

**ILMI HALLSTEN**

**THE POSITION OF WOMAN  
IN FINLAND**

**HELSINKI 1925 HELSINGFORS**



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## Women's position in Finland.

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followed what battles has woman had to fight for her

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The following is a translation of an article appearing in the work published in Finnish under the title »*Suomi, Maa, Kansa, Valtakunta*» and in Swedish under the title »*Finland, Land, Folk, Rike*» (Finland, the Country, the People, the State). This work was edited by Mr. Anders Donner, Mr. Arvi Grotenfelt, Mr. Lauri Hendell, Mr. Edvard Hjelt, Mr. K. S. Laurila, Mr. Alvar Renqvist, Mr. E. N. Setälä and Mr. Robert Tigerstedt. The publishers for the Finnish and Swedish editions respectively are *Otava* and *Holger Schildt*.

## **Women's position in Finland.**

What lines has the women's movement in Finland followed, what battles has woman had to fight for her freedom, for her right to develop her faculties and to mould her personality, so as in due course to be able to take part in work for the progress of national culture and for the improvement of moral and material welfare in our country? We shall endeavour to answer these questions in the following pages.

### **The first phase of the women's movement.**

The women's movement has in a striking way been described as »an effort to harmonise the relations between the two great forces of creation, man and woman». It is an expression of woman's ever increasing desire to rise from ignorance and dependency to the same level of culture, independence and liberty as the opposite sex. For, only under the condition that neither part is left behind, thus retarding progress, can man and woman with united forces extend the realm of human achievements.

The victories of the women's movement therefore also indicate gains for the whole of humanity. The aim of the movement is to realise a new humanitarian ideal: the principle, that every one has the right of the free individual to take her share in civilisation, i. e. the right to develop her talents and unfettered by hereditary prejudices and limitations use her power and capacity for the common weal in working for family, community and state.

While the movement among civilised peoples has developed on something the same lines, it has, however,

in different countries assumed a distinct national character. Women have everywhere been inspired by their own people's conditions and current ideas. The religious revival, caused by pietism, which about 1830 began to make its influence felt in Finland and continued for several decades, made the women take life very seriously and forced them to consider the greatest problems of existence. Some time afterwards and partly owing to other influences, a national movement started, which like the spring breeze awakened the indifferent and which found its expression in the watch-word: »we are a nation to ourselves». When this truth was realised, patriotism widened the vision from everyday small tasks to the great problems connected with the welfare of the whole country. In these early days there was enough work for everybody. An appeal was also made to the women. But here great obstacles were encountered. The theoretical education of woman had been much neglected, while narrow traditions and deep-seated prejudices blocked the way to cooperative work with man.

This was realised by the most farsighted women. One of these was Finland's first woman author, *Sara Wacklin*, whose work, »A Hundred Reminiscences from Ostrobothnia» published in Sweden in 1844, contains some masterly conceived types. Several of her stories show a deep bitterness over the hard lot of woman, but she does not yet in her works demand any reforms. But on the other hand, Sara Wacklin by her deeds endeavoured to further woman's cause. Together with some other fellow-women of her time she supported boarding schools for girls in Oulu, Turku (Åbo) and Helsinki (Helsingfors). She even planned something so modern as a home of refuge for women in Helsinki (Helsingfors), but the plan, on account of its being a vindication of women, raised indignant opposition and was obliged to fall through.

Somewhat later *Fredrika Runeberg*, the wife of our national poet J. L. Runeberg, began to take an interest

in reformatory work, including demands for extended education for women, the improvement of the married woman's position and the right for woman to choose her own work and obtain professional training, such as medical, etc.

Her articles on these subjects, eventually collected in the volume »Sketches and Dreams», had originally, about 1850, been published in J. W. Snellman's literary journal. These sketches, in which the authoress often described the hard fate of women among primitive people, attracted attention, especially on account of the rich imagination displayed. But they were considered exclusively as literary products, while at the same time *Fredrika Bremer's* »Hertha» raised a violent press campaign, which for the first time in Finland brought the women's cause under public notice. Fredrika Runeberg, along with many other enlightened women in this country, had a great esteem for this farsighted pioneer of the women's movement in Sweden. Fredrika Bremer's literary and intellectual influence on public opinion was thus quite considerable also in Finland, the country of her birth.

Another woman of Finland, who was inspired by the same ideals and aspirations, was *Adelaïde Ehrnrooth* (A—i—a). Belonging to an old family of warriors, this courageous woman firmly and daringly exposed the unjust conditions under which women lived. Her vivid and pointed style charmed her readers. At this time, about 1860, people began more and more both in private and in public to discuss women's claims for reform. In her articles in the journal »Helsingfors Dagblad», as well as in her novels, A—i—a particularly presented the fol-



Miss Adelaïde Ehrnrooth.

lowing claims: Parents should be obliged to give their daughters the same careful education and professional training as their sons; women should have the same possibilities as man to obtain a livelihood and reputation by virtue of personal work; the existing two-sided morals should be fought against, husband and wife should be equal before the law.

The poet *Z. Topelius* whole-heartedly assisted in these aspirations. Already when quite young he had, about 1830, publicly appealed to the mothers of Finland to take part in a noble task: to light the flame of patriotism in children; »for without woman's help we shall never be able to inspire the coming generation with high ideals». And in a lecture given in the year 1850, he said: »Without freedom for women the family is not complete. Why is the curse of slavery still hanging over so many of the most flourishing countries? Because there woman, still a child without a will of her own, easily becomes the prey of man; because she, herself oppressed and despised, is unable to inspire her child with a feeling of respect for humanity, and because he, who since infancy has seen the weak bow down to the strong, can himself never recognise any other right than that wielded by the strong. Not without good reason an ancient law ordained that a female-slave's son should become a slave, even though the father were free. If, therefore, the oppression of woman throws whole races and nations, whole ages and continents into slavery, her emancipation and the recognition of her human rights should be the commencement of civilisation.» — — — Already in the seventies Topelius considered the time ripe to suggest that women should have the same right as men to be admitted to the university, but for political reasons the subject was forced to be dropped for the time being. During all his life Topelius was ready in his literary work to break a lance for the women's movement, while he personally encouraged and advised its champions. In this respect *Z. Topelius* does not stand alone among

Finland's great men. *J. W. Snellman*, in his journal »*Lit-teraturbladet*» incessantly argued in favour of increased educational possibilities for women, while *Uno Cygnæus*, more far-sighted than most, demanded for the daughters of the people, »the mothers of the nation», a sufficient preparation for their calling in life. It was important that women should learn to manage a home, but likewise important that they should obtain a general education, which would allow them to regard their task of bringing up children from a higher standpoint.

All the above-named wrote in Swedish but in due course a protest in the Finnish language was also raised against existing conditions. In vivid colours and with moral indignation *Minna Canth* described in »*Työmiehen vaimo*» (the labourer's wife) and other works the position in which the law places a helpless woman, bound to a bad husband. She pictured with shocking realism the poverty and misery in working-class homes, and the lamentable life of the poor wife. In »*Hanna*» and »*Papin Perhe*» (The Clergyman's Family) she gave a pathetic description of woman's inferior position even in educated families. The discussion of women's rights, which had become



Mrs. Minna Canth.

quite general through Ibsen's dramas, widely read and acted in Finland, got new nourishment from these Finnish works and began also to interest Finnish circles. *Minna Canth's* works caused many heated discussions in public.

During the new political movement which began in the sixties efforts were very soon made to improve woman's position by legislation and to do away with the abuses founded on ancient laws, which were incompatible with the evolution of modern times. In this way a bill granting

majority to women at the age 25 and a bill abolishing guardian's rights were passed 1863, while in 1878 a bill, granting equal rights of inheritance to brother and sister, was passed. Already in 1863 the Diet had given women who disposed over their own property communal votes in the rural communities and in 1872 the same right was extended to the towns.

As was the case in other countries, the leaders of the women's movement in Finland directed their energy first of all to the improvement of women's education. Their efforts were supported by the state in so far that already existing (Swedish) girls' schools had their curriculum extended. First in the eighties the state founded or took over Finnish girls' schools. At this time there were also in many towns girls' private schools with comparatively modest curriculum. For the training of teachers for the above mentioned schools *Elisabeth Blomqvist*, the highly cultivated head-mistress of Helsingfors Swedish Girls' School, founded a class for Swedish pupil-teachers. Somewhat later Mr. B. F. Godenhjelm and his wife *Ida*



Miss Elisabeth Blomqvist,  
headmistress.



Mrs. Ida Godenhjelm.

*Godenhjelm* combined with the Finnish Girls' School (Helsingin suomalainen Tyttökoulu) which they had founded,

a Finnish continuation school with the object of training teachers and in general furthering the higher education of girls.

This program for girls' schools did not, however, satisfy more farsighted women. It was too limited, and, what was worse, it did not to any great degree help the pupils towards independent work or self-support. And yet industrial progress and increased trade had even in Finland already brought about a distinctly visible economic revolution, which also had influenced the conditions for women. Finished and half-finished industrial products began to be used in the homes and displaced home-industries, thus making many home-workers unnecessary and depriving the female relations of many families of their work. To an increasing degree women were now obliged to look for work and support outside their homes; it was a necessity created by the new era. Here were many problems to be solved, many wrongs to be righted by the women's movement, which thus partly is to be considered as a consequence of the difficulties, with which, through altered political economic conditions, women and homes had to contend.

The most important question, that of a better education for women, was now frequently debated in public. A few women had succeeded in making their way to the University, and one of these, Emma Irene Åström (afterwards lecturer at Ekenäs Seminary) passed the examination in Philosophy in 1882 and received the degree of Master in that same year. This gave fresh impetus to the women's efforts, and in the same year a number of ladies residing in Kuopio appealed to all the women of Finland to collect funds for a girls' school (lyceum) from which the pupils could matriculate to the university, or a corresponding mixed school in Helsingfors.

The cause was so energetically taken up, that already in 1886 the Finnish mixed school »Helsingin Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu» could be opened. Before that, in 1883, a

Swedish mixed school »Läroverket för gossar och flickor» had been opened in Helsingfors. It may in this connection be mentioned that at this time women were allowed by special permission to matriculate into the university. They obtained this right on the same conditions as men first in 1901.

### The associations and their activity.

The active campaign in favour of better education for women along with the public discussion of ethical problems, especially those concerning sexual morality, made the women's movement very actual, and it was soon recognised as a matter of indisputable social importance. The women, however, realised that only an organised action could lead to lasting results. In 1884 the Finnish Women's Association was founded, its first president being Mrs. *Elisabeth Löfgren* and its first secretary Miss *Alma*



Mrs. Elisabeth Löfgren.

*Hjelt*. The association worked on two lines: by raising the standard of education it endeavoured to bring the women of the people into contact with modern civilisation, while at the same time it carried on an energetic agitation for legislative reforms. By influencing certain members of the Diet, the Association succeeded in course of time in having the following questions brought to the notice of parliament: married women's majority and property act; right for

women to enter the university; political franchise and communal eligibility; raising the marriageable age of women to over 15 years; majority at 21 years; extended rights to enter the teaching profession; right to sit on the boards of guardians and to act as governors of workhouses; abolishment of legal prostitution, etc. By appealing to the government the Association assisted in bringing about the decision to appoint women inspectors of factories etc., and in obtaining the right for women to become pupils in the state's agricultural schools.



Miss Alma Hjelt.

In addition, the Association started a number of practical enterprises with the object of improving prevailing conditions. It thus ran for 20 years a labour exchange and for 9 years classes for dressmakers (until Helsingfors town council started a technical school for girls), and also for 17 years elementary classes for women who had not had schooling in their youth. For nearly 30 years the juvenile library, started by the Association and bearing the name of Z. Topelius, has provided the homes with good literature for the young.

It has already been mentioned that the Association had as one of its primary objects the enlightening and raising of the woman of the people. Local branches were instituted in various parts of the country (numbering at present about 30). The women's movement thus penetrated to the masses and consequently obtained a national and democratic character. Educational work was carried on within all fields of feminine activity through lectures,

distribution of literature, etc. The Association possessed a singularly persuasive speaker in the teacher *Hilda Käiki-koski* (died 1912), herself a daughter of the people and a woman of incomparably high ideals.

During the periods 1889 to 1904 and 1909 to 1913 Baroness *Alexandra Gripenberg* (died 1913) was the leader



Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg.

of the Association. She was extremely well conversant with everything connected with the woman's cause and inspired by an unshak- en conviction as to its moral mission. Al- ready in 1888 she took part as the Associa- tion's representative in the great Women's Congress in Washing- ton, where the Inter- national Council of Women was founded. During all her life she was in close contact with the work abroad and ably introduced its aspirations and methods into Finland. In the homage rendered to her memory at the International Women's Congress in Rome (1914) she was called one of the most remarkable personalities of the international women's movement. Her comprehensive work »Reforms for the Improvement of Woman's Position» (published both in Finnish and Swedish) has along with her journal »Koti ja yhteiskunta» (Home and Community) 1889—1911, made known to many generations of Finland's women the leading ideas and achievements of the women's movement.

In 1892 a new association was founded for the protection of women. It was called the Women's »Union» of Finland, its first president being the headmistress *Lucina Hagman*. With regard to legislative reforms the »Union» took the initiative in improving the laws regarding the position of illegitimate children, married woman's majority and right to property and woman's political franchise and communal eligibility. The »Union» also worked for the appointment of women trade inspectors, the right for women to become pharmacists and to act as guardians. Furthermore the »Union» initiated sewing meetings for mothers, lectures for working women, arranged work for the unemployed and in general worked for the improvement of industrial knowledge by means of classes for sewing, weaving, etc. and by distributing work in the homes. The meetings, arranged by the »Union» for lectures and debates, where all questions pertaining to the women's movement were deliberated and explained, were of great importance.



Lucina Hagman,  
headmistress.

The »Union» owns the Wilhelmina-Home in Hyvinkää, an extremely necessary home of rest for working-women. It was given in 1904 to the Union by Mrs. Minette Donner, who also left a large donation in her will for its maintenance.

In their efforts to raise the standard of women the associations have, of course, paid attention to woman's natural vocation as the mistress of the home. In order to overcome the lack of knowledge of domestic science the Association of Finnish Women in 1891 took steps to found a Pedagogic School of Housekeeping. Among those who financially supported this school was Mrs.

*Aurore Karamzine*, a distinguished, warm-hearted woman, well known as the founder of the institution of deaconesses.



Mrs Aurore Karamzine.

As soon as the school had trained a sufficient number of teachers, ambulating classes for domestic science were started in the provinces. This work was hailed with enthusiasm by the local branches. In this respect the branch in Tammerfors has done extremely good work for the benefit of the suburban population. — Although the state for many years granted only very limited subsidies to the Pedagogic School of Housekeeping,

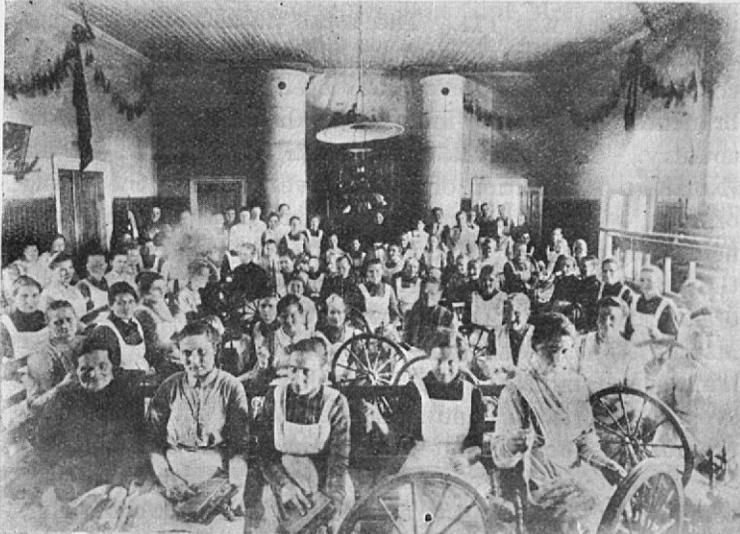
its work proceeded successfully chiefly thanks to the untiring energy of Mrs. *Elin Sjöström* who had studied this kind of organisation abroad and all through managed to keep the school on a high level. After having, for some years, been the secretary of the Association of Finnish Women, Mrs. Sjöström acted as its president from 1904 to 1909.

In 1899, just at the time when the Russian policy of oppression against Finland began, the *Martha Association* was founded in order to assist in the above mentioned work, and



Mrs. Elin Sjöström.

thanks to the energy and power of initiative which the Association has displayed it has been very successful. Its purpose is to improve the general knowledge and prosperity in the homes. It is extensively active in the instruction of gardening and domestic economy. A special feature is the preserving and bottling of garden products, wild berries and mushrooms. The products which are not consumed at home are sold by the medium of a co-operative organisation. Many local branches have included in their program home-industries such as making dolls, etc. while the classes in weaving and sewing are yielding ever increasing results. The Association arranges



Spinning meeting in Parainen.

exhibitions of products of gardening, housekeeping and home-industry and distributes prizes, circulates pamphlets and issues the journals »Emäntälehti» and »Husmodern». The Martha Association, which for a great number of years has been under the direction of Mrs. *Fanny Hull*, had in 1923 no fewer than 361 branches and 731 »circles»,



Mrs. Fanny Hult.

while the number of members reached 30,697. The reports from the same year show a lively and successful activity in every respect. Both the ideal and the practical side of its extensive activity has in most parts of the country awakened great interest, which was increased through the association taking part in the agricultural exhibition in Tammerfors. In 1923 nearly six hundred new gardens were laid out. The number of instructresses was 171. The total number of meetings and »Martha-days» was about 6,000. Special practical courses, numbering 585, had been arranged, and new branches had been formed in different parts of the country. The Martha Association is affiliated to the »Northern Association of House-wives», and in the spring of 1924, when it celebrated its twentyfifth anniversary it held a big and well attended Congress of Housewives from the northern countries. At the end of that same year the organization was divided on linguistic grounds and two Martha Associations were formed, one Finnish, »Suomalainen Marttaliitto», and the other Swedish, »Finlands svenska Marthaförbund». These have both the same program as before, but their management and finances are separate. They co-operate, however, through a joint committee formed as a connecting link between them, which is called the »Central Committee of the Martha Associations in Finland». This joint committee represents both organizations in relations with foreign countries, and also deals with such internal matters as demand cooperation between them and common representation.

For the spiritual side of women's work there are several Christian societies, of which the societies for Home Missions and the Salvation Army take the first place with regard to social charitable work. Of utmost importance in this

respect is also the work of a nursing sisterhood (Deaconesses), whose members consecrate themselves partly to Christian nursing of the sick in their four hospitals, partly to individual Christian social service and nursing for the benefit of the community in various parts of the country. Social aid is also given by the Y. W. C. A. and its local branches, especially amongst factory girls and other self-supporting women. The association also supports homes for children, the one in Riutala (Enare) being an important centre for home-missions in Lapland. The Y. W. C. A. also carries on missionary work in India, China, Africa and among the Jews.

For some decades women had already been interested in the temperance movement and Mrs. Alli Trygg-Helenius must be named as one of the most eminent women working in this cause. In 1880 Mrs. Emma Mäkinen took up work in Helsingfors for the rescue of fallen women. In order to organise their part in this work women founded, in 1905, the »White Ribbon» Christian women's temperance union, which was affiliated to the world-league bearing the same name. The »White ribbon» union, for many years under the leadership of Miss *Frida Sjöblom*, has in Finland especially devoted itself to a comprehensive work for improving public morals. It arranges meetings, distributes pamphlets and supports children's homes and homes of refuge for women. The local branch in Helsingfors supports a school of housekeeping and sewing in order to interest young women in useful work. In accordance with its program the »White Ribbon» also advocates the appointment of women police in the towns and has been fortunate in realising its endeavours in this respect.

Baroness Mathilda *Wrede* takes a unique position in social work and has earned the name of »the prisoners' friend» by her self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of the unfortunate people in the prisons.

In 1907 was founded the »Suomalainen naisliitto» (the Finnish Women's League), the purpose of which is to raise the civic standard of women. The League carries on an

extensive work of education through its 30 local branches. It aims at stimulating women's interest in communal life. The Helsingfors branch is keenly interested in questions connected with the extension of women's rights. Some of the branches specialise in housekeeping, others in the protection of children by supporting homes for children, etc. One of the branches has founded a summer home for working class mothers. The founder and



Baroness Mathilda Wrede.

present leader of the League is the headmistress Miss *Lucina Hagman*, a woman of manifold interests. In this connection is to be mentioned the journal «*Naisten ääni*» (the Women's Voice), edited by Miss *Maikki Friberg*, D. Phil., one of woman's staunchest champions in Finland. Doctor Friberg is at present the chairman of the «*Union*».



Dr. Maikki Friberg.

As above mentioned, both the Association of Finnish Women and the «*Union*» had included in their program *political votes for women*. The former already in 1897 succeeded in having the matter brought before the Diet. The initiative, although not leading to any positive results for the time being, was, however, of great im-

portance, as it served to pave the way for the eventual realisation of this reform, which so long had seemed too audacious. When in 1904 the question of universal suffrage was raised, attention was again drawn to women's votes. In 1904 and 1905 both the Association of Finnish Women, the «*Union*» and the social-democratic members of the Diet

petitioned for political votes for women. Also this time the Diet refused to consider the appeal, but the action served immensely to increase the popularity of the claim among all classes of women. The two associations of lawyers of the country declared that a married woman's minority could constitute no hindrance to her obtaining political rights. In 1904 the »Union» arranged a mass meeting which unanimously declared itself in favour of universal suffrage and extension of eligibility to women. The associations arranged meetings all over the country, and the women presented their claims both in the press and in appeals to the Diet. The result was that the Diet passed a law, giving *universal and equal votes to men and women*. This law became valid on the 1st October 1906.



Mrs. Hedvig Gebhard.



Miss Vera Hjelt,  
Factory Inspector.

This momentous reform, for which enlightened men and women in other countries had fought during many decades was thus carried in Finland after a comparatively short struggle. That the victory in this country was so much easier is partly due to the fact that new ideals usually find a more favourable soil in young countries, unhampered by ancient traditions, than in older ones. But on the other hand it must be admitted, that the

success to a great extent was also due to the preceding campaign, in which many men of liberal views took part.



Miss Hilda Käkikoski.



Baroness  
Ida Yrjö-Koskinen.



Dr. Tekla Hultin.



Dr. Jenny af Forselles.

In the first Diet, assembled in 1907, where also women were represented, they had in all 19 members, among

whom may be mentioned Baroness *Alexandra Gripenberg*, Miss *Hilda Käkikoski*, Mrs. *Evelina Ala-Kulju* and Mrs. *Hedvig Gebhard* (for the Finnish party); Miss *Dagmar Neovius* (for the Swedish party); Miss *Lucina Hagman* (for the young Finnish party) and Miss *Miina Sillanpää* (for the social democratic party). Among women who in later years for considerable periods have been members of the Diet are Doctor *Tekla Hultin*, Miss *Vera Hjelt*, Doctor *Jenny af Forselles*, Miss *Annie Furuhjelm* and Baroness *Ida Yrjö-Koskinen*.

### Modern woman in community and state.

The securing of political rights for women represents the passing of a mile-stone in the development of woman's cause. This victory, which abroad attracted much notice both among friends and foes of the women's movement, called for radical changes in the working program at home. As the obstacles fell one after the other, the highest wall having been scaled, women's responsibilities increased accordingly. The task was now to further extend the work and at the same time raise the standard of women's activity and competence. The new education had to break away from the old routine, the indifference and superficiality which had up to then hampered women's development and progress and kept down their wages.

Recent reforms of the educational system have done much to promote and improve girls' schools. In Finland there are now numerous women who have matriculated into the university. A great many of them, however, seem to regard this as the crowning effort of their studies. To what extent women have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the university is shown below. Between the years 1880 and 1924 women students have passed 1,317 examinations entitling them to enter various professions or to hold Civil Service positions. 681 of them

took the degree in philosophy (in the sections of history and philosophy, physics and mathematics, or agriculture and economics), 29 the examination for Bachelor of Medicine, 52 Licentiate of Medicine, 187 Licentiate of Dentistry, 199 the Lower Administrative examination, 27 the Lower Juridical (since the autumn of 1922), 19 the Higher Administrative and 6 the Juridical, and 3 the Higher Juridical (introduced in 1922). In addition to these, one woman in 1925 took the degree of Bachelor of Law. Forty-eight women have taken the qualifying examination in agriculture, and 7 the final theological examination. In the spring term of 1925 the 2,833 students registered at the University included 851 women. Out of these 373 were studying in the section of history and philosophy, 138 that of physics and mathematics, and 52 in that of agriculture and economics, 185 belonged to the medical faculty, 62 to the juridical, and 6 to the theological, while 35 women were studying in the University gymnastic institute.

From 1895 to 1920, 12 women had published dissertations for doctors degree, of which 7 in the historical-philological, 2 in the physico-mathematical section and 3 in the faculty of medicine.

An increasing number of women have also frequented the technical schools. During the years 1901 to 1907, 9 women passed in architecture and 1 in engineering at the Polytechnical Institute. At the Technical High School, during the years 1910—1922, 22 women won diplomas, 20 for architecture, 1 for chemical engineering and 1 for textile engineering.

Young women have more and more begun to take advantage of the practical instruction to be obtained at the many communal schools for industries, agriculture, dairy work, housekeeping, sewing, etc.

In 1911 Baroness *Alexandra Gripenberg* founded *The National League of Finnish Women*, to which at present 20 societies are affiliated. The League, whose present

chairman is Mrs. *Tilma Hainari*, is a branch of the International Council of Women thus constituting a link with the women's movement abroad. The same aim has the Women's International Suffrage Alliance, which has a branch in Finland with four affiliated societies. The president of the Finnish branch is Miss *Annie Furuhjelm*, who is well known in the international women's movement, and is president of the »Enfranchised Women's Committee» of the Alliance.



Mrs. Tilma Hainari.

A happy sign of the times is that the societies show a growing tendency towards cooperative work where things of more importance are concerned. Thus the various societies in Helsingfors have



Miss Annie Furuhjelm.

formed joint committees to revise the matrimonial laws, to organize active assistance, to overcome the shortage of food during war, etc. In connection with the National League of Finnish Women there are two important committees, of which the one, the Central Committee for Domestic Economy, handles questions regarding the management and economy of the home from the point of view of political economy, while the other represents

the women's interest in the work for improving public morality. The latter carries on preventive and rescue work and maintains refuge homes and industrial institutions, as being the best solution of these important social and hygienic problems.

Large meetings, comprising women delegates from all over the country have been held. The general meeting held in 1907 resulted in the appointment of the above mentioned committee. The temperance question has been discussed by big meetings in Helsingfors, while at another meeting in the spring of 1921 in Helsingfors, the housing problem was exhaustively debated. On the two latter occasions women delegates from the social-democratic party took part both in the preliminary proceedings and in the general meeting.

Nearly all the women's organizations in Finland work in one way or another for the care of children. The foundation in 1920 of General Mannerheim's League for Child



Baroness Sophie Mannerheim.

Welfare gave fresh impetus to voluntary effort in this field, by concentrating the forces available and systematizing their work. The rapid growth of the League — it has now (1925) 250 local branches — shows that the appeal from the general who set Finland free to the citizens of free Finland met with a warm response, and not least from the women.

In the nursing profession there is also a tendency towards greater efficiency, both theoretical and practical. Baroness *Sophie Man-*

*nerheim*, the pioneer of this vocation for women, has methodically applied these principles to the nursing classes, which are held in the State's hospitals in Helsingfors. It is to be hoped, that her three years' program of training will eventually be sanctioned by the government. The idea is gradually to apply the same scheme of instruction all over the country, which would necessitate the establishment of a school for probationers. The nursing profession, already now partly on the same level as that in most advanced countries, would thus be completely on the same footing. Bar-



Mrs. Elin Kallio.

oness Mannerheim is chairman of the Nurses' Association of Finland, and also now of the International Council of Nurses, to which the Association is affiliated.



Miss Elli Björkstén.

Gymnastics have in Finland a number of distinguished women representatives. Both as a teacher and by founding, in 1876, the Gymnastic Society of Helsingfors Mrs. *Elin Kallio* has worked untiringly and methodically for the popular recognition of its importance. Miss *Elli Björkstén*, teacher at the university gym-

nasium has won a high reputation for her cleverly conceived new system — based on Ling's principles — which

is well adapted for women's organism and psychology. Miss *Annie Collan*, inspector of gymnastics and hygiene on the Board of Education, has done much for the improvement of games and sport in this country.

The new form of political representation also influenced the activity of the women's associations, in so far that these were expected to a certain degree to express their allegiance to the various parties. Already in 1892 one of the trade-unions had formed a special section for women. In 1900 all such sections which had been formed in the meantime, amalgamated with existing women's trade organisations in the Women's Social Democratic Federation (*Sosiaalidemokraattinen naisliitto*), with a view of propagating woman's political claims (vote and eligibility, maternity insurance, temperance, etc.). In 1906 the Federation started a journal, called »*Työläisnainen*» (The Working Woman). When in 1921 the Federation split up on account of the communist movement, a new organisation, *Suomen Sosiaalidemokraattinen työläisnaisliitto*, was founded under the leadership of Miss *Miina Sillanpää*. The new organisation has 70 branches with about 3,000 members and issues a monthly journal called »*Toveritar*» (The Woman Comrade).

Soon after the passing of the new representation bill Baroness *Alexandra Gripenberg* took the initiative of founding *Suomalaisen puolueen Naisjärjestö* (The Finnish Party's Organisation of Women).

Swedish speaking women founded in 1907 *Svenska Kvinnoförbundet i Finland* (The Union of Swedish Women in Finland), which has done extensive and productive work for the women's cause and acts as the central political organ for the Swedish women.

For many years, from 1895 to 1914, the Swedish speaking women had an excellent organ in the journal »*Nutid*». Among its editors is to be mentioned Miss *Helena Westermarck*, one of the most distinguished Swedish champions of the women's movement in Finland. In 1919 the

Union of Swedish Women in Finland started the journal »Astra».

The new orientation of the Finnish bourgeois parties which took place in 1919 also caused a corresponding reorganisation of the women's associations. Within the coalition party a number of organisations were founded under the collective name of *Kansallinen kokoomuksen naisjärjestöt* (The Women's Organisations of the National Coalition Party) with *Naisvaliokunta* as a central organ. They issue a journal called »Suomen Nainen», edited by Baroness *Ida Yrjö-Koskinen*. The corresponding organisation within the Finnish progressive party is *Kansallinen edistyspuolueen naisten valtuusto* (The National Progressive Party's women's organisation) with its local branches.

As mentioned above, the question of improving the position of married women by means of modern legislation has been discussed for many years. It is only natural that the women have persisted in this, as the present matrimonial law, with the exception of some newer modifications, is very old, dating from 1734. Already in the first Diet where women were represented, their members presented several petitions concerning woman's right to enter the civil service, the organisation of the teaching of domestic economy, the position of illegitimate children and the revision of the matrimonial law, woman's majority and her right to her children. A committee of legal experts was charged with the preparing of a report on these subjects. The women's associations were invited to express their views in a joint committee. In due course a report was prepared, concerning husband's and wife's legal relations, in which report attention was paid to the principles adopted in Sweden, Norway and Denmark with regard to this matter. A Government Bill based on the report was introduced into Parliament, but referred back to the Government for additional clauses.

One of the most important tasks of the women's societies is to organise modern instruction in all matters

bearing on the management of the home. Rational house-keeping comprising all classes of the people is no doubt extremely valuable from the point of view of political economy. The unmethodical management of homes which still prevails causes all the greater losses, as it is as a rule the housewife herself who does the buying. Also from an educational point of view it is essential that the mother is well conversant with her tasks: the authority



Tampere School of Housewifery.

she yields and the order she retains, form to a high degree the growing children's ideas of what home and community expect from them in the future. A housewife who methodically manages her home is furthermore able to save time for the children's intellectual training, as well as for her own education and social work.

These tasks could, however, not be realised without competent teachers, and for a long time the Pedagogic School of Housekeeping in Helsingfors, the housekeeping schools in Kuopio and Tammerfors, the garden schools in Haapavise, Sippola and the housekeeping and garden

school at Högvalla were the only more important institutions. It was, therefore, quite natural that the women members of the Diet tried to make improvements in this respect. Thanks to their efforts the Diet granted increased subsidies to the housekeeping schools, while the government charged a committee with the preparation of a report on the organisation of instruction in domestic economy. At present a complete state institute for domestic economy



Karkku, School of gardening.

is under organisation for the purpose of training teachers for giving instruction in housekeeping on a comprehensive scale.

Already for many years attention has been paid to the question of organising classes in housekeeping for school girls, which would give distraction from the ordinary routine work and by its variety interest the pupils. The new educational law provides for such work in the supplementary classes of the primary schools, but unfortunately not in the schools themselves. In two classes of the state

schools for girls housekeeping is now taught, but with a few exceptions the private schools have not yet taken it up.

While the country's old constitution in certain cases prevented women from entering the civil service, the new constitution of 1909 makes women equal with men in so far that they enjoy the same rights and duties. Despite this equality recognised by principle, there still remain some obstacles for women to overcome. For instance a woman is not entitled to become a judge. If, as is to be hoped, the remaining restrictions are removed in the near future, women will have access to numerous posts, which they formerly have been unable to fill, as they require judicial authority.

A great number of Finnish women have entered the medical profession, which is now quite open to them.

In 1917 women were granted communal votes and eligibility for election. They are now taking an important part in communal work both in the towns and in the country. They are members of the councils and some are even chairman. In the social institutions controlled by the councils they are very active, especially in such committees as those for education, protection of children and domestic economy.

As regards the Church women have the right to vote for and be elected as vestrymen and churchwardens, and as elders of the congregation. They may also vote for clergymen and organists. At the last Church congress the question was considered as to woman's right to elect representatives to the congresses and to be herself elected. The carrying out of this reform is only a matter of time. The ecclesiastical law stipulates that woman may not exercise the function of clergyman. There are, however, in Finland a few women who have passed the final examination in theology.

The radical political changes, which have marked the last few decades, have like powerful waves carried the women's cause forward and served to make the import-

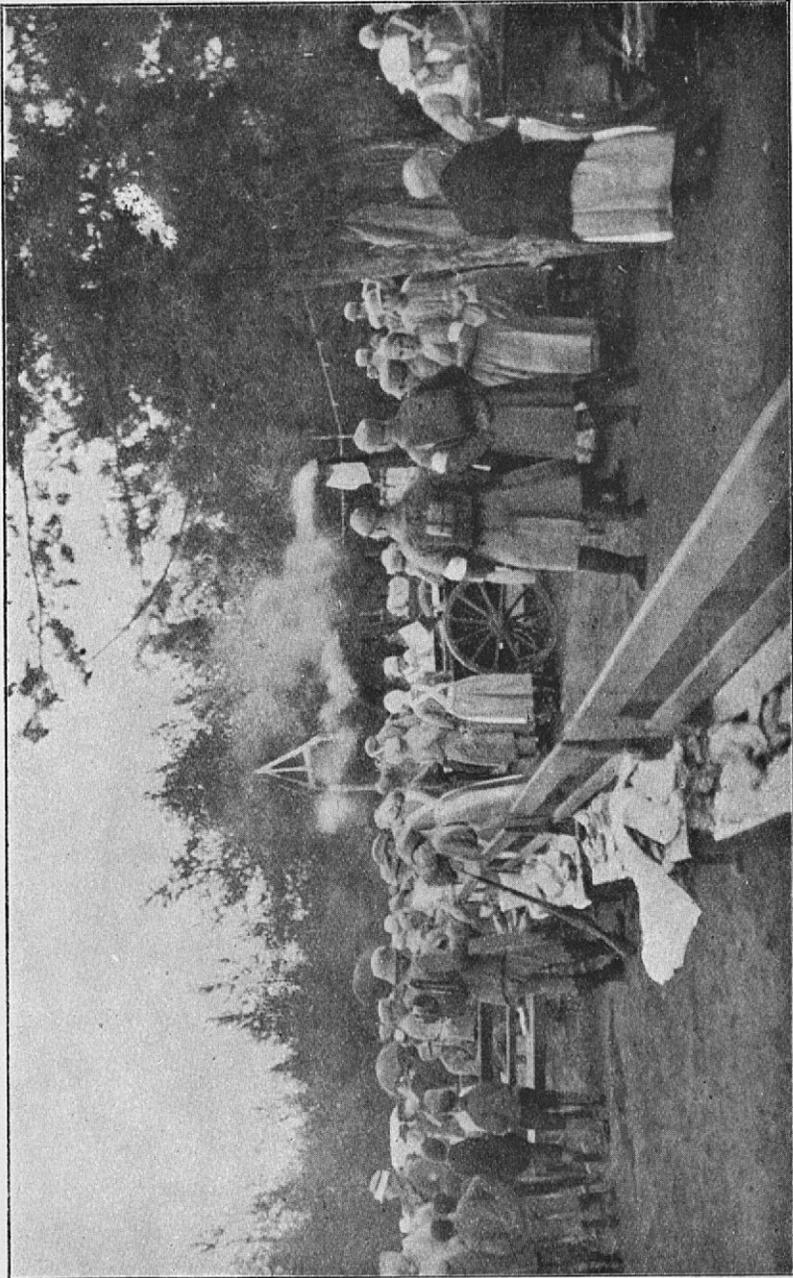
ance of her work better understood. At the same time as the individual right to free choice of work is recognised as the only principle, the modern women's movement emphasises the qualitative difference between man's and woman's work. Thus woman's work has been found most valuable where her feminine qualities can be used, especially where a more personal contact with things and where a greater power of individualisation are required. Women, however, are still without certain rights, and there are still obstacles which prevent their freedom of action, but the overcoming of them depends on the women themselves. The more they can prove by their work that they are fit for further culture and development and can show that their collaboration cannot be dispensed with, without harm to state and community, the more responsible tasks will be allotted to them. With their watchword »through duties to rights» Finland's women will advance their cause.

This review of the women's movement would not be complete without mentioning the part the women of Finland took in the War of Liberation. The national fight during the past century had awakened their interest in public problems. During the defence of Finland's autonomy some worked by improving education and by stimulating patriotism to preserve the nation's spirit, while others suffered hardships for the country's sake. When the war of liberation began, the women of Finland's bourgeoisie knew what was their duty. The Chief of the »White Army», General Mannerheim, gave them the following praise: »Among those who have been mentioned in despatches for heroic deeds are also many women. Some of them have been decorated for »valour», others have under enemy fire courageously prepared food for the troops; others have by their hardiness and bravery inspired the men with still greater courage, others have under heavy fire carried wounded to the ambulances». »But the despatches do not tell of the selfsacrificing tireless work which Fin-

land's women did during the War of Liberation, do not mention the dangers and privations they suffered. The men who died of their wounds cannot tell of the loving hands which to the last tended them. How many women did not expose themselves to dangers which were connected with the distribution of arms in the districts occupied by »Red» troops, how many did not endure terrible suffering when accompanying the troops during their often fatal advances? The calm and composure with which the mothers received the news of their sons' deaths, the wives of their husbands', proved that the women possessed the spirit which made them fit to mother a generation which at the momentous hour was ready to sacrifice itself for freedom.»

Paragraph 75 of the Constitution ordains: »Every Finnish citizen is obliged to take part or assist in the defence of the country». — Finland's women have through their unique organisation *Lotta Svärd* effectively given their assistance in the country's defence. The women's activity during the War of Liberation is continued in this organisation which is attached to the Civic Guards. *Lotta Svärd* has 21 districts and about 400 local sections. The number of members is about 25,000. The organisation works assiduously for the equipment of the Civic Guards, especially in the matter of clothing. Its duty is also to look after the feeding of the troops during manoeuvres, etc. *Lotta Svärd* also organises on a comprehensive scale ambulating courses in nursing and housekeeping. Another important form of activity consists of summer courses, attended by hundreds of young women participants, who receive instruction in gymnastics, nursing, the management of field kitchens and attend lectures on civic questions and general education.

The young women in the *Lotta Svärd* organization are inspired by the patriotic consciousness that they, like the Civic Guards, are a safeguard to the peace and freedom of their country.



Lotta Svärd members on manoeuvres.

The political and social rights which the women of Finland have obtained and the amelioration of their position in general had in the best of them had time to develop the noble civic spirit and the power of personality, which grows with increased responsibility and free self-determination. When the hour of trial came, also woman stood ready to act and was prepared to give firm support to those who bore the heaviest burdens of war, thus contributing to the establishment of Finland's freedom. She now needs to a still greater degree strength, love and conscientiousness in order to be able, by serving high moral ideals, to assist in the strengthening of her country's independence.

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