

**AMERICAN
WOMEN
IN CIVIC WORK**

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American women in civic work by Helen Christine Bennett

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HELEN CHRISTINE BENNETT

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BENNETT

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PREFACE

PORTIONS of the sketches which appear in this book have been published serially, principally in the *Pictorial Review* and the *American Magazine*. With one exception, they are stories of women whom I have met, and whose work I have personally investigated. It has taken something over four years to gather the material for this little volume.

At the end of the time I find myself so impressed by one fact which has developed from the matter collected, and particularly from acquaintance with the women themselves, that I want to record it. In almost every instance they who have done so much for the public welfare have stated that they believe themselves selected by a Divine agency for their particular work and accountable to the Divinity for success or failure.

Sophie Wright, whose recent death bereft New Orleans of its most useful citizen, said to me:

“ If God did not help me, and want me to do this thing, how could I, a sickly cripple, accomplish so much? ” and Sophie Wright but put

into plain language the feeling that many of the other women indicated in more subtle phraseology. The sense of a power beyond themselves, impelling them onward, was general. So was a great faith in the efficacy of prayer. As I am neither a religious nor a sentimental person, the knowledge of this belief, forced upon me after many interviews and visits with the women, had a profound effect. In a day of despair over the lack of idealism in the advance of women, of antagonism to the very phases of work with which this volume deals,—that is, their entrance into public affairs,—of suspicion as to motives and ultimate ambitions, the leaders, the women who have achieved success and fame, are working as direct agents of God to minister to His people! The simplicity and sincerity with which this belief has been shown have made it impossible to doubt. And to the writer, at least, the thought that the most prominent women of today are working not for fame nor glory, nor for the joy of personal expression, but for the service of humanity because they believe that God wants them to, is worthy of consideration.

HELEN CHRISTINE BENNETT.