NEW YORK CITY TELEGRAM
Sunday, December 29, 1912

N. Y. CITY TRIBU[NE]
Sunday, December

Sunday - SPECIAL The Morning Telegraph Magazine FEATURES

Vol. 80. No. 182. New York, Sunday, December 29, 1912. Section Two

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THE GREATEST WOMAN in SUFFRAGE

And the Greatest Story Ever Written About Her.

by Theodora Bean

"The Occident Keeps Her Word Better Than the Orient."

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"No Place in the World Can Compare With the Holy Land in Squalor and Hopelessness."

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"The Triumph of the Women of Bohemia Is of Greater Importance Than the Addition of Four Stars in Our Suffrage Flag."

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"The Men's League for Suffrage Has Been a Blessing to Us. It Represents the Thinking Men of Our Country—the Brains of Our Colleges, of Commere and Literature."

Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, the Greatest Woman in Suffrage.

Turkish Women Are Finding a Way From the Harem to the Platform.

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"More Suffrage States Can Be Admitted Through the Insurgents' Wave, and Then I Look for a Reaction."

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"When Women Approach You With Ideas, Never Discourage Them By Word or Sign, But Tell Them to Go Ahead."

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"Women Are Strange and Wonderful Creatures; It Is Wise Not to Trifle or Interfere With Their Determined Efforts.

NEVER discourage a woman who has an idea that she wishes to work out for herself; the chief element in suffrage solidarity to-day is the individual idea that has been carried through.

Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, foremost in the cause in the United States, and president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, who has returned from her eighteen months world tour of investigation and organization of "Votes for Women," following the convention at Stockholm, is authority for the foregoing statement. Mrs. Catt is already preparing for the next world's suffrage meet at Budapest in June, when as president, she will be shown the fruits of her good thinking and much doing.

"Susan B. Anthony once said to me," began Mrs. Catt in the dawn of a talk with her in her pretty and spacious apartment at 2 West Eighty-sixth street: "When women approach you with ideas they think will tend to promote the value of suffrage, listen well, and even if you do not comprehend what it is all about, or instinctively feel little faith in the project, don't denote discouragement by word or sign, but tell them to go ahead and see how they make out.

"For example," resumed Mrs. Catt, "the women of Bohemia have elected a woman member of the Diet, and the women have no vote. When they first told me of the [illegible] quite see how they might accomplish it, but they persisted three years and now they have won."

WHEN Mrs. Catt was a very young school teacher in Iowa, she was chosen to fill a vacancy in the superintendency of the schools; the following year she was elected to the same position by the Board of Education and she had plenty of men opponents. In those days women superintendents were not known, and thus she has much of the courage necessary to bid others go ahead.

"I heard a remarkable story once showing that nothing can keep a woman back, if she is sincere, persistent and resolute," said Mrs. Catt. "This woman lived in a Middle Western town, was married to a man who begrudged her even the money for household necessities, and never gave her any for herself, although he was in tolerably good circumstances.

"She stood it as long as she could and then she rebelled in a definite way. She collected some of [illegible] bills, found she had sufficient to start with, took a train West as far as it went and found herself in Bozeman, Montana.

"She heard of a vacancy in the railroad's management caused by the death of the auditor, and applied for it again and again until finally she got it. She saved about $5,000, but didn't let her ambition end when the whistle blew at night.

"The town was full of men who easily parted with their wages and were invariably short, so she loaned them money at her own rate of interest.

"In the town was a poor little helpless man who although he had a fine head, possessed a withered body. The woman, who had been divorced from her husband on the ground of desertion, made his acquaintance and proposed marriage to him. She told him she needed protection, that life in a Western town was too difficult for a lone woman—all she asked of him was to let the world know him as her husband.

"HE had a pretty good lumber business and saw no objection to a wife. So they were married and she resigned her position. In a few days the lumber yards burned.

"'Well, haven't you any other property. Haven't you anything at all?' she asked.

"'Yes, I've got a claim in Idaho,' he answered. 'It looked like a gold mine once, but I guess there isn't [illegible]'

"'[illegible] nothing,' she replied, 'we'll see.'

[illegible] her savings and invested them in the [illegible] found gold. It was called the Spotted [illegible] worked it herself, clearing a mil-[illegible] little helpless husband and returned to her old town with all the jewels and clothes she could buy on the way. She built a regular mansion in the fashionable locality and life was a long holiday for her. She said the happiest moment of her life was one day when her own carriage splashed mud over her stingy ex-husband.

"Women are strange and wonderful creatures," continued the leader, "and it is wise not to trifle or interfere with their determined efforts."

"Then you think the hand that waves the hatchet should not be stayed?"

"I don't criticise it—it is the English militant's way of working things out."

Mrs. Catt bears no resemblance to the American idea of a militant. She has rare gentleness and force combined. She is feminine in voice, dress, environment, yet she is the most successful organizer for suffrage in the world. She is logical, courteous, tolerant, gracious and iron willed. And she is not excessively optimistic.

"IDAHO, Utah and Colorado came into suffrage during the Populist wave," she declared. "Not that this was brought about through Populists, but through the unrest of the times. The remaining suffrage States were admitted through the insurgents' wave and it will be the same tide that will carry other States soon to victory. After that I look for a reaction, but the pivotal suffrage State is New York. If it goes for equal suffrage others will immediately follow. All the forces for and against are in operation here."

"Why did you become a suffragist and when?" I asked.

"I wish I knew," she returned. "I was one when a child—I couldn't see why women were not citizens. Finally I converted my parents to my way of thinking, and before they died they were sympathizers with the cause. I often wish I had been converted to it so I might appreciate and work out the best and surest way to convert others."

"Does the hope for suffrage in the United States rest with the young women, the schooled fighters or the 'silent' women?"

"At the convention in Philadelphia I realized that the age of an advocate doesn't matter. I saw some young women who are reactionaries and some old ones as well."

"Do you think State and national suffrage societies have in themselves accomplished much in the way of converts?"

"They have persistently, consistently worked—fighting valiantly when it seemed all the odds were against them."

"DON'T you think a great factor in the recent suffrage growth was the labors of Mrs. Mackay and other women of similar influence, character and breeding?"

"They had tremendous bearing on it," she returned.

"Don't you think their partisanship or their example gave a great many women the courage to express their convictions, women who had refrained from doing so before for fear they would be laughed at?"

"That accounts very well for our additional prosperity," she said.

"And Jane Addams' interest in suffrage—isn't that of more value than the presence of a little amendment tucked away in the constitution, forbidding members to ally themselves with political parties?" I protested.

"Miss Addams' influence is far reaching and the convention certainly was with her," she responded.

Now if Mrs. Catt had not agreed don't you see she would have destroyed the beauty and power of that statement about never discouraging a woman who wants to set about to prove something.

"Furthermore, Mrs. Catt, don't you think that the Men's League for Suffrage has aroused intelligent sympathy and support?"

"It has been a blessing to us—we cannot over-estimate its value—it represents the thinking men of our country, the brains of our colleges, commerce, literature."

"MRS. [illegible] is another telling force, her sincerity—her definite grasp and understanding, her zealous devotion—hasn't she, too, helped?" I asked.

"Her work, her results show we needed her," answered Mrs. Catt.

Mrs. Catt reviewed the pioneer integrity of the suffragists, showing the foundation of Votes for Women was laid by careful organizations, State and national, until to-day, society, labor, the stage, the farmer's wife and the clerk's mother, are regarding equal suffrage as a nearly accomplished fact. A force in the destiny of the nation.

Of course there will be political hills to climb and [illegible] heart beats and amendment headaches to live through and overcome, and streets to be marched and propaganda to be distributed.

"When you have surmounted all obstacles, and vanquished the last enemy; when all the legislatures have voted for and all the people have approved, what will you do then; what will then be left for you to do?"

"Vote," she uttered simply.

Naturally, as her suffrage aims are not bound by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, she regards the triumph of the women of Bohemia as of equally great importance as the new stars in the suffrage flag.

"What do you hope from the Budapest convention?"

"I have been promised actual reports from the different countries showing the status of suffrage everywhere, not the status of the women; we know that. But so far I find the Occident keeps her promises better than the Orient."

"It is a long way from the harem to the suffrage platform," I began.

"Yet the Turkish women will find it. I found that nearly all the women in the countries—the representative women—want to bring about their own organization. We held meetings in China, Japan, South Africa, [illegible], the Philippines, India"——

"Egypt and Turkey?" I cut in.

"Not yet, but Turkey is alive."

"THE Holy Land—did you put a little suffrage spirit into it?"

"That is the most ungodly, the most uninteresting, the most revolting, repulsive place"——

"Did you lose the glamour for it, that superstitious [illegible] we are supposed to inherit?"

"I never had it! I don't fancy it in the least. There is not one decent, redeemable thing about it. I don't know any country I can compare to it in squalor and [illegible] hopelessness."

The Holy Land was saved from further attack by the arrival of Miss Mary Garrett Hay, the president of the Woman Suffrage Party, and the late president of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. Miss Hay, [illegible] last moment of office, saw the federation endorse Votes for Women and she relinquished the gavel with a smile.

Miss Hay was still wearing the smile and it became her wonderfully. She has a face made for pleasant lines, and it invariably lives up to all that is expected of it.

"Mrs. Catt was telling me of the one uninspiring spot in the world," I explained to Miss Hay.

"The memory of it is the most thriving thing about it, I gather," said Miss Hay. "Why don't you let her land in California?"

"I did land there," said Mrs. Catt. "I got in the day before election and I forgot the fatigues of the world's travels—I would be happier still if I could arrive into women voting New York. The ballot wasn't difficult for the California women to secure—their fight can in no way compare with ours, but there will be this satisfaction about ours, we will carry negative, positive and doubtful States with us. We have fairly well disposed of those busy little bees, the antis, and their campaign of disapproval to our work."

AN anti can't very well progress, as her weapons of warfare are chiefly the phrases she learned by heart long ago and has repeated ever since. As combatants they aren't exciting enough to be picturesque, and rocking chairs in a fitting line form a weak defense from the enemy.

"We are not attacking the antis," went on Mrs. Catt, "though we never miss an opportunity to convert one."

"I was fair to them when the resolution was before the State Federation," spoke up Miss Hay, "though my heart was thumping, thumping for success."

"Is there anything I haven't answered?" asked Mrs. Catt. "If not, I'll begin on a speech I must deliver."

"Will you have time to finish it before you are off for Budapest?" I questioned.

"That makes me think—I ought to rest a little before I begin again. Have I time?" she asked of Miss Hay.

"You haven't anything to do next Tuesday afternoon, nor two weeks from Thursday, nor the last Saturday in January," replied Miss Hay.

"That is something to look forward to," announced Mrs. Catt, by way of demonstrating she couldn't be anything but optimistic if she had a chance.