

# WOMAN AND HER INTERESTS

## Woman's Movement and Progress



THE first decade just closed of the twentieth century has seen steady progress in what has been called the woman's movement, not the least wonderful phase of which is its world-wide reach. To-day there is hardly any topic that occupies more the pen of essayists and the speech of orators than woman, her sphere, actual and ideal, her abilities and disabilities, her present position and future prospects. To be sure the "fair sex" has always been an interesting theme in literature, but, whereas once the poet wrote lines on his lady's azure eyes, now the college professor writes essays on her brain capacity; where once the novelist claimed her for his own, for her sentimental value to his pages, now the political economist and the sociologist make her the centre about which circle their theories and discussions. Her relations to man, the home, and society, about which there was, not a great while ago, no thought of question, forms the subject of countless club lectures and magazine dissertations. And meantime the transition, impelled by the irresistible force of progress, goes on and on.

The last half-century has wrought marvellous changes. To-day, we find women in all the professions and engaged in almost every occupation that can be mentioned. There are women doctors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, and, in the United States, preachers. Women are pursuing their way as dentists, photographers, florists, electricians, commercial travellers, poultry-raisers, and in a great variety of other occupations. In Canada and the United States, one hears of women who are succeeding as farmers, and horticulturists. And there is the great body of women and girls earning their living in industrial pursuits, in factories and shops.

It is this very matter of women in industry that has more than anything else revolutionized "woman's sphere." The idea that women have gone out into the world because they rebelled against the restrictions of the house is only partially true. That so-called revolt is secondary. When it fell to her lot to be the spinner, weaver, tailor,

and dressmaker of clothes for the family, to knit all the stockings, to make the soap with which she did the washing, and the candles by whose light she mended and darned till bed-time, the house mother had her hands full and found plenty of occupation for her daughters until they left for homes of their own. The life seems to us now narrow and hard, but they did their duty, as it lay before them, bravely, and on the whole, contentedly. Then sprang up the hundreds of factories with their acres of machine filled space, and the work once done by woman's hands in the house was taken into the factories to be done by machinery. Naturally, the girls who otherwise had worked in the home, went into the outside world after their occupation.

With the removal of the pressure of many time-devouring occupations, women, generally, found themselves with some leisure to look about them. And when they had looked about a little they saw a good many things that needed doing. And with the same natural devotion to duty which they showed when their whole attention was needed to look well to the ways of their household, they have undertaken the new duties of social service and reform. Not that they have abandoned the home duties by any means. Perhaps never was there a time more than now, when the thinking woman realized that the home is the first and chief care of the wife and mother. But now, as some one has cleverly put it, while home is the centre it is not also the circumference of "woman's sphere." They are coming to realize clearly that many things with which it was once thought they had no concern affect the home, directly or indirectly, and so come within woman's province. Therefore, we find women on pure food committees, working in the cause of temperance, on public health boards and anti-tuberculosis associations, in the front rank in all educational movements, concerning themselves with the welfare of immigrant women and girls, seeking to abolish the social evil by spreading knowledge of the laws of nature and health, inquiring into the industrial conditions affecting women and children, even on forestry committees for the conservation of this splendid natural resource of the country.

Women have proved their capacity and

the value of their services in many positions of public trust. One proof is that more such positions are entrusted to them. In England, for instance, three towns, one of them with a population of over 200,000, have elected a woman for mayor. In Chicago, the second largest city in the United States, the superintendent of schools is a woman, at a salary of \$10,000 a year. (The salary is mentioned as an indication of the importance of the position.) A woman who had succeeded in making the town in which she lived a name for clean and well-kept streets has been invited to institute civic house-cleaning in several large and important centres. So far from being now regarded as "interfering with men's work," the help of the women is often asked by their men fellow-citizens, when some measure of civic advancement or reform is to be passed. One notable case in point is the election last spring in Montreal, for better municipal government. At the request of the Citizens' Association, the leading women's organizations canvassed the voters of their own sex with the result that out of some 8,000 women whose names were on the register for the municipal franchise, from sixty to eighty per cent. voted, telling very forcibly on the returns in favor of reform.

Now she is claiming the privileges of a citizen, to share in the government, as an intelligent, responsible part of the governed—to put it briefly, the right to vote. This is not a new thing, of course. For forty or fifty years, women in England have been petitioning Parliament for legislation in this regard. It is many years since a small band of able women and men sowed the seeds of the suffrage idea in the United States. But it was long before the plant put forth vigorous shoots.

Within the last decade or so, along with woman's success in many new undertakings, in her own career and in public work, has come a great increase of interest in the suffrage. The crisis in England, brought about by the "suffragette" action, has had effect on other countries, making the question more living and insistent than ever before. In some countries the franchise has been attained by women without much difficulty, in others, after a struggle; some are now in the throes of the struggle, others are moving, albeit slowly, towards the goal of enfranchisement. New Zealand has had woman's suffrage for nearly twenty years. All the states of the Australian Commonwealth had granted the Parliamentary suffrage to women since about 1904. In Finland, women not only vote, but are eligible to seats in Parliament. Norway granted the suffrage two years ago. In Denmark, the Folkething, or House of Commons, is elected by the suffrage of women as well as men. Sweden passed an act to the same effect in 1909. Wyoming, among the United States, led the way as long ago as 1869. There are now five of the states in which women have the suffrage, Washington having decided in favor by a large majority in November last. In Italy there is an active society, "Pro Suffragio Femminibile." The different branches of the German women's movement have united in their claim for suffrage. The women of France and Belgium have gained the step that they have been accorded the right to vote for Trade Councils. Holland has a Suffrage Bond. And so on. In almost every civilized country there is a women's movement in this direction.

In Canada, progress has been slow, chiefly because few among the women themselves, apart from those engaged in some branch of organized effort, have given serious thought to the matter at all. The campaign must be an educational one. At the last annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada, a resolution was passed in favor of making work for woman suffrage a part of the Council's activities, but not, it must be confessed, without some opposition. A number of the local Councils in both Eastern and Western Canada have passed similar resolutions. Toronto has taken more definite action than other cities, in forming an organized Suffrage Society. The Ontario Legislature has now before it the question of granting Provincial suffrage to women.



Lady Aberdeen and Her Dog Friends

The picture is from a recent photograph of the Countess of Aberdeen with the two dogs of which she and her husband, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, are so fond. Lady Aberdeen has just edited the reports of the meeting of the International Council of Women held in Canada in 1909.