

WOMAN'S SUPPLEMENT

A FEW PAGES PREPARED TO MY LADY'S TASTE

The Editorial Table

About The National Council.

DURING the last week of May, the annual meeting of the National Council of Women will be held in London, Ontario. The official visit of Their Royal Highnesses, the Governor-General and the Duchess of Connaught, coincides fortunately with this event. There is no city in Canada which contains warmer hearts or more comfortable homes than the county town of Middlesex, and the delegates to the National Council will be treated so well and will fare so sumptuously that it will be difficult for them to look after all the business which such an important body is called upon to transact.

The National Council has been fortunate in its officers. Lady Aberdeen's initial interest and constant concern in its affairs gave it an excellent "start" and it has been managed most judiciously throughout the last eighteen years. To the late Lady Edgar the Council owed much, as her calm judgment and experience as a political hostess gave her an equipment as presiding officer quite equal to national requirements. As head of the National Council, during the days of the imposing Quinquennial Congress, in June, 1909, Lady Edgar had an exacting part to play and discharged her duties admirably. Mrs. Torrington, of Toronto, who was elected as president last year, has proved the wisdom of the Council's choice. The name of Dr. F. H. Torrington is known throughout Canada, and the work he has done in oratorio and festival will long be honoured. In all his musical undertakings, he has had the sympathy and co-operation of his wife, who has contributed not a little to his success. Mrs. Torrington's business ability is equalled by her tact and graciousness, qualities of high importance in an authoritative position such as the one she holds.

Mrs. Willoughby Cummings has been associated with the National Council and also with the international activities, from the first. Her energy is tireless and her information on all affairs connected with the Council is of amazing extent. In fact, if you want to know about anything what an affiliated society is doing or is going to do, just telephone Mrs. Cummings and she'll tell you all about it. She has been awarded a somewhat rare honour—the degree of "Doctor" from a Canadian University. With such officials, it is hardly to be wondered at that the National Council has accomplished a surprising amount of work, and that the work is of a very high quality.

Mrs. Boomer, President of the London Local Council, is a most efficient and experienced officer.

A Bit of China.

SOME very superior critics speak of painting on china as if it were hardly an art, and I even heard one man (he was a young professor) characterize it as "parlour tricks." Nevertheless, it remains an art when exquisitely done, and one of the most charming of those by which everyday life is "embellished and refined." Raphael, himself, did not disdain to decorate plaques and vases, with what immortal flowers and cherubs the modern world may not know. Ruskin deprecates the lavishing of much care or elaboration on what may be destroyed so easily; yet that objection might be urged in connection with almost every delicate craft.

For many of us, the ceramic art, whether that of form or colour, possesses undying interest. The potter is an ancient craftsman, indeed, and the oldest literature contains references to his work. Humanity has been compared again and again to the frail products of the potter's workshop, and the writers of the East, from Jeremiah to Omar Khayyam, have warned us that we are but clay in the hands of the Master Potter. Perhaps most

memorable of all these metaphors is that in Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra," where we are admonished to remember the "high uses of a cup," which may be used at the royal banquet amid the festal glow. It is quite becoming, then, that humanity should take an interest in the making and the decoration of pottery and china.

In England, statesmen and soldiers are not at all superior to the lure of "old china." Mr. Gladstone, for instance, was devoted to his collection of rare Chelsea pieces, and General Baden-Powell is said to be an admirer of Crown Derby. In Canada, we have comparatively few citizens who are devotees of ceramic collections. Yet there are several who have given their leisure moments to its study, and there is at least one prominent K. C. whose collection of "Delft" would arrest the eye and excite the envy of the connoisseur, with its array of plates, bowls and "garnitures" which tell some of Holland's most stirring history in their tints of unfading blue.

The Browning Romance.

IN most Canadian cities, during last week, there was a meeting which marked the centenary celebration of the birth of Robert Browning. From the service in England's great Abbey, where his body was laid on the last day of 1889, to the gathering of a few students in a remote Western town, there ran the thrill of sympathy known by those who have been helped and strengthened by a great spirit. To give heart and courage to others, to inspire failing, fainting humanity with renewed belief and fortitude, to deepen the joy and the meaning of Life, was the high calling of the English poet, who was born one hundred years ago in Old London.

It was inevitable that the observance of this centenary should bring to remembrance the love story of Browning's life, the radiant fifteen years during which two poets lived and worked together. So often has the poetic genius dragged love into the mire and made it a sordid passion, that one recognizes with gratitude the pure fealty of such a love as made the romance of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning more memorable than their poetry itself. We turn from the tempestuous experiences of Burns, Shelley, and Byron, to the golden calm of Browning's devotion, with an assurance that even the poetic temperament sometimes finds its true comrade. "Heaven help them!" exclaimed one of their literary friends, when he was informed that the greatest woman poet of her day was to become the wife of Robert Browning. A woman who had been regarded for years

as a hopeless invalid was to fly in the face of paternal opposition and leave home and England, with a husband whose poetic gifts were regarded as a serious disqualification for matrimony. Surely, their friends might well wonder how this mad marriage would prosper. But it has left us a rare record of wedded harmony and intellectual comradeship, such as the world seldom beholds. Italy gave the invalid new life, and amidst the fragrance of a Florentine Junetide, fifteen years after she dared her father's wrath, Elizabeth Browning passed away.

There are no more beautiful tributes to a woman's memory in literature than the poems, "Prospice" and "One Word More." Yet, to many of us, the most intimate words which Browning uttered of his love are these, from "The Ring and the Book":

"Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
Some benediction, anciently thy smile."

CANADIENNE.



MRS. F. H. TORRINGTON,
President National Council of Women.