

MONTHLY NEWS of the CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST WOMEN'S FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION.

President: THE COUNTESS OF SELBORNE.

Chairman of Executive Committee: WINIFRED, COUNTESS OF ARRAN.

Hon. Sec.: MRS. GILBERT SAMUEL.

Hon. Treasurer: MRS. FABIAN WARE.

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OUR WORK.

Future Meetings.

In response to numerous requests, the Meetings Committee has arranged a series of four lectures on "The War and the Industrial Position of Women," to be held at 14, Wyndham Place, by kind permission of Mrs. Fabian Ware, on Wednesdays March 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th. The first lecture, on "Women's Trades Unions," will be given at 3 o'clock by Mr. Geoffrey Drage, the eminent authority on all questions relating to the welfare of the working classes; the second on "Women in Engineering," at 3.30, by the Hon. Lady Parsons, who also has a wide personal knowledge of her subject.

On March 21st the Committee has organized a Conference on the Entry of Women into Agriculture from (a) the physical, (b) the economic standpoint; and they hope to obtain speakers to put the case from the point of view of the women, the farmers and the agricultural labourers. Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Agricultural Labourer's and Rural Worker's Union, has promised to attend and speak for us, if his engagements permit. The last of the series is on "Recent Industrial Developments in Australia and New Zealand," and the Committee hopes to obtain a speaker whose first-hand knowledge of the subject is second to none.

The Committee hopes that members and friends who are interested in these subjects, and who wish to attend, will make an early application for tickets, as the number will be more limited than in the case of the former series. The proceeds of the collection will be devoted to the maintenance of our Cot at Netley Hospital.

Our Cot at Netley Hospital.

Members will remember that we have maintained a Cot at Netley Hospital since September 30th, 1915. In reply to our appeal for funds to enable us to continue this work, we were able to send a further donation, and have received the following letter from Sir Robert Hudson, the Chairman of the Finance Committee:—

"Dear Madam,—I have much pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date enclosing cheque value £16 10s., being a further contribution from the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association towards the maintenance of the bed standing in their name at Netley Red Cross Hospital, for the period December 31st, 1916, to March 31st, 1917. I enclose herewith our official receipt, and beg

to convey to you, and through you to your colleagues, our most warm thanks for this further contribution. Permit me to once again assure you all how highly we appreciate the continued support we receive from you in our work at Netley Hospital."

We know our members will wish to continue this splendid work; and as a further contribution will be due on April 1st, it has been decided to devote the collections from our lecturers to this object.

We would remind our readers that the occupier of our Cot is always grateful for parcels. We received recently the following letter from him:—"I beg to acknowledge the receipt of a second parcel, per Lady Bective, on the 16th of January. Please convey my sincere thanks to the Ladies of the Association."

Our Glasgow Branch.

The following resolution was passed at the recent Annual Meeting of the Glasgow Branch;—

"That for the duration of the war the Branch desire to co-operate with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, in order to identify themselves more particularly with the various war undertakings which the latter society are engaged upon.

Our members in the Rothesay section have been busy with various kinds of war work. The French Army has awarded the *Croix de Guerre* to a member of our Executive Committee for her work as *Médécine en chef* in the Scottish Woman's Hospital. This is a distinction awarded for unusual merit and service to the country.

W. ROBERTSON MACKAY, *Hon. Secretary.*

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORM.

Our Executive Committee met soon after the Report of the Electoral Reform Conference had been issued. As a result the following statement was sent to the press:—

"The Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association desire to express their approval of the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference on the subject of the grant of the Suffrage to women. They are of opinion that these recommendations should be embodied in a Bill without any delay, and presented to Parliament as a Government measure."

Signed) Maud Selborne, *President.*
Winifred Arran, *Chairman of Executive Committee.*

Anna Margaret Ware, *Hon. Treasurer.*
Louise Gilbert Samuel, *Hon. Sec.*

Resolution of the Consultative Committee.

The following resolution has been sent to the Prime Minister by the Consultative Committee of Constitutional Women's Suffrage Societies (February 5th, 1917):—

"We, the undersigned, representing different Women's Suffrage Societies, heartily welcome the recommendation of the Speaker's Conference that Women's Suffrage should be conferred. We are unanimously of opinion that this recommendation should be carried into effect at once, and we therefore strongly urge the Prime Minister to include a proposal for Women's Suffrage in the Government Bill embodying the recommendations of the Conference. It cannot be expected that Societies whose demand is for Woman's Suffrage on the same terms as men should hail the detailed proposals with entire satisfaction. Without expressing an opinion upon the suggested basis, however, we all desire to welcome the removal of the sex barrier."

Gertrude Forbes-Robertson, Actresses' Franchise League.
Florens Roch, Catholic Women's Suffrage Society.
Maud Anna Bell, Church League for Women's Suffrage.
Maud Selborne, Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association.
Jane E. Strickland, Free Church League for Women's Suffrage.
Gulielma Crosfield, Friends' League for Women's Suffrage.
J. Spring-Rice, Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation.
Eva McLaren, Liberal Women's Suffrage Union.
Herbert Jacobs, Men's League for Women's Suffrage.
Esther S. Roper, National Industrial and Professional Women's Suffrage Society.
Millicent Garrett Fawcett, National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.
A. M. Chapman, New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage.
Frances Balfour, Scottish Churches League for Women's Suffrage.
Frances H. Simson, Scottish University Women's Suffrage Union.
Henry W. Nevinston, United Suffragists.
C. Despard, Women's Freedom League.
Gertrude Eaton, Women's Tax Resistance League.

Suffrage Societies in Council.

The following resolution was passed on February 17th, by a meeting held at Caxton Hall; representatives from the majority of societies for Women's Suffrage being present:—

"That we, representing the undersigned Societies, recognising that a Bill based on the recommendations of the Speaker's conference will confer the Suffrage upon women, though not upon the terms for which we stand, urge the Government to introduce such a Bill without delay, provided that it contains, as an integral part, provisions for the enfranchisement of women."

Liberal Women and the Vote.

It is announced that the Committee of the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union have unanimously decided—after much thought—to begin an educational campaign among the Liberal women of the country. "We are of opinion," writes Mrs. Alderton, "that the question of Women's Suffrage is rapidly approaching a crisis, and if we postpone our work until after the war we may lose a priceless opportunity of securing political and economic

liberty for women. We are fully aware that most Liberal women are at present giving of their best to war activities, and it may be difficult, and even irksome, to them to arrange meetings, but in all our stress of war work it is important that we should not lose sight of what is to happen after the war. If we want women to take their share in the 'great rebuilding of the nation,' in the settlement of the economic questions, in the consideration of the problems relating to military service, temperance, morality, education; etc., we must keep ourselves in touch with the changes which are going on around us, and which, indirectly, are bringing Women's Suffrage so acutely to the front."

Suffrage Victories.

The Legislatures of North Dakota and Ohio have granted the presidential and municipal suffrage to women. Bills modelled on these lines are pending in the Legislatures of many other States.

The Premier of Ontario has announced that the Government propose to give the franchise to women in time for the next General Election.

Deportations in Northern France.

Mme. de Witt Schlumberger, President of L'Union Francaise pour le Suffrage des Femmes, has sent to Mrs. Fawcett, President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, a narrative of the horrors attending the deportations of women and girls in parts of Northern France, which we regret that we have not space to publish. Mme. Schlumberger writes that similar atrocities were perpetrated at Roubaix, Toucoing and other places, and that the facts have been registered with the object of demanding a legal enquiry after the war.

One of the worst features of the deportations is that women and girls, with a revolver held at their heads, were made to sign documents in ignorance of their contents; they believed that they were required to work in the fields. They were then taken, not to Germany, but to the rest-camps behind the German lines, and handed over to the soldiery. Those who return are broken down in health or driven insane by the treatment to which they have been subjected.

She asks that women in every country—allyed, enemy or neutral—should raise their voices in protest. Mme. Schlumberger's documents have been circulated to a number of women's societies, together with a resolution, expressing in some faint way, what all ordinary people must feel on such a subject. The resolution is given below. The number of signatures could easily have been increased tenfold had it not been that time pressed.

The following resolution has been signed by 19 Women's Societies, including the C.U.W.F.A.:

"The undermentioned Women's Societies desire to unite in a deep expression of horror and indignation at the atrocities described in the accompanying documents, and also in offering their profound sympathy to the whole French nation, and other nations suffering such barbarities."

THE WILL TO VOTE.

BY THE COUNTESS OF SELBORNE.

It is assumed by many that the cause of women's suffrage has made great progress in public favour. The reasons given for this opinion seems to me rather unsatisfactory. They mostly come to this, that women, having worked their best for the country, ought to be rewarded with the gift of the franchise. Now, it is not often that I find myself in agreement with the "Anti-Suffragist Review," but in the denunciation of this particular doctrine I am entirely of its opinion. There is only one good reason for giving women the vote, namely, that it would be to the advantage of the nation to do so. That is what we Suffragists have always maintained. We think it would help women, help children, and also help men that women should be allowed to vote. And we do not base our case on any "a priori" or theoretical reasoning. We say where women do vote the people are the better for it. And we challenge our opponents to bring forward any facts they may have which would show the contrary. Up to this time our challenge has not been answered.

There is one thing about women's suffrage which is emphatically in its favour. It spreads from the State which first adopts it to those in the neighbourhood. That is what happened in New Zealand and Australia. New Zealand and South Australia adopted it in 1893. By 1906 every State in Australasia except Victoria had accepted it, and when the Commonwealth Parliament was constituted in 1902 men and women had equally the right to vote for its members. The same thing is happening in America. The whole West is now governed by an electorate of men and women. And the infection has spread across the border, for four provinces of Canada—Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia—have just adopted it. Those people who know most about it are most in favour of it. Now, judging by the evidence we have, what can we say are the effects of giving women the vote?

First, to re-assure the fearful, we may consider some effects which its opponents have prophesied, and which in practice do not show themselves. It has not disturbed the mutual relations between men and women in the least. Women in Australia and New Zealand do very much what they do here. They have been admitted to the Bar, and a few earn their living that way. But the vast majority prefer to be wives and mothers just as they do here. They are very slow at removing their own legal disabilities. I think an equal divorce law has been passed in most suffrage States, but I am not sure that it has in all, and the father's rights over the children have not yet been reduced to an equality with the mother's.

The unmarried mother has had some protection in Australia, and illegitimate children are better looked after. They become State children in several of the States, and an effort is made to save them as far as possible from the results of their parents' wrong-doing.

Women at present have not become members

of the Legislature, the Bench, or the higher ranks of the Civil Service. They are not treated with less courtesy or respect, nor does an interest in politics prevent them from giving the proper amount of attention to their household duties.

So far on the negative side. Now what have we on the positive?

First, there is a greater interest in national affairs, shown by the high percentage of those on the register who vote. In countries which have manhood suffrage it is rare to find more than 60 per cent. of the voters exercising their right, except where some exceptionally exciting question is at issue. In New Zealand, at one ordinary election, 84 per cent. of the men and 82 per cent. of the women vote. In Australia it is not quite so high. It averages about 76 to 78 for men and 68 to 70 for women. In these countries, as they are so sparsely inhabited, the polling stations must generally be difficult for many of the voters to reach, so that it is evident that there is a much greater "will to vote" than there is in countries where only men have the franchise.

In accordance with this greater interest in national business, the fire of their patriotism burns with a shining light. The people have a sense of duty, and stern reprobation is shown to corrupt politicians, law breakers, and the forces of disorder. Some years ago they adopted compulsory military training, that they might be in a position to defend themselves, and we know what whole-hearted support they have given to the Empire in her hour of peril.

Secondly, there is the effect on national health. The three countries which are always at the head of the list of those who save their babies' lives are New Zealand, Australia, Norway—all three countries which have given women the vote. And in all countries you may trace the amount of political power the women have by the lowness of the infantile death rate. Women voting increased good sanitation. Good sanitation brings general good health, but more particularly good health for children. Here is another instance how the woman's vote is useful to children and to men as well as to themselves. There are several other good features in the countries which have equal suffrage. They all seem very anxious to find a satisfactory system of settling Labour disputes. They are all given to temperance legislation. They have all great belief in education, and spend public money freely upon schools and universities. Altogether their record is good, and it is that which encourages us to ask for admission to a privilege which our sisters in the Dominions already enjoy and use with profit to their country.

(Reprinted from the "EVENING STANDARD," by courtesy of the Editor.)

Frenchwomen and the Municipal Vote.

The Commission of the French Chamber for universal suffrage has expressed itself in favour of the admission of women to the right to vote at municipal elections, and of making them eligible for municipal councils.

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		—	
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WEEKLY LECTURES, HOUSE DINNERS.

- Wed., 7 Mar., 7.15 p.m. HOUSE DINNER (for Diners only).
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- Wed., 14 Mar., 8 p.m. "Imperialism."
The Hon. Sir John Cockburn, K.C.M.G.
Chairman: Mrs. Gilbert Samuel.
- Wed., 21 Mar., 8 p.m. "The Food Question."
The Hon. Lady Mackworth.
Chairman: Sir William Chance, Bt.
- Wed., 28 Mar., 8 p.m. "Motherhood."
C. Gasquoine Hartley (Mrs. A. D. Lewis).
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The WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

Public Meetings at CAXTON HALL, Westminster.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS, at 3 o'clock.

- March 7th.—The Rev. C. Warlow.
Mrs. Mustard. Chair: Miss Eva Christy.
- March 14th.—Mrs. Herring: "The Venereal Problem in Australia."
Mrs. Despard. Chair: Mrs. Corner.
- March 21st.—Miss Margaret Hodge: "The Heroines of Shakespeare and Sheridan as Prototypes of women to-day."
Mrs. Mustard.
- March 28th.—Mrs. Kineton Parkes: "Women in Political Warfare."
Mrs. Despard.

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