

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE JOURNAL.

MEMORIAL NUMBER.

LYDIA ERNESTINE BECKER.

*August, 1890.*

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LYDIA ERNESTINE BECKER.

NONE of those who have been in any degree associated with Miss BECKER in her work can have heard of her death without a peculiar sense of sadness. The news came upon us suddenly. She had for some little time been in ill health; she was indeed abroad in quest of recovery; but we had heard of an improvement in her condition, and it was understood that an ailment that had never been regarded with anxiety had almost disappeared. But the feeling of security thus arising vanished in a moment. The development of a new illness and her death were announced together. And when the tragic details followed the shadow of calamity deepened and became more oppressive. Yet it was not that Miss BECKER'S death was unlooked for, nor the apprehension that it might, under better circumstances, have been prevented, that most affected the sympathies of her friends. Their most poignant feeling of sorrow was that she should have passed away without having seen the triumph that had so lately seemed so near at hand. It had almost been realised. As far as political calculation could be assured, a House of Commons had been elected, the majority of whose members were ready to confer on women the right to vote in Parliamentary elections on the conditions which entitled men to the franchise, and there was a reasonable confidence that the House of Lords would confirm and complete the decision of the Commons. Miss BECKER was justified in the strongest hopes of the near future. But the chances which determine in Parliament what shall be undertaken and what shall be left unattempted proved against the cause to which she was devoted. The ballot was unfriendly, and even when a chance—a possible chance—presented itself it was somewhat clumsily lost. So Miss BECKER has left us with her work unfulfilled after the end had been within reach. That it cannot be long delayed is the faith her friends hold in quiet and confident strength; that when it comes Miss BECKER will be entitled to a great share in the result they know; but it must remain a fond regret that she did not live to share

the reward of earnest and thorough work pursued with unwavering zeal and with a single regard to the cause of the welfare of women.

To secure to women a voice in the election of members of the Legislature was Miss BECKER'S aim. Not that her life was engrossed with this object. All that tended to the education and elevation of her sex engaged her sympathies and attracted her co-operation. From the first she was a member of the Manchester School Board, where her help was prized by all her colleagues. But it was in connection with the Parliamentary franchise that she was best known, and it is only in relation to it that I can speak as a fellow worker. I may say at once I have rarely known any one with a better political capacity. To be an advocate of women's rights may make a woman the object of high admiration or the subject of cheap and transitory satire; and it must be admitted broadly that the pioneers in any field cannot be pre-eminent in that composure of manner which so sweetly befits those who can dwell in the graces and pieties of domestic felicity undisturbed by the strange promptings of fresh enterprise. Miss BECKER knew what it was to be laughed at, without being thereby diverted from her path. Keen and yet calm, watchful and wary, resolute to seize every opportunity of progress, but restraining herself from wasteful work, she showed all the qualities which make up a director of political movements—an idealist in her aims, a realist in her appreciation and management of means:—thoroughly possessing the machinery and thoroughly possessed of the purpose all the machinery was to accomplish. She had at command the comparatively poor art of Parliamentary procedure which not a few members of Parliament never succeed in mastering. All these qualities necessarily have their counterparts. They naturally fitted her to lead, except in respect of concealment of leadership. The group of advocates of women's suffrage, like all other political groups, male, female, or mixed, is not free from variations of temper and capacity;

LYDIA E. BECKER, JULY 19TH, 1890.

LIKE lightning, a word Speeds over the sea; And some, who have heard, Are weeping with me.	So tender and strong, So faithful and true, Thou wast all along; Yet few of us knew
It says: We may see, In this world, no more A vision of thee, On sea or on shore;	How gentle thy hand, How tender thy heart; How firm to withstand, Yet swift to impart.
That ne'er may we hear Thy counsels again; Or feel thou art near In sunshine or rain.	God bless thee, dear Friend; And give thee great store Of peace without end, And joy evermore!

ETA.

LYDIA ERNESTINE BECKER.

ANOTHER gone! from that devoted band  
Who worked through all the darkest hours of night,—  
Who worked with heart and soul, and head and hand,  
And cried like he of old for "Light! more light!"  
Now, has there burst on her enraptured sight  
The glorious heritage where all are free;  
And the fair deeds which make her memory bright  
Shall gleam like gems throughout eternity.  
Whilst silent prayer our fight for justice stirs,  
GOD send another soul as brave as hers.

WARNER SNOAD.

The Lilies, Lee, July 22nd, 1890.

and Miss BECKER sometimes failed in following the most difficult of all the Apostle's social precepts. Differences from time to time arose, hard to compose. There were secessions and reunion, and then again separation. The Apostle himself, despite his precept, went through sharp contentions, and had to agree to a severance of activity. Miss BECKER's personality could not fail to be prominent in all the developments of the women's franchise movement, but I may perhaps be allowed to put on record, as illustrative of her feelings on the existing duplication of agencies, that she expressed to me her strong satisfaction that I was able to be an adherent of both. In this, as throughout her career, she was faithful to the one object that was supreme over all divisions, and her faithfulness was not devoid of recompense. She saw women voting in municipal elections, in the elections of School Boards, and in the elections of County Councils. Step by step progress was made. The highest right of joining in the choice of Parliamentary representatives she did not live to see conceded; but though she has rested from her labours without this supreme satisfaction, her works will surely follow her, and this too cannot be long delayed.

LEONARD COURTNEY.

It was in the year 1869, at a meeting in the Manchester Town Hall of the newly-formed Society for obtaining the franchise for women, that I first saw Miss BECKER. Previous to the meeting, a gentleman who had become interested in the new movement said to me, "The most remarkable person whom you will see here to-day is LYDIA BECKER." Perhaps among the many instances of personal sacrifice to one idea, none can exceed that of the intensely earnest faith and labour which she devoted to this one cause, which she believed lay at the root of all other questions bearing on the status and happiness of women. One of her fellow-workers once sent her a cameo from Rome, representing a Vestale, and wrote—"While we go out to play, and see and think of other things, you stay at home and keep the suffrage fire ever burning;" and this was indeed a fact. For this one question she put aside all other interests and considerations.

In some of the newspaper notices which have appeared since her death, it is stated that she was a Conservative—in some that she was a Liberal. Her mind was so thoroughly political, in the best acceptation of that term, that she never could be said to belong to any "party." Every political question which arose she discussed exclusively on its own merits. At Manchester, she stood among

the "undenominational candidates" for the School Board, but she was strongly opposed to the Disestablishment of the Church. Notwithstanding the decided views she held on every political question, she always refrained from appearing on any party platform, lest her power and influence in advancing the suffrage cause might suffer. Once at least she made an exception to this rule. In her own Ward at Manchester, the Conservative candidate at a recent municipal contest asked her to speak in his favour. His opponent was a Gladstonian; and after some hesitation, she went to the meeting, and made her only speech in support of the Unionist position.

None can imagine how earnestly she longed to see, as she expressed it, "the suffrage out of the way," in order that she might turn her energies to work for great national questions. Her influence with the working classes was undoubted. She always spoke in an easy practical manner which made the "masses" believe her to be thoroughly disinterested and true. When the canvassers in the hard fights for the Manchester School Board elections brought in the results of their respective canvass, both sides reported "the working men always say they must keep some of their votes for LYDIA." Thus it was she received so many votes that she once laughingly said she was far more the "representative for Manchester" than any of the members of Parliament, because far more electors voted for her than for any of them.

Miss BECKER's love of nature and of flowers was very keen. Driving with me through the beautiful scenery around Bath, her attention was always directed upon the hedgerows, and she would keep enumerating the flowers and plants she saw. Living all her life amid Lancashire towns and smoke, where vegetation cannot thrive, it was a constant surprise to hear her speak familiarly of every flower she saw. She had travelled very little, and I was rather interested on returning once from a journey abroad to read a letter from her beginning, "You would admire Leipsic and Dresden. Did you go up the Elbe to Pirna and Schandau and the Bastei, and the wonderful Königstein and Liebenstein? I never shall forget my first impression of those strange columnar mountains. I spent three happy weeks at the Weinberg, the vineyard in front of the house sloping rapidly down to the Elbe."

The last drive she took was on the day of her death, from the Hotel de Mont-Blanc, St. Gervais, to Geneva. The day was exquisitely fine, and as she drove along her eyes were constantly wandering over the scenery, and though she could no longer speak she motioned to her

maid to notice the wonderful beauty of the world from which she was so rapidly hastening. For twenty years LYDIA BECKER has been my constant correspondent. On every event of private trouble or pleasure, on every question of public interest, she has always written to me. No cloud or misunderstanding has vexed the long spell of years. It is not easy to write of one who has been so recently among us. But let me humbly bear my tribute to her worth and to her life.

LILIAS ASHWORTH HALLETT.

ALL friends of the cause of women's suffrage must have heard with sorrow of the death of Miss LYDIA BECKER, who for so long has been our Parliamentary agent, and who for twenty-three years was the main-spring of the movement and its best organiser. She was not among the very first movers in the cause, and it was a matter of constant regret to her that she did not hear of the first petition for women's suffrage presented to Parliament by Mr. STUART MILL in 1866, in time to add her name to the list of signatures.

The subject was brought to her notice a few weeks later at a meeting of the Social Science Association held at Manchester, where she resided. She eagerly offered her services to assist in forming a committee there, and by her energy and powers of organisation at once gave an impetus to the movement. She became the secretary of the Manchester Committee, and also assisted to establish the *Suffrage Journal*, which she edited with marked ability until the failure of her health obliged her to go abroad last spring. Miss BECKER was an honest, straightforward worker. She held her opinions very strongly, and would urge them with impetuosity and determination, and she sometimes gave offence by so doing; but whether she were bringing forward a measure she approved, or opposing one of which she disapproved, her conduct was always open and fair. She would, if she could, bring over to her opinion those who differed from her by hard reasoning, and if she could not do so, she would try to defeat them by an honest majority. If she failed in this, she would submit in silence, and, though grieved at the failure of what she considered to be the best plan, she would yet try heartily and loyally to make the less good plan succeed. She put her heart so entirely into the cause that its success was her first wish and the chief aim of her life. Thus she was entirely free from all personal motives. The only victory she desired to obtain was the victory over the opponents of women's suffrage. A

year and a half ago she was very sanguine of the immediate success of the movement. A few days were spent by her at my house last Easter year, and she then indulged in building castles in the air as to what her future life was to be, when, her work being crowned by success, she might retire into private life. Her ideal of happiness was a small house in the country in the neighbourhood of Manchester, a garden, and a donkey chair.

This castle failed of realisation owing to the fatal mistake made by one of our friendly M.P.s in selecting a day on which Parliament did not usually sit to bring forward his Bill on women's suffrage.

After that disappointment she saw that as this supporter of our cause had failed to take the tide of fortune at its flood the delay in obtaining success was likely to be considerable, and she no longer expected to live to see the achievement of her object. Yet she never doubted of the ultimate success of the cause.

In politics Miss BECKER was a Conservative, at least of late years; what she thought in the early part of her life I cannot say. She was also much opposed to the Bill permitting marriage with a deceased wife's sister, as she held the opinion that changes in that direction would be to the disadvantage of women. Miss BECKER's grandfather and father were both manufacturing chemists. Her youth was passed at home with her parents, but as she did not wish to be idle she gave lectures in girls' schools on botany, a study of which she was very fond. She probably cultivated, in order to give these lectures, that power of lucid explanation for which she was so remarkable.

Miss BECKER will be much regretted and her loss widely felt.

JESSIE BOUCHERETT.

August 10th, 1890.

I HAVE been asked to write my impressions of Miss BECKER. Those impressions are blended of admiration for her great political capacity; of respect for her honesty and courage; and, lastly, of tender remembrance of certain transient passages in our scanty intercourse which revealed to me a vein of softness and gentleness in her inner nature for which, I imagine, few people gave her sufficient credit. As all the world recognises her to have been an exceptionally able woman, (I use the word advisedly, as distinguished from the "clever womanliness," which generally means taste in millinery and in the confection of chair-backs and acrostics), and as everyone also honours her steadfastness and self-devotion, I shall devote my few lines of tribute to her memory to

recalling the less-known side of the character of this typical "strong-minded lady."

For example: It was very commonly imagined that Miss BECKER was of a combative disposition; a sort of VALKYRIA of the political battle-field, who enjoyed the war for its own sake. Nothing could be further from the truth. It happened to me once to remark to her that if (as we then hoped) the suffrage should be granted to us that session, she would feel as GIBBON did when he wrote the last words of the "Decline and Fall;" and would find it hard to throw herself into smaller interests after her great life-work was accomplished. Her reply startled me by its vehemence. She said she could not convey to me in words how she longed for the end of the battle; how she desired to be released from perpetual contention for a bare right, so that she might devote herself to some work of a happier kind. She had some projects of positive and far-seeing beneficence very closely at heart.

On another occasion her sense of the electric stimulus of the sight of crowds as calling forth the "Enthusiasm of Humanity," (the spectacle has an opposite effect upon most of us!) was somewhat singularly betrayed. She had called to see me at my office in Victoria Street when I was hon. sec. of the Society for Protection of Animals from Vivisection (an object in which Miss BECKER warmly sympathised), and I shewed her with some pride how handsome and quiet were the large and lofty rooms, well furnished with stores of books and of our own publications; and I expressed regret that the offices of the Women's Suffrage Society, though nearly equally expensive, were comparatively poor and exceedingly noisy. "Do you know," she said, "that the great tide of people rushing through Parliament Street, and all the flood of life and business eddying below our windows there, are essential to me? I could not bear to sit and work in your quiet rooms." "Then," I said, "you are like Tennyson's youth, who longed to be

In among the throngs of men.

You feel, as you look on them,—

Men, my brothers! men, the workers! ever working something new,  
What they have done but the earnest of the things which they shall do."

"Yes, yes!" she said, "that is *just* my feeling!"

Once Miss BECKER consulted me about the purchase of a dog to be her own companion. I begged her to come and take luncheon with me in Hereford Square, so that we might go together afterwards to the Battersea Home

and see if there were to be found one to please her. When the day came, she expressed her enjoyment of the little meal I had provided, and I answered, "It is not every day that I have the privilege to entertain Miss BECKER! When I do so, of course, I make it a *festa*." The sudden and almost pathetic smile she gave me revealed in a flash to my mind how seldom in her hard-driven, over-worked life it had occurred to her to think that her visits were considered as matters of festivity and pleasure, not of business. When, a little later, we had chosen a pretty Black-and-tan at the Home, and were walking back through Battersea Gardens, I noticed the gentle and tender way with which—a stranger to dogs as she evidently was—she led the creature by her side, and encouraged it by her caresses to fawn on her.

The time has not yet come when we women can rightly estimate our debt to LYDIA BECKER as the leader of our political struggle. I never conversed with her on the subject without fresh admiration for her store of recent information; for the strong grasp she took of each successive combination of events and parties; and for her clear insight of the honourable and expedient policy for our party to adopt. She was a leader with whom (so far as I took part in the suffrage movement) I was always glad and proud to be associated; and a fellow worker with whom for twenty years I enjoyed unbroken friendly relations.

Hengwrt, Dolgelly. FRANCES POWER COBBE.

AFTER the first shock which I experienced on receiving the startling intelligence of the death of LYDIA E. BECKER, the work, and the incidents of that work, which she and so many of us had carried on for more than twenty years—to gain the Parliamentary franchise for women—all rose up before me, with the many and various benefits to society which had resulted from our agitation; the gifted fellow labourers, some gone to their rest, others still working and hoping that men will yet be just—these, too, rose up before me, and I felt conscious that a chord of deep sympathy was uniting us all in this latest and most unlooked-for stroke which had so suddenly severed us from one who, in our earliest days was the most prominent of our band. The electric wire had sped the unspoken words from Geneva that LYDIA BECKER was dead, and though it was shrouded in mystery we knew that the message must be true.

As further tidings came of the tragic circumstances which brought our friend's life to a close, I could not but feel that they were in harmony with much of her past

SUPPLEMENT.

MEMORIAL TO MISS BECKER.

The following letters have appeared in the Manchester papers:—

To the Editor of the Manchester Courier.

Sir,—A portrait of the late Miss Becker was painted five or six years since by Miss S. I. Dacre. It is strikingly characteristic, boldly executed, and one of the finest examples of the artist's work. I wish to suggest that it should be purchased and hung in some prominent position in Manchester. It is now at 10, South King-street. Perhaps your readers may have some suggestions to offer.—  
Yours, &c., A FRIEND.  
August 14, 1890.

To the Editor of the Examiner and Times.

Sir,—Can you afford space for a few words of heartfelt recognition of the debt we owe to the life and work of the late lamented Lydia E. Becker? She will live long in grateful memory, and the present generation will need no sign to remember her by, or be in danger of forgetting the mighty things her self-denying labours have wrought, unbarring doors which open to nobler, truer life for women, and so to complete life for the race. But it seems fitting that the present time should see a worthy memorial of her raised by her country-women. If this design be at once undertaken I feel assured that thousands of women will gladly contribute their pence towards expressing in a permanent form the grateful thoughts of their hearts in remembrance of so faithful a witness to the responsibility and dignity of womanhood. Respecting the form this expression of feeling should take I will quote Miss Becker's own words, used lately, when consulted about a memorial which it was desired to erect for a fellow-worker: "Set up a stone in memory of her." This was the ancient way.—Yours, &c., SIGMA.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir,—Your correspondent "A Friend" is quite right in desiring that a portrait of this lady should be placed in one of our public buildings. Miss Dacre's would doubtless be an excellent one for the purpose. May I not also suggest that, the late Miss Becker's life-long work having been devoted to the good of others, she is worthy of a memorial being raised in her own city, Manchester, by a subscription principally collected from her own sex? Surely Lydia E. Becker, the woman's friend, was worthy of this.—I am, &c.,  
Didsbury, August 18, 1890. A. E. S.

To the Editor of the Examiner and Times.

Sir,—The letters of "A Friend" and "Sigma" will be read with satisfaction, I feel sure, by many, for already friends in various parts are asking what can be done to honour the memory of Miss Becker. As regards the portrait by Miss S. Isabel Dacre, more than one has expressed the hope that steps may be taken to have it placed in the National Portrait Gallery. To raise a monument in enduring stone, as "Sigma" suggests, would be to do for the memory of Miss Becker as I know she herself best liked done for the memory of those whom she honoured.—Yours, &c., HELEN BLACKBURN,  
Secretary to Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, 10, Great College-street, Westminster.  
Manchester, August 19.

We have been requested to state that friends desiring to take part in a memorial to Miss Becker are invited to communicate with Miss ATKINSON, The Laurels, Sale, near Manchester.

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MEMORIAL TO MISS BECKER  
The following letters were prepared in the Manchester office of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, and are published by permission of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, Manchester, 11, Great College Street, West-  
Manchester, August 18, 1892.

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That mingling of courage, endurance, clearness of intellect, and judicial insight, with affectionate thought for those friends who had clung to her through sunshine and storm—all these characteristics seemed to have been gathered together and focussed in her short but painful illness; so that we have no picture of weakness to dwell upon. Even her dreams, which almost in her last written words she had narrated to a dear co-worker in London, were like a grand poem. They seemed like "coming events casting their shadows before," and as though they had made the veil almost transparent which separates her now from us, in that higher life towards which her spirit was so unconsciously rising.

She was led by almost a miracle of strength to draw her last breath in Geneva, that city so full of interesting associations, under the shadow of the great Alps. But the outward circumstances were sad and lonely, and remind one painfully of some last graphic words written to a friend, 'the Alps are a gruesome sight when the sun does not shine upon them.'

I, too, have felt this when under a great heart-anxiety; in the presence of physical pain, the finest mountains have seemed to possess no more beauty than the commonest boulders; and with what deep sympathy must we think of her feelings in that time of loneliness and suffering, as she looked upon the sunless Alps, so far away from all her friends!

One would have liked that she should have been buried in English soil, and near her native city. The men of Manchester appreciated the remarkable woman who had dwelt in their midst; but I have heard her say her friends were more amongst the working men than amongst the

richer merchants. I trust the working men will show their appreciation of her memory by insisting that the object of her life's work shall be realised; for what Manchester wills the House of Commons, under whatever party rule, must obey. I think there is a poetic justice in the remains of their most distinguished woman-citizen being laid to rest in Geneva, where she died. In Manchester few strangers would have visited her grave; whereas pilgrims from all lands will come with loving and grateful hearts, to look upon the spot where the remains of LYDIA ERNESTINE BECKER repose at Geneva.

It was only three weeks before her death that I received a most affectionate letter from her from Aix-les-Bains. I allude to it in order to quote the following earnest words, so characteristic of her:—"I have had English papers every day, and so keep fully in touch with all home interests. What a triumph for PHILIPPA FAWCETT at Cambridge! That is just one of those instances which strike the public mind, and do more for the cause of women, at a stroke, than the labours of others for years. Not for herself only has Miss FAWCETT worked to win this prize. The gain to herself is great; but great as it is, it seems small in comparison with the gain for all women in the demonstration that men can no longer deny to women equal ability and honour with themselves. If there could be a renewal of the proposal to admit women to degrees at Cambridge, I think for very shame they could no longer refuse. The general public will refuse to believe it just, that a woman should be excluded from the honours she has so justly gained."

Being dead, she yet speaketh.  
Perhaps I ought now to lay down my pen; but as our friend's name has been too often merely associated with intellectual power, and with an unreasoning prejudice against "strong-minded women," showing how little the public have realised that only the tenderest and most unselfish of women have had the courage to fight against woman's wrongs, I would like to touch upon a few things which may seem small in comparison with the larger questions in which Miss BECKER was interested, to show what manner of heart she had.

These things are little, these things are small,  
They may be little, but they are all;

for it is the heart virtues that sweeten life.  
The first day I ever saw Miss BECKER I called upon her in her lodgings in Manchester. She had a thoughtful face, but it lighted up with that peculiar beaming expression, which all will remember, when anything deeply

interested her. She was engaged in an essay for the British Association. Observing a sewing machine in the room, I remarked, "I should hardly have expected to see that here, Miss BECKER." She smiled, and said, "Oh, I have been cutting out garments for all our family before taking up my pen," and then she spoke of a woman's home duties, the education of girls, and other topics.

Some years afterwards I had tea at her father's house. I was struck with the close affectionate sympathy which seemed to bind the family together, and with the pride with which the father regarded LYDIA. He pointed to a picture of her and her sister taken together when girls; the one of LYDIA was not quite finished, "because," he said, "I would not allow the painter to put another stroke to it lest he should spoil the likeness." As I was leaving, he said, "I wish you to know that all the good there is in my children they have got from their mother." I could never forget the love which brightened Miss BECKER'S eyes that evening. I wrote her a letter afterwards descriptive of the visit. It pleased her, because I said I wished it could have been put in the *Pall Mall Gazette* along with the "At Home" articles about distinguished men.

I remember at a later time taking her a drive, after an exciting and interesting annual Women's Suffrage meeting in London. She insisted on taking me to her apartments to dine. I saw then, as often, what a love she had for the beautiful. She said, "I could not live without beautiful things to look upon, and something to love," and rising from the table she fetched a little bird from the bedroom, saying, "I must have my little loving companion near me to give it something, or its little heart will pine." No one more appreciated domestic happiness, and this was well expressed in her reply to a married lady, who was strongly urging the claims of a duly qualified woman, though a wife, to the suffrage—"My dear friend, a really good husband is worth a hundred votes." But Miss BECKER had been too long and too often the sympathetic listener to many a sad wife's story, not to know that there might be more men educated to be good husbands if some wives had votes.

A few years ago there were inquiries being made by a Glasgow solicitor for a young lady to whom some little property had fallen. The last thing knowable of her was that she had been connected with our Suffrage work. I made much effort to try and find her. Amongst the many answers I received, only the one from Miss BECKER expressed any heart-sympathy. She wrote: "What

strange probabilities of a sad and romantic story this incident opens to the imagination!" I find docketed on the back of her letter: "Contains a touching remark on the subject of the letter, which no other correspondent has made, showing her sympathetic nature under what sometimes appeared a cold exterior. No one can fathom correctly the depth of any human heart!" Many a time I have looked over my letters to see if I could diminish their number, but I have always preserved this one.

A remark in one of the Memorial Articles on Miss BECKER, saying that had she been a man she would have risen to a high position at the bar, if not even on the bench, reminded me of an incident connected with the Married Women's Property Bill. I accompanied her to the lobby of the House of Lords, as she wished to see the Earl of SHAFTESBURY about some flaw in the Bill. He came out, and Mr. RUSSELL GURNEY came with him, who had been the chief promoter of the Bill. They both assured us that the Bill was as perfect as the House of Lords could make it. The light which fell upon the group was a thing to be remembered. It illumined Miss BECKER'S face, whilst those of our friendly legislators were thrown into shadow, and their expression harmonised with it, whilst she explained the matter to them. They stood silent for a moment, then looked very expressively at each other, and said, "You are right, Miss BECKER. Strange! we had neither of us seen this."

Hers was not a one-sided mind. At a brilliant reception given in Hyde Park Gardens by our friend Mrs. THOMAS TAYLOR, a gentleman adverse to women's suffrage was requested by our hostess to take Miss BECKER down to supper. On returning to the drawing-room he thanked Mrs. TAYLOR for the pleasure he had had. It had not been the ordeal he had expected. He had not heard one word about women's suffrage, but much that was interesting about science.

Miss BECKER was a very regular attender of the British Association and Social Science Meetings. At the close of one of these, held in Edinburgh, she was asked if she would consent to be one of the patronesses of a ball which was to finish up the proceedings. She humorously replied, with a rich smile on her countenance, "This is the first time I have ever been asked to do anything that was popular." Her life was indeed spent in working against the stream. The world owes much to those who dare to do what is unpopular!

It would be unfaithful to the truth to pass over the fact that so strong a nature as Miss BECKER'S, working along

with some other natures as individual as her own, could not escape those errors into which human nature falls through a too strong self confidence and self assertion. These occur in every society where men and women are banded together, even for the highest and holiest aims; and I have often been touched by the heart-sorrow of our friend when we have alluded to the friction which some of these differences of opinion and action have caused.

It may be that her special work was accomplished. The women's political leagues, Conservative and Liberal, which have sprung out of our Women's Suffrage Committees, were they all true to the interests of women, might soon bring us to the goal for which we have so long worked, for their power would be so great that our rulers could not resist it. But we grieve to think that one who had so borne the heat and burden of the day should not, with some others now passed away, have been permitted to see the full fruit of their labours. I think those members who have encouraged Miss BECKER, and all of us, by so many promises to be true to our question in the House of Commons, ought now to ask themselves if they have done all for us which they led us to expect.

To go back to the days of our Suffrage meetings, long before Primrose Dames or Women's Liberal Leagues were dreamt of, I will conclude with another little simple story about our departed friend. She was leaving Edinburgh one afternoon when a drawing-room meeting was to be held at the house of our friend Bailie CRANSTON. She missed the train, and we begged her to come back to our meeting, but she said her box was packed and she had not the wherewithal to appear. I lent her a lace fichu, which she smilingly said was so becoming that she asked if she might take it home. In a few days she returned it, saying she could not keep it, but that I should find in one corner a little *forget-me-not* which she had worked upon it.

It is under the influence of that little worked flower, that little "*forget-me-not*," that I have strung together these few reminiscences of our departed friend; anxious to add my contribution to the cairn of loving words which is to be raised to her memory in, it may be, the last number of the *Woman's Suffrage Journal*, which will be a lasting monument of her work in the great cause we have all so much at heart.

PRISCILLA BRIGHT M'LAREN.

Newington House,  
Edinburgh, August, 1890.

WHEN the news of Miss BECKER'S sudden death reached

me, my first feeling was one that was probably shared by the great majority of her fellow-workers for women's suffrage:—"How hard that she should not have been permitted to see the labours of her life crowned with success." No one had worked so long, so continuously, and so exclusively to secure this corner stone of political justice for women as she; her indomitable will, her great knowledge of facts, her comprehensive grasp of the whole subject, and her practical sagacity made her a leader among those who have for twenty-five years been striving to convince Englishmen and women that good and not harm would result from admitting duly qualified women to the small modicum of direct political power involved in the possession of the Parliamentary suffrage. Success seems nearly in sight; but she who has done so much to secure it, is withdrawn from the contest before the goal is finally reached. She has laboured and others will enter into the fruit of her labours. That, as I said, is probably the first thought with many of us. Then comes a second: that the fruits of all labour that are good for anything must necessarily be entered into more fully by succeeding generations than by those who have actually toiled and groaned in producing them. A merely personal success is not worth much. The things that the best men and women give their lives to, enrich and ennoble the lives of those who come after them. Those who have actually fought the fight, not only reap no profit, they may even suffer loss in the process. But their generosity in giving themselves up for the public good is all the greater for that. Miss BECKER'S life has its crown; for her work has made it easier for those who succeed her to continue her efforts to base the lives of women on truth, justice, and freedom. There cannot be a more perfect measure of success, nor a stronger claim on our gratitude.

M. G. FAWCETT.

SOMEWHAT more than twenty years have elapsed since the first number of the *Women's Suffrage Journal* was issued under the editorship of Miss BECKER. Twenty years ago next November, at the first School Board election in Manchester, Miss BECKER was placed upon the School Board, the first woman who occupied such a position in this country. These two events, which mark the main currents of Miss BECKER'S life, mark at the same time an interesting epoch in a movement of great and increasing importance. Much has happened since then in the course of the movement of which they were indications, perhaps

nothing of greater significance than the profound change which has been wrought in the general feeling with which the movement itself is viewed. It is easy to forget now the hardness of the initial stages of the struggle, and to look upon the result gained as due only to the natural and normal development of opinion in the domain of social politics. Good things, unfortunately, or fortunately it may be, are not produced in any such blissfully unconscious fashion. Only by the zealous effort and self-sacrifice of individuals, a sacrifice of which not the least part is the apparent absorption of individual work in the general result, does progress come about in human affairs. It is a fond illusion that things improve of themselves, and need no active furtherance from those who think alteration both necessary and possible.

So great has been the change produced in the short space of twenty years in public sentiment regarding the active participation of women in public life, that it is only through the actual records of these earlier times one can realise how heavy was the burden of ignorant misrepresentation and misunderstanding the pioneers had to endure, and how deep going has been the result they have produced. To have brought about so thorough a change of public feeling on an important topic is an achievement in which its authors may justly take pride. Whatever yet remains to be accomplished by the slow-going methods of legislation, it is now no matter of wondering or invidious comment that women should play their part on School Boards, on Board of Guardians, or even County Councils, and that they should exercise the municipal rights of citizenship. Even the far-reaching change in the political constitution implied in the proposal to extend the suffrage to women has become so familiar to the slow and conservative imagination of the average member of Parliament, that he is able to regard it without terror as about to become an accomplished fact, as waiting only the final fiat to become part of the normal order of things.

Of all the work that has led to this deep change of public opinion, Miss BECKER might justly have said, *Magna pars fui*. In it no individual has taken so active or so prominent a part. For more than twenty years she devoted to it the best energies of a powerful and accomplished mind. The example which her career afforded of a life devoted to work of public and general interest, the rare ability, earnestness, and constancy with which she urged her cause, and her impressive personality combined to render her in general esteem pre-eminently the representative of the whole movement towards

elevating the status and extending the sphere of activity of women. With it her name was invariably and most intimately associated, and so, in all probability, it will continue to be. In kind and amount the work she did has been such as to secure for her an assured position in the history of social progress in this generation.

To the important movement for extending the franchise to women, Miss BECKER actively contributed, in part by her editorship of the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, in part by her labour as secretary of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage. The *Journal* was in her hands a powerful instrument for keeping alive public interest in questions affecting the political and social status of women, and it was conducted by her with indomitable zeal and courage. For editorial work she was admirably equipped, being a practised writer, with an excellent gift of clear and felicitous expression, and no small share of the special capacity that goes to make the successful lawyer.

From the foundation of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage Miss BECKER acted as secretary—during the last few years of her life as honorary secretary of the Committee. In that position she displayed such complete mastery of the various constitutional issues that from time to time arose, such an intimate acquaintance with the machinery to be employed, such soundness and sagacity of judgment, as made her services invaluable and renders her loss to the Society irreparable. Of the Society she was in a very real sense the mainspring.

Miss BECKER'S work as a member of the Manchester School Board occupies a very large and important place in her public life. At the first election of that Board, in November, 1870, she stood as an independent candidate and was elected, receiving over 15,000 votes, a fact in itself of interest as showing how strong was the position she even then occupied in public esteem. That she was returned at every subsequent election, having been continuously a member of the Board from its origination, and that she generally secured a very large proportion of the votes given (at two elections she stood second on the list of members returned), further demonstrate how firm and complete was the hold she had secured on the sympathy and respect of her fellow citizens. In the work of the Board itself she took an active and independent part, specially interesting herself in the provision of educational facilities for girls and in the improvement of the position of women teachers. That in 1877 she, at the request of the Board, laid the foundation stone of the Burgess-street school for girls, and

that one of the School Board scholarships is designated by her name are among many proofs of the esteem and regard entertained for her by her colleagues. Canon TOOLE, who with the present chairman of the Board, Mr. BIRLEY, has been associated on the Board with Miss BECKER since 1870, writes thus to me: "In the course of twenty years of association in public work there must necessarily have been times and occasions of difference of opinion, but these had begun to disappear. Still, through the whole period I have had but one opinion of her sincerity and candour, and of her ability to give expression to them. Let me unite my sympathies in the loss which they have sustained with those of her family and of her colleagues in the various public works to which she rendered so much valuable service."

It is impossible for me to close these few lines without an expression of the general esteem and regard I entertained for Miss BECKER. During an intercourse of some years on the Committee of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage, I learned not only to admire her great ability and force of character, but also to esteem her perfect candour and straightforwardness. We differed in opinion on many points,—I found her, generally speaking, much less radical than I had been inclined to believe, but I never found anything small or paltry in her judgments or views, and never found her anything but fair and open-minded in argument. Such defects as there were—and they lay on the surface—were but incidental to her genuinely good and great qualities. R. ADAMSON.

#### RECOLLECTIONS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

Miss Becker was born in Cooper-street, Manchester, on February 24th, 1827, the eldest of the fifteen children of Hannibal Leigh Becker and Mary Duncuft. During her early childhood the family lived at Reddish, close to Mr. Becker's chemical works, and some of her early letters, written as a little child to her aunt, Mrs. Backhouse, to whom she was tenderly attached, are still preserved; one of them rejoicing at the birth of a little cousin, destined in after time to be for eighteen years her faithful coadjutor in her work for the suffrage.

When she was about eleven years old, the Beckers removed to Altham, near Accrington, living in a large house on rising ground, with a fine view towards the Pendle Range, and in this beautiful country home the greater part of her life was spent. Here her love for stars and flowers developed; astronomy and botany became her favourite pursuits: as a friend of her youth expressed it, "Lydia knew and loved every little flower that grew." She wrote a small book entitled "Botany for Novices," in hope of helping to interest others in the pursuit which gave so much enjoyment to herself. This was published in 1864, and about the same time she wrote a

little work on astronomy for beginners, which the present writer has seen in a MS. copy made by the hand of a friend, but which was never published. These little books show the power of clear, concise description which later marked her political speeches and writings.

About 1866, Mr. Becker removed to a house in Grove-street, Manchester, and Miss Becker rejoiced at the stir of human life around her, and to find herself in the midst of the throng of men and women for whom something could be done. Her great longing was to do something to bring more interests into the lives of women, and she started a little society of ladies for the study of scientific subjects, taking a room and giving lectures which were free to all. Those who cared to come were, however, few, and those who cared to work fewer still, so that this effort must have been discouraging. But better work was soon to open out. The question of the enfranchisement of women was then beginning to occupy the attention of thoughtful women here and there, and the paper read by Madame Bodichon on the subject at the meeting of the Social Science Association, held in Manchester in October 1866, appears to have been the occasion of first bringing Miss Becker in contact with what was to become the absorbing work of her life.

An old friend likes to relate how, when on some occasion praising the excellent dancing of a young relative of Miss Becker's, she was met by the reply, "Ah, who do you think taught me, why Lydia: from a spring-waltz to a plum-pudding I would back Lydia against any woman in England." When Miss Becker became Secretary to the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee, on its formation in January 1867, she brought to bear on her public work that all-roundness of mind and desire to do everything on scientific principles which had characterised her domestic work. She always had a reason for what she did, were it the making of jam or the drafting of a Parliamentary Bill.

An article on "Female Suffrage" in the *Contemporary Review* was the first thing to make her name known to the general public; this article elicited much comment, yet more so the paper which was read by her at the meeting of the British Association, held at Norwich in 1868, on "Some Supposed Differences in the Minds of Men and Women with regard to Educational Necessities," the ability of which was recognised even by those most opposed to the views which were there expressed. The meetings of the British Association were her chief, often her only holidays. She never failed to attend them and the only occasion on which she took anything like a prolonged holiday was when the Association held its meeting in Montreal. Miss Becker then visited Canada, and stayed a few weeks with relatives settled in the Dominion.

The largeness of mind which raised her above heeding the ridicule with which she was assailed in the early stages of the movement is well exemplified by a saying of hers preserved in the heart of a friend, "I will forgive the person who says a disagreeable thing about me, but I will not forgive the person who comes and tells it me, for that means mischief." She was always prompt to take the most charitable view of the conduct of those who opposed her, and calm in her estimate of the political situation of the moment, so that in times of hope, when some of her co-workers were inclined to be too sanguine, she would warn them of possible dangers; and in times of disappointment, when they were despondent, she would discover the gleams of encouragement.

The extent of her work and her firm grasp of the question in all its bearings throughout those twenty-three laborious years, can best be tracked in the long series of pamphlets, speeches, and papers prepared by Miss Becker and in the pages of this *Journal*. In addition to this she gave diligent attention to the work of the School Board.

A few words must now be added of the sad and painful close of her life. A brief intimation appeared in the June *Journal* that Miss Becker had gone to Aix-les-Bains for the benefit of her health. While at Aix, the malady, which had attacked her suddenly about Christmas and had compelled her spending some weeks of the spring at Bath, seemed yielding before the curative effects of the waters; each letter told of some improvement and gradual return of the power of walking. After a few weeks, she wrote of excursions on the lake, of enjoyment of mountain drives and plans for a more prolonged excursion to Switzerland; then, after another

course of baths, she looked forward to returning to Manchester in October.

She left Aix towards the end of June, stayed a few days at Annecy, and then proceeded to St. Gervais-les-Bains. Of this journey she wrote: "Where the rail ends the valley contracts to a ravine, up which the diligence proceeds to Chamounix. The day was glorious, and the country magnificent. When the diligence stopped at the point for St. Gervais, I found the village was three or four miles off, and I had not arranged for a conveyance, so I was perforce obliged to stay the night at the Baths, which are situated at the bottom of a very narrow wooded ravine, with perpendicular sides. There is just room for the building and the torrent. The place struck a damp chill to my bones, and I made up my mind to get away next day." But a torrent of unintermittent rain kept her there another day and night.

On at last reaching St. Gervais, she was greatly pleased with the place and her cheerful letters removed apprehension. Even when a few days later she wrote of having a serious sore throat, there was nothing in her account to excite alarm. Letters written only the day before her death spoke of feeling better and of confidence in her doctor's skill, and gave various directions about the *Journal* and other matters connected with the work of the Society. The first intimation of danger was a telegram received by her brother in Manchester, on July 18th, that she was dangerously ill of diphtheria, and asking both her brothers to meet her at Geneva. This was followed in a few hours by a telegram from the doctor at Geneva, "Mademoiselle Becker est morte."

On the morning of the 18th the doctor had perceived a change for the worst, and had told her the only hope would be in the greater skill of a doctor in Geneva. With her resolute will she immediately decided to go to Geneva, and started on the long drive of forty miles, accompanied by her maid, her only attendant. The day was fine and the air seemed to brace her up—though she took out her watch, and wrote (for she could not speak) "I shall not live to get there." She did reach Geneva, indeed, but it was to find that the doctor to whom she had an introduction was not at home. At one hostel after another she was refused admission, and it was after two hours of driving from place to place that she at length was taken in at the Clinique Juillard, where every attention was shown her, but all was in vain. She asked for some tea, and immediately after taking it, while sitting in a chair, the life departed.

Her brothers saw her laid in her grave in the beautiful cemetery of St. George, on Monday, July 21st, 1890.

We venture to conclude these brief recollections with the following passage from a letter from that early and zealous fellow-worker in the suffrage cause, Miss Jane E. Taylour:—

"When I think of the great mental capacity, the fearless spirit of independence, the persevering energy and the earnest devotion of her who is gone, I feel that it is next to impossible to find one who can fill the gap that has been made; but great as the loss is we have no reason to lose heart, for we know that though 'God calls away his workers He carries on His work.' As we believe that the advancement of woman to her true position in the world is of divine appointment and under divine guidance, instead of discouraging unduly, our great loss should rather stimulate to fresh effort to complete the work, which owes its success, so far, mainly to the past faithful services of Miss Becker. She has gone to a higher sphere, but her work remains and will endure; it rests with those left behind to show their appreciation of it, by carrying it on to fruition, and by and by in the future 'sowers and reapers will rejoice together.'"

Yet another co-worker from the early days writes: "Her memory ought to be an inspiration to all who knew her."

#### RESOLUTIONS OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES.

At a special meeting of the executive of the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage, held August 8th, 1890, the following resolution was adopted:—"The committee desires to place on record the expression of its deep sense of the irreparable loss the Manchester National Society for Women's

Suffrage has sustained by the death of the honorary secretary, Miss L. E. Becker. To the Manchester Society, which may be said to have been called into existence by Miss Becker, and which throughout has been animated by her, Miss Becker gave many years of active and invaluable service. The society has benefited not only by her unwearied and zealous labour, by her energetic conduct of its affairs, and by her wise counsels, but also by the wide reputation which Miss Becker's abilities and eminently successful career of public usefulness secured for her. With the movement in this country for extending the political rights of citizenship to women, Miss Becker's name will continue to be in the future, as it has been in the past, inseparably and most intimately associated. Even her untimely death, before the final achievement of the success towards which she had so largely contributed, will not deprive her of her well-deserved fame. All other movements towards the improvement of the status of women found in Miss Becker a cordial and considerate sympathiser; in her every such movement has lost a wise and powerful friend."

The following resolutions have been received by the Committee of the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage:—

Resolution passed at a special meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage on July 23rd, 1890. Moved from the chair by Mr. A. W. Bennett, M.A., seconded by Mrs. Bateson, "That the members of the Executive Committee of the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament-street, have heard with profound regret of the death of Miss Lydia Becker, one of the earliest and most prominent pioneers in the women's suffrage movement. They herewith desire to place on record their sense of her many invaluable qualities, her clear intellectual powers, her whole-hearted and persistent devotion to duty, her courage and hopefulness in times of difficulty, and her zealous labours for the cause, which in her death has indeed sustained an irreparable loss. They desire at the same time respectfully to tender their warm sympathy to the various members of Miss Becker's family."

Resolution passed at a meeting of the Birmingham Society for Women's Suffrage on July 29th: "That the members of the Committee of the Birmingham Women's Suffrage Society desire to record the deep regret with which they have heard of the death of Miss Becker; and their sense of the great and lasting loss which the movement for women's suffrage has sustained thereby. They look back with gratitude on the life-long devotion which Miss Becker showed to the cause of freedom and progress for women."

Resolution passed at a meeting of the Executive of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage on July 30th, moved by Mrs. Fawcett, seconded by Miss Mordan:—"We desire to express to the Manchester Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage our deep condolence with them in the irreparable loss they have sustained in the death of Miss L. E. Becker. Miss Becker has been our friend and colleague for so many years that we can appreciate her value in council and in action, and we feel that all movements for the true advancement of women have lost in her a wise and trusted friend."

The following words have been added to the Annual Report of the Central Committee:—"Since the report was printed, the committee have been deeply grieved to receive the news of the very great loss they have sustained in the death of their friend and colleague, Miss Becker. Her long experience, her intimate knowledge of all matters bearing on the claims of women to representation, her sagacity and her devotion to the work of the Society, make her loss one that is most keenly felt and deeply deplored. The best tribute which all who respect and mourn her can pay to her memory will be to work more zealously in bringing about the speedy accomplishment of the object to which her life was devoted."

The Bristol and West of England Committee sent a resolution from a special meeting held on August 13th: "The Committee of the Bristol and West of England Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage desire to unite with all the other Committees in the expression of their deep regret at the death of Miss Becker, who devoted her life to the service of women, concentrating her unique powers on the cause of their political enfranchisement. They recognise the great loss of her ripe experience and wise judgment in the counsels of the Society."