

PEOPLE WE MEET.



RACHEL FOSTER AVERY.

IF I were to head this article "A Woman Suffragist," there are yet those in our midst who would conjure up a vision,—dark and big and beetle-browed, with strident voice given to fierce denunciation.

So I shall omit the title, and ask you in stead to glance at the face which looks out from the top of our page in greeting.

It is not a flattering likeness; woodcuts rarely are. But when I endeavoured to secure the photograph from which it was taken,—the only one Mrs. Avery happened to have with her,—the *Montreal Star* informed me confidentially that it was so pretty a picture that one of the staff made off with it,—which goes to prove that a 'woman suffragist born,' as Mrs. Avery would say, may yet prove sufficiently charming in appearance to—well, have her photograph carried off by the tyrant man.

Mrs. Rachel Foster Avery was one of the American visitors to the National Council Conference, held in Montreal in mid-May. She charmed everyone with her pleasant womanly way, and made as many converts to her belief as her words were able to reach.

She has right on her side—of course, we all know that, although we are not all willing to make frank acknowledgment of the fact. If the women who secretly believed that woman's suffrage was a just and right measure would openly declare the same, those who advocate it would not only be considerably surprised, but much encouraged. But a large number have not the courage of their convictions in this matter, and, again, many women, while acknowledging its justice, are not yet prepared to go as far as its champions, in declaring it to be the pivotal measure upon which all other reforms hinge.

But it is coming, as all apostles of social reform see, and such sweet, moderate advocates as Mrs. Avery are doing more than anyone else to hasten its coming.

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Mrs. Avery is yet a young woman. Thirty-five, perhaps, one would say; thirty-seven she asserts with frank sweetness. A certain tender, young motherliness is so essentially hers in speech and look—in very atmosphere—that by association, as she spoke, my thought leaped to Jean Ingelow's maternity song,—so joyous in its tender brooding. You will remember how it begins:

Heigh ho! daisies and butter-cups,
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall!
When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,
And dance with the cuckoo-buds slender and small.
Here's two bonny boys, and here's mother's own lasses
Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho! daisies and butter-cups,
Mother shall thread them a daisy chain;
Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-sparrow
That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain:
Sing "Heart thou art wide, tho' the house be but narrow,"
Sing once, and sing it again.

Mrs. Avery is a woman of independent means. She has a charming home in Philadelphia, and is the mother of three children,—the eldest a little adopted daughter of eight or nine, Miriam, by name, whom she took to be 'her very own,' as she phrased it, two years before her marriage.

"Miriam taught me," she said, "that it was possible to combine home-life with a judicious amount of public work; else, I think, I should never have married. I think my husband recognises this, and is especially grateful to the child," she concluded, smiling. "Anyway, he is devoted to her."

Mrs. Avery is a most persuasive speaker. Because of her natural manner, free from all oratorical effects; her evident sincerity; because also of the thoughtful moderation, the 'sweet reasonableness' of her words, she wins her hearers to admiration and conviction. It is a persuasiveness of character and personality, as well as of logic.

During the conference in question, she took part in the Council discussions on several topics;—her words concerning the confidential relations between child and mother will bear fruit in the home life of every woman who listened to her.

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We met one afternoon at a five o'clock tea,—one of those pleasant hospitalities that the Montreal women were continually devising for the entertainment of their guests between the busy conference sessions.

I coaxed her into a little personal chat. "Yes," she said, "I was born into woman suffrage. My mother was a Sunday-school pupil of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. When I was twelve years old, the first suffrage organisation was formed in my mother's house, and the first woman's rights convention was held in our city. I used to get some dreadful valentines in those days," she laughed.

"My mother knew Lucretia Mott well," she continued. "When I was seventeen I became acquainted with Miss Anthony, and she has been one of the strongest and sweetest controlling influences in my life ever since."

It was pleasant to hear this younger woman speak in such enthusiastic terms of the staunch veteran in the fight—the famous woman whose name is continental in association with this one cause. It was pretty, too, at this moment when I lifted my eyes to note the scene.

Mrs. Avery sat in a low easy chair, toying with a posy of yellow roses; she spoke in low, quiet tone; but attracted by her words or personality, a knot of bright Canadian women had gathered about us, their faces, lit by the yellow sunshine glowing through the

western windows, turned intent toward her, while from beyond the portiere came the tinkle of tea cups and the soft speech of other guests.

"Where is Miss Anthony now?" some one inquired. "Is she well?"

"Quite well, and engaged heart and soul in the California campaign. That is pretty good for a woman of seventy-six; isn't it?" answered Mrs. Avery.

"We have three banner States now, as perhaps you know. We hope soon to add California. The Republicans have put a straight suffrage plank in their platform. This is Republican year, and we are sure to go in. But to make assurance more sure, Miss Anthony, Mrs. May Sewell, and one or two other of our leaders have gone out to work it up."

"I have read and studied a great deal concerning the development of home life," she said later, "and I am willing to take up any new thing that seems good, for my children's sake."

Those three little children are evidently very dear, and very watchfully tended. Their clever young mother will talk of them with as simple fondness as though she cared not one whit for woman's suffrage. Or is it perhaps because she so loves these little daughters, that for their sakes, she cares the more?

FAITH FENTON.

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