

Women are Persons

TO ESTABLISH THE fact that women are persons, Judge Emily Murphy and four other women from Alberta staged a ten-year fight. This fight started when Judge Murphy, then the first president of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, inspired a unanimous resolution from that organization requesting the Canadian government to appoint a woman to the Senate. The premier at that time, Mr. Arthur Meighen, replied to the request that such an appointment for a woman was impossible under the British North America Act. In the next few years several such requests were made.

The British North America Act said that the Governor General shall from time to time summon qualified "persons" to become members of the Senate. The women, then, must establish the fact that women are persons.

One of the women who supported Emily Murphy in her courageous fight was Nellie McClung, known as the author of Canada's first best selling book, *Sewing Seeds in Danny*, published in 1908. Nellie McClung was born at Chatsworth, Ontario.

The story of these five women is told in a chapter of a very interesting book, *The Clear Spirit*, with the subtitle, *Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times*, edited by Mary Quayle Innes, and published for the Canadian Federation of University Women. Of special interest to the members of the Women's Institutes is the story of Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, founder of the Women's Institutes. This story was written by Ruth Howes, presently assistant editor of the *Federated News*, the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada publication.

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Wouldn't this old world be better
if the folks we meet would say,
I know something good about you,
and then treat us just that way.
Wouldn't it be fine and dandy
if each handclasp warm and true
Carried with it this assurance,
I know something good about you.
Wouldn't things here be more pleasant
if the good that's in us all
Were the only thing about us
that folks bothered to recall.
Wouldn't life be lots more happy
if we'd praise the good we see.
For there's such a lot of goodness
in the worst of you and me.
Wouldn't it be nice to practice
this fine way of thinking too:
You know something good about me,
I know something good about you.

Anon.

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Some other Canadian women, the account of whose lives makes this book fascinating reading, are Mazo de La Roche, the author of the *Jalna* stories; Pauline Johnson, the Indian poetess, Cora Hind, who was born in Toronto, moved to Manitoba as a child, to become an expert in agriculture in the Western provinces; L. M. Montgomery, writer of the *Anne* books; Agnes McPhail, the doughty woman who paved a thorny path for women as parliamentarians; Emily Carr, the famous painter from British Columbia.

If any criticism is to be offered of this very fine book, it could be said only that, in it, there are two stories written in French. This seems but a token gesture toward bilingualism. People who read French only, will find pleasure in just two of the stories, while those who do not read French are not able to enjoy two of the stories. These are the accounts of the lives of Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation and Laure Conan. Mother Marie de l'Incarnation became the founder of the Ursuline Sisters in New France; Laure Conan was one of the first French Canadian women journalists.

These are inspiring stories written by competent, well known authors. The lives of these twenty women were hard but they were inspired by a determination to accomplish a purpose and to meet a need. That the accomplishment of that purpose has improved living conditions for women and paved the way for other women, is obvious as the stories are read.

The Clear Spirit (University of Toronto Press \$6.00).

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Members of Alvinston Women's Institute erect street signs as their Centennial Project. Left to right — Mrs. John Walker, Mrs. Robert Tait, Mrs. Art Yost, Mrs. Leland Pavey.