

THE VOTE.
SEPTEMBER 14, 1917.
ONE PENNY.

Hands off the People's Bill.

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

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FRIDAY, SEPT. 14, 1917

Edited by C. DESPARD.

OBJECT: To secure for Women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

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THE PEOPLE'S BILL.

**Women are the People:
Women want the Bill.**

The Government threatens to hold back

THE PEOPLE'S BILL

until the House of Lords has been reformed.

The People must come first;

the Upper House can wait until the People are able to say how it shall be constituted.

Hands off the People's Bill.

Women's Freedom League.

Offices: 144, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C. 1.
 Telegrams—"DESPARD, MUSEUM 1429, LONDON."
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 Political and Militant Organiser—Miss C. NINA BOYLE.
 Secretary—Miss F. A. UNDERWOOD.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS: W.F.L.



LONDON AND SUBURBS

Saturday, September 15.—Political Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3 p.m. Speakers: Miss Boyle and Miss Dorothy Evans. Chair: Mrs. Marion Holmes. Tea can be obtained in the Café after the meeting.

Wednesday, September 19.—Public meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Mr. Laurence Housman, on "Prison Reform in America," and Miss Nina Boyle. Chair: Mrs. Mustard. Admission free. Tea can be obtained in the Café.

DARE TO BE FREE.

Sunday, September 23.—Lecture by Miss C. Nina Boyle, "A Modern View of Ancient Macedon" (in aid of the Despard Arms), Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Tickets, 1s. Tea after lecture, 8d.

Wednesday, September 26.—Public Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Miss Margaret Hodge, on "W. T. Stead and His Work for the Woman's Cause," and Miss Nina Boyle. Chair: Mrs. Mustard.

Friday, September 28.—Croydon Sewing Party, at 32a, The Arcade, High-street. 3 p.m.

Wednesday, October 3.—Public Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. M. W. Nevinston, L.L.A., on "The Prospects of Success," and Mrs. Mustard. Chair: Mrs. Nourse.

Sunday, October 7.—Discussion Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn. W. L. George, on "Will the position of married women be enhanced or diminished by the War?" Tea, 6d., 4.15 till 5 p.m. Lecture, 5 p.m. Admission by ticket only, prices 2s. 6d. and 1s., from W.F.L. Office, 144, High Holborn, W.C.

Wednesday, October 10.—Public Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Stanbury on "Women in the Government of London," and Miss Nina Boyle.

Friday, October 12.—Croydon Public Meeting, at 32a, The Arcade, High-street, 3.30 p.m. Speaker: Miss Nina Boyle.

Wednesday, October 17.—Public Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: The Rev. W. C. Roberts and Miss Nina Boyle.

Friday, October 19.—Women's Freedom League Rally, Caxton Hall, 7.30 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Despard, Miss Boyle, and others.

Sunday, November 18.—Discussion Meeting, Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn. Miss Rebecca West on "The Real Sources of the Inequality of the Sexes." Tea 4.15 to 5 p.m. Lecture 5 p.m., admission by ticket only, prices 2s. 6d. and 1s., from W.F.L., 144, High Holborn, W.C.

SCOTLAND.

Friday, September 14.—Paisley, Meeting at Abbey Close, 7.30 p.m.

Saturday, September 15.—Paisley, Meetings at Abbey Close, at 3.30 and 6 p.m. Speaker: Miss McLelland.

Thursday, October 4.—Glasgow, Public Meeting, Central Hall, Bath-street, 2.30 p.m. Speakers: Mrs. Despard, Miss Eunice Murray, and others. Tickets, 6d. and 1s., plus tax, on sale at 212, Bath-street.

We draw special attention to

Saturday, September 15.—Political Meeting, Minerva Café, 3 p.m. Speakers: Miss Nina Boyle and Miss Dorothy Evans. Chairman: Mrs. Marion Holmes.

Wednesday, September 19.—Public Meeting, Minerva Café, 3.30 p.m. Speakers: Mr. Laurence Housman on "Prison Reform in America," and Miss Nina Boyle. Chairman: Mrs. Mustard.

SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY—DO FATHERS COUNT?

By the Electoral Reform Bill it has at last been admitted and accepted that women are *people*, although they are not yet persons except for purposes of punishment and penalty. There is something of the same sort, only reversed, going on in regard to the word children. The papers last Monday all made some allusion to the number of "children" charged at the Guildhall, and to the fact that every reformatory in the kingdom was full, necessitating the constant remand of "children" charged to the Remand Home. *The Evening News* lets slip, however, that it is a "great outbreak of unruliness among boys." An "authority on the subject" is quoted by *The News*:—

The want of proper supervision, combined with bad housing conditions, was, he thought, the main cause of unruliness among boys. Where families occupied single-room tenements the children had nowhere to play except the streets; and, while it could not be stated that the source of crime was to be found in the home, it was true to say that in many cases the effect of the training in the schools was nullified by the conditions of the home.

In *The Observer* of the day before, by a coincidence, was an article by Judge Neal, of Chicago, on "War Orphans." He considers the problem of how the young are to be reared and trained after the loss of the fathers to be "the biggest problem that the world has ever seen." Yet he goes on to say that "the loss to the nations through failure to give their children proper care would be greater than the loss of the fathers themselves. . . . Personally, I believe the loss of fatherhood to be less important than it may seem to some. . . . I believe the average mother could do better with her children without the father than she could do with him, were she relieved of money cares. . . . There is not a very large proportion of cases in which the State could not perform, without much harm to the child, the functions of father. . . . As a matter of fact, the trained mother could almost always do better without the father around the home than with him there. . . ."

While "tickled to death," as Judge Neal might himself say, at the sight of the fathers catching it in this style from one of their own sex, we cannot help feeling that it is, after all, rather hard on fathers, some of whom have contrived not to be so desperately in the way of their own offspring as Judge Neal makes out. But it is a real pleasure, for once, and a counter-blast to the shriek raised all over the country that the absence of the steady hand of the male parents, and the folly, crime, or carelessness of the female ones, were driving children wholesale into crime, to find mother let off the abuse and father catching it instead. The truth is probably somewhere between the two points of view.

We recall the wise words of Mr. Cecil Chapman, which appeared recently in *The Evening Standard*, on the subject of crime and war. His experience as a metropolitan magistrate confirms the reports of serious increase in pilfering, especially by boys. He referred to the general belief that want of discipline at home is due to the father's absence at the war, but observed that though it may be true of some cases, "it is nothing like a true explanation." The importance of beginning well was Mr. Chapman's message; he retains a robust faith in the essential goodness of human nature, but declared that "much of the wickedness of the world is due to misdirection at the start and to the unconscious pessimism which enters into and ruins our whole system of education." With man and woman standing together as equals in the home and in the State there will be living hope for the children; and we do not feel we need entirely rule out the fathers.

THEY SUPPORT US.

POLITICAL NOTES.

The People's Bill.

Mr. John Hill, President of the Trade Union Congress sitting last week at Blackpool, stated that, although "the information we have is only very informal," it was understood that it was "the intention of the Government to delay the Representation of the People Bill until the Reform of the House of Lords has been dealt with." Mr. Hill continued: "We hear that with very considerable alarm. It is the intention of the Parliamentary Committee to take up the question in the next few days and to deal with it."

The New Labour Parliamentary Committee.

The ballot for the Parliamentary Committee—the Cabinet of the Trade Union Parliament—resulted in the election of the following members:—Messrs. H. Gosling, J. Hill, W. Thorne, M.P.; J. H. Thomas, M.P.; W. J. Davis, J. W. Ogden, J. H. Jenkins, J. Sexton, F. Hall, A. Onions, R. B. Walker, E. Judson, E. L. Poulton, F. Bramley, H. Skinner, J. B. Williams, G. H. Stuart-Bunning. Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., as Secretary, is an *ex-officio* member. A feature of the ballot was the defeat, by a very narrow margin—her score standing next to that of Mr. Stuart-Bunning—of the women's nominee, Miss Margaret Bondfield. Mr. Robert Smillie did not stand.

Stockholm and Free Trade.

The chief events of the Trades Union Congress were the decision to postpone the date of the Socialist conference at Stockholm until at least the Allied Socialists can come to some agreement among themselves; and the great and overwhelming majority vote for Free Trade, in spite of the feeling displayed and voted on at the last gathering against admitting to compete with British goods, goods made abroad by cheaper labour and under worse conditions.

The War.

The outstanding items of war news are the altogether unexpected revelations from Washington of the double part played by Sweden, which may have as a direct result the throwing of Sweden into the arms of Germany and drawing her into the vortex of the world war; and the deplorable dissensions which have arisen between M. Kerensky and General Korniloff, each of whom claims to be the only saviour—the one defending the ideals of the Revolution and the freedom won at the cost of so much suffering; the other concerned to defend the soil of his native land and the freedom from invasion without which no other freedom can exist. The situation is serious beyond the general belief of the public.

Women and Revolution.

We call attention to an extremely interesting course of lectures which will be delivered by our good friend and colleague, Miss Margaret Hodge. The subject round which the lectures hang is "Woman and Revolution"; and the first series deals, in Miss Hodge's vivid and instructive fashion, with the French Revolution, ranging from the parts played by the French kings and their mistresses, the ladies of the intellectual "salons," and the hideous conditions of the peasantry, to the final triumph of the patriotic French Revolutionary Army and the victory of Valmy. The lectures will be held at the Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, beginning on Monday, October 1, and tickets for the course of ten lectures are obtainable there for five shillings.

WOMEN IN WAR TIME.

Women in Signal Boxes.

Women have been employed by the G.C. Railway for some time past on sidings and in signal cabins. It is now being suggested that they should be employed on main lines. Signalmen, according to precedent, are making the usual jealous protest, and engine-drivers are claiming that they would not feel safe if they thought the signals were in the hands of young women.

Strike-breakers—or Patriots?

The Agent-General for New South Wales has received information from Sydney that a Loyal Service Bureau for women has been established there in connection with the strikes, and that 3,000 women are already prepared to support the Government with voluntary labour. A number of members of the Industrial Workers of the World have been arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

BRANCH NOTES.

Glasgow, 212, Bath-street. Sec.: Miss Kate Evans.

The Glasgow Branch held a members' meeting here on the 6th inst., when Miss Bella H. McLelland gave an interesting *résumé* of her Clyde campaign. We were very pleased to welcome some of the sixteen new local members secured for us by Miss McLelland at Rothesay, and to listen to a selection of questions put by her audiences there, which led later to the formation of resolutions for the proposed conference. A public meeting is being arranged for Mrs. Despard on October 4, in the Central Halls, Bath-street, when we also hope to hear Miss Murray and other local speakers; tickets 6d. and 1s., plus tax, to be had here. Will members kindly reserve all cast-off clothing and furnishings for our Jumble Sale on November 3? Parcels gratefully received at this address from now onward. Office hours: Weekdays, 2 p.m. till 5.30 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.

Paisley.

A week's campaign began on Saturday, September 8. Miss McLelland, assisted by Miss Steven and Miss Flora Cheyne, held two meetings, in the afternoon at Abbey Close, and in the evening at Muir-street. Literature sold very well.

Women's Freedom League Settlement, 93, Nine Elms Lane, S.W. Hon. Sec and Organiser: Miss Kathleen Holmes.

The Settlement reopened on the 4th inst., for penny dinners and the milk depot, and the Children's Guest House will not be long behind. Attention is called to the advertisement for a resident worker to look after the children, which has appeared in *THE VOTE* for the last two weeks. We should be most grateful to any friend who could put us in touch with a suitable applicant; the work is pleasant enough to anyone really fond of children. Welcome gifts have been received during the holidays from Miss Wood, 10s.; and per Mrs. Giles, £12, both for the Milk Depot; clothing from the Baroness de Pollandt, Mrs. de Vere Summers, Miss Wood, and an anonymous parcel from Letchworth; vegetables from Mrs. F. Lindsay Fisher, Miss Constance Harvey, Miss Gibson; 2s., per Miss Rachel Wells; 4s. 6d. from General Sir George Higginson and 10s. from Mrs. A. Gascoigne to buy clothing for three Nine Elms children who had a very happy holiday at Marlow; £1 from Mrs. Yewens. We again ask for dinner-hour helpers from 12 to 1 any week-day; we expect a busy winter, and need many more workers.

MISS MAUDE ROYDEN takes up her position as pulpit assistant at the City Temple, Holborn Viaduct, on Sunday, September 16, when she will preach at the 7 p.m. service.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FRANCHISE CLUB,
 9, Grafton St., Piccadilly, W. 1. FOR MEN & WOMEN.
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 Weekly LECTURES and MEETINGS.
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THE VOTE.

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FRIDAY, September 14th, 1917.

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To the Editor—on all editorial matters.
To the Advertising Manager—on advertising.
To the Secretary—on all other business, including Votes orders, printing, and merchandise, etc.
Telephone: MUSEUM 1429.
Telegrams: "DESPARD, Museum 1429, London."

EDITORIAL.

The Editor is responsible for unsigned articles only. Articles, paragraphs, or cuttings dealing with matters of interest to women generally will be welcomed. Every effort will be made to return unsuitable MSS. if a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed, but the Editor cannot be responsible in case of loss.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE.

At Home and Abroad ... post free, 6/6 per annum.

AGENTS.

International Suffrage Shop, 5, Duke-street, Charing Cross, W.C.; Messrs. Horace Marshall and Co., Temple-avenue, E.C.; City and Suburban Publishing Company, St. Bride's Churchyard, E.C.; E. Marlborough, Old Bailey, E.C.; A. Ritchie, Pemberton-row, Gough-square, E.C.; Simpkin, Marshall and Co., Orange-street, Haymarket; John Heywood, Manchester. Can be obtained at the Book-stalls of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son and all newsagents.

HANDS OFF THE PEOPLE'S BILL.

At a recent gathering the writer of this article, in dealing with the prospects of the Electoral Reform Bill becoming law this autumn, postulated that it depended on three things. The first was, that the Government should remain in office; the second, that no diplomatic or military crisis should supervene; and the third, that the Bill was an honest attempt at reform and not mere window-dressing.

In regard to the first, we ventured to predict that the Government would remain in power; and that prediction appears to be verified. Mr. George's Government has the same quality of tenacity to office that distinguished his predecessor's. It has survived the railway strike, and the raid in broad daylight over London, and the Stockholm typhoon; the formidable Trades Union Congress has passed off with nothing more menacing than a vindication of Mr. Henderson's honour—and a consequent depreciation of Mr. George's. Honour, however, sits lightly on politicians these days; a little more or a little less of that unmarketable commodity leaves governments unconcerned.

So much for the first condition. The second is a graver matter.

The questionable discretion of the disclosures from Washington has brought appreciably nearer the danger which has overshadowed us from the beginning of the war—the intervention of Sweden on the side of the Central Powers. To avert this never-distant possibility the successive War Governments have done, and left undone, many things about which the people in their ignorance have raged furiously. Now the danger is disclosed; and, in conjunc-

tion with the unspeakable folly of the Russian mob, which apparently owns no principle of government but mutual detestation—ghastly object-lesson to all humanity of the disastrous results of tyranny—a most serious situation confronts the British Cabinet. If all internal legislation be held up while those responsible for the conduct of the war address themselves to the naval, military and diplomatic intricacies which demand such delicate, such careful, such detailed handling, we would not complain or protest. For, we are not, like Russia, in the elementary stages of citizenship development. But here we come to the third condition.

Is the Bill, or is it not, a serious attempt at reform, or is it an unloved bantling forced on the Government and the House against their will, to be kept out of the way whenever and for as long as possible? Was the deep-throated solicitude for our seamen and soldiers, and the suddenly-engendered burst of enthusiasm for the hard-worked, long-neglected Cinderella, Woman, only play-acting? Was it all blather and bunkum, just another device to fool the people—the patient, dull people who swallow so much and forgive so much—who are in very truth "long-suffering" (the virtue of slaves or dupes)? For if it be not so, what is the meaning of the new pretext for delay, the paltry pretence that the reform of the House of Lords is of greater urgency than the rights of the people so long denied and so long delayed?

The unconstitutional exclusion of women from franchise rights, and the extension of those rights to others not yet included, has been the subject of agitation for more than half-a-century. The question of the House of Lords is of mushroom growth; it has no standing, no urgency, compared with the electoral reforms which have been dangled before the people's eyes—held out and withdrawn, acclaimed by heavy second-reading majorities, and disdained by Prime Ministers who would not surrender "Government time" to the people who paid the Government wages—for long years of hope delayed and constitutional as well as unconstitutional agitation. Why this sudden haste to reform the House of Lords? The present arrangement is quite workable, while the position of the electorate is admittedly unworkable, and makes an election an impossible and unthinkable scandal. The people—the newly-promised as well as the old electorate—have a clear right to decide what the new conditions of their country, under which they will have to pay such mountainous taxes, under which such a strange new life must be accepted—shall be. They have a right to decide what the machinery shall be and how it shall work, since new machinery needs must be provided; none have the right to settle it over their heads and rob them of half the value of what is being promised them. For was not the new electorate hailed as having to be taken into the nation's confidence about that very vague thing described as "reconstruction"? What is reconstruction, if not a new marshalling of our forces, a new overhauling of our gear, a new ordering of our national methods? The electoral reforms are themselves, in very fact, a part of this reconstruction; so is the reform of the Upper House, the question of Ireland, and all the other big matters that the corrupt oligarchy which to-day represents nothing and nobody is trying so incessantly to snatch from the control of the people and settle themselves. The time has come for a peremptory mandate to the Government—Hands Off. Hands off the People's Rights.

If the situation is too critical for purely domestic legislation to receive attention we, the loyal people of this land, will accept the ruling unflinchingly.

But if legislation on any matter outside the conduct of the war is to continue, it shall be the People's Bill. If the Reform of the House of Lords and the Irish Convention, and other matters of internal re-adjustment can be carried on, then so can electoral reform. And we warn the Government that any more trickery or Parliamentary juggling with a view to setting back this matter or robbing it of any of its value, will be a dangerous business and fraught with disaster for any Cabinet that attempts it.

THE VOTE was the first to sound the alarm, on the publication by *The Daily Telegraph* of an article in which the new line of attack was outlined. Times are indeed altered when *The Daily Telegraph* becomes the mouthpiece of the Government presided over by David Lloyd George! The next warning was given by Mr. Henderson; and the President of the Trades Union Congress at Blackpool spoke of the proposal to delay the People's Bill until the Upper House was reformed, as an intention of the Government's and not as a device of the House of Lords. The Trades Union Parliamentary Committee is to take the matter up and deal with it at once; we trust they will deal with it drastically. Should the threat prove serious, and should this indeed be the next move in the game of "spoofing" the people, the suffrage question will be revived in its acutest form, and the results will be beyond computation.

C. NINA BOYLE.

A "VOTE" SELLER IN LAMBETH POLICE COURT.

Last year the members of the London County Council, who were elected to their present positions more than four and a half years ago, passed by a majority a resolution, the object of which was to prohibit the sale of literature in parks and open spaces round London. For many years the Women's Freedom League has held Sunday meetings, more or less regularly during the summer months in Brockwell Park, Clapham Common, Wandsworth Common, Battersea Park, etc., and it has been the custom to sell THE VOTE and other Freedom League literature at these meetings. Several attempts have been made during the last year by members of our League and of other societies to challenge the authority of the Council to deprive the public of their rights in this connection, and last Monday afternoon Miss Winifred Spriggs, the hon. secretary of our Herne Hill Branch, was summoned for selling THE VOTE in Brockwell Park, on Sunday, July 15. The validity of the Council's action was questioned in court, and as an application for a *mandamus* had been made, the magistrate dismissed the case on condition that Miss Spriggs would undertake not to sell in Brockwell Park until the matter of the *mandamus* had been decided. Miss Brance, who was charged with selling *The Freethinker* under similar circumstances, refused to give any undertaking, and was cautioned that if she repeated the offence she would be fined.

The Women's Freedom League had previously written to the Right Hon. the Marquis of Crewe, the Chairman of the London County Council on this question, but no reply having been received from him a similar letter was sent to every member of the Council. It is encouraging to know that at least two L.C.C. members, the Rev. Stewart Headlam and Mr. Charles Jesson, have used every effort to defeat this resolution of the Council, and we hope that all democrats and especially women suffragists who have a vote for the Council will make themselves well acquainted with all the present members' views on this subject of the rights of the people, and see to it that all reactionaries fail to secure a return to power at the next London County Council election.

F. A. UNDERWOOD.

PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY FUND.

SIXTH YEAR.

Second List of Contributions.

	£	s.	d.
Amount previously acknowledged...	256	6	0
<i>Branches—</i>			
Anfield	15	0	
Middlesbrough	1	15	0
Montgomery Boroughs (additional)	2	9	3
Reading	10	0	
Scottish Scattered Members	10	0	0
Sheffield	1	13	0
Tufnell Park	2	0	
Waterloo	1	0	0
North-Eastern Dist., per Miss Dorothy Evans	8	7	4
Anonymous	100	0	0
Mrs. A. B. Jones	3	0	0
Mrs. Budd	2	2	0
Mrs. A. W. Broadway (collected)...	10	0	
Mrs. George Cadbury	10	0	
Mrs. Counter (collected)	6	1	
Mrs. R. C. Welch (collected)	6	0	
Mrs. Clanchy	5	0	
Miss Agnes Husband	5	0	
Mrs. C. F. Lawrence... ..	5	0	
Rev. G. W. Thompson	5	0	
Miss Margaret Aaron (collected)	3	6	
Miss Bisset Smith	2	6	
Mrs. Nourse	2	6	
Mrs. K. E. Regan	2	0	
Miss Riggall	2	0	
Miss E. Leale	1	0	
Refreshments, per Mrs. Fisher	2	7	2
Tickets	19	0	
	£394	11	4

Churches Urge Woman Suffrage in the United States.

At the annual General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, held at Dallas, Texas, recently, a resolution was passed by a large majority in favour of Woman Suffrage. The resolution sets forth the invaluable influence of women in moral reforms, declares that every possible force should be utilised in the new and larger work lying before the country, urges that women should have the opportunity to introduce into civic life more of the true spirit of Christianity, therefore

We, the Commissioners to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, assert our belief in the justice, wisdom, and righteousness of the enfranchisement of the women of our country.

Federal suffrage for women was strongly advocated at the convention of the Disciples of Christ, which was held in Colorado recently. The resolution reads:—

We note with much satisfaction the rapid growth of equal suffrage in the United States, and we declare ourselves unreservedly in favour of the complete and universal enfranchisement of the womanhood of the nation, both by legislative enactment and by amendments to State and national constitutions, and we wish to see constant agitation till political justice shall be done to all citizens without discrimination as to sex.

OUR OPEN COLUMN

To the Editor of THE VOTE.

NURSES AND THE NATION.

DEAR MADAM,—I write to say how deeply grateful I feel to you for your chivalrous championship of the cause of trained nurses. The profession is the greatest national asset at this moment. The war could not be carried on without it. The country—nay, the world—at all times dependent upon it, was never more so than at this time, and yet, strange as it may seem, the nursing profession was never more neglected and insulted and its members sweated than at present. It would almost seem as if there were a determined conspiracy against trained nurses to-day. Will it be believed that there is not a single trained nurse on the committee of the Joint War Committee of the St. John Ambulance Association and the British Red Cross Society? The management is entirely in the hands of lay people! Here is another remarkable thing. The uniform of the V.A.D.'s is protected by the State; the uniform of the trained nurse, which is fraudulently worn by all manner of women—even the very worst—has no such protection!—Yours most gratefully,
BEATRICE KENT.

A GRAVE QUESTION.

We are asked by the Secretary of the Divorce Law Reform Union, 19, Buckingham-street, Strand, to publish the following statement:—

THE CHURCH AND DIVORCE LAW REFORM.

An attempt is being made by certain of the Church papers to discredit the effort to release the million separated persons in the country from what is described by them as a state of "bondage worse than death."

The organisation of which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is President has more than enough evidence to prove that the attitude of the Christian Churches towards the sufferers under the existing laws is driving them to desperation, and is one of the surest ways of depleting the congregations of the Churches and leaving these men and women without the "moral support" which the Church insists is the result of Christian teaching. That the "necessity of proof of criminality" should be the sole ground for a divorce, as at present, is a degrading and loathsome rather than a desirable law.

All right thinking men and women to-day realise that many causes contribute to the breaking-up of a marriage, and the impossibility of continued cohabitation; to say nothing of the growing conviction that it is an iniquity to breed children in an atmosphere of drunkenness, vice, or hatred.

Thousands and thousands of persons in this country have agreed to separate where neither has been guilty of the "graver cause necessary before an English court can decree a divorce," and it is these people who are demanding their freedom, and demanding it with no uncertain voice.

There are also thousands of sufferers who are entitled to divorce, yet are precluded from obtaining it owing to their poverty. Not all of these have entered into irregular unions, or "made their own arrangements," as so often stated by those who would leave things as they are. There is proof that large numbers of poor people save for years with the hope, often illusive, of "getting free."

The cry for help comes from all parts of the country—from Scotland, Wales, and even Ireland; from hospitals, camps, trenches, and prisoners in Germany.

A vast number of the separated in the country are potential parents, and it is certain that many desire to remarry and have families. The present system of permanent separation without the power to remarry condemns these people to lifelong celibacy or makes them a danger to society and the State.

Much has been said and written about the decline of the birth-rate, and the desirability of facilities for encouraging new birth, and it is unthinkable that while hasty war marriages between very young persons have been and are encouraged, which will assuredly increase the number of separations, these people will never after be allowed to remarry.

Are we to suppose that should these unhappy persons refuse celibacy as their lot in life, the Church is prepared to support the charge of being the cause of an enormous increase of irregular unions and illegitimacy? And what will the State and the people have to say to it?

The article on this question in one of the Church papers says:—"This is no mere Church question. We have seen the consequences of fluid marriage laws in many of the American States, and we dare not run similar risks." It is careful, however, not to point out the moral conditions prevailing in the State of South Carolina, where there is no divorce at all. Nor does it point out the more humane methods prevailing in America of dealing with this and other domestic questions by the establishment of "Courts of Domestic Relations" and "Mothers' Pensions."

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Yet it finishes up on this remarkable note:—"Certain it is that any legislative proposals of the kind will be met with the uncompromising opposition of the Church of England, which will fight every clause and every line of any measure which seeks to widen the doors of the Divorce Court."

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

Separation and Divorce.

The attitude of the Churches towards the more advanced proposals for divorce facilities is commented on severely in the statement we publish by request from the Union of which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is President. In our next issue there will be an earnest article by Mrs. Despard dealing with the evils created by separation without divorce. In the week-end Press is a terrible practical commentary on the whole question—an action brought against a boy of 18 by a girl of 18, his wife, for desertion, after three months of married life. If these young people separate at that age, it is almost inevitable that irregular unions will be the result. It is, however, a question which bristles with difficulties, and while many suffragists hold the strongest possible views about easier divorce, there are others who, as convinced churchwomen, will not entertain the idea. The only point on which all are agreed is equality of treatment for the sexes—that what is allowed to free a man should also free a woman.

Are We Satisfied?

No amount of amendments to the Criminal Law and no amount of public indignation seem to have weight with those charged with the administration of "justice." A man called Bracey, running a "hotel" in Craven-street for immoral purposes only, into which during one week ten women were seen to take 84 different men, has been sentenced to three months' hard labour. Such sentences, for persons of this description, are farcical; and we much regret that the magistrate responsible for it should be Mr. Grahame Campbell, from whom one expects better things. The redeeming point is that the women, also charged—we note that, as usual, only the women found on the premises, and none of the men customers, were haled into court—were fined and not imprisoned.

The Usual Omission.

It is a distressing fact, and one that possibly we should be used to by now, but which provokes no less indignation as the years go by, that the great organisation of Trades Unionism, at its congresses year by year, should treat the important question of the position of women, in the industrial and political worlds, with an indifference that is akin to contempt. As one more instance of the shortsightedness of the male publicist and politician, this should not surprise us; nor would it do so, in normal times. The times, however, are anything but normal; and it is really not much to expect that, with all the familiar world of the familiar ways of life toppling in fragments about their ears, those who claim to be able to "reconstruct" should at least show some sign that they understand what the new forces and elements are. Organised male labour, with the exception of an occasional jealous spasm or fretful prohibition, treats the woman question much as a bald man treats the fly settling on his head. A thing that can be brushed away; that may possibly return but is not important enough to bother about; that is the attitude of the Trades Unions. We believe they will find that the matter will not be so easily disposed of. Women have leapt, in the short space of the war and through its exigent demands, over obstacles which would under other circumstances have tripped them up and delayed their progress for another half-century. Their vision and their ambi-

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tion alike have widened. They have learned their value as workers, and have grasped the idea that the world and its work and its opportunities are their heritage, that these things are not the natural, heaven-destined monopoly of men. These "new women"—so different from those others who cleared the way for them and first gave them the vision, the "new women" of sixty years ago—cannot be brushed away like flies, nor whistled to heel like obedient terriers. It would be a great thing if some dawning of this knowledge were evinced at the great congresses of labour, where work is only dealt with as one of the prerogatives of the male sex.

The Fruits of Oppression

The deplorable condition of Russia to-day is the saddest and severest commentary that could possibly be made on the fruits of tyranny and bad government. It is not to be wondered at that, after centuries of the most cruel oppression at the hands of their own people, the proletariat of the Russian districts and provinces, released from the terror under which the nation groaned, should have lost its head and its balance, and should think more of revenge for wrongs, old grievances against old foes, and license for the wildest dreams of the liberty they have never before tasted, than of the new and alien menace of foreign invasion of which in their heady ignorance they know and understand so little. We can well imagine them flouting the German terror; it cannot in their eyes loom larger than that from which they have freed themselves. The pity of it is that in their wild whoop of freedom they cannot hear the reverberations of a heavier load of fetters, and can give no thought to the hosts of other workers, full of hopefulness for the destiny of mankind and with equal enthusiasm for democracy, whose hopes and whose plans—nay, whose very lives and national existence—these freedom-drunk prisoners are imperilling along with their own, while their leaders look on in impotent dismay. We cannot at this distance apportion the balance between Kerensky and Korniloff. The one desires to keep intact the freedom wrung from Russian tyrants; the other sees all Russia, and all that in her new hopes Russia stands for, in danger from foreign tyrants. It is incontestable that both have a measure of right on their side. It is disastrous they cannot come to an agreement.

ON OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

A Useful Line.

A very useful book—with a preface by that newly converted patron of woman in industry, Lord Northcliffe—is "Women's Work in Wartime," by H. M. Osborne. This is no mere empty eulogy of the wonders we have just been discovered to be capable of performing, it is a "handbook of employments," telling the women who want to get work about the work that they are wanted for, where to apply for it, and what they will be paid. A book of this kind can be brought up to date and extended indefinitely; it is a really good beginning that has been attempted by this author. The publisher is T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 8, Essex-street, Strand. The price is 2s.

A Voice from India.

The publication which bears the above name is published by the Minerva Publishing Co., 144, High Holborn, and it is an enterprise which should be of interest to women who feel drawn to the many-sided culture of the East. In "A Voice from India" the Editor aims at introducing to the Western reader the idealism and imagery of Indian thought, whether religious, literary, or traditional. No one will deny that some interpretation of our fellow-subjects, so far removed from us by historical, racial, and geographical conditions, is an essential prelude to right understanding. The Editor of this peri-

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dical has found a gap which he is endeavouring to bridge, and to introduce the new and old culture of his native land to English newspaper readers. The current number is to be had now from the publishers, price 3d.; the next issue will be the Christmas Number, in magazine form.

Interesting Pamphlets.

Messrs. Allen and Unwin, of Ruskin House, 40, Museum-street, W.C., have an interesting series of publications on the subject of Poland, for the Polish Information Committee. "Poland for the Poles," by Professor Charles Richet, is a specially stirring collection of addresses on the subject of Polish independence, by such authorities as Maeterlinck, Gabriel Séailles, and Richet. The firm also publishes "The Polish Review," a quarterly magazine devoted to "The Freedom of People and the Cause of Nationalities," at a price of 8s. per annum, post free.

"Some Thoughts on Education and the War," by R. H. Tawney, is published by the Workers' Educational Association, 14, Red Lion-square, Holborn, price 1d. At the International Suffrage Shop, 5, Duke-street, Adelphi, copies of a pamphlet by "A Suffragette," may be obtained, containing a history of the present Electoral Reform Bill, and the incidents that led to its framing. The price is 2d. "The Sword or the Cross? How to end the War," is an earnest appeal to the Christian spirit, by E. Cecil Beman, published by the Universal Publishing Co., Chorley, Lancashire, at the price of 6d. "The Free Land Proposal," by Milner Gibson, comes from the press of the People's Publishing Co., 5, Cathedral Yard, Manchester, price 1s., and is "a programme for social reconstruction," which should prove of great interest to those who look to the land question as the solution of modern social problems. The Howard Association (43, Devonshire Chambers, Bishopsgate) has produced, besides its annual report—a document of absorbing interest—a pamphlet by its secretary, Cecil Leeson, "The Child and the War." The Howard Association's matter is always well worth study, affording as it does information on many obscure social problems, and throwing light on the terrible struggles and handicaps surrounding the poor in the rearing and training of their children. "The Child and the War" is published by P. S. King and Son, Ltd., Orchard House, Westminster.

The Despard Arms, 123, Hampstead-road, N.W. 1.

Miss Boyle's Lecture.—When speaking on August 31, at a dinner given in her honour, Miss Boyle said she would reserve the story of her experiences for the lecture in aid of the Despard Arms. Make sure of your tickets, 1s. each, and make a note of the date, Sunday, September 23, 3.30 p.m., at the Minerva Café. Tea afterwards, 8d. each.

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