

FIFTY YEARS IN TROUSERS.

An Interview With Dr. Mary Walker in Which She Speaks of Her Coming Book and of Her Long Eventful Life.

Washington, July 17.—Dr. Mary Walker stepped off her wheel upon the curb, drew her bicycle toward her, arranged the pedal and looked around. As usual a crowd had gathered, for Dr. Mary is not a usual sight. Dressed in a neat, broadcloth suit, with shining tile, the suit set off by a bright red necktie, the doctor is, to say the very least, unconventional. Yet she bore the scrutiny well. "The only self-made man in America" was used to being stared at.

"What are you going to do next?" asked a friend, a reporter of this newspaper, stepping up to Dr. Mary from the crowd that had gathered.

"Nothing," said she, with a quick smile. "I am resting nowadays and getting ready to die."

"And bicycling?"

"Yes," and the doctor smiled again.

For the past two years people have been asking, "What has become of Dr. Mary Walker?" But no one could answer. When last heard from she was lecturing. Then she dropped out of sight, and nothing was known of her again until she reappeared in Washington, apparently as young as ever, and certainly as pretty. One day last week she went to the photographer's to be taken asleep as she will look in death. And then the public heard of her again.

It was stated that during these intervals of silence Dr. Mary Walker entered a convent and lived in absolute solitude. Yet such is far from being the case. On the contrary, she retired, like any person of means, to a very nice farm near Oswego, and there lives, writes and enjoys herself in retirement. As she herself says, "It is quiet and peaceful here, and nobody knows what I suffer in town."

Yet she is the same little lithe figure you saw at the Centennial; the same short, gray curls fall over her coat collar, and she carries the same dainty little cane which is partly for convenience and partly from habit. Her coat to-day is cut a little more closely and more modishly, but otherwise she is the same Dr. Mary Walker of twenty years ago.

HER EARLY LIFE.

Mary Walker began her martyrdom when she was a girl. Born in 1842, she passed an uneventful girlhood until her father said to her one day: "Never wear corsets. Do not suffer your figure to be deformed by that steel cage." Mary was then sixteen, and her studies in anatomy were already begun under the direction of her father. The girl, looking at the feminine charts, saw the possibilities of the "steel cage," and took an awful dislike to it, a dislike which has lasted her half a century.

Just when Mary Walker began to wear pants—she hates the term trousers—is unknown. But it is certain that she was wearing them in the forties when a mere girl. She began to teach school at an early age, and in 1859 her first "pant" picture was taken. It shows her with a loose, Jenny Lind waist, with a skirt sewed to it. Another skirt falls to the knees over a pair of trousers that reach to the ankles.

Meanwhile the girl taught school, studied medicine and wore her men's attire. The little skirt she changed often; sometimes it was short, sometimes long, but it always came to the knees. "It really seemed," she said to your correspondent, in speaking of that time, "as though I never put on my skirt that some one did not suggest that it be made either a little longer or a little shorter."

DR. WALKER'S WAR RECORD.

"When I went to war," says she, "as a doctor I wore my pants and a skirt that came to the knees; it was sewed to a woman's waist. Of course I wore no corset. During the four years of the war I let my hair grow long, so everybody would know at sight that I was a woman. I did not want to impose upon people, though I often did it afterward. It is a great deal safer for a woman to

wear pants than a skirt. Men will insult a skirt when they will not notice pants. Then a woman can earn a better living in pants than in skirts. I know you will not believe it, but at the present day there are dozens of women in Chicago who wear pants all the time exactly like men, and little cutaway coats and derby hats. Everybody thinks they are men. They earn much better wages dressed as men."

Dr. Walker was so brave during the war and rendered such signal service that Congress awarded her with a medal, which she now wears. After the war she went to England and created a great sensation over there.

Pants, in those days, were arrestable and rotten eggable, and Dr. Walker suffered the bitterness of both. Speaking of that time, she says: "No one knows what I endured. I was the first new woman. I made it possible for woman to do all the great deeds she has accomplished since. But I suffered for it. Even now I am not appreciated. I have got to die before women will know what I have done for them." And then her bright eyes snapped sharply.

While in England Dr. Walker was persuaded to adopt a court dress, and trying to look pretty, she had a suit made of tulle, which she wore over long pants. Another court suit was edged with black velvet. But the transparent skirt was not admired, and Dr. Walker went back to the thick one, and finally she discarded all skirts except the skirt of her Prince Albert coat, which she still wears. Her Prince Albert of to-day is modeled on the lines of the one worn by your clergyman, and is, perhaps, made off the same piece of broadcloth.

UNSUCCESSFUL IN MARRIAGE.

The romance in Dr. Walker's life occurred in 1871, when she married a man named Brown. At that time it is claimed that Dr. Walker was on good terms with her relative, Colonel Robert Ingersoll, but that friendship with him broke off when she married Brown.

About the marriage there is considerable mystery. Dr. Walker was about thirty-five at the time, slender, petite, sweet-faced and very opinionated. It is said that she lived with Brown just three weeks, and the joke-makers declared that the family jar arose over a dispute as to who should wear the pants. The doctor triumphed, and in a hasty moment packed up a boiled shirt, a pair of cuffs, a clean collar, a toothbrush and a necktie and left Brown. She has always thought marriage a failure here, though she has been repeatedly asked to reconsider.

How did Dr. Walker support herself? In another question asked about this singular woman. Well, she has, in time past, and, perhaps, not so long ago, enjoyed a nice income from her medical practice, at which she is very clever. "Iago," says she, "I was called in to treat a man who was dying. I thought I had no one who had tried to cure me. But I did my best for him and pulled him through."

It is added that, in addition to this, Dr. Walker has a private income. She has earned large sums from her lecturing tours, and also from her writings. She is unquestionably very talented, and can do many things well. Those who went to hear her in New York two years ago, to laugh, remained to listen and listen with growing respect.

Those who know Dr. Walker describe her as very amiable. If she has ideas she keeps them to herself until asked for them. She is an interesting talker, and can "hold" any audience. When she visits Washington it is generally to do some important work for women, but it is said that this time she is here to get her book published. She may call it "Fifty Years in Pants; or, The Struggles of a Manly Woman," "A Plea for the Emancipation of Women," "From Skirts to Trousers," or "My Daily Walk and How I Enjoyed It," or "A Self-Made Man of Fifty-seven."

Under any title Dr. Walker is readable. AUGUSTA PRESCOTT.