

THE WOMAN'S CONGRESS AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

BY EDITH J. ARCHIBALD.

It is significant of the age in which we live, as corroborative in the highest degree of the opinion of Victor Hugo that this is the woman's century, to find such a prominent place given to woman and her work by the promoters of the Columbian Exposition.

The gains of the last fifteen years in this direction, since the Centennial Exhibition was held in Philadelphia, have been most wonderful; and during the last decade in particular, the movement among the women of all countries of the globe towards larger and freer conceptions of life, and a deeper realization of their true relation towards the world of which they form a part, has gained in force and momentum, until the crest of the oncoming wave will reach its culminating point in the World's Congress of representative women, which, under the happiest and most favorable auspices, is to hold its sessions at the World's Fair in Chicago during the month of May next.

That there should have place, in the outlined scheme of the Columbian Exposition, a department of Woman's progress, which deals directly with ethical rather than with material values, emphasizes the establishment of a new order of things, in which the coming woman shall be judged in the light of emancipated thought, and no longer from the arbitrary dictum of the masculine idea as to what is or is not essentially feminine; but rather, from her true relation to the State no less than to the Church and the Home.

"The greatest discovery of the age," says that keen observer, Frances E. Willard, "is woman's discovery of herself," and because "ever more to come to consciousness is to come to power, women everywhere are finding out the helpfulness of organization, and are

going forward, and reaching out along every line of work:—philanthropic, charitable and representative; and enquiring with eager interest into the problems of civil and religious polity; of government—home, state and national;—with the strong and unwavering determination to discover wherein they have failed, in former days, with relation to their duty in regard to these affairs, and to be, henceforward, a recognized force in the body politic.

The motto of the Woman's Branch of the World's Congress Auxiliary, "NOT MATTER, BUT MIND," is a sufficient index to its purpose. It has received national recognition, and this Department is under the supervision of Mrs. Potter Palmer, and Mrs. Charles Heurotic, the duly accredited representatives of the United States Government for women's work at the Columbian Exhibition.

But, in the full electric light of the present day, as concerns the status of women, it is interesting to look back at the tiny spark which, so long ago as the year 1848, kindled the train of thought and purpose which has led to such undreamed-of results, and has made the Woman's Congress possible.

The pioneers of freedom of thought for women were those few brave souls, who, less than fifty years ago, at Seneca Falls, New York, made their first organized demand for equal educational, industrial, professional, and political rights for women.

The seed of the movement they planted that day, in cold and unfriendly soil, has thriven, in spite of all the adverse winds and biting frosts of derision, obloquy and contempt; has survived the cutting blasts of ridicule and inuendo. Confronted by every form of opposition, discredited by the very persons whose lot it sought to