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REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

IN PRESENTING TO

MADAM CURIE.

A GIFT OF RADIUM FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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REMARKS

MADAME CURIE:

It is with an especial satisfaction that I perform the pleasant duty which has been assigned to me today. On behalf of the American Nation I greet and welcome you to our country, in which you will everywhere find the most cordial possible reception. We welcome you as an adopted daughter of France, our earliest supporter among the great nations. We greet you as a native-born daughter of Poland; newest, as it is also among the oldest, of the great nations, and always bound by ties of closest sympathy to our own Republic. In you we see the representative of Poland restored and reinstated to its rightful place, of France valiantly maintained in the high estate which has ever been its right.

As a nation whose womanhood has been exalted to fullest participation in citizenship, we are proud to honor in you a woman whose work has earned universal acclaim and attested woman's equality in every intellectual and spiritual activity.

We greet you as foremost among scientists in the age of science, as leader among women in the generation which sees woman come tardily into her own. We greet you as an exemplar of liberty's victories in the generation wherein liberty has won her crown of glory.

In doing honor to you we testify anew our pride in the ancient friendships which have bound us to both the country of your adoption and that of your nativity. We exalt anew our pride that we have stood with them in the struggle for civilization, and have touched elbows with them in the march of progress.

It has been your fortune, Madame Curie, to accomplish an immortal work for humanity. We are not without understanding of the trials and sacrifices which have been the price of your achievement. We know something of the fervid purpose and deep devotion which inspired you. We bring to you the meed of honor which is due to preeminence in science, scholarship, research, and humanitarianism. But with it all we bring something more. We lay at your feet the testimony of that love which all the generations of men have been wont to bestow upon the noble woman, the unselfish wife, the devoted mother. If, indeed, these simpler and commoner relations of life could not keep you from great attainments in the realms of science and intellect, it is also true that the zeal, ambition, and unswerving purpose of a lofty career could not bar you from splendidly doing all the plain but worthy tasks which fall to every woman's lot.

A number of years ago a reader of one of your earlier works on radio-active substances noted the observation that there was much divergence of opinion as to whether the energy of radio-active substances is created within those substances themselves, or is gathered

to them from outside sources, and then diffused from them. The question suggested an answer which is doubtless hopelessly unscientific. I have liked to believe in an analogy between the spiritual and the physical world. I have been very sure that that which I may call the radio-active soul, or spirit, or intellect—call it what you choose—must first gather to itself, from its surroundings, the power that it afterwards radiates in beneficence to those near it. I believe it is the sum of many inspirations, borne in on great souls, which enables them to warm, to scintillate, to radiate, to illumine and serve those about them. I am so sure of this explanation for the radio-active personality that I feel somehow a conviction that science will one day establish a like explanation for radio-activity among inanimate substances.

Perhaps, in my innocence of science, I am airily rushing in where scientists fear to tread. But I am trying to express to you my conviction that the great things achieved by great minds would never have been wrought without the inspiration of an appealing need for them. That appeal comes as inspiration to successful effort, and success in turn enables the outgiving of benefits to millions whose only contribution has been the power of their united appeal.

Let me press the analogy a little farther. The world to-day is appealing to its statesmen, its sociologists, its humanitarians, and its religious leaders for solution of appalling problems. I want to hope that the power and universality of that appeal will inspire strong, devout, consecrated men and women to seek out the solution, and, in the light of their wisdom, to carry it to all mankind. I have faith to believe that precisely that will happen; and in your own career of fine achievement I find heartening justification for my faith.

In testimony of the affection of the American people, of their confidence in your scientific work, and of their earnest wish that your genius and energy may receive all encouragement to carry forward your efforts for the advance of science and conquest of disease, I have been commissioned to present to you this little phial of radium. To you we owe our knowledge and possession of it, and so to you we give it, confident that in your possession it will be the means further to unveil the fascinating secrets of nature, to widen the field of useful knowledge, to alleviate suffering among the children of man. Take it to use as your wisdom shall direct and your purpose of service shall incline you. Be sure that we esteem it but a small earnest of the sentiments for which it stands. It betokens the affection of one great people for another. It will remind you of the love of a grateful people for yourself; and it will testify in the useful work to which you will devote it, the reverence of mankind for one of its foremost benefactors and most beloved of women.

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