many of us women from our homes and from the works of charity and education in our respective localities, even to come

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to Washington, session after session, until Congress shall have submitted the proposition, and then to go from legislature to legislature, urging its adoption. But when you insist that we shall beg at the feet of each individual voter of every one of the States, native and foreign, black and white, learned and ignorant, you doom us to incalculable hardships and sacrifices, and to most exasperating insults and humiliations. I pray you to save us from the fate of waiting and working for our freedom until we shall have educated the ignorant masses of men to consent to give their wives and sisters equality of rights with themselves. You surely will not compel us to await the enlightenment of all the freedmen of this nation and the newly-made voters from the monarchical governments of the Old World!

“Liberty for one’s self is a natural instinct possessed alike by all men, but to be willing to accord liberty to another is the result of education, of self-discipline, of the practice of the golden rule. Therefore, we ask that the question of equality of rights to women shall be decided by the picked men of the nation in Congress, and the picked men of the several States in their respective legislatures.”

Sometimes these Committees reported favorably, sometimes unfavorably, but generally they did not report at all. Eleven favorable reports have been made—five from Senate, six from House, Committees. It is a noteworthy fact that from 1879 to 1891, when Miss Anthony was enabled to spend the Congressional season in Washington, nine of these favorable reports were made. Committees of the first three Congresses after she ceased remaining in that city for the winter, reported adversely—in 1892-4-6,—and since that time there has been no report of any kind. Could there be a better illustration of the powerful influence she was able to exert?

Many members of Congress and constitutional lawyers held that women really were entitled to vote under Section I of Amendment XIV, which declares that “no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.” Acting under legal advice, Miss Anthony determined to test her rights, and, in November, 1872, with but slight objection from the election-inspector she registered and voted the full ticket. She was arrested, and, although she testified that she voted conscientiously, under legal advice, believing it to be her right, she was charged with committing a *crime*, her writ of *habeas corpus* denied and her bail fixed at \$1,000. Her trial was set for the May term of court in Rochester, and in March she started out to canvass Monroe County, not to argue

her case, but to see that the people were educated upon the constitutional points involved. Being informed that the District Attorney threatened to move her trial into another county because she would prejudice the jury, she notified him that then she would see that that county also was thoroughly canvassed, and asked him if she were prejudicing a jury by reading and explaining the Constitution of the United States. She spoke in twenty-nine post-office districts and then he did change the case to Canandaigua, when she immediately began speaking in Ontario County. As the time was so short, she called to her assistance that able debater, Mrs. Matilda Joslyn Gage, who spoke in sixteen places on "The United States on trial, not Susan B. Anthony." Miss Anthony spoke in twenty-one places on the question, "Is it a crime for a citizen of the United States to vote?" Her Constitutional Argument delivered during this canvass was a masterpiece of clear, strong, logical reasoning, which never has been excelled in the Senate or before the Supreme Court of the United States. If all that ever has been said on the subject of the suffrage for woman should be blotted out and this alone remain, it would establish forever woman's just, moral, equitable and fundamental right to the ballot.

The trial of Miss Anthony opened on June 17th, 1873, Ward Hunt, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court being on the bench, and United States District Attorney Richard Crowley prosecuting. She was ably represented by her counsel, Judge Henry R. Selden and the Hon. John Van Voorhis, of Rochester. The Court refused to permit Miss Anthony to testify as to the intention or belief under which she voted, holding that she was not competent as a witness in her own behalf. After listening to the arguments of counsel on both sides, Justice Hunt, not having left the bench in the mean time, delivered a *written* opinion, and at its close *directed the jury to bring in a verdict of "guilty!"* Miss Anthony's counsel insisted that the Court had no power to make such a direction in a criminal case and demanded that the jury be permitted to bring in its own verdict. The Justice made no reply, except to order the clerk to register the verdict. Mr. Selden demanded that the jury be polled. Justice Hunt refused, and discharged the jury without even asking if they agreed upon a verdict. Afterwards several of them declared that they would have brought in a verdict of "not guilty."

The next day Justice Hunt denied the motion for a new trial, and then occurred that remarkable scene, when the wronged womanhood of all the ages seemed to speak through Miss Anthony, standing there at the bar where Justice herself had been brutally violated. When at last she was silenced, the Justice assessed a fine of \$100 and costs, and she answered: "I will never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty. All I possess is a debt of \$10,000 incurred by publishing my paper, 'The Revolution,' the sole object of which was to educate all women to do exactly as I have done—rebel against your man-made, unjust, unconstitutional forms of law, which tax, fine, imprison and hang women, while denying them the right of representation in the Government. I will work with might and main to pay every dollar of that honest debt, but not a penny shall go to this unjust claim, and I will continue to urge on all women that "resistance to tyranny is obedience to God."\*

Miss Anthony never did pay this fine, which always stood against her, and the only reason it was not collected by law was that she had no property which could be levied on. She never asked President Grant to remit this fine, as has been so often stated, but she did ask for the pardon of the inspectors, who were found guilty, and this was granted by the President. She carried her own case to the Congress of the United States because she had been denied the right of trial by jury guaranteed by the National Constitution, but Committees from Senate and House declined to take action, and the case stands to-day as one of the greatest of judicial outrages.

A notable accomplishment in this life of illustrious deeds, one which will stand for all time, is seen in the four large volumes, "History of Woman Suffrage." They should have a more comprehensive title, for they include the invaluable records of the wonderful progress of women along all lines during the past century. In their actual writing Miss Anthony called other women to her assistance, but to her alone is due their inception, the collecting of material, the persistence which constantly pushed this work through a period of over ten years, the raising of money, the drudgery of publishing, and finally the placing of these books in all the large libraries of this country and Europe. To this last

\* Full reports of this trial are contained in the "Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony" and the "History of Woman Suffrage," Vol. II.

task the later years of her life were almost wholly given. Except for her foresight, her energy and her perseverance, the history of the evolution of woman would be forever buried in obscurity, for it exists only in these volumes. The present and future generations must also feel indebted to Miss Anthony for having preserved in her Biography the story of her own life, which is so closely interwoven with the warp and woof of the destiny of all women henceforth to the end of time.

Another memorial of Miss Anthony's marvellous executive power may be seen in the International Council of Women, whose membership of millions extends around the globe. It was while in Europe in 1883 that she and Mrs. Stanton took the first steps toward bringing the women of different nations together in organization. With the cooperation of other capable women, Miss Anthony spent several years in perfecting the plans that finally culminated in the forming of the International Council at Washington in 1888, which now has its national auxiliaries in over twenty countries. At its Congresses in London in 1899 and in Berlin in 1904, women of literally the whole world joined in a magnificent ovation to their acknowledged leader, Susan B. Anthony.

On the evening of February 15th, the eighty-sixth birthday of Miss Anthony was celebrated in Washington, the city which had welcomed her so many times during the past forty years. Letters of congratulation were read from the President of the United States, from Senators, Representatives, many distinguished men and women. Those she loved were gathered around her, and all about was the earnest, sympathetic audience which had ever been her inspiration. Robed in her soft, black gown, relieved as always with delicate lace, her silver hair parted over her noble brow, she sat there just as she had so many times before—and yet there was a difference. The great reformer, the orator, the planner of campaigns, seemed to have faded into the background and left instead only the beautiful, beloved woman, with an expression so spiritual that to every heart came the thrill of sorrowful thought, This is the last! One month from that night the snow was falling on her new-made grave.

IDA HUSTED HARPER.