

VICTORIA, B. C.

(Continued from page 19.)

The Local Council of Women met for the transaction of business on Friday, November 9th, when many questions of interest concerning social and educational affairs were discussed.

On Friday evening, Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen addressed a large audience on the object and aims of the Council.

Concerning the servant question, as Her Excellency's attitude has been so largely misrepresented, it may not be amiss to quote her words upon the subject:

"We are often told of the farmers' sons who are flocking into the cities, and of their daughters who are becoming clerks and typewriters for a mere pittance, often amidst most unhealthy surroundings, instead of taking to the profession of their fathers and their mothers. What does it mean? It means that by giving our public school children an exclusively literary education we are training them to look upon that as far superior to the knowledge of how to farm well or how to cook well. There are many complaints about this and about the difficulty of getting good and reliable servants, and yet we do not trace cause and effect and see that the education given to our children is largely responsible for the estimate they form of the dignity of labor. Perhaps, ladies, you think me somewhat rash for alluding to the subject of domestic servants at all, for you have perhaps seen some of those paragraphs according to which I am supposed to have rather strange notions upon the subject. I do not know, for instance, whether you have ever read the following, which I take from the New York Tribune, a leading American paper:

"Stories current in Canada indicate very strained relations between Rideau Hall and certain social magnates. Some of these stories may have been manufactured; many are doubtless exaggerated; but the fact remains that they obtain credence. It is said that hotels, as well as private households, have declined to entertain Lady Aberdeen on account of her interference with domestic servants in the interest of reform. One story relates that Lady Aberdeen was invited to dine at the house of a leader of society in Montreal. The maids in attendance were dressed in neat suits of black lustre, with dainty white caps. In passing into the dining-room Lady Aberdeen glanced at these costumes with disapproving eyes. When one of the maids served her, she said, indicating the cap: 'My poor child, I see you will wear that unfortunate badge of servitude. Pray take it off, and do not put it on again while you serve me.' The maid at once complied, but the mistress of the house at once caught sight of her capless head, and, beckoning her, demanded the cause. The girl said she had taken off the cap by request of Lady Aberdeen. The mistress told her to put it on at once, and the girl obeyed. It is said that after dinner Lady Aberdeen disclaimed any intention of interference, and her hostess politely but firmly explained that in her own house she had always been and would continue to be the mistress of her own servants.

"Another story is to the effect that a couple well known in Ottawa society were invited to dine at Rideau Hall. The absence of the husband from the city caused the wife to decline. Lady Aberdeen sent an invitation for her to dine *en famille*, and on her arrival explained: 'This is Haddo Hall night, and we will dine with the servants in their dining-room. Lord Aberdeen will take you into dinner and the butler will take me.' Thereupon the visitor begged to decline the honor. She had not understood that the invitation to dine with the family included the servants.'

"Ladies, you will understand how gladly I take this opportunity of thanking my British Columbia friends who so gallantly came to my rescue the other day and sent a letter contradicting these stories to *Vanity Fair*, a paper read largely among certain

classes in England. I am very grateful to that kind champion. (Loud and continued applause.) If I may constitute you, ladies, my champions in this matter I shall be very grateful. (Renewed applause.) If you do take up my cause perhaps you will state that it is a curious fact, but it is a fact, that the girls in our household have always worn caps, and, moreover, that I have never heard the breath of an objection from them to doing so."

In replying to a vote of thanks on behalf of the Countess, His Excellency also referred to the matter in these words:

"Possibly it might seem to some of us that one portion of Lady Aberdeen's address—I mean that which alluded to a somewhat personal matter—was, on that account, scarcely necessary. Well, it is, no doubt, a very good rule that we should pay very little attention to stories and talk of the sort referred to, in the press or elsewhere. But at the same time, it must be remembered that when a statement or report, though primarily affecting only individuals, is liable to have a detrimental effect upon a useful public movement, it then becomes something more than a merely personal affair. Moreover, it must be remembered that this particular story, in one shape or another, has been in circulation for at least three years—(laughter and applause)—and, therefore, it must be admitted that a certain amount of patience has been displayed in abstaining from an earlier contradiction. As to that, I may add that you may rest assured that neither Lady Aberdeen nor I will, on the one hand, adopt or encourage an eccentric departure from reasonable custom and usage, as for instance, by a display of an erratic and undignified familiarity, which would certainly not be regarded as a real mark of respect towards those to whom it might be offered; while, on the other hand, I hope that it is equally certain that we shall not be the slaves of meaningless fashion, or evince what I can only call the vulgarity of an artificial and haughty assumption of superiority or exclusiveness."

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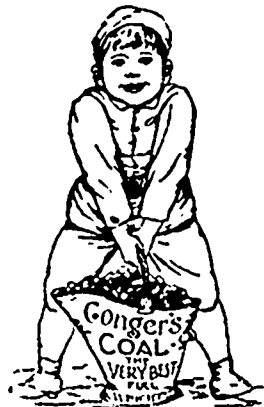
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