



## OUR FIRST CONGRESS- WOMAN

**A** GRAY-EYED, slender girl with the enthusiasm of a zealot, the simplicity of a child and the energy and fire of a race-horse—that is our first and only Congresswoman, Miss Jeanette Rankin, as she is known to her personal friends.

She was born in Missoula, Mont., some thirty years ago. Her father was a banker and big landowner. She grew up in a family of four sisters and one brother, all of them keen thinkers and now college graduates. But for all the intellectualism of her home atmosphere, there was nothing of the theorist in Miss Jeanette. From the first her interest in life was practical and it was chiefly concerned with babies—poor babies whose mothers neglected them, deserted babies who languished in institutions.

Consequently, having graduated from the University of Montana, she went to New York to study at the School of Philanthropy. Social work was her chosen career. She considered that, to improve the condition of the working classes, it was necessary first to understand their condition thoroughly. She set about understanding it in her own way.

She sold goods behind a New York counter. She scrubbed floors for a while in Seattle. But very soon she arrived at a conclusion that was to change the course of her career.

What women needed in life, she decided, was political standing, and that could come only with the vote.

So Jeanette Rankin became an active suffragist. The State of Washington was then in the throes of a suffrage fight. Jeanette Rankin threw herself heart and soul into the fray. The women won, and the leaders

offered their thanks to her. Next, Mrs. Clarence H. Mackay and Mrs. James Lees Laidlaw, hearing of her success, asked her to conduct a new campaign in California. She went there, and personally canvassed the miners, going from house to house. California became a suffrage State.

Then Miss Rankin went home to Montana. Here it was she appeared before the State Legislature to present the petition for the vote. Montana was carried, and the women declared they owed it to her.

So far Miss Rankin had not taken a cent for her services. She had a small income which sufficed for her needs. About this time her income stopped. At the same time her health broke down.

A long sea trip was advised by her physicians, Miss Rankin, borrowing the money for her fare, set out at once for New Zealand. She arrived there without a penny.

What to do? Her eye caught an advertisement in a paper, offering six shillings a day for a seamstress. Miss Rankin offered her services at double that sum.

"No one ever wants to pay what you're worth," she explained.

She was accepted at her own price, and for six months she sewed for a living.

It was on her return from this trip to the Antipodes that Miss Rankin was offered the Republican nomination for Congress—the highest honor her party could bestow on her. But it was an uphill fight for victory, for the Democrats were sweeping the State, and only her indefatigable energy saved the day.

"No compromise, when it is a question of a principle," has been Miss Rankin's watchword all through life. She does not intend to drop it for any political advantage.

