

WOMEN AND THE WORLD'S FAIR

By Mrs. Potter Palmer



THE Board of Lady Managers of the World's Columbian Commission, the first body of women legally appointed to act in a national capacity by any government, was created and authorized by the concurrent action of Congress and the Columbian Commission to take care of the interests of women at the coming Exposition. The appointment of the board was certainly not necessitated by any inability upon the part of the National Commission to perform the duties assigned it; therefore, its creation can only have been a practical acknowledgment of the really helpless position of industrial women, and of the possibility that they and their work might be overlooked in the preparations for the great enterprise.

IN November, 1890, the Board of Lady Managers met and organized. After its adjournment the first work assigned its members was to provide for the appointment of women on the various boards, as without such recognition in every State and Territory, and a share in the appropriations made in each instance, the work of the board would have been rendered very difficult. An amended bill was issued, asking that women be given representation on the various State boards, and a share of the funds to carry on their work, and, through untiring efforts, this has been generally adopted. In many of the States the legislators remarked that their attention was first called to the subject of the World's Fair, and the necessity for an appropriation, through the members of the Board of Lady Managers, who had spoken or written to them about it. The various powers conferred on the board by Congress, the Commission, the Directory, and the Legislatures of most of the States and Territories, influenced it to decide to mark the first participation of women in an important national enterprise by gathering such an exhibit of woman's work, and of all statistics and data in connection with such work, as would prove an object lesson, showing the progress made by women in every country of the world during the century in which educational and other privileges have been granted them; and showing, also, the increased usefulness that has resulted from the enlargement of their opportunities. It may, at this point, be mentioned in illustration of what the board is endeavoring to do, that several schools of industrial art and technical design for women have made application for space for exhibits. Within the few years in which technical training has been procurable, women have made marvelous advancement. American women are now supplying practical "working" designs of great commercial value not only to manufacturers of their own country, but to almost every part of the earth, even to Japan.

THE board thus aims to show to the breadwinners who are fighting unaided the battle of life, the new avenues of employment that are constantly being opened to women; to demonstrate in which of these their work will be of the most distinct value by reason of their natural adaptability, artistic temperaments, and individual tastes; what work receives the best amount of pay for the least labor and time expended; what education would best enable them to enjoy wider opportunities and to make their work of the greatest worth, not only to themselves but to the world. The Board of Lady Managers have, therefore, invited the women of all countries to participate in this great work, to the end that it may be made not only national, but universal, and that all may profit by a comparison of methods, agencies and results. Through the Department of State the governments of each country have been invited by the Lady Managers to appoint a commission of women to co-operate in this work, and it was thought best to make this request direct of the rulers of the countries, as the women thus named, especially among the nations of Europe, where the power is more centralized than with us, would feel that their commission was almost like a patent of nobility. In many countries where women have heretofore not been recognized, such an appointment could not fail to place their work upon a higher plane. The invitations of the board have met with prompt and gracious response. In England the Woman's Committee has already been announced, under the immediate patronage of the Princess Christian. The list of names composing the British Woman's Commission comprises many of the most distinguished in Great Britain. In France a slight unexpected delay was occasioned by the change of ministry, but the French Woman's Committee has been finally announced; it is composed of many of the most influential ladies in France, and is now actively at work. The Empress of Russia has been graciously pleased to evince a strong personal interest in the purpose and plans of the board, and has named a committee to co-operate with it. The ladies composing the Russian Woman's Commission are of the highest rank and the most advanced philanthropy. The president of the committee is Madame Vishnegradzky, the wife of the Minister of Finance. In Germany, the Princess Friedrich Karl, at the personal request of the Empress, has consented to serve as the protectress of the German Woman's Committee, which has just been announced. This committee includes

ladies of rank and great social influence, and several recognized leaders in the movement for the advancement of women, now attracting so much attention in Germany. Switzerland will be represented. Miss Neville, of Geneva, sister of the celebrated Egyptologist, will organize the Swiss Committee. Holland, also, has a Woman's Committee. Altogether, the board's invitation may be said to have met with general acceptance. The commissions of women, organized in all countries as auxiliaries to the Board of Lady Managers, will be asked to recommend objects of special excellence produced by women, and the producers of such successful work will be invited to place specimens in the Gallery of Honor of the Woman's Building.

THE board has decided that in the general Exposition buildings, where the competitive exhibits will be placed, it will not separate the exhibits of women's work from that of men, for the reason that, as women are working side by side with men in all the factories of the world, it would be practically impossible to divide the finished result of their combined labor.

Nor would women be satisfied with prizes unless they were awarded without distinction as to sex and as the result of fair competition with the best work shown under the general classification. They are striving for excellence, and desire recognition only for demonstrated merit. In order, however, that the enormous amount of work being done by women may be appreciated, a tabulated statement will be procured and shown with every exhibit, stating the proportion of women's work that enters into it. The application blanks now being sent out to manufacturers contain this inquiry.

BESIDE the foregoing extensive exhibit, women will have another opportunity of displaying work of superior excellence in a very advantageous way in the Women's Building, over which the Board of Lady Managers will exercise complete control. In its grand central hall—the Gallery of Honor—will be grouped the most brilliant achievements of women of every country and in every line of work. Exhibits will be admitted only by invitation, which will be considered the equivalent of a prize, and no sentimental sympathy for women will permit the admission of second-rate objects, for the highest standard of excellence is to be rigidly maintained. In the surrounding smaller rooms will be arranged a display supplementary to the wider race exhibit shown by the Department of Ethnology in the general buildings. This showing is intended to disprove the statement frequently made that women do not possess creative minds. It is designed to prove by ocular demonstration the fact generally conceded by archaeologists, that woman was the inventor of the industrial arts among all the primitive peoples, and that it was not until these became lucrative that they were appropriated by men. While man, the protector, was engaged in fighting, or in the chase, woman constructed the rude semblance of a home. She cooked the food and later ground the grain between stones and prepared it for bread. She cured the skins of animals and fashioned them awkwardly into garments. Impelled by the necessity for its use, she made the needle, twisting the fibres of plants into threads. She invented the arts of basket making, weaving and knitting, and discovered the use of vegetable dyes. The first potter, she molded the coarse clay into jars and other domestic utensils, drying them in the sun and gradually learning to ornament them.

THIS exhibit in the Woman's Building will illustrate the history of women from the time of the cliff-dwellers through the mediæval ages, when, though her mind was not developed, her delicacy of touch was made useful in copying the elaborate manuscripts of the day and in making the rich illustrations that accompanied them in books of poetry; in textile fabrics, wonderful embroideries, drawn work, rare laces and celebrated tapestries, which have been famous in every country and period. The board will endeavor to secure, through its home and foreign committees, the originals, reproductions, or illustrations of various famous objects made by women which have had important influence on the epoch in which they were produced, such, for example, as the celebrated Bayeux tapestry, made by Matilda of Flanders, the best and most complete history of the conquest of England by her husband, William the Conqueror, and which is constantly referred to by every authority treating of the military science, arms, accoutrements, manners and customs of that day. An effort will also be made to procure a reproduction of the famous doors of Strasburg Cathedral, which were the work of Sabina von Steinbach, sister and assistant of the architect. Permission to make the copy has been officially asked by the Board from the German Government, and it is intended to use the doors for the main entrance of the Woman's Building. These illustrations will follow in historical sequence down to the present time, when her active brain is educated to cope with the scientific problems of the age, and her trained hand to make the delicate machinery of the watch. Such an exhibit as this has never been made, but so quick are the French people to seize an idea, that since the announcement of the plans of the Lady Managers in Paris, last June, an exhibit illustrating the history of woman's progress has already been arranged for next year in the Palais de l'Industrie, so that, though the Board of Lady Managers has the honor of originating this idea, it will not be the first to put it into practical execution.

BUT interesting as the exhibit in the Woman's Building may be, it is not alone designed to show the history of woman. The Board of Lady Managers hope that such statistics and such representation may be procured from every country as will give an adequate idea of the extent and value of what is being done in the arts, sciences, and industries by the women of to-day. Several competitions have been opened since the formation of the board, which have already resulted in the awarding of prizes to women in the lines of architecture, sculpture and designing. The Woman's Building, designed by a woman, in itself, as well as in all its decorations, both exterior and interior, will serve to exemplify women's progress during the past few years in these new and heretofore untried pursuits. Not only has woman become an immense, though generally unrecognized factor in the industrial world, but hers being essentially the works of mercy and peace, her best work is shown in the numberless charitable, reformatory, educational and other beneficent institutions which she has established for the alleviation of suffering, for the correction of many forms of social injustice and neglect, and for the reformation of long-established wrongs.

A FULL and complete record of woman's progress in these fields—what she has done, is doing, and endeavoring to do for humanity—had never been attempted before the board began the collection of this data from every country. The catalogue is already well under way, and the Lady Managers earnestly entreat every one who can add anything, no matter how small, to the list, to communicate with the board without delay. All organizations of women must be impressed with the necessity of making an effective showing of the noble work which each is carrying on. The board of Lady Managers especially desires to have represented in the rooms reserved for that purpose the educational work originated or carried on by women from the kindergarten organizations up to the higher branches of education, including all schools of applied science and art, such as training schools for nurses, manual training, industrial art and cooking schools, domestic economy, sanitation, etc. When not practically exhibited, the work of such organizations should be shown by maps, charts, photographs, relief models, etc. The beneficent effects of this particular undertaking cannot fail to be great and permanent. An international comparison of methods, agencies and results, furnishing opportunity for the selection of the best features of each submitted system, must necessarily reflect universal good. To the hopeful it seems possible that from the occasion may come solutions of certain previously insoluble problems, and that by this means may even be discovered that subtle secret which has hitherto eluded the philanthropist's too solid grasp—the helpfulness which teaches self-help.

FACTS ABOUT THE WORLD'S FAIR

THE dedicatory ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, Illinois, will be held on October 12th, 1892, the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.

The exercises will last three days. The President of the United States will be present.

In April, 1893, a grand international naval review will be held in New York harbor.

The Exposition will open its doors to the public on May 1st, 1893, and close them on October 30th, of the same year.

The Exposition will be held under the auspices of the United States Government.

Almost all foreign nations will be represented. Foreign exhibits will be admitted free of duty. A reproduction of Columbus' caravel, the Santa Maria, will be exhibited.

The Exposition will probably not have an Eiffel Tower. There will be, however, three observation towers about 300 feet high.

The reception of exhibits will begin November 1st, 1892, and continue until April 1st, 1893.

Queen Victoria will send specimens of her own work done in spinning and knitting when she was a girl. Princess Louise will contribute some clay modeling, and Princess Beatrice several paintings.

It is estimated that the number of exhibitors will be about 175,000. To these mail will be delivered every hour.

Over 11,000,000 persons have, up to date, petitioned that the gates of the World's Fair be closed on Sunday.

Between 10,000,000 and 20,000,000 silver half dollars of a special design will be issued by the United States Treasury Department for use as admission tickets to the Exposition.

Insurance aggregating \$3,000,000 is now carried on the buildings.

In the South Dakota exhibit there will be a life-size statue of a Sioux Indian maiden.

The Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who is head of the Philanthropic section of the English Woman's Department will, if her health permits, be present at the Exposition. She is nearly eighty years of age, but suffers very little from ill health.

Plans adopted for lighting the buildings provide for 138,218 electric lamps. The lighting will cost about \$1,500,000, and will be ten times as extensive as that used at the Paris Exposition.