

THE STANDARD

EXTRA. No. 27.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, AT THE OFFICE OF THE STANDARD, 42 UNIVERSITY PLACE.
[Entered at the Post Office in New York as second class matter.]

Price 2 Cts. NEW YORK, DECEMBER 19, 1891. \$1.00 a Year.

Price of this number in quantities, 10 copies 10 Cts.; 100 copies 80 Cts.; 1,000 copies \$6.00

A SINGLE TAX WOMAN.

**Paper Read by Leonora Beck Before the Single Tax Club of
Chicago, Illinois.**

It has been my desire for some months to give to this club a biographical sketch of the life of a woman, in whom all of us as "single taxers," should be especially interested.

In the summer of 1887, during my first visit to California, it was my good fortune to meet and know Kate Kennedy. Our introduction took place at the home of a mutual friend, where we were invited to an afternoon lunch. That day will always have a sacred place in my memory, for on that occasion I was fortunate enough to win the friendship of that noble woman, which friendship was mine so long as she lived.

We were much together from the day of our first meeting, and because you have never met this woman, you cannot fully appreciate the joy, the inspiration, the delight it gave me to be under the influence of her great heart and high intelligence. To me she was the perfection of uprightness of mind and character, for to her popularity, when it must be maintained by the abandonment of an honest principle, was so hideous a thing that she did not hesitate to fling it to the four winds. She asked neither for place nor power. Her one desire was to bring about the reign of justice.

It not unfrequently happens that the information from which the story of a life is drawn has been derived from the conversation or correspondence of the person whose character and work we intend to commemorate. While I have much to recall of her conversations, the incidents of her life I gathered from her sister and brother, both residents of California.

In the year 1827, in the County of Meath, in Ireland, about the time of Catholic emancipation, Kate Kennedy was born. Her father, mother and entire family were on the defensive in the cause of freedom and the right of the ballot. Her father, from her earliest recollection, was radical in his opposition to oppression in any form from either Church or State, and one of the first days of rejoicing in her early childhood was at the time "tithes" were

abolished. After that followed the agitation by Cobden and Bright and the final repeal of the corn laws, during which she was often called upon to read aloud from the papers what was said, not only by Cobden and Bright, but by their opponents also.

Following closely after the repeal of the corn laws, the great agitation for the repeal of the Union was begun in earnest by the monster meetings which were held on historic grounds throughout Ireland. I remember she especially spoke of the one she attended held at "Tara Hill," where it was thought about a million people were in attendance. The authorities forbade the holding of any more of these meetings, and began the persecution of the leaders in this movement for freedom. The leaders were arrested and tried by a packed jury and imprisoned for one hundred days, when they were released by the House of Lords.

Following this outrage came the agitation by the "Young Ireland Party," in which her entire family was interested. An effort was made by the Government to confiscate all the "arms" throughout Ireland, but by some mistake they did not find those in the Kennedy household, and when the call came her only brother, a boy but then sixteen years of age, did not hesitate to go forth and enlist in the ranks of the "Young Ireland Party."

The famine in Ireland about this time in her history made life much harder on the renters, and the widowed mother found it very difficult to keep land. So Kate Kennedy, with her brother and one sister, left their loved land and came to this so-called "Free Republic," where the family followed in 1851. They sojourned for a time in the East, but the pioneer spirit again took possession of the family, and two of her sisters made the journey to California in the spring of 1853. The family were again united in 1856, when Kate Kennedy's life work really began, as she taught on the Pacific coast for over thirty years.

She was a radical equal suffragist, and never lost an opportunity to agitate the question of equal pay for equal work; and it was mainly through her agitation, assisted by her friends and Judge Maguire, who was then in the Legislature of California, that the bill was passed to prevent discrimination against female teachers.

The following is the bill as I copied it from the statute of California:

"Section I. Females employed as teachers in the public schools of this State shall in all cases receive the same compensation as allowed male teachers for like services when holding the same grade certificate.

"Section II. This bill was passed and approved March 30, 1874."

In 1875 an attempt was made to repeal this bill as well as one that had been passed in 1873, enabling women to hold school offices. In this contest Kate Kennedy was an active worker and the bills were not repealed.

She had been, before the last bill was passed, appointed as a principal of a grammar school, but had been compelled to accept the

same salary she had received while principal of a primary school, while she was recognized as one of the very best educators and disciplinarians in the city.

She was the first woman who ever received equal pay for equal work, and Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton visited her at her school building to congratulate her upon her victory.

She was at this time a land reformer, and it began to develop in her work among her older pupils; and she talked it even in the principals' meetings; and her sympathies were so clearly with the anti-monopolist party of her adopted State that she soon began to be feared as a power. She was listened to everywhere she raised her voice, and many of those who loved her told me, with eyes overflowing, that they never heard such earnest pleading for justice.

In the year 1877 she took leave of absence and traveled in Europe. She was received courteously by the heads of the educational institutions all over that land. She was always a student, and never lost an opportunity to gather knowledge. During her stay in Europe she had traveled much of the time second or third rate, so that she might get very near to the people, to talk with them, to know them. From Italy, Spain, France, and England, she came back to her native land and saw there, as of old, the awful slavery imposed upon her people by "landlordism" in all its hideousness, every new scene increasing her determination to work on for justice to the disinherited ones.

On her return she resumed her work as principal of the N. Cosmopolitan School, and found a hearty welcome awaiting her. She began openly to teach the new political economy, not only in her school, but outside, whenever she could get a hearing. She contributed money to "strikers" from time to time, and was a member of the Knights of Labor in San Francisco.

In 1877, while Kate Kennedy was absent in Europe, the "Land Reform League" was organized. There were six members: Henry George, Judge Maguire, Joseph Leggett, and William W. Hinten. I did not get the names of the other two.

Upon her return she became a member of this "League," which then had ten members. During the agitation of the question of equal pay for equal work, Kate Kennedy found a warm friend and firm supporter in Henry George.

During the years 1885, 1886, and 1887, she was a correspondent to the San Francisco Weekly Star, and under the name of "Cato the Censor," wrote a series of papers entitled "Short Sermons to Workingmen." The following are some of the texts she used: "How to put an end to the Robbery of Labor;" "Inadequate Representation, Majority Government, and Boss Rule;" "Property, Land, and Capital;" "How Industry is Robbed by Land Monopoly;" "Property in Land;" "Property and Its Rights;" "How Labor is Robbed by the Appropriation of Nature's Resources," etc.

During the fall of 1886 her health was poor, and she asked for a

leave of absence for three months to regain her strength. She was granted a leave by the Board of Education for the months of February, March, and April, 1887, expecting to return the 1st of May to finish out the year, at the end of which it was her intention to resign and retire to private life, where she could devote all her time to the promotion of the single tax cause, which she so much loved. But little did she dream of the trial through which she must pass when she went out to seek for the health she so much desired.

During the summer of 1886 she had been placed in nomination for State Superintendent of Schools by the labor party, and the Democrat in the field knew that she was the means of his defeat, and when the opportunity came did not hesitate to take his revenge.

The Board of Education feared her, for she expressed so fearlessly her opinions regarding the grade of womanhood that should be placed in the schools of San Francisco, telling the Board members that they were outraging the people of that city when they carried the schools into politics.

Because of her independence of opinions and fearless expression of them, and the fact that she advocated the single tax movement, and had contributed money shortly before to the Sutter Street Railway strikers, the Board of Education wanted to remove her from the schools. They wanted to show their power, and disgrace her, if they could; to show her that a woman would better keep silent and not resent anything they chose to do or say. The Board had dropped out others for political reasons, and thought they could do so in this case without further trouble. As soon as Kate Kennedy took her leave for three months, Boss Buckley, who had a niece who wanted a position, began working to secure a place for her. He was a great friend of the president of the Board of Education, C. B. Stone, who was glad of an opportunity to revenge himself upon Miss Kennedy.

This niece of Buckley's was not fitted to fill Miss Kennedy's position in a grammar school, so they removed a Miss Fairchilds to Miss Kennedy's school and put the niece in a lower grade school.

On March 16, 1887, the Board of Education passed a resolution assuming to transfer Miss Kennedy from the principalship of the N. Cosmopolitan School in the heart of the city, and having twelve assistant teachers, to the principalship of the Ocean View School, a primary school in the country about four miles from the centre of the city and with but one assistant teacher, and without any of the modern conveniences. By this transfer her salary was to be reduced from \$175 per month to \$100 per month.

It was well known at the time that Miss Kennedy would not accept the transfer. She knew that this course of conduct by the Board of Education was no new thing, as they held themselves up as a body to be feared, and those who received employment at their hands must be very humble.

Knowing these facts, she was, of course, very indignant, and said

she would not rest until she proved the right of woman to be heard and her right to justice, even though she was without the right of franchise, and did have the courage to express opinions of her own. She said further to me: "I have the money to make the effort, and I will make this a test case, so that no other woman shall receive such treatment from a political Board of Education."

Her leave of absence expired on the 1st day of May, and she on the day before reported to the Superintendent of Schools as able and willing to resume her duties as principal teacher of the N. Cosmopolitan Grammar School. The superintendent declined to interfere.

On Monday morning, May 2, 1887, Miss Kennedy was, at the time for opening school, at the N. Cosmopolitan School, and attempted to resume her duties as principal, but was then and there prevented by the Board of Education from so doing. She addressed the Board at their next meeting, held on the 4th of May, and complained in a very courteous letter to the Board, in which she very clearly explained the whole matter, and asked to be reinstated in her position and allowed to perform the duties of that position. The Board did not reply to her letter, but at that same meeting where her letter was read they rescinded their resolution of March 16th, transferring Miss Kennedy from the principalship of the N. Cosmopolitan School to the principalship of the Ocean View School. The Board then, at this same meeting, although her leave of absence had expired, and they had nominally reinstated her, adopted a resolution striking out from the rule which she and they both knew was in her favor, these words: "In the same school."

Section 158 of the Rules of the Board of Education reads as follows: "When a principal or assistant has been employed in the Public Schools of San Francisco for a period of not less than ten years, the Board may grant such principal or assistant a leave of absence for not exceeding one year, and the party to whom such leave is granted shall, at the expiration of the leave of absence, be entitled to a position of the same grade, in the same school, as he or she held when the leave was granted."

Immediately after the Board had adopted the resolution striking out the words "in the same school" they, without assigning any reason for so doing, and without any charge or pretense of any charge against Miss Kennedy, and in her absence and without notice to her, adopted another resolution, setting forth that Miss Kennedy was thereby transferred from the position of principal teacher of the N. Cosmopolitan Grammar School to the position of principal teacher of the Ocean View Primary School. She made one more attempt to interview the Board, but was refused even a hearing.

On May 18th, 1887, while she was demanding her position, the Board adopted a resolution dismissing Miss Kennedy from employment and position as the principal teacher of the Ocean View School, where they had assumed to transfer her. Not in one

instance had she been notified to appear before the Board or an opportunity of a hearing allowed her. No reason was even assigned or suggested for the treatment she received at the hands of the Board. Three very important rules of the Board read as follows :

"First. The holders of city certificates, when elected as teachers, shall be dismissed only for violation of the rules of the Board of Education or for incompetency, unprofessional or immoral conduct.

"Second. All complaints against teachers must be made in writing and verified and shall be addressed to the Secretary of the Board of Education.

"Third. No action shall be taken against a teacher unless such teacher has had an opportunity of a due hearing before the proper committee."

The Board utterly ignored these same rules in their treatment of Miss Kennedy.

Proceedings were instituted for the first suit against the Board of Education on May 31, 1887.

After a long and weary delay, the lower court decided in her favor. The Board appealed the case and carried it to the Supreme Court, which also decided in her favor, and the Board had to recognize her as the rightful possessor of the position she claimed. As soon as the Superior Court decided her first suit, she resigned her position and entered suit for her back salary. Here again she was successful, and the Board was compelled to pay her thirty-three months back salary, from May 1, 1887, to February 1, 1890, which amounted to \$5,700.75.

But the delays of the law, the outrageous imposition of the whole affair, wore upon her and her strength gradually gave way, and although she spent much time at the life-giving springs of California, her health gave way entirely, and before her last suit was decided she was an invalid and only a few weeks before she died she received the news that she had won in the long fight. Justice came too late, however, for her to appreciate it. She was then lying too weak to even see those who had stood by her through all those weary months, and was so near the border of another environment that she scarcely seemed to realize what a great victory she had won for all her sisters in slavery. And the congratulations which came pouring in from all sources fell upon unheeding ears, and even after she was told of her victory, she would inquire of those about her if they had learned what the decision was in her suit.

Her last hours were weary, anxious ones, and I think we may truly say that injustice and the delays of the law shortened the career of this noble woman, whose life had been a constant, untiring pressure upon everything which meant injustice to the many, privilege to the few.

Her devotion to her sex was most beautiful. She was raised a Catholic, but threw off everything like creed or form, and adopted

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the true natural religion of "do to others as you would have them do to you."

On the 18th day of March, 1890, at her sister's home in Oakland, California, the soul of Kate Kennedy passed on into the unknown, just three years from the time the Board of Education began its persecutions.

During the past summer, while sojourning in the sunset land, it was my great privilege to go with her sister to the sacred spot where she lies buried, and place upon her grave some of the choicest flowers which she with her beautiful nature loved so well.

A simple shaft of gray granite, with the name "Kate Kennedy" engraved upon it, marks her last resting place.

The world lost a noble woman when her life went out. She left this sphere at the age of 62 years, and who associated with her knew her to be gentle yet firm, and in her school work a strict disciplinarian, but so kind and tender in her firmness that all youth loved her. Her soul revolted against anything like unjust conditions, and her purse was ever open to assist in any and every reform in which she saw hope for the outcasts from natural opportunities.

She was liberal and tolerant toward every creed and every nationality. At her burial in Laurel Hill Cemetery, while a large number of friends stood about the open grave, Judge Maguire made the following remarks:

"In the death of our beloved friend, to whose memory we now pay the last earthly tribute of respect, a life of uncommonly arduous, untiring, and conscientious labor came to a close.

"Hers was a life of well-directed, unselfish, useful labor, which has made the world better than it would have been if she had not lived; and this, her constant ambition, is, after all, the only true test of the value of any human life.

"In the struggle of life she sought neither physical ease nor relief from mental responsibility, but whatever came to her hands in the line of duty she did with all her might.

"Duty was her guiding star. The principles of justice, truth, liberty, she loved dearer than life; and to them she devoted and prematurely sacrificed her life.

"Kate Kennedy was, indeed, a type of noblest womanhood. She was an earnest reformer and strict moralist, yet possessed of that rare combination of virtue and tolerance which enabled her always to love the sinner while hating and opposing the sin.

"I know that none more than our dead would deprecate any fulsome eulogy, such as is too common on such solemn occasions as this, for her simple heart despised all shams and merely formal ceremonies; but I do know, from her expressed wish, that she hoped to have some friend, acquainted with her most cherished thoughts, aspirations and sympathies, say at her grave that—regardless of the distinctions and classifications prevailing in human society, regardless of the division of races, parties, and creeds—she loved her fellow creatures one and all; that she sympathized with the poor and oppressed of her brethren; that she labored and

hoped for the restoration to them of their natural heritage, of their natural opportunities, believing firmly that the greatest portion of human miseries, in the present age, springs from the exclusion of the poor from the resources which the Creator has so generously and so bountifully provided.

"In this great cause neither her tongue, nor her pen, nor her purse ever faltered to the last, and no assurance could be more gratifying to her in this hour than that which we now give, that those who labored with her will continue in that work until it shall be accomplished.

"Her lifelong labor as a public school teacher is known and appreciated. In her domestic relations she was all that a true and noble woman could be—a faithful daughter, an affectionate sister, a true friend.

"Now that we consign her to her last resting place, at the close of her splendid and exemplary life, we can only say: Loving daughter, kind friend, great and conscientious teacher, noble philanthropist, farewell!"

True to her principles to the last, and wishing good even after death, she left to Judge Maguire, in trust, property valued at about \$10,000, to be devoted to the promotion of the single tax cause. She left an estate of nearly \$50,000, and forgave debts to the amount of \$10,000. During her whole life she was generosity itself to those who needed comfort, and many a fireside was made cheerful and happy at Christmas tide by the aid of her purse.

The friends and admirers of this noble woman have resolved to erect a monument to her memory.

My great sorrow is that this short sketch of this woman's life is so weak, for I feel that I have but poorly shown to you what a most generous and noble woman she was of whom I have spoken to-night. But if I have failed to make you know how true and noble a character she was, how unselfish, how she lived only in the universal world of thought and action, how she loved humanity, it is the fault of my head and not of my heart, for I respected, admired, and loved her. I feel that there went out of my life a great and noble influence when the soul of Kate Kennedy changed its environments. And my tears will flow in sorrow for myself, when I realize that never again shall I see her strong, beautiful face, and the light of her kind eyes as she talked with me.

The last time I saw her was the day I took the train for Chicago, in August of 1889, when she came to the depot with her arms full of her choicest flowers from her own garden, to bid me good-bye and God-speed.

I took her flowers and her blessing with a grateful heart, and little dreamed that when again I sought the Western land the grass and daisies would be growing green upon her grave.

CHICAGO, February 19, 1890.

THE STANDARD.

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

An independent paper issued every Wednesday. The accepted exponent of the Single Tax doctrine; and the only absolute Free Trade advocate having a general circulation throughout the United States. Sample copy sent free on application. Address,

THE STANDARD,
42 University Place, New York.