

country of my own ancestors, a country rich in heroes of every kind, perhaps after all the most splendid figure of French history is not the figure of a man but of a woman, Joan of Arc (applause); a simple peasant girl who rescued her country when the task had been given up by the ablest men of that day. If you cross the channel and go over to England I am sure everybody would admit that there never was a man on the throne of England who could discharge the duties of a monarch as Her Majesty Queen Victoria has done. (Loud applause.) If from that high station you go lower, we shall have to admit that some of the greatest reforms that have ever been achieved in England, reforms which have civilized her and made her the first country in the world, have been accomplished by women. If for instance the life of prisoners has been made what it is to-day, if prisons are no longer cages fit only for animals, but are fit habitations for men, it is due, as we know, to a woman—God for ever bless the name of Elizabeth Fry! (Applause.) If the care which is due to those who risk their lives upon the battle field is now bestowed upon wounded soldiers and they are tended as they should be, it is due to a woman, to Florence Nightingale. (Applause.) If I cross over to this continent, we must acknowledge that the cause of the abolition of slavery in the United States has been advocated by women just as much as by men; and if the death-blow has been finally given to slavery, it is not altogether due to the sagacity and wisdom of Abraham Lincoln, or to the courage, devotion, and tenacity of General Grant, but the largest share of the praise is due to a woman, Mrs. Beecher Stowe. (Applause.) It was the pen of Mrs. Beecher Stowe that painted the horrors of slavery and brought the North to a determination to resist everything in order to wipe out slavery from the land. (Applause.) Though we have a country which is enriched by the names and memories of Montcalm and Wolfe and many other heroes, you will agree with me that there is no brighter name in Canadian history than that of that young girl Mademoiselle De Verchères who fought against invasion (applause); and perhaps it may not be out of place when there is talk of war to remind you that even women can fight. (Applause.) This is what we know as to what women can do.

Now I am here to testify that this Council of Women, which is only two years old, has already achieved a very great deal. My friend, Mr. Foster, struck the right key when he remarked that if the National Council had done nothing else than to bring together women from the east and from the west they had done a great deal towards the unification of this country, with its diverse creeds and races. Her Excellency said that one aim, one purpose, one object which the National Council had was to smooth away ancient feuds and rancours; what nobler work can there be than that! (Applause.) What we want in this country above all things, if we are to become a nation, as with God's help we shall, is to have peace, harmony and union amongst all the heterogeneous.