



Mrs. H. A. Boomer.
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Something About Our Women's Parliament.

[It would be a matter of regret were we not permitted, at this juncture, to reveal the identity of "H. A. B.," who has been for many years an esteemed contributor of "The Farmer's Advocate" Home Magazine.

During the recent Convention of the National Council of Women of Canada, held at London, Ont., many of our readers were especially interested in the clever and alert little lady who, as President of the local branch of the Association, was hostess upon that occasion. They would, no doubt, have been even more interested had they known that this Mrs. H. A. Boomer, of whom all had long since heard, was none other than our own "H. A. B."

To-day, the fact need no longer be concealed, for Mrs. Boomer has kindly consented to our giving the readers of these columns a few notes upon the events of her unusually eventful life,—the personal touch that will make still more real a personality which has so often revealed itself through the writings of "H. A. B."

Mrs. Boomer was born July 10th, 1835, at Bishop's Hull, England, the daughter of Mr. Thomas M. Mills, Solicitor, of Taunton. She was educated at Queen's College, and, in 1851, came to Canada with her mother, who had been appointed lady superintendent of a home school for daughters of the clergy and officials of the Hudson Bay Company at the Red River Settlement, now Winnipeg. The trip, still vividly pictured in the memory of Mrs. Boomer, was made by way of Hudson's Bay, over the route for which a regular steamship service to Europe is now, after so many years, being projected.

Afterwards Mrs. Mills came, with her young daughter, to London, Ont., where she assisted Bishop Hellmuth in founding Hellmuth Ladies' College, of which she was principal for three years.

In 1858, Miss Mills (now Mrs. Boomer)

was married to Mr. A. R. Roche, of the Civil Service of Canada, who, later, was the originator, and, in connection with Lord Bury, Earl of Albemarle, and others, one of the founders of the Royal Colonial Institute, of which King Edward VII., as Prince of Wales, King George, as Prince of Wales, and now H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught have been, in turn, Honorary Presidents, presiding personally on special occasions.

Of Mr. Roche, one who has written of him, says: "By perpetual use of the press of Canada, over fifty-five years ago, he so kept in view the possibilities of the Big Northwest, then only known as a wild waste for fur-bearing animals, and only inhabited in spots by the Hudson Bay Company, who practically owned it, that at last Canada's eyes were opened, so that now the whole Northwest is a living Canada. Old records bear his name, though time has effaced the memory of the hand that sowed the first seed."

In 1875 Mr. Roche and his wife went to South Africa, and while here the subject of this sketch wrote two books that were extensively circulated, "On Trek in the Transvaal," which foreshadowed the Zulu war, and, "Notes from Our Log in South Africa."

On the homeward journey, Mr. Roche died at sea, and some years later, Mrs. Roche became the wife of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Boomer, Dean of Huron, and first Provost of the Western University.

Since the death of Dean Boomer in 1888, Mrs. Boomer has lived chiefly in London, but has made frequent trips to the Mother Country. Always energetic, she has made her life count along many lines. For some time she was Provincial President of the National Council of Women of Canada (of which the Countess of Aberdeen was then President), and, in connection with the work of the Association, she has become well-known throughout the Dominion. At present she is President of the local branch at London. She was also the first woman to be made a member of a civic board in London, having been appointed one of the Trustees of the Collegiate Institute of that city in 1898. Her interest in all charitable works has always been deep, and for years she has been a prominent member of the Women's Auxilliary to the Missionary Society of the Church of England. It will be remembered that, at the time of the serious accident which befel her last year, through the running away of a horse, she had been occupied during the day in packing bales of clothing for the sufferers after the Porcupine fire.

With this, then, may we close, making room for Mrs. Boomer's own account of the meeting of the "Women's Parliament of Canada."—Ed.]

A FEW ECHOES FROM A MEMORABLE WEEK.

Just a very few echoes only, out of a very large number which might with equal justice find a place in our women's Columns in "The Farmer's Advocate" to-day.

During the week just gone by, London has been honored, not only by a visit from the Royal Representative of the King of England in Canada, the Duke of Connaught, and by their Royal Highnesses, the Duchess of Connaught and their daughter, the Princess Patricia, who has a place of her own in the hearts of loyal Canadians, but by a gathering of some of the most notable women of our Dominion, drawn together for the nineteenth annual meeting of Canada's National Council of Women, a council of women's societies which claims the interest and co-operation of every woman in Canada. For the National Council, the coming of the Duchess of Connaught

had a very special significance, for she came, not only as the First Lady of the Land, but as the First Lady of the National Council of Women, in virtue of her office as its Honorary President.

Apart from the great honor done to us as one in membership with her, and to our city through the gracious acceptance by Her Royal Highness of our invitation to attend the first annual meeting of the N. C. W. held since she came to Canada as its Vice-Reine, we have had, by many tokens, the assurance that to her the National Council of Women is not a mere name. She has heard great things of it in the past, and she expects great things of it in the future. Her Royal Highness has already given Canadians practical evidence of her interest in the work of the Council, and of her thorough understanding of its true meaning.

In one very definite way she has already accomplished much along Council lines, her appeal on behalf of the extension of the work of the National Council of Nurses in the widely-scattered districts of outer Canada where skilled nursing is so sorely needed, having brought rich results. The Duchess chose as the subject which she would desire to hear discussed, "The Employment of Women," and she followed the debate with a keen and intelligent interest which promises much for the future.

Of the various civic functions which arose out of the coming to London of their Royal Highnesses, the daily press has given full information, so I will confine my echoes to mentions of what transpired more particularly within our own "ring-fence."

Both by letter and cablegram, our honored founder, Lady Aberdeen, sent us greetings, adding, in the former, the words, "How His Excellency and myself wish we could fly across the Atlantic to be with you all. Now, would you find a florist in London who would make up a little spray in Council Colors for our delegates to the National Council, to be given to each as a token of our affectionate remembrance. Good-bye. God be with you all." And so it came about that on "Royalty day" every member bore on her breast a tiny spray of lilies of the valley, as she rose to greet the Duchess when she entered the Council Chamber at the Normal School on the 29th May last. The story of the young girls of the Normal School who lined up on either side from the door of entry, their fresh young voices singing, "Oh, Canada!" should be written by one of themselves. The memory of it will assuredly live in many of their hearts as a day to be marked with a white stone.

It was said of the National Council that no sooner was a new need made manifest than a remedy was unitedly and diligently sought for it. Already has much been accomplished for the bettering of the conditions of women, such as, after much insistence, the passing of the Factories and Shop Act, which provided women inspectors as well as men; the securing in many centers medical inspection in schools; the reports from year to year of Dr. Helen MacMurchy, throwing light upon much which mothers, as well as teachers, should know. The Council, through Miss Agnes Fitzgibbon, has organized a system of Welcome Hostels in connection with the immigration movement, systematizing and smoothing the way for women from the Old Country who come to supply one of Canada's greatest needs at present, assistance in one form or another in the homes of the land.

An immense amount of investigation along these and other lines was reached by the reports from the conveners of the several central committees, each of which was compiled in condensed form from the information handed in from the workers

in the several local councils throughout the Dominion, and therefore trustworthy and to be relied upon. Nearly every one of these subjects might with profit have had a whole session to itself, only that was impossible.

I will give you their headings, and perhaps a little later on, when the printed reports come out in our Council Year-book for 1912, I may be allowed to tell you of these committees of concentrated effort a little more in detail.

The standing committees of the National Council are as follows:

I. Laws for the Better Protection of Women and Children.

II. Objectionable Printed Matter. This opens up a wide field for its antidote; good literature for our homes and schools.

III. Custodial Care of Feeble-minded Women.

IV. On the Development Classes.

V. Finance.

VI. Immigration.

VII. Press.

VIII. Agriculture for Women.

IX. Citizenship.

X. Vacation Schools and Supervised Playgrounds.

XI. Equal Moral Standard and Prevention of Traffic in Women. (This is a burning question, of which Mr. Coote, a devoted worker from across the water, and an eloquent speaker, said, "The Women's Council has been a greater force than any other body in Canada in aiding in the suppression of this iniquitous traffic.")

XII. Peace and Arbitration.

XIII. Public Health.

XIV. Education. A subject of very wide significance and deep interest to every parent and teacher.

XV.—Employments for Women.

XVI.—Special Committee on Home-making.

XVII. On Problems of Childhood.

With these subjects as the keynotes for discussion, with some of Canada's most earnest, clever, thinking women as their exponents, with records given of good work already done, and of hopes still to be fulfilled as the reward of continued, persistent effort, of remedies for existing ills suggested, and propositions offered for broader lines of work, is it any wonder that time was all too short (although not a moment of it was lost, and not a second of it wasted in talking for talking's sake) to wholly satisfy the members of this Women's Parliament of 1912?

But, nevertheless, its members parted believing that their annual fore-gathering would once more bring with it fresh inspiration, renewed enthusiasms, added wisdom, and by God's good hand upon them, blessed results.

I will close my little extra article with an echo from the lips of one of our most devoted pioneer workers now gone to her rest, Mrs. Gibbs, President of the West Algoma Local Council, who proved by her life that while home and its claims must ever have first claim to her motherly heart, it did not make her forgetful of her relationship to her city as a good citizen, or to her country as a good Canadian.

Eleven years ago, in our Forest City, during her response to the welcome offered on behalf of our London Branch to the visiting delegates from far-away local councils, by Mrs. E. N. English, our first President, whose loss we have ever lamented, Mrs. Gibbs said: "I believe that the most valuable feature of our Council is the bringing about of an interested knowledge of the lives of our sisters under less happy circumstances than our own; for, when we think, we will care; and when we care, we will work to bring about a happier condition for all."

H. A. B.