

# The Common Cause

## OF HUMANITY.

The Organ of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

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### Notes and News.

#### General Botha's Thanks to South African Women.

When Cape Town welcomed General Botha on his return from his triumphant campaign, and his splendid services to this country were publicly acknowledged at one of the greatest public gatherings ever held in South Africa, General Botha took the opportunity of dwelling on the courage, fortitude, and the splendid heroism of the men who had made the campaign with him, in the face of almost insuperable difficulties, and then, after thanking them, spoke of the women's share of the war. "We had thousands of married men at the front for nine months and longer," General Botha said, as reported by *The Cape Times*, "and I have seen many of the letters from their women-folk urging them to keep on doing their duty at the front, while they remained on the farms and did the necessary work there. I can tell you that my heart very often went out in pity to these wives who remained behind on the farms, carrying on as best they could, with a few neighbours to help them. I am proud to think that South Africa has such women. . . . We can look with pride to the part played by the women of our country in this struggle."

A correspondent adds: "It will be remembered that at the time of the Convention, which led to the Union of South Africa, there was a story current that Botha favoured the inclusion of Woman's Suffrage in the new constitution, and that De Wet was violently opposed to it, threatening to retire if (as seemed probable) a majority should support it. As this was a threat to break up the Convention altogether, the point was conceded. The contrast in the position of the two men (Botha and De Wet) now and then is dramatic."

#### Was it an Oversight?

"Have your readers observed the abnormal enlightenment of the Government Registration authorities?" writes a voluntary official enumerator. "I had been instructing people to fill in their forms in accordance with strict law rather than with common sense, and to state that the children of the family and also the wife were 'dependents' of the husband unless he were *obviously* or, rather, *legally*, incapacitated. After reading the 'instructions' in several of the morning papers, I made inquiries at headquarters, and discovered that (a) 'If you are a married woman and your husband supports the home and children, you should, nevertheless, put down the same reply to Question 4

[How many children are dependent on you?] as your husband; (b) if you are a married man it is not intended that you should put down your wife amongst 'dependents.'

"This is a revolutionary interpretation of the law of husband and wife. Is the Government really waking up to the real facts of everyday life, or is it an oversight? Perhaps the authorities found it so difficult to reconcile 'law' and 'common sense' that for once they have let the balance drop on the 'common sense' side."

#### War and the Death Rate in Neutral Countries.

Statistics of extraordinary interest have just been published by Dr. L. Hersch, of Geneva. He shows that in some mysterious way war raises the death-rate in neighbouring neutral countries where not a shot has been fired. In 1870-71, for example, during the Franco-German war, there was a sudden rise of 57 per cent. in the mortality of Holland; of 50 per cent. in Belgium; and about 40 per cent. in Switzerland. In fact, the war of 1870 cost Switzerland alone nearly 20,000 lives! The direct causes of this mortality are not certainly known; probably they could be traced to unemployment, dearer food, anxiety, and epidemics, all consequent upon war in other countries. It is curious, too, that women and men appear to be almost equally affected. "It is a mistake," says Dr. Hersch, "to suppose that women are altogether exempt from the blood-tax of war, since it is clear that they bear their share indirectly; and this, the heavier share, falls almost equally upon both sexes." But if women die, killed by the war, in neutral countries, the children fare worse still; 46 per cent. of the increased death-rate in Belgium in 1870 was due to infant mortality; in Holland it rose to as much as 62 per cent. Dr. Hersch's figures also show that the second year of war is more deadly than the first in its effects upon neutral countries, especially among infants, who probably suffer from the lowered vitality of their mothers during the previous year.

#### "Dress and Saving."

A correspondence under this heading, now going on in the columns of *The Times*, throws a curious light on the manners and customs of women of expensive, if not of extravagant habits. The young girl guest, who is regarded by the hostess "as part of the decoration of her rooms," lays herself open to a remonstrance, if not a reproof, from the latter "if she appears more than two or three times in the same house in the same dress." If this is true, it is extraordinary that well-to-do women in war-time should lay themselves out in this way to procure custom for the dressmaker. A young and charming girl in a pretty frock is "decoration" enough for any room, and the pretty frock, if made of good material, does not lose its beauty after being put on three times. The fragile and extravagant "creations" which can only be worn once or twice are a national evil at all times, and, in war-time, represent a positively criminal waste of energy.

#### Gold Medal for Woman Doctor.

A correspondent points out that Miss Catherine Violet Turner is the first woman doctor to receive the London University M.D. Gold Medal, not the M.B. Gold Medal, as reported in our issue of August 6th. The latter has been already won several times by women.







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