

The Common Cause,

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Women's Suffrage

Societies.

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ONE PENNY.

Notes and Comments.

The Virtue of Organisation.

Never was the necessity for organisation, and the rightness of the lines on which the National Union works more plainly demonstrated than in the Oldham Division. Until comparatively recently there was no Suffrage society there, for, as several residents told us: "We're all Suffragists in Oldham, and both our Members are straight, so why should we bother?"

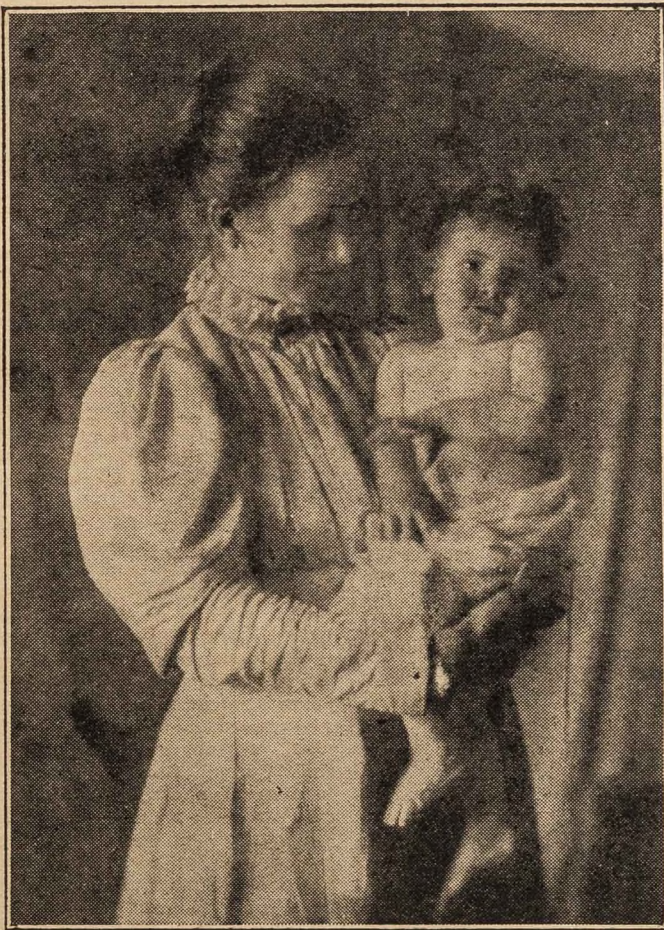
But Oldham began to feel that, since it was so progressive, it ought to help other less progressive places, and a most flourishing society sprang into being. Now mark the result! Our staunch friend, Lord Emmott, leaves us for "another place," and Mr. Stanley, having found no organisation in the Eddisbury Division, where he was a candidate last election, did not realise the feeling there is in the country for the enfranchisement of women. He comes to Oldham and finds all his supporters, and the man who will be his colleague in Parliament, if he is elected, are keen Suffragists; he realises the strength of public opinion, because it is organised, and he promises—like a true representative of the people—to vote for the women, thereby coming into line with both the other candidates.

More money is wanted for organisers. Who will give?

What Women Do Want: Better Homes.

The new Home Secretary declined to meet the pit-brow women again when they were up in London last week, because, he said, the Government was convinced that the amendment to prohibit their labour in future ought to be deleted in the Report stage. We

hope that the pledge to do so will be fulfilled in its entirety, and that no vexatious restrictions will be made. The Mayor of Wigan, on the 21st ult., pointed out one remarkable feature of this agitation: that it is entirely altruistic on the part of the women. Those now engaged are not in danger of losing their work, and they know it. They are thinking of those who are to come after them. So much for the "narrowness" of a woman's view! Of her incapacity to think of any but "individual interests," and all the other anti-inventions. Mr. Whitehouse, M.P. for Mid-Lanark, is going to agitate for an inquiry into the housing conditions in mining districts. Now there is immensely much to be said for that. The recent inquiry into infant mortality plainly showed that bad housing conditions were more to blame than anything else for the deaths of babies. Further, a



THE LATE MRS. RAMSAY MACDONALD
with her son.

woman who has to carry heavy buckets of water for domestic purposes, no matter what the state of her health, as many wives of colliers have to do, is likely to suffer from strain more than pit-brow women at their work; and—if you come to decency—whether is

it worse for morals to hear the same language at your work as you do in your home, or to live, night as well as day, in proximity so revolting that the word "decency" never has, or can have, any meaning? Such proximity is the inevitable lot of many thousands of boys and girls, to whom we afterwards preach.

The Wives' Clause.

Space forbids our quoting any of the interesting speeches made on Thursday on the re-modelled Wives' Clause in the Insurance Bill. We assure our readers that threepence spent in purchasing the official report will be well spent. Mr. Lloyd George repeated the statement he had already made that "there could not have been any unfairness to women as a whole (in the Clause as it originally stood), because every penny paid into that fund was distributed to the women"; but in practice he conceded a portion of that principle, which we have from the first maintained to be the only equitable and humane one, namely, that men should pay the insurance for widows. They do not in the new clause pay nearly all, but they do pay a small portion. In regard to the original arrangement, that the provision for widows was to come out of the savings of maidens, Mr. Lees Smith suggested that a gentleman about to marry does not say to his betrothed: "I am going to insure my life. I get nothing out of it; it is for your benefit, and, therefore, in order to pay my premiums, I propose to take the savings which you made before we were engaged."

Mr. Masterman stated that "all the demand of those who speak for the women" had been for separation of the funds of men and women, a statement which we are glad to see Mr. Snowden questioned. It certainly is a surprise to us. Mr. Snowden also congratulated the Chancellor of the Exchequer on removing from the Bill the words "married and is supported by her husband," which he described as "not only untrue," but "distinctly offensive to the women of the country."

The Antis' Laureate.

On November 1st the *Morning Post* published a long and excellent letter from Miss Leaf, of the National Union, in reply to the leader which accompanied Mr. Kipling's delightful verses on the 20th. We will not spoil the letter by quoting from it. It is full of sweet reasonableness, yet has a little dash of malice, too.

We have been a little at a loss, by the way, to understand the anger which Mr. Kipling's verses have caused. We have ourselves received no less than four amended versions, which were all certainly much better sense. The Anti-Suffragists have fitted the cap on, and acclaimed him their laureate; they are welcome to him. We have George Meredith. To us it would seem that even a writer of verse might reason better than to say that because woman's sole and only function is the preservation of the human race, therefore she is the most deadly enemy of the race. But we really can't feel angry with Mr. Kipling. One of our pleasantest recollections is of Mrs. Fawcett sedately reading: "Speech that drips, corrodes and poisons—even so the cobra bites." And then looking genially up at her audience of quiet, self-controlled women, and saying "That's you and me!" No, we wouldn't miss our Kipling.

Awful Charges.

We have been asked to deal regularly and at length with the *Anti-Suffrage Review*. It is, however, so very much the same thing from month to month that we dread the monotony of it. In this month's issue they complain of the "extraordinary and distressing reasoning" which led us to comment on the article by their anonymous woman correspondent (who said the infant death rate in New Zealand was a disgrace to the women of New Zealand), that anyhow it was 77 per thousand, while in England and Wales it was 147 per thousand. As the anonymous article was written to show that votes had not produced "a family Paradise"

in New Zealand, we submit that the reply was quite pertinent. But see the interpretation which this ingenuous gentleman puts on our reminder that if things really *are* bad in New Zealand, where women have the vote (and no Suffragist ever said the vote would do everything), they are twice as bad in England, where they haven't the vote! He writes:—"If a few more babies die than ought to, may not a condonation of their death be fairly justified, if it serve the purpose of a Suffragist argument?" As we read, we are haunted by an echo: "Unprovoked and awful charges." . . . Take care, dear Mr. Anti! That way danger lies! You will be accusing us of poisoning English babies, so as to improve our statistics, before you know where you are!

A Wronged Woman.

The Personal Rights Association (11, Abbeville Road, S.W.) has sent us the papers referring to the case of Miss Jessie Brown, to which allusion was made in Parliament last week. This is a case where a respectable woman between thirty and forty years of age was taken up by plain clothes constables and charged in the Southern Police Court, Glasgow, with solicitation, she being a prostitute. She was kept in a police cell till Monday morning, and then charged and convicted, and discharged with an admonition. She secured two unimpeachable medical witnesses to the fact that she was not a prostitute, and then brought an action in the Sheriff Court against the constables for wrongful arrest, but this was dismissed. She then appealed to the Justiciary Appeal Court, and they quashed the conviction on the ground that the magistrate had not informed her of her legal rights, no copy of the charge having been handed her, and she not being told she had a right to adjournment. The Justiciary granted her seven guineas expenses. Miss Brown, however, desires, very rightly, that the wrongful conviction should be withdrawn, and her character vindicated, and it is this request which Mr. Ure refused last week.

Our Bad Law.

This case brings into prominence the wrongful and injurious nature of our law. This woman could only be indicted for solicitation if she were a prostitute, and the evidence of the police was considered sufficient to brand her as a prostitute. As it happened, being an unmarried woman, medical evidence was conclusive as to the impossibility of her having pursued this trade; but had she been married this would not have been the case. In another case, at the Marylebone Police Court in January, 1909, the magistrate, in commenting, said "Everyone knew that mistakes continually occurred; the wonder was that they did not occur more frequently in cases of this kind." But who knows how often they do occur? The power in the hands of the police is altogether too great. In other cases we are bound to *prove* guilt; it is not enough for a policeman to say a man is a thief; he must, if called upon, state when he stole and what. But here, if a policeman says a woman is a prostitute she can be indicted for "loitering for the purpose," etc., and no one asks the policeman to prove what he says. In England, we are told, a man is supposed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. A man, yes; not a woman. And if she is "guilty," is she "guilty" alone? She is taken, at night, by men, to a men's court, tried and sentenced by men under men's law for a fault which she cannot commit alone. What depths of degradation have been caused by the solicitations of men with money, power, influence, position—all that puts them at such a fearful advantage in buying the poor, helpless, obscure, and sometimes friendless girl! How does the law protect her? Ask the Anti-Suffragists!

The N.U.T. and Women's Suffrage.

In Birmingham, as a result of the teachers' meeting addressed by Mrs. Snowden, the local Association of the N.U.T. passed the resolution in favour of women's suffrage, circulated by the Executive. The Borough of Lewisham branch has also passed it.

The A.B.C. of Women's Suffrage.

Human Motherhood.

The majority of women are mothers; the majority of girls are potential mothers; all the people of the world, men and women, boys and girls, are the children of mothers. So we are all influenced directly by mother-contact, nor can we escape from it. What is the

BEST SORT OF MOTHER

to have?

"I know," a chorus of nine out of every ten calls out, with no uncertain voice; "the mother who stops at home and looks after us, who makes the sort of pies we like, and who has no other thought in the world, no other wish in life apart from serving *us*! That's the sort of mother to have!"

Is it? Suppose we turn a deaf ear for a few moments to the promptings of age-old sentiment and prejudice, and just think of this in the newer light of our developing reasoning powers.

Those of us who have got, or have had, the inestimable blessing of a good mother, have an undying picture in our hearts and minds of selfless devotion; of matchless patience; of untiring industry, all exercised on our special behalf, with an abandonment of love lavished on us by no other person.

"Yes, that's my mother," say nine out of every ten of us.

Why is mother like that? Because, of course, she *is* a mother, and the maternal passion is the strongest life-factor we have. Our mothers obey the most irresistible, compelling law of their being in loving us, caring for us, and working for us. All animal mothers share this passion, which leads to the effectual care and protection of their young. But in the lower animal species it is only their individual young which call out maternal devotion. The young of other animals, even of their own species, do not command the care of any mother except their own. Surely this is not

OUR IDEAL

of what mother should be? Yet, if all we want is that mother shall use her brains (which make her different from other animal mothers) solely in making pies for us, how much higher is our ideal than the animal?

Our mother is

A HUMAN BEING

as well as an animal, and if we are content with merely animal and not human mothers, there's surely something grievously wrong with our view-point.

We, as humans, are a more highly developed species than the rightly-termed lower animals. We get our livelihood in a distinctively

human way, subduing, by our superior brain power, all sorts of natural forces which at a lower stage of our development were our masters, and not, as now, our servants. Yet some of us don't want mother to take any part or share in the progress of the human race, but to devote herself, as in primitive times, to the merely animal functions of producing and rearing her young.

Well, what is a human mother, then, as distinguished from the animal? A human mother recognises, with all other thinking, observing humans, that the human race has evolved into a close network, every mesh of which is interdependent the one on the other. She realises that her children are being fed, housed, clothed, guarded and educated by many hands and brains besides her own. So, of course, she is interested in all that concerns the welfare of

OTHER WOMEN'S CHILDREN

as well as her own. She sees that in spite of the wealth of maternal love and devotion which is poured out ceaselessly and without stint by individual mothers on individual children, now as ever, this does not save a majority of the world's children from

HOMELESSNESS, MISERY, AND WANT;

that many of them have homes in which some of us would be ashamed to house dogs; many of them never get enough food to eat (think of the helpless mother-anguish caused by this!), many more have bodies stunted, and minds warped for want of common necessities of life—pure air, food, and water; the majority have rotten teeth; many have defective eyesight and other bodily ills; and nearly all have to start work with a body half-grown, and a mind just beginning to grow, and so suffer from

STUNTED BODIES AND MINDS

all their lives as a consequence. She sees that the evil conditions which cause these horrors—horrors which act and re-act on the body politic—are removable only by education and by legislation. So she

WANTS WOMEN TO HAVE VOTES

because she wants to make the world

A BETTER PLACE FOR THE CHILDREN.

"So when the great word 'Mother!' rang once more, I saw at last its meaning and its place; Not the blind passion of the brooding past, But Mother—the World's Mother—come at last.

To love as she had never loved before—
To feed and guard and teach the human race."

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