

Club Women Who Head the General Federation

MRS. SARAH PLATT DECKER of Denver, president; Mrs. Philip N. Moore of St. Louis, first vice president; Mrs. May Alden Ward of Boston, second vice president; Miss Louise B. Poppenheim of Charleston, S. C., corresponding secretary; Mrs. John Sherman of Chicago, recording secretary; Mrs. Percy Pennybacker of Texas, treasurer and Dr. Sarah H. Kendrick, auditor, is the personnel of the newly-elected executive committee of the General Federation of Women's clubs.

Standing as it does, an organization unique and so without the guidance of precedent, the incoming of a new executive board carries with it more or less anxiety among those who realize the immensity of the tasks the federation has undertaken and the delicacy, tact, untiring energy and unwavering courage its accomplishment entails. But those who know the General Federation are sure that the seventh biennial has chosen well those who are to preside over its affairs during the coming two years.

In fact, no previous board has included so many women of national reputation. Not one in the seven but has been previously entrusted with important commissions, several of them executive positions in their respective states. Than Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker of Denver there is no better known club woman in the country. Widely popular in her own city and state for her exceptional ability, Mrs. Decker first came prominently before the national federation when it held its fourth biennial at Denver six years ago. It was she who superintended the entertainment of the convention, which was the first of the really big meetings, and that still stands unsurpassed. At that time the convention would have honored Mrs. Decker with its presidency, but she declined the honor and incidentally established the precedent which practically eliminates the hostess city from the presidential contest if there chances to be one. But as Mrs. Decker's popularity had enabled her to establish precedents, so it permitted her to break them, if she chose—but she did not choose, and two years later, at Milwaukee, when her friends would have violated the unwritten rule of electing a president to a second term, she, for a second time declined the honor and Mrs. Rebecca Douglas Lowe was re-elected. The Milwaukee convention failed to settle the reorganization agitation, and besides that developed an even more dangerous issue in the color question. Mrs. Decker was an ardent champion of the individual club in the national body as well as the state organization. Mrs. Lowe was a representative of Georgia, the state that lead the opposition to the admission of colored clubs, and Mrs. Decker's good sense told her that, independent of courtesy, it was policy to retain as many members of the presiding administration as were eligible to re-election, so she declined the presidency.

And all of this only increased Mrs. Decker's host of friends, and two years later, at Los Angeles, there was such a demonstration as has rarely been seen. Whether she would have it or not, her friends would give her the presidency and as every woman in the convention seemed to be numbered among her supporters, Mrs. Decker had a most difficult as well as embarrassing time declining the honor the third time. She held that the office should rightfully go to Mrs. Demies T. S. Denison, of New York, who, as vice president, had borne the brunt of the burdens of the chief executive office during the year that Mrs. Lowe had spent abroad and the burdens had been heavy indeed. Mrs. Denison was elected and, during the last two years, has by her ability, her graciousness and her tact won her fellow-workers that many of Mrs. Decker's staunch supporters would doubtless have abided by the established precedent had not Mrs. Denison herself declined the office for a second term. Mrs. Denison's announcement was made two months before the biennial, and in spite of her popularity, when, a few days before the election, it was rumored that she had reconsidered and might accept a nomination, it quickly became evident that she had changed her mind too late; the sentiment was for Mrs. Decker and Mrs. Decker was elected.

Some one has defined an orator as "one who has something to say and knows how to say it." The same can be said of Mrs. Decker. She is a brilliant speaker and in

addition to her gift of expression has the faculty of moving her audience to laughter or to tears at will. Yes, Mrs. Decker is a suffragist, too, but the apprehensive ones are no longer afraid that her views on this subject will influence her action as president of the General Federation. In fact, woman suffrage has come to have a new meaning to even the conservative ones. Their experience with child labor legislation during the last two years has been a wonderful education and besides it has developed, upon investigation, that most of the leading women of the club movement are avowed suffragists and most of the others are suffragists, too, only they did not know it until experience enlightened them.

Mrs. Philip N. Moore of St. Louis, who the convention honored with its first vice presidency, needs no introduction to the club women of the land, particularly since the organization of the local board at St. Louis for the entertainment of the seventh biennial. With an enviable record as president of the Missouri federation for two terms, the club women of St. Louis were confident that under her chairmanship they could entertain a biennial, even during the season of the World's fair, and so the invitation was extended, and when the local board was organized Mrs. Moore was made president. How well they succeeded and in the face of what difficulties, only those who did the work and those who were privileged to enjoy their hospitality will ever appreciate. If never before, Mrs. Moore proved on this occasion her ability to manage large affairs. But this was not her first introduction to the General Federation. She had previously served as corresponding secretary and later as treasurer of the General Federation. Two years ago at Los Angeles she came before the convention with the much discussed proposition for the erection in St. Louis, as a memorial to the Louisiana purchase, a hall of philanthropy, that should also serve as a place for keeping the records and other property of the General Federation.

The election of Mrs. May Alden Ward to the second vice presidency gives fresh honor to Massachusetts, that home of brilliant, cultured, thinking women, and to the General Federation one of the most able of these women as its third executive offi-

cer. As president of the Massachusetts Federation Mrs. Ward has made a splendid record. To recount what has been accomplished by the Massachusetts clubs would be to review almost every step that has been gained by the concerted action and influence of women. Mrs. Ward was as strongly in favor of reorganizing the General Federation at Milwaukee as Mrs. Decker was opposed to it. Mrs. Ward, as state president, was also practically at the head of the Massachusetts contention for the admission of colored clubs, but that is all past now; the Los Angeles convention determined what should be and, true to the motto of the national organization, "Unity in Diversity," the Massachusetts delegation returned from Los Angeles to extend their strong support, financially as well as morally, to the club women of Georgia in an effort to establish better and more practical educational advantages to the negroes of that state. Mrs. Ward is an admirable presiding officer, her gracious, courteous manner relieving the exaction of parliamentary rule of much of its sharpness. Mrs. Ward is also an ardent advocate of the enfranchisement of women.

Miss Louise B. Poppenheim of Charleston, S. C., is the one member of the old executive committee to be retained on the new. During the last two years she has served as corresponding secretary and her reelection lacked little of being unanimous. A conspicuous worker among the clubs of her own state Miss Poppenheim has given valuable counsel in the executive board of the General Federation. A journalist herself, being editor and publisher of the Key-stone, a monthly publication, Miss Poppenheim has, while maintaining the interest of the General Federation, so arranged her reports as to greatly facilitate their circulation through the press of the country.

The incoming recording secretary, Mrs. John Sherman of Chicago, is not less widely known for her work in the Chicago Woman's club. A parliamentarian of recognized ability she is looked upon as a most valuable acquisition to the executive committee, especially as Mrs. Fox, the federation's parliamentarian, is retired from the board this year.

Mrs. Pennybacker of Texas, the new treasurer, who has been admirably referred to as the "Little Whirlwind," has

come rapidly to the front since two years ago, when she so frequently expedited the business of the Los Angeles convention by moving the previous question. Her frequently offered motion became a joke, but the little woman herself became a favorite for her quick and reliable judgment. As president of the Texas Federation she deserves much of the credit for the splendid accomplishments of that organization, this being conceded not only by her fellow workers among the club women, but by the business men and legislators who count her among their valued advisers in matters of public welfare in which the clubs have interested themselves.

Dr. Sarah H. Kendrick of Oregon, the newly elected auditor, is perhaps the least known of any of the new board, but she has been tried and found competent in her own state, and that is recommendation enough.

Last, but not least, is one other that appears in the group—Mrs. Demies T. S. Denison of New York, the retiring president. While courtesy forbids that anyone should be called the "best loved president," certainly the General Federation has never had a presiding officer who was "just one of the women," as Mrs. Denison has been. With her in the chair the timid woman was not afraid to take the floor, for her skill as a parliamentarian includes that faculty of assisting the inexperienced into the "prescribed way" without embarrassment to the speaker, the house or herself. That Mrs. Denison so successfully led the General Federation through the troublesome times of three years ago proves her ability and this, with her unflinching courtesy to all, will retain her, in spite of her retirement, a leader of the national organization.

The eight directors are scarcely less known than the new officers, and in awarding one of these offices to Nebraska the General Federation only conferred an honor that is due. Mrs. Belle M. Stoutenborough of Plattsmouth is too well known in Nebraska to need any introduction or recital of what she has done. An ex-president of the state federation, she has been most prominently identified with the library extension, and not alone her own state, but others have profited by her efforts along this line.



Left to Right—Mrs. Phil N. Moore of Missouri, Vice President; Mrs. J. D. Sherman of Illinois, Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. May Alden Ward of Massachusetts, Recording Secretary; Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker of Colorado, President; Mrs. Charles H. Denison of New York, Ex-President; Miss Louise Poppenheim of South Carolina, Corresponding Secretary.
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