

The Federation of Women.

Interesting Visit to the German Empress and Her Views on the World's Congress.

(By May Wright Sewall in the Woman's Journal, Boston.)

In my last letter, written from Berlin, I briefly characterized many of the interesting associations composed of women, and institutions founded by them, which I had been privileged to visit. One fact concerning them I reserved for this article, of which it forms a necessary part.

From the Schaeffer-Lette Verein to the Volks Kuechen, all of the societies and works referred to are under the protection of her Majesty the Empress Frederick. It was some time before I realized the full import of this phrase. In spite of what I had long ago known of the activity of the Empress, while yet Crown Princess, in establishing courses of university lectures for women, and in facilitating educational opportunities for girls of all ranks, I still unconsciously associated her Majesty's protection with the royal patronage which bakers and brewers, tailors and milliners, in all monarchical countries, are wont to use as a trademark indicative of the superior quality of their wares. But, when I found, in the Postleitz-Freibel House, games and pastimes presented by her Majesty on one of her visits of inspection; when I learned that the Princess Victoria was Frau Heyl's first pupil in the art of gardening; when I knew that the Empress had recently inspected Tanneck (the country home where Frau Heyl's daughter lives with the pension portion of her pupils), and had gone from observatory to dog-kennel in her survey of the premises; when, in the Victoria Training School for Nurses, I saw numerous evidences of her Majesty's personal vigilance and sympathy, I began to understand that the phrase "Under the Protection of Her Majesty, the Queen and Empress Frederick" was of vital significance to all things to which it is applied; and, moreover, that it is a sure pledge of noble motive and capable management in the institutions enjoying it. Presently I discovered that most of the remarkable group of women by whom I was welcomed were members of what they constantly referred to as "The Empress's Circle." I noted that the tone in which the "circle" was mentioned by its members had an accent of proud, noble modesty, but no hint of boastful vanity. I found every member of this "circle" to be a woman of serious purpose, engaged in some work whose motive lay outside of self. Everyone of the "circle" whom I met realized and deplored the relative weakness consequent upon isolating her own work from that of others, and as we discussed the means of securing a federation of forces for the common interests, one after another explained the obstacles to such a union, always ending with an expression of eager desire for it, and with the statement: "The Empress Frederick has always desired just such a federation, and if it can be accomplished at all in Germany, it will be only through her influence." Several of these leaders, each in a personal interview, suggested my unfolding to her the ideas of the National and International Councils, and the plans for the General World's Congress of Women at Chicago in '93, with a view of enlisting her Majesty's aid in securing for this congress a good delegation of German women.

It may be difficult to believe that the suggestion was at first not agreeable to such, however, is the fact. As a simple American woman, unfamiliar with the manners of empresses, possessing a tongue untrained to the phraseology employed in addressing imperial personages, I felt that I should be quite out of place in a queen's audience chamber. Deliberately to seek an interview with the Empress, and thus to become responsible for the impression produced in the royal circle by the plans for the work of the Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exposition, was a role to which I felt unequal; and not until it had been pressed upon me as a duty by many deeply interested did I consent to ask for an audience. I received a favorable response from her Majesty's chamberlain, and the audience was set for Saturday, Aug. 8. The summer residence of the Empress is at Homburg, a watering place eleven miles north of Frankfurt-on-the-Main. The Schloss is an interesting structure formerly the residence of the Electors. It was once occupied by the dukes of Saxe-Coburg III, who married a German princess, and like most European castles it is clothed with historic reminiscences. After traversing numerous courts and corridors, we reached an ante-chamber where we were received by the Countess Reichenow, chief lady-in-waiting of her Majesty. After a few minutes conversation, which showed her to be conversant with the object of my visit, the Countess conducted me to an interior apartment where her Majesty presently appeared, the Countess at the same time quitting the chamber.

In a moment the gracious cordiality of her Majesty's welcome gave me the ease of an accustomed guest, and in the more than an hour that the Empress kindly detained me, my mind was fully occupied with the subjects before us, viz., the condition of the women of different countries, particularly of those of Germany and the United States, as respects opportunities for education, for employment, and for the exercise of personal liberty, and the best methods of securing on the committee of honor for the congress of '93 the German names that would carry most weight at home and abroad, and be truly representative of the best that Germany has attained, so far as its women are concerned. As, in reply to her Majesty's searching questions, the complete outline of the plans for this congress was revealed to her, she expressed the warmest approval, and her strong desire that Germany should send worthy delegates who can gather as well as give, and bring back to home use an enlarged comprehension of the significance of "the woman movement," and new enthusiasm for its advancement. Her Majesty was also deeply sympathetic with the ideas that underlie the organizations of the National and International Councils, and the urging the usefulness of their application to societies of local scope. She talked freely of her own efforts to federate the different societies and institutions organized by the women of Berlin through the "circle," of which I had learned so much in that city, and to which I have above referred as "The Empress's circle." During the winter it is the habit of the Empress to invite the members of the "circle" to take tea with her once or twice a month. On these occasions each one (who, as I have before intimated, is the working head of some insti-

tution or society enjoying the Empress's protection) reports the state of her own work. All advise together, and endeavor to make their works mutually supplementary. The Empress speaks of their kind meetings as if they were a source of great pleasure to herself, told me some incidents to illustrate the helpfulness of even such an informal federation of interests, and expressed the strongest desire to see such a federation take so national proportions under permanent, formal organizations.

The Empress deplored the present state of unrest among the working people, and protested strongly against the injustice of those who attribute it to the fact that education has been made accessible to the masses, and hold liberal reformers responsible for it. With the democratic conviction to which one is accustomed in a republic, but which one does not expect from royal lips, her Majesty declared with emphasis: "It is not too much education which produces these revolts and outbreaks among the people everywhere, these strikes and dissensions; not too much but too little education is the trouble." Her Majesty expressed the opinion that intellectual and industrial education should accompany each other in all classes of schools for all classes of people; that respect for useful things and for the people who can produce them, together with a desire to be useful, should be inculcated in every child; and that all systems of education which ignore this part of their plain function fail on the side of practical morals. In discussing industrial education, the Empress Frederick can speak with the authority of experience, for, as a child, she was educated to habits of industry, was instructed carefully in household arts, and has worked all her life very perseveringly in her studio; producing both sculptures and paintings which indicate that, had she not been born to other duties, she would have been a professional artist. Moreover, the leading industrial and technical schools for girls in Berlin have been founded under her Majesty's protection, and she, with the Emperor Frederick, was active in the establishment of the "Kunst Gewerbe" museum.

When I explained that the "General World's Congress of Women" would be divided into several departments, and that it would be the aim of the committee charged with preparing the programme to secure from the delegates of each country a report that would give both the history of the progress of women in their respective countries and their present status in respect to the subject considered—the Empress expressed the most cordial interest, spoke of the vast help that the published reports of this congress will afford to students of social economy everywhere, and said that they will indeed be a cyclopedia of all phases of progress that affect woman's life.

Several times her Majesty said: "I would go to Chicago myself, I would attend this congress were I not such a bad sailor." Repeatedly expressing her desire that Germany be well represented in the congress, she gave me the address of Frau Minna Strecker, who has charge of the institutions founded by the still universally mourned Princess Alice, and urged me to the endeavor to do so, but the absence of Frau Strecker from Darmstadt made it impossible for me to meet her, though her interest in the congress is assured.

Nothing certainly could be more gratifying to American women, or more inspiring and gratifying to German women who interest themselves in progressive movements, than to have the Empress Frederick accept the protectorate of the German committee and delegation in the congress of '93, if circumstances permit late deo. Requesting to be kept informed of the plans as they mature, and making valuable suggestions, which I trust may be executed, her Majesty terminated an audience which, instead of proving an ordeal, was to me the most interesting experience of a summer which has been full of vivid enjoyments.

The Empress talked on many subjects only indirectly connected with that reported here. Her manner was characterized by uncommon simplicity and frankness. I felt Homburg was a home, and knew that I had been in the presence of a truly royal mind; of a mind accustomed to originate and to contemplate large views. I felt that I had seen a woman who has taken life seriously; who has developed her own powers by the study of the sciences which have been full of vivid enjoyments.

The Empress contemplates a conception of womanhood that may be used as the basis for the ideal of the future. She developed this idea somewhat, I was impressed with her frank assumption of the oneness of humanity, and with her aspiration to further the recognition of the solidarity of human interests. In the castle with the noble women who have grown upon me as I have recalled her Majesty's questions and utterances, that I had enjoyed an audience with "the cleverest woman in Europe," for this is the title often bestowed on Victoria of Germany.

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An ostrich raised of Honolulu will exhibit a bird at the World's Fair that is a wonder and a terror. It is 8 feet 6 inches high, weighs 380 pounds, and can kick 24 times more or less—during the snap of a kodak. He is named Jumbo.

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WITH THE FAIR SEX.

The Way They Wash in Japan.

Washing was and is still done in Japan by getting into a boat and letting the garment drag along the bottom by a long string. It is an economical habit of traveling Japs to get a large amount of washing thus accomplished by a steamboat excursion, and has given rise to the story that they travel to wash up once a year. They have no instinct for laundage work, like the Chinese, and think it complete when the soap is in the garment, and will not wring it out. Salt water washes to their taste just as well as fresh.

The Best of Beverages.

An enthusiastic lover of chocolate affirms that for those who wish to keep the imagination fresh and vigorous, chocolate is the beverage of beverages. However copiously you have lunched, a cup of chocolate immediately afterwards will produce digestion three hours after, and prepare the way for a good dinner. It is recommended to everyone who devotes to brain work the hours he should pass in bed; to every wit who finds he has become suddenly dull; to all who find the air damp, the time long, and the atmosphere insupportable; and, above all, to those who, tormented by a fixed idea, have lost their freedom of thought.

Under Golden Rules.

There are a few golden rules to be observed by ladies who wish to have flowers during winter, of which may be enumerated the following: Water all the plants that require it in the morning; leave the plants in the saucers until after the whole has become saturated through; never water by dribs, but give the whole a good soaking, or the consequence often is, that the top of the mould is wetted, while the lower, containing the roots, is dry; sponge over the foliage often as it becomes dusty; take a pointed stick, and, once in a while, stir the surface of the soil, this acts deep enough to disturb the roots, but not the same part as hoeing in the summer, and tends vastly to the health of the plants. Give each plant space enough for air to circulate around it, if possible; let it have the benefit of a little pure fresh air at times.

Where Maidens Are Put Under Lock and Key.

Mr. Bigg-Wither, an English engineer who was employed some years in railroad surveying in Brazil, tells some interesting experiences among the landed proprietors. We quote a few paragraphs pertaining to a visit he made in the valley of Ivahy.

Senhor Andrade was an old man, and allowed his wife to do most of the talking for him when she was in the room. One of her first questions was to know whether I was married, and on hearing that I was still in the full enjoyment of freedom she proceeded to enlarge upon the delights of married life, at the same time informing me that she had five unmarried daughters. After this pretty broad hint of what was expected, of course I expressed a wish to make the acquaintance of these fair members of the family.

Her face became suddenly grave, she looked hesitatingly at her husband, who had remained silently puffing his cigarette during the conversation, and he said something that I did not understand, but which at once dispelled her momentary gravity. The old man got up, went across to a locked door, turned the key, opened it and disappeared into a dark chamber within. Almost immediately he returned, saying: "The girls are not accustomed to see strangers and are afraid."

Meanwhile the senhora, who evidently now determined that her daughters should show themselves, had also disappeared into the secret chamber, from which now proceeded sounds of whispering and suppressed giggling. Presently the senhora reappeared, leading a very modest looking damsel about 19 years of age, closely followed by three others apparently somewhat younger. All were overwhelmed with intense shyness, and a hysterical effort to formalize the introduction and separate introduction of each—be it noted that the lady is here introduced to the gentleman—they all scamper back into the secret chamber and their papa turned the key on them.

At this time I was ignorant of the custom which is so general in these out-of-the-way parts of keeping the women, or rather the daughters, of the family locked up like wild beasts, consequently I did not hesitate to express my wonder and to ask why it was done in this manner. In reply the senhora Andrade said that it was the custom of the country, and he had never thought of bringing up his daughters in any other way.

"No, never," replied "not now that they are grown."

They had all learned horseback riding when children, but since then they had been shut up in the house, according to the custom of the country, where they must remain until husbands can be obtained for them. Poor things! It is to be hoped that there are a few old maids among the lasses of Brazil.

A Friendship.

One of the pleasantest of friendships is the friendship of a young and a middle-aged woman. (There are no old women nowadays.) If the two women are of exactly the right sort, the friendship is almost an ideal one. There can be no jealousy. The older woman is too old to be envious of the younger, either in looks or in accomplishments. The younger feels the superiority of her youth too keenly to care for the regard cherished by the older for her contemporaries. But each possesses a charm to which the other returns with never-ceasing delight.

The older friend smiles over and rejoices in the freshness and vigor, the eager anticipations and daring impetuosity, of her companion. She speaks no word of discouragement. It is beautiful, this demanding youth, this splendid audacity, to which all earthly achievements are possible. It is the highest earthly wisdom to recognize that all this enthusiasm is needed for the lessons which divine wisdom shall teach.

And the younger woman, pouring out her hopes and expectations, her passionate longings and wistful imaginings, feels strongly the mellow graciousness which experience has brought. Dimly she wonders at the content that is always the most puzzling to the youthful heart. Contentment should only be found upon mountain peaks, she thinks.

Yet the large-hearted charity which endures all things, believes all things, and hopes all things is an ever-refreshing surprise. Sometimes she is tempted by its fragrance the vague question arises: "Is it possible that this charity, this contentment of themselves, are attainments? Is it not? Can it be? Ah, no!"

No, not yet! For youth is the longing; for age, the knowledge that the longing was never meant to be satisfied here. Each is best for its own time. In such a friendship each grace finds its complement in the other.

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