

THE
WOMAN'S LEADER

IN POLITICS IN INDUSTRY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN THE HOME IN LITERATURE AND ART IN THE PROFESSIONS

AND

THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS

Professional Women and Marriage.

A sequel to the recent decision of the St. Pancras Borough Council that Dr. G. M. Miall-Smith, as Assistant Medical Officer of Health in the work of maternity and child welfare, must vacate her position in consequence of her marriage, is provided in the report of the Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee, which was recently presented to the Council. The Committee have considered and approved a minute of the Public Health Committee which recommends that in filling the vacancy the principle recently adopted by the Council in regard to the termination of the appointment of women on marriage be included in the conditions of appointment. They suggest, however, that "married women with dependent husbands should not be debarred from applying." The salary suggested for a full-time qualified medical woman of suitable experience to assist the Medical Officer of Health in the work of maternity and child welfare, would be £315 per annum, plus bonus on the Civil Service scale, which at the present rate is £235 13s.

The Education Cuts.

The educational world is much alarmed at the prospect of the Geddes "cuts" in education. Local authorities, as well as teachers, are anxious, and even officials of the Board of Education are uneasy. The suggested cuts are believed to amount to £16,000,000 a year, and it is feared that it may mean the scrapping of day continuation schools and evening schools, with no prospect of any further provision for secondary schools. All this is little short of disastrous. The teachers mean to fight any breach of the Burnham Agreement, and we wish them luck. A complete reorganisation of the Board of Education is prophesied, with a curtailment of the *personnel* and probably some method of decentralisation, which is the only good which will come out of this misplaced enthusiasm for economy. We hope that many parents, who are obviously convinced of the necessity for better education for their children—as is shown by the long waiting lists at every secondary school in the land—will gather themselves together and protest with all their might.

New Women Beit Fellows.

The Trustees of the Beit Memorial Fellowship for Medical Research have elected two women candidates to Fellowships of the annual value of £400, together with four men. Mary Kathleen Forsaith Lauder, M.Sc., M.B., B.S., proposes to make an examination of optic regions in primate brains, with clinical observations and physiological experiments, with a view to ascertaining the crucial stages of the evolutionary process of development of stereoscopic vision and conjugate movements of the eyes. Ethel Marjorie Luce, B.A., M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., M.D., proposes to work on accessory food factors with special reference to the relationship of ductless glands to calcium metabolism.

A New Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, after serious consideration, has suggested the following items as a basis for a new Criminal Law Amendment Bill:—Raising the age of consent to *indecent assault* from thirteen to sixteen, with a proviso that where the defendant is under, say, eighteen or twenty-one and a first offender, the Court may, instead of sending him to prison, bind him over in recognisances to be of good behaviour; raising the age of consent to *criminal assault* to seventeen, with a proviso, as above, if the defendant is under twenty-one; abolishing the defence of "reasonable cause to believe"; and extending the limit of time in which proceedings may be begun from six to twelve months. In addition, the Association offers no objection to a clause increasing the penalties against brothel-keepers and to one repealing Section 5 of the Punishment of Incest Act, 1908, so that incest cases may be heard in public instead of compulsorily *in camera*. The only new item is the introduction of provisoes, giving the Court power to bind over first offenders under twenty-one years of age. A joint Conference of national organisations is called for January 24th to consider these proposals. The new Bill must be a Government Bill, secured from disaster by the Government Whips, and all women must be agreed, both on the form of the proposed Bill and on the irreducible minimum they will accept.

Help for Women Workers.

The Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, having given training to many women in a wide range of occupations, and having allocated a large part of their funds, are obliged now to fix a closing date for applications for training. All women who desire to apply for assistance should do so before March 1st of next year. The Committee are particularly interested in two developments of the original scheme. Firstly, Homecraft (vocational) courses for the training of unskilled and unemployed women who undertake to enter resident domestic service at the end of the course. Candidates, who must be between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five, will in future be required to give a verbal undertaking that they will enter resident domestic service on the completion of their training. The Ministry of Labour are contributing in proportions of £1 to £3 to the cost of these courses. Secondly, the Homemakers' (general) course, for the assistance and instruction of women workers who are suffering from hardship through prolonged unemployment. Women between the ages of eighteen and forty only are eligible for these courses, which have been instituted in districts where there are large numbers of women who are unemployed skilled workers, waiting for trade to revive. The Committee also give grants towards outfits for women and girls entering resident domestic service.

Lady Pearson.

Everybody will be glad to hear that Lady Pearson is to succeed her husband as President of St. Dunstan's Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' After-Care Fund and the Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Care Committee. His loss is irreparable, but in the choice of his successor St. Dunstan's is paying a worthy tribute to his memory. Lady Pearson is raising a memorial fund to endow Sir Arthur Pearson's great work for the blind, and Queen Alexandra, who always supported him and his endeavours, has promised to become a patroness of the fund. Donations should be sent to the Arthur Pearson Memorial Fund, St. John's Lodge, Regent's Park, London.

L.C.C. and the Cinema.

There was a long discussion at last week's meeting of the L.C.C. on a recommendation of the Theatres Committee to place new conditions on licences to cinemas. It has been decided that no film should be displayed which is likely to be subversive of morality, and that no film, other than photographs of current events, that had not been passed for "universal or public exhibition" by the British Board of Film Censors, should be shown without the express consent of the L.C.C. An amendment that no young person under sixteen should be admitted to see "public" or "adult" films unless with a parent or *bonâ fide* guardian was added, and the recommendation was agreed to. The British Board of Film Censors is to be strengthened by the addition of a woman, which will improve it out of all recognition.

Miss M. Bentinck Smith.

We hear with deep regret of the death of Miss M. Bentinck Smith, head mistress of St. Leonard's School for Girls, St. Andrews. She was a woman of high ideals and took a keen interest in all progressive social movements, and especially in the woman's movement. She was among the first women magistrates appointed for the county of Wilt. She had a brilliant career as an educationist; part of her student days were spent at Girton, and later she became Director of Studies and Lecturer in Modern Languages there. In 1907 she was appointed head mistress of St. Leonard's School, which has greatly prospered under her rule.

First Woman Senator in Belgium.

As we go to press we learn that among the new Senators Mme. Spaak, a Socialist, has been elected. She is the first woman to sit in the Belgian Parliament. Under a recent law the Senators are empowered to co-opt suitable persons, and it is in this way that Mme. Spaak has been elected. We congratulate both her and her fellow Senators.

POLICY.—The sole policy of THE WOMAN'S LEADER is to advocate a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women. So far as space permits, however, it will offer an impartial platform for topics not directly included in the objects of the women's movement, but of special interest to women. Articles on these subjects will always be signed, at least by initials or a pseudonym, and for the opinions expressed in them the Editor accepts no responsibility.

THE PARLIAMENTARY YEAR.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

The year 1921 has been marked by many tremendous events of world-wide importance. Of them all, the Washington Conference, the terrible developments in Russia, and the growing burden of economic depression, stand out most portentously. We do not know at all clearly what is happening in Russia, beyond the bare fact that there are thousands who starve: nor can we as yet see the end of the economic collapse of Europe, nor what it may lead to. 1921 has not cleared either of these problems, but it is to be hoped that 1922 may do so. There is need, for we are perilously near to widespread European disaster.

Across this gloomy prospect the second Assembly of the League of Nations and the Conference at Washington have thrown a ray of light. By such international organisation—and by that alone—we may be saved. And the growing support which such movements obtain has been one of the few bright features of the year.

In home politics we have had violent vicissitudes. The great Coal Strike, which brought us face to face with the possibility of a sort of revolution, was undoubtedly the big event of the spring, but the abandonment of the housing policy also helped to throw confusion into innumerable areas; and the reversal of the farmers' subsidy gave agriculturalists something to grumble at during the perfect summer weather. All through the early months the Irish troubles continued, but in these last weeks a great hope of solution has arisen. As I write the attitude of the Dail is still in doubt; but whatever happens, the situation cannot be so bad again as it was at this time last year. If Ireland refuses we may have troubles and horrors once more, but at least we shall all know what has been refused, and no conflict can be so terrible as was the aimless and brutal murdering which marked 1921. And there may be no conflict even yet. The hope is very real and well-founded.

Apart from these general matters, Parliament has done little of importance. Like the rest of the world, it has seemed to stagger under the magnitude of the great events which are in progress.

From the point of view of women's special questions the year has been full of interest. The most hopeful and encouraging thing of all has been the return of the second woman M.P. to the House of Commons. With this event the election of more women to the next House is assured. The idea is no longer singular, the individual no longer an object of such intense curiosity. The whole business of women in public life is losing the strangeness with which it was greeted even a year ago, and it is settling down to the normal in a most satisfactory way. Had Mrs. Wintringham been defeated the prospects of other women at the next election would have been very bad; as it is they will fight on their own merits and those of their programmes and it looks as if the fact of their sex will exert very little influence either way.

Besides Mrs. Wintringham's election, this year has seen the failure of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill—which came at one point very close to success—and also the failure of the Equal Guardianship Bill to secure the time which alone is necessary for so universally approved a measure. The Parliamentary year has seen the success of the Civil Service regulations, but it has also seen the practical difficulties in the application of theoretic victories in the economic field. In the regular Parliamentary phrase, you can drive a coach and horses through the Sex Disqualification Removal Act—and in fact this is what is happening in every direction. Nevertheless, Parliamentary victories count for something, and 1922 may see the fruit of the labours of 1921.

In any case, the woman's cause is bound to go forward, because the women of to-day are carrying it on. Members of Parliament know well that they have to reckon with their new constituents. They do not yet know how to do the reckoning; nor very often do the women voters; but every month brings better understanding and fuller consciousness of citizenship, and there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has watched the Parliament of 1921 for the signs of change, that its purely masculine habits of mind are in process of modification. Other things are changing too. "The old order changeth." 1922 will see another long step forward.

EDUCATION.

When, during the war, we passed the Education Act which is known as the Fisher Act, everyone said, and said truly, that it was a sign of the greatness and the wisdom of this country. Such was our national temper in those days that our chief objection to it was that it was too timid a measure, and did not give us enough of what we wanted. We talked a lot then of building up a nation after the war which should be equal to the responsibilities of the post-war world. We said that in education lay the key to industrial troubles, to prosperity, and to peace. And we said truly. But to-day, our temper, or rather the temper of our Cabinet, seems to have changed. Money spent on education is looked upon as legitimate plunder; teachers' salaries are fair game, and who cares for education anyway? That is the tone of to-day, and it is a most serious thing that it should be so.

It is now known that the Geddes Economy Committee is going to make a sweeping attack upon education, and all sorts of cuts are being talked of. Teachers' salaries come first, secondary education grants next, and University grants next, so we are told; and the most rigid economy is to be enforced all round. Now economy is a good thing, and a very necessary thing in the present state of the world, but what is it? Is it economy to rear up ill-educated children? Is that the way to set the wheels of civilisation going again? Is it economy to prepare the next generation for their stupendous task of democratic world organisation by refusing to teach them even the elements of history and geography, and by driving away from the task all those teachers who are best worth attracting? Is it economy to drive the teachers to despair, to crowd their class-rooms till they cannot hope to instruct, far less to educate, their pupils? Is it economy to condemn boys and girls of talent to pass their lives without opportunity because the doors of learning are closed to them? Is all this what we mean by economy?

It is not what women mean by that word. What woman who is forced to reduce expenses will save first from her children's food? What mother will say—"it is only the

children"—and skimp the pennies on their concerns? And how, then, can we allow the Government to contemplate so retrograde a step and not make protest?

Even from the concrete money point of view this proposed saving seems to be bad economy. For what will it actually mean? It will mean that we recruit the ranks of our workers from boys and girls without training, from children who can know little of the economic problems of which they form a part. It will mean that only to the well-to-do will chances of knowledge and understanding be given, and that the gap between hand and brain workers which must be bridged in the next few years can never be bridged at all. To turn our backs on education to-day is the sheerest folly, even from a materialist aspect, and from every other standpoint it is worse than folly. Take, for example, the aspect of international affairs. Everyone knows that upon the foreign policy of Europe its future existence depends. If we act within this next generation so as to make another world war inevitable, then Europe, and perhaps the whole of the Western civilisation, will go down. And how can we hope for a decent foreign policy if our people have left the elementary schools at fourteen, before they have learnt to care in the least about the past or the future of public affairs? We shall fall back into insularity, into that fatal self-sufficiency which accompanies imperfect education, and as we fall back we shall bring our doom upon us.

These may seem to be strong words to use of such proposals, but the truth is that the Geddes plan comes at the end of a long series of whittling down which has rightly exasperated everyone connected with any form of popular education. If it had been superimposed upon a fully working Fisher Act we might have borne it. But to have it added to the miserable halting substitute for a forward policy which we have been putting up with since 1919 is more than anyone who cares about the matter can endure. The storm and fury these proposals will evoke will be tremendous, and rightly so. It is to be hoped that in the strength of them this projected "economy" will come to its death.

WOMEN IN THE SOCIALIST STATE.*

Mrs. Swanwick's book, "Women in the Socialist State," is written primarily to meet the needs of Socialists who are not feminists. Equally well, however, does it meet the needs of feminists who are not Socialists. The lines along which the Woman's Movement and the Socialist Movement must, in the author's opinion, develop, are inextricably wound together; and one of the most striking passages in the book is that in which the author points out that only in an industrial system, from which profit-making and labour exploitation have been eliminated, will it be possible to adapt economic life to the needs and capacities of the woman producer. To quote the author's own words:—"When the fear of exploitation has been done away with, all sorts of adaptations to women's conditions in the way of shifts and piecework—is it possible that the author means by piecework, part-time work? It would seem to follow from the context—will be practicable, which now are naturally resisted as so many ways of driving down the standard of pay and conditions. Homework of certain clean and pleasant varieties might even be revived, without fear of sweating, or of making the home uninhabitable."

In the main, Mrs. Swanwick's book is a plea for freedom in its truest sense—freedom, that is to say, for the investment of all those varying talents with which individuals came into the world. To her, socialism is in effect the highest development of individualism; for in a community whose essential instruments of production, and consequently whose open avenues of opportunity

are in the hands of a small class of persons operating on a profit-making basis, such freedom as she visualises cannot exist. And it is with the practical application of this conception of freedom to the lives of women, and in particular to the lives of women as mothers and home makers, that Mrs. Swanwick's book is concerned.

Taking the book as a whole, we are tempted to assert that never has so much solid and stimulating argument been compressed into so small a space. At times, indeed, the reader is conscious of undue compression—and this is particularly the case in the brief section entitled "Abolition of profit would reduce restrictions on freedom of the individual." We are inclined to believe that Mrs. Swanwick over-estimates the influence of political and economic institutions as a determinant of human behaviour. Her treatment of the question is too shadowy to allow us to come to blows over it. Nevertheless, we are left with the suspicion that she has under-estimated the stubborn perversity of the human heart, and with a keen desire to talk the matter over with her.

But it would convey a false impression to our readers if we were to conclude this brief review on a note of criticism. Mrs. Swanwick's book is splendidly, and at moments disconcertingly, reasonable. It contains no atom of fanaticism, no suggestion of a tendency to blink at difficulties or pass them by. We hasten to reassure our readers on these points, not because we have reason to expect such defects from the author, but because a hard and bitter experience as reviewer of feminist literature has led us to expect them from the subject.

M. D. S.

* "Women in the Socialist State." By Mrs. H. M. Swanwick. (International Bookshops Ltd. 3s. 6d. net.)

THE NEW YORK BUSINESS GIRL.

When thinking of the New York business girl it is necessary to bear in mind that New York has little in common with any English-speaking city, except the use of a common language. It is a cosmopolitan city, whose population has thrown over ancient customs, and whose new traditions are only in the course of formation.

In this atmosphere of transition the business girl naturally shares, and this very much influences her character and outlook.

Ask a New York business girl her nationality, and she will invariably reply American, sometimes adding with pride American-born. Nevertheless she is probably of foreign parentage, or at the most an American of only one or perhaps two generations' standing. These girls may come from families who in their own countries are well-informed and well-educated people, or they may come from the ranks of struggling factory workers, or illiterate peasantry. It will therefore be seen, that the elementary school teacher, through whose hands the future office girl first of all passes, has often very crude material to work upon. Sometimes her pupils have no knowledge of English, and this must first be taught them.

All this accounts for the fact that the general standard of education amongst business girls is not high.

The usual procedure is to pass directly from elementary school to business college.

Business colleges vary in the instruction given, from those which simply give an intensive course in shorthand and typewriting, to those which do this, and at the same time endeavour to improve the general education of the student. These courses vary in duration from six weeks to nine months.

The course completed, most of these colleges find positions for their graduates.

In 1917 a girl would receive from eight to ten dollars a week at her first post. Since then, owing to inflation and subsequent depression, wages have varied very much.

Her circumstances will now, of course, vary as to whether she has a comfortable home to live in, or if she is one of the thousands who must fight for themselves, living in a hostel or "rooming" by herself.

The day of the average office girl passes something like this. Rise at seven-thirty and fight for her turn at the bathroom (there is no washing accommodation in bedrooms in the United States). Breakfast at eight o'clock, consisting of fruit, cereal, meat or egg. If the office is far away, crush into the Subway (Underground) and ride from a quarter to three-quarters of an hour jammed sardine tight in the crowd. If the office is nearer, she is a little better off, as she may travel by the slower but less stuffy elevated railway, by tramway, or even walk. In the latter case there is always the possibility that her way may take her down one of the Avenues dominated by the elevated railway. There, in addition to the noise of trucks and tractors clattering over stone sets, she will have the "L" as it is called, rattling and screaming overhead.

Arrived at the office, she may be pretty sure of tolerable comfort, if not luxury. The office building reminiscent of the dilapidated and converted private house is not popular in the States. Their office buildings are certainly things in which we should do well to copy them. They run from eight to twenty or so stories high, are well warmed and clean, and there is a good lift service at the disposal of every employee, however humble. A well appointed rest room, with chairs and couch, is generally provided for women. In the office itself there is hot and cold water laid on, and in the summer a special service of chilled and filtered water.

Office work generally begins at nine o'clock, and there is an interval at one o'clock for lunch.

Work finishes from five to six o'clock, and dinner comes at seven. After that, if the girl is well paid, the rest of the day is hers. If not, she must be washerwoman, tailoress, and dress-maker as well as stenographer. On her free evenings she will often go to the pictures or visit some show with her "Beau." I should explain that a Beau is a girl's man friend. This relationship does not necessarily lead to subsequent engagement. It is a custom found in every walk of Society in the States, and seems a satisfactory one.

In her relations with her men friends, the New York girl is very independent and spirited, if not domineering. Should her beau treat her in what she considers a neglectful or offhand way, she will welcome the opportunity of "calling him down." If he takes this in a spirit of meekness all is well, if not, he will have to find another girl to take to the pictures.

The New York employer is, on the whole, very good natured with his girl employees. And this is much to his credit, for from an English point of view, they are frequently assertive, saucy, and neglectful. In fact, the stenographer figures in the American joke in much the same rôle as the office boy does in this country. The stenographer is fortunate, in that she shares, in common with the rest of her sex in the United States, the privilege of consideration and respect as a woman, quite apart from her personal character or social position.

Sometimes the need for good nature and tolerance is on the side of the employee. A girl came back to the business school from which she had graduated to ask advice. Her employer insisted on her using the expression "youse" for you. She had been given to understand at the school that this was a fault in English. What was she to do?

There is no employment or health insurance for workers in the State of New York—a girl's salary is hers to spend as she chooses. For working girls out of employment there is, however, a capital institution called the Trade Extension. This is run by the municipality, and its object is to improve the business girl in her work by giving her opportunities of study and practice during her times of unemployment. As employers frequently ring up the Trade Extension when in need of "help," it also serves the purpose of a labour exchange. It gives no preliminary instruction, but offers opportunity for practice and improvement in stenography, typewriting, indexing, and English, for office workers. And in millinery, dressmaking, &c., for others. The instruction is excellent, and is given in a sympathetic and interesting manner, as if the teachers enjoyed helping their pupils. Most of the latter show a quick appreciation of the advantages offered them, but there are others. A girl whose English was quite impossible, being urged to attend the class in English, instead of spending all her time taking shorthand dictation, complacently replied, "If I spend my time at English, I don't get no speed!"

There are a number of hostels for business girls in New York, and they compare quite favourably with hostels elsewhere. Their prices are in fairly correct relation to the salaries of the residents. There is not that tendency one frequently comes across in Europe to unduly restrict the occupants' liberty of action.

At these hostels there is always a laundry, for the use of which a nominal charge is made, and there are also sewing machines for general use. This is a great convenience, as Americans attach a great deal more importance to dress than Englishwomen do. Unfortunately this love of dress too frequently runs to an extreme of flashy vulgarity. There is, however, none of the slovenliness often seen elsewhere.

The average business girl's prospects may be briefly described as matrimonial. There is, however, plenty of scope for the girl who wants a business career.

She may become private secretary to the head of some corporation. Or she may aspire to being put in charge of some large office, with fifty girls under her. There are also superior posts to be had in concerns run by women for women. For instance, the Martha Washington Hotel, a first-class hotel run on such lines. Then there are the careers of public stenographer, notary, and real estate agent, the latter being often a very paying one.

I doubt that there are more openings for the business girl in the United States than there are in England. But in seeking them she is likely to meet with a more generous spirit and less hostility than she probably would over here, the only thing required of her being that she should "deliver the goods." The absolute refusal on the part of the American girl to take a snub, has much to do with this.

There are many girls taking poorly paid posts where there is little to do that they may have the opportunity for further study. They may be attending evening high school with the intention of passing to the University, and subsequently entering some profession.

At the worst the stenographer who takes any interest in her work may always be sure of a position to keep her in the bare necessities of life. For she shares in common with the domestic servant the privilege of a constant demand for her labour.

At her best the New York girl shows good business ability, adding to the qualities of efficiency and reliability those of quickness and enterprise.

H. S. C.

MOTHERS AND THE POOR LAW.

It is probably not generally known amongst women, or, if known, not fully realised, that under the Poor Law Act of 1899 Boards of Guardians possess powers enabling them to deprive mothers of their children, and to prevent all communication between them. The proceeding is legally empowered on the following grounds: if either parent has been in prison or in an inebriates' home; if a parent is considered unfit to have the control of the child or believed to be mentally or morally defective; if a parent has been sentenced for neglect of a child; if a child has been deserted by the parent, or if a parent is disabled and is in the workhouse.

In theory this sounds less barbarous than it actually becomes in practice, and I therefore quote instances within my personal experience of the working of this Act, in order that my readers may judge for themselves of the cruelty and hardship involved to the mothers in this enforced separation from their children.

In September, 1920, a paragraph appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, headed "Robbed of her Children." It related to the case of a Mrs. Lawrence, who appeared at the Stratford Police Court before a magistrate to demand access to her children whom she had placed temporarily in charge of the Romford Board of Guardians. Her husband had been sent to prison for an aggravated assault upon her, and whilst in prison she had been obliged to go out to work and had therefore asked the Guardians to maintain the children. Since then she had been refused permission to see her children or to know of their whereabouts. She had been "robbed of her children," she said, and demanded justice from the laws of this land. A relieving officer explained in Court that the children had been probably dealt with under the Adoption Act, and, if so, the parents would not see them until each attained the age of eighteen years. The magistrate said that he thought that it was "very hard that because a man broke the law his wife was not allowed to see her children." Previous evidence of a relieving officer showed that the mother kept children and home clean and tidy. The magistrate postponed the case for inquiry, but apparently had no power to reverse the decision. The Guardians alleged other grounds for the detention of the children, and refused Mrs. Lawrence permission to see them, or any knowledge of their whereabouts, nor is the mother who bore them even to know whether they are alive or dead.

A Mrs. B., whose husband was fighting in the war in Salonica, lived in a slum tenement-house with her four children. In order to supplement her separation allowance she occasionally went out to work. One day in her absence her home was visited by an N.S.P.C.C. Inspector, who charged her with allowing her children to be in a verminous condition. So insanitary was the state of this particular tenement-house that it was well-nigh impossible to keep any children clean, but Mrs. B. had no one to assist her in her defence, and she was sentenced by the magistrate to six weeks' hard labour. Her children were taken by the N.S.P.C.C. to a workhouse institution, and whilst the mother was in prison the Guardians passed a resolution adopting the children till eighteen years of age. Expecting to be reunited to her children at Christmas, the poor woman, when she came out of prison, was heartbroken to find her children gone. She applied to the Guardians for access to her children, but was refused any information as to their whereabouts. She was also refused permission to see them or to correspond with them. The Guardians also took away the main portion of her separation allowance, leaving her a miserly pittance of six shillings a week for her own support. Upon the husband's demobilisation I helped to secure the return of Mrs. B.'s children, and in spite of poverty they are well cared for and happy in the new quarters to which they have moved.

Mrs. C., a war widow with three children, was charged with neglecting them, and whilst in prison for a short term the children were adopted by the Board of Guardians. The Medical Officer of the Infirmary stated that in his opinion the children were not so neglected as to cause them unnecessary suffering, and were well nourished, but in spite of this opinion, the mother was unable to recover her children, nor was she permitted to

know their whereabouts or to see them. She was extremely fond of her baby, aged nine months, and appealed in person before the Board of Guardians that she might be allowed to visit it occasionally. She was however met with an obdurate refusal on the grounds that she had no further right to the child, and that it now belonged to the Guardians who could do as they liked about the matter.

Mrs. X. appeared before Mr. Cairns (City of London magistrate) last year, to ask him to help her to secure permission to see her children, who had been adopted by the Board of Guardians, as they had either refused or neglected to reply to her applications. The magistrate said that it savoured of the "true spirit of Bumbledom—the whole proceedings seemed most unsatisfactory, and for some reason, whether rightly or wrongly, the applicant was refused access to her children. He would lay the matter before the authorities concerned."

Mrs. O. was sent with her husband for a short term of imprisonment for neglecting her children and permitting them to be in a verminous condition; while in prison the children were taken to the workhouse. They were then adopted by the Board of Guardians, and when the parents were released from prison they found they could not recover the custody of their children. The mother has repeatedly attempted to secure permission to see them, but has failed in all attempts.

While Mrs. R. was at work her child was taken to the workhouse by a school attendance officer, where it was placed in the custody of the Guardians without, it appears, any magistrate's order being obtained. The mother's application to recover the custody of her child and permission to see it was refused. The child has been quite recently shipped to Canada without the mother's consent being given. There is no likelihood of her ever seeing her daughter again.

These cases sufficiently establish the fact that children are compulsorily separated from their mothers by Boards of Guardians, who not only assume sole custody but refuse to allow mothers to see or correspond with their children, or to be informed as to their whereabouts. Frequently the reason given for forbidding the mother to see her children is that the children would cry too much on parting, and that it is not worth while upsetting them. Sometimes the children are shipped out to Canada, and are thus effectually placed out of reach of their parents and relatives.

It should be remembered that none of these drastic measures are ever enforced against parents who are in an influential or well-to-do position. In fact, these powers can only be put in action against those who have the misfortune to be paupers, i.e., who have been technically at one time or another in receipt of Poor Law relief. There is also a tendency to enforce these powers against a woman who has not the protection of a good husband behind her. People forget that the woman's imperfections as a mother are often due to adverse circumstances, and that if these be rectified she can then fulfil her duties to her children properly.

What is the alternative offered to the child instead of its mother? An institution, with its cold, bare wards and stamp of uniformity and Bumbledom. "No child ought ever to be put in an institution," says Dr. Mary Scharlieb. "The worst mother is better than the best beadle," says Mr. Bernard Shaw. "A baby has no skies but mother's eyes," sings the poet. Can anyone deny that Providence has ordained that a mother, and not an institution, should look after a child? And yet, in these days, when everyone is pressing the claims of motherhood, we find that the Government is supporting a system which completely cuts off a mother from communication with her own offspring. The cry of these poor mothers who are thus by force bereaved of their little ones is lifted to heaven in anguish, weeping for their children and refusing to be comforted. Can not we do something to help them secure justice for themselves and their little ones, or are we women, in whom are implanted the instincts of motherhood, to turn a deaf ear to their cry of distress?

AGNES MOTT.

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