

(October 18th, 1915.)

The New Citizenship.

By Mrs. R. W. McClung.*

AT the meeting of the Canadian Club held on the 18th October, Mrs. McClung said:

Mr. President, and Members of the Men's Canadian Club,— I assure you that it gives me very great pleasure, and that I appreciate the honor that I have to-day of addressing you. I always feel when I have the privilege of addressing so many men that I share the feeling of St. Paul when he wrote: "I write unto you men because ye are strong." I feel that way to-day, that I am having the opportunity of addressing men who are strong, who are doing things, who are capable of starting something, even in political ideals, of which some cynics say that we in Canada are a little bit short.

I rejoice, too, this afternoon in the name of woman kind. You say that I am but the third woman who has addressed you in all these years! (Laughter.) A very great change is coming about in the attitude of the world towards woman. Things are in a state of change: "Time makes ancient good uncouth." And some of the things said about woman years ago are not true now. It used to be truly said that women led a protected life. All the work was done in the home by the women. But machinery has had as one of its general effects this result, that women have had to do work outside of the home. Do you know that thirty per cent. of the women of Canada at the present time are wage-earners? How can any woman send her daughters out to work and sit quietly at home, making doyleys and antimacassars for the backs of the chairs—do you know what antimacassars are? (Laughter.) How can any woman sit at home, within four walls, and not say, "I must have something to say about the conditions in which my daughters labor? (Hear, hear, and applause.) You can't help feeling that way when you think about it. You know it is a good deal like an earthquake. Geologists tell us that what causes the quake is the slipping of layers of rock in the crust of the earth probably hundreds of miles away from where the shock is felt; and just about the time when the pictures begin

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to come down from the walls, and the kitchen stove stands upon one leg, you can't do very much about the earthquake then, can you? (Laughter.) You have to let it go on. It is just like that on this woman question: the cause took place forty or fifty years ago, when machinery took the work out of the home. You are beginning to feel the shock now, and there isn't very much you can do about it. (Laughter.) You might just as well try to get used to it. The day when woman's sphere was protected has gone by, and we might just as well begin to adjust ourselves to the new conditions.

It is very complimentary to women that men do not wish to have us change; they do not want to give us the vote for fear it would change us: a pretty good guarantee that they are quite well pleased with us. (Laughter.) So many are afraid to have women take an interest in public affairs, because of the haunting fear that some man will come home some day and find dinner not ready, and they could not imagine anything much more horrible than that! (Laughter.)

You know it is the old struggle. Fifty years ago when women wanted education, men held up their hands in horror. It would never do! They were afraid that if women learned to read, some poor man would come home some day, and find the ashes dropping out of the stove and his wife reading a yellow-backed novel! But to-day, no one will say that illiteracy is good for any woman anywhere.

Then when women began to go into business, the wise ones were sure that would never do! It would "rub the bloom off the peach"—I think that is the poetic way they put it. (Laughter.) I believe most people will admit that business women who have married have made good wives, their homes are happy places of rest, content, comfort, and better still of companionship. The Chairman told you that I have two boys. Let me make a correction—I have four! (Laughter and applause.) Four sons and one daughter. And I want to tell you this: when I am giving advice to my sons matrimonially, I will tell them to marry a business girl. If they want a creature of selfishness and peevishness, let them marry the petted child of fortune, who has been given everything that the heart can desire, who can order anything she sees that she likes, to be sent home C.O.D.—which is "Call on Dad!" (Laughter, and applause.)

I believe that going out into the world of business has taught women many things; it has taught them to be punctual, to pay their debts, to answer letters promptly, and a few little things like that which are no handicap to a man or a woman anywhere. Now the question of education and of going into

business has been settled, but men are afraid, if we go into politics, even in the small degree of casting a vote, that in some mysterious way our whole nature may be changed. It is like the story of the man who wanted a watch dog to protect him from burglars, and he got one guaranteed to eat a burglar on sight. The dog performed his share of the bargain, but the man was not satisfied to have a watch dog, he wanted to have a trick dog, too. So he began to teach the dog tricks, and soon had the dog trained to carry things in his mouth. One night he heard stealthy footsteps, as of a burglar entering the house, but he did not hear his dog. What was his astonishment, on investigating, to find his good watch dog which should have been eating up the burglar, carrying the lantern for the burglar! (Laughter.) I think that is something like the fear that is laid upon men's hearts as to women going into politics. You are afraid that women having a limited intercapacity for doing things, will mix their tricks, and take less interest in husband, home and children. I want to tell you, it will never happen! (Hear; hear.) God made woman the guardian of the race; God could not be everywhere at once, and so He made mothers. The reason we are asking the franchise, is not because we want to stand on street corners and make speeches; but with that weapon in our hands we may better defend the children we have brought into the world! (Applause.)

You tell us politics are corrupt, too corrupt for women! You should be ashamed of yourselves if this is so! (Hear, hear.) You certainly cannot blame us for that now, can you? (Laughter.) In reality that poor fellow who is wringing his hands and saying, "Oh, politics are so corrupt!" is holding out the flag for help. That man needs help; somebody should go to his relief! (Laughter.) There is nothing inherently corrupt in politics. In old days the function of law-giver combined with that of prophet, with excellent results, though these two offices have grown more widely divergent in these days. If politics are too corrupt for women; they are too corrupt for men. Then there is the argument that women are angels; if that is so you can't get them into politics any too soon! (Laughter.) Because there seems to be a little shortage of angels in politics at present, if all we hear is true. (Laughter.) I want to tell you, this is a spiritual movement among women! We are not asking greater privileges, that we may enjoy idleness or ease; our plea is not for mercy, but for justice! (Applause.) That is the reason men are answering that plea everywhere, because in almost every man's heart there is a sense of justice. (Hear, hear.) When we can put it up to a man on the ground of that

old-fashioned square deal, every man who has a sense of justice will respond to the appeal, no matter what his education or his prejudices, he will ultimately do the square thing, but nothing can put a sense of justice into a man's heart if he hasn't it naturally, except the transforming power of God's grace.

We have great cause for gratitude that we have the enthusiastic support of the farmers, the grain growers of Manitoba and Alberta and Saskatchewan in this movement. There is an honesty about the man who works in lonely places; the man who breaks out the long furrow has time to turn things over in his mind, and the man who will think about it, is likely to think it out right. That is the reason that woman suffrage is not so far advanced in the cities. (Laughter.) This movement among women is for the saving of the race like the back-to-the-land movement! We have got to do something to remove the movable handicaps from the race! That is the reason that the temperance cause has gained sudden strength. Some people thought the temperance movement in the West was an economic one, because they heard we thought it would pay us to be sober; that is not altogether the reason. It is partly economic, but it is a humanitarian movement, too.

Personal liberty—perhaps you have heard this argument—it would never do to interfere with personal liberty. So many men have the idea that a man has the right to drink all he likes, and then go home and beat up his wife and family all he wants to. (Laughter.) There is some excuse for that idea for our civilization has taught that in the past, in the old idea that his wife was his chattel, to do as he likes with. There was a law in New York State which permitted a man to beat his wife so long as he used a stick only the size of his little finger! (Laughter.) It is told that a judge in London, sentencing a man for blackening a woman's eyes, said to him: "I want you to understand, sir, that this woman is not your wife!" (Laughter.)

The reason that the personal liberty cry does not take so well as it did long ago, is that real liberties are being fought for over there on the battlefields of Europe. The right to do as I like, no matter who is hurt, seems so unworthy now, sticks in the throat! (Hear, hear.) It is a miserable claim; people can no longer put it over the lights; people are ashamed of it while they are saying it. (Hear, hear.)

Perhaps you would like to hear a little about the temperance movement in the West. (Applause.) Of course, to Mr. Scott, the Premier of Saskatchewan, who in that splendid brave manner took upon himself and his Cabinet the responsibility of enacting that law, we all have words of praise, and appre-

ciation. In these days, when so many of our politicians stand only for one principle,—that of re-election (Laughter),—it is a splendid thing to find a man willing to stake everything on a moral issue. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

The Province of Alberta, through the terms of the Direct Legislation Act, brought about the same result in a different way. Twenty-five per cent. of the voters, in 85 per cent. of the municipalities, sent in a petition, and the Government have sent it on to the people. It is a great thing when you get to the people! (Hear, hear.)

The vote was taken on July 21st, but prior to that time one of the finest campaigns I ever expect to see was fought out. It is a great thing to see a whole province swept by moral passion! (Applause.) People discussed the situation everywhere. We distributed, I think it was sixty thousand copies of the Liquor Act. You would see men reading it on the trains, in the restaurants, everywhere. Disputes arose over it—people fought before breakfast! (Laughter.) When the time drew near, parades were held. Fifteen thousand people marched through the streets of Edmonton, carrying banners declaring for a clean province. Children carried banners, reading "Vote for us!" "Save the next generation now." Five thousand men, four abreast. Men, of all classes, drivers, policemen, one thousand women all dressed in white, led by the Salvation Army band playing "O Canada!" The procession was three miles in length. The liquor people who were gathered at the Selkirk Hotel to see it, grew gloomy and serious as that stream of humanity poured by. They were beginning to take notice. They said one to another: "This is worse than a temperance convention! (Laughter.) This is no Loyal Legion picnic! These people mean business!" One liquor man said to the rest of them: "Well, boys, one sure thing—they are giving us a great funeral." (Laughter and applause.)

There were many amusing incidents in that campaign. You know things really happen which are funnier than anything you could imagine. This question of unemployment was raised. Much was said along this line, that if you closed the bars you would take the bread out of the mouths of honest men. Of course we tried to tell them that the liquor trade paid less to labor than any other industry—if you could call it an industry. The money invested in breweries and distilleries, if put into some legitimate line of trade, would pay six to eighteen times as much in labor for it would employ that many more men. One brewer was very anxious to know how the thing was going to go. "For," he said, "if this thing goes against

us, I am going to turn my brewery into a creamery!" (Laughter.) He was a wise man! He was going to accept the inevitable, as I believe almost all of them will. We tell them that a man who is an engineer in a brewery can become an engineer somewhere else; a bookkeeper in a brewery can be a bookkeeper in some other kind of office. It is not going to lessen the occupations for most of those employed in the liquor traffic.

You have heard of the Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, who saw a monk who for his sins was condemned to stand on an elevated platform so many hours a day and bend his body back and forth. The Yankee thought it was a great pity to see so much good energy going to waste; so he fixed a harness on that monk, and set him to turning a sewing machine and made union shirts. (Laughter.)

But I think the best story that happened in connection with unemployment was one that actually took place in the case of a bartender who lived in a little small town in South Alberta, south of Edmonton. This young man of twenty-five, seeing the prospect of unemployment staring him in the face, met one of the women who was active in the campaign, and said to her: "I suppose you never thought about me, that I shall lose my job; I suppose you don't care, do you?" The woman replied: "I have thought about you. You see it is like this: my husband drinks a good deal, and I have to supplement his wages by working myself, so I go out to wash for four neighbors every week, to keep my children clothed. If the bars close, my husband will bring most of his wages home, and I won't need to do that any more. So you can have my job!" (Laughter, and applause.)

Yes, it is a great thing to get to the people! The heart of humanity is sound. Let the people say what they want, they may make mistakes, and if they do they'll pay for them, too, and it will be a pleasant change for them to be paying for their own mistakes—they have always paid for the politicians' mistakes.

That is why I advocate woman suffrage. It is not that I want to go to Parliament. I have gone and sat in the gallery sometimes and looked down on the politicians, and it didn't look like such a hard job! (Laughter.) But I say that is not the ambition of woman. Woman's desire is to protect her home. And, who has got a better right than the mother, shall me this thing, to say under what conditions her children tell me this thing, to say under what conditions her children shall grow up? (Hear, hear.) I always felt strongly upon these things, but since my own children have grown up to the age when they are beginning to go out into the world, I have

felt strong to proclaim these things before kings! (Applause.) In the old days, when the settlers were in daily perils from Indians, they taught their women folk to shoot with the gun, and to shoot to kill! None of the men then said, "My dear, this is a man's weapon, your little hands were never made for such things, but for the crochet hook and the mat hook and the wash board." (Laughter and applause.) They did not talk that way, because there was real danger abroad, and when people see it it takes all the nonsense out of them! It does! (Hear, hear, and applause.)

There are evils abroad in the world to-day, as cruel, as merciless, as any Indian who ever scalped his pleading victim! What irony, what hypocrisy, to say that woman is protected at the present day! Women are theoretically protected, yes, like Belgium! (Hear, hear.) Belgium was protected—on paper! It was never to be invaded, no, never, world without end, Amen! And you and I know with what unhappy results! It is time we got away from this poetry and prejudice, and looked the matter straight and clear in the face.

Yes, they say we are a little short on political ideals. I think we have got an uplift. Belgium has set the pace for us! (Hear, hear.) It is not all of life to live, to draw our breath, or even to draw our salary! (Laughter.) Neither is it a worthy ambition for a man to make money and dress up his wife and children like Christmas trees. We are receiving a spiritual uplift from this war. We have made an investment of blood, and it has already paid its first dividend, (Hear, hear,) which is an altered sense of values. We confess it, with sorrow and tears, that as a nation perhaps we thought success meant money, and power; but now before us is the spectacle of a country with both money and power and wonderful skill saying that using these things to bring sorrow, and loss and suffering to innocent people, using their skill in aircraft to drop bombs on defenceless women and children; and now we know that these things are not a success unless rightly used and joined with gentleness, brotherly kindness and neighborliness, and that Christ-like love which alone maketh rich and addeth no sorrow; that is the measure of success! (Applause.) We are coming to see this. Yes! I say we are perhaps a little short on ideals; our political ideals are little and low. I have found out what politics means to some people—jobs, wealth, friends, railway passes, telephone lines where none should be built, favors! They say sometimes of a man, "He is a good member, he got us something! Look what he gets us." You may remark that his political ideals are too low; he may be ignorant, corrupt, and all that, but they will

point out what he gets for his constituency, and say he is a good member. The reason we have so many corrupt politicians is that we have so many corrupt voters, looking for something, favors, easy jobs, tips!

I say Belgium has set the pace for us. People see now what it means to be a citizen of that country, whose people say, not, "What can I get?" but, "What can I give? What sacrifices can I make?" We talk of low political ideals. We should walk up and take our medicine. Let us not blame the foreigners, we native-born Canadians; we are not altogether sinless!

But there is a spiritual awakening taking place in Canada. People wonder why it comes all at once,—Why shouldn't it? The experience has been the same for every one of us. The leaves on the horse chestnut, when they begin to fall, go all together, suddenly and in five minutes they have all fallen. We need the vision; because, after all, dear people, what's the good of life unless we have vision? Life is so uncertain at best! The earthly hopes we set our hearts upon—how quickly they are gone!

"The earthly hope men set their hearts upon,
Turns ashes or it prospers and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's arid face,
Cooling a little hour or two is gone!"

There is a jumping-off place, a finish and end to everything! Very suddenly it is all over! And the only thing that can comfort us, when we take our passport to that unknown country will be, "I think I left this one a little better than I found it!" (Applause.)

I hope that comfort may be yours and mine, when that time comes to us. I hope this thought will illuminate our pathway, when we set out on the Long Trail, that we can say to ourselves honestly, "When the fight was on for decency and better citizenship, I never went and laid down behind the hedge and let the others fight alone!" This is my one plea to this Men's Canadian Club, that you may have moral passion and sincerity of heart to bring it to bear upon the public questions of the day! (Long applause.)
