

# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND  
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## NOTES AND NEWS

### Women in the Senate of the Irish Free State Parliament.

The election of members of the Senate of the Irish Free State is now complete. Four women members are elected. These are: Mrs. Stopford Green, widow of the historian; Mrs. Costelloe, well known in Irish literary circles in London; Lady Desart, who has organized industrial work in Kilkenny; and Mrs. Wyse Power, who has much practical business knowledge and has served for four years on the Dublin Corporation, where her ability on finance questions has won general recognition.

### Equal Franchise.

In reply to Mr. Groves, Mr. Bridgeman said that he could make no statement on the question of the early introduction of legislation to extend the franchise to women of 21.

### Domestic Service.

Lieut.-Col. Nall asked the Minister of Labour whether able-bodied spinsters are allowed to draw unemployment benefit whilst vacancies in domestic service are available; and what steps are taken to prevent women and girls drawing benefit after refusing a situation? Sir Montagu Barlow replied that benefit is only paid to women who are normally employed otherwise than in private domestic service. Further, such women who are suitable for, and who refuse, domestic service are not granted benefit. Viscountess Astor, evidently weary of the continual ignorant attacks on these unemployed women, asked for an explanation to be given to the House that these women cannot be taken into domestic service unless they are trained, and Mr. Thorne suggested that if domestic service were made more humane more girls would go into it.

### The Grant to the Central Committee.

Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck asked the Minister of Labour whether he has now guaranteed the sum of £50,000 towards the training schemes of the Central Committee on Women's Employment on condition that the Committee guarantee an equal amount; and whether, in view of the facts that this sum will only train 5,000 women for three months, and that there are 176,000 unemployed women, he will make some further provision for their training? Sir Montague Barlow replied: "The

Government contribution, up to a maximum of £50,000, is £1 for every £1 disbursed by the Committee from their own funds up to 31st March next on the training of unemployed women who give an undertaking to enter domestic service on the conclusion of training. The grant is additional to the sum of £50,000 which was made to the Committee last year, and which, with the Committee's contributions, brings the sums allocated to the purpose up to a total of £250,000. I understand that the funds at the Committee's disposal are adequate to meet the demand for this form of training, as far as it can now be estimated, and I am afraid that there are at present no other openings for which unemployed women could advantageously be trained."

### Mui Tsai.

In answer to a question of Mr. Charles Roberts, Mr. Ormsby Gore said that the local legislation necessary to secure the abolition of the Mui Tsai system will be enacted in the near future, and the administrative machinery to implement it will be completed early in 1923. Colonel Wedgwood asked whether homes for those girls who are emancipated are being provided in Hong Kong, or what is being done to get them away from their servitude? Mr. Ormsby Gore said he would find out and report.

### Mothers' Pensions.

Mr. Edwards asked if the cost of a practicable scheme of mothers' pensions is estimated at £50,000,000 a year, what the present cost is for maintaining those who would be eligible for the pensions, and whether an opportunity will be given for discussion on this matter? Mr. Baldwin replied that the proportion of mothers at present receiving relief is small, and that he could not provide special facilities for a discussion. As Mr. Davison remarked, this is one of the most important questions of the day, and it should be debated.

### Mrs. Wintringham's Appointment.

Mrs. Wintringham has been asked if she will serve as one of the members of a Departmental Committee which is being appointed, with Lord Linlithgow as chairman, to inquire into the methods and costs of selling and distributing agricultural, horticultural, and dairy produce in Great Britain, and to con-



sider whether, and if so by what means, the disparity between the price received by the producer and that paid by the consumer can be diminished. We agree with the Ministry of Agriculture that this Committee ought to include a woman, and that Mrs. Wintringham is especially suited for this appointment.

#### Legitimation Bill.

In reply to Captain Bowyer, Mr. Bridgeman said that he was not yet in a position to make any statement as to whether the Government intends to introduce the Legitimation Bill next year.

#### Married Women Teachers.

Colonel Wedgwood asked the President of the Board of Education whether he was aware that education authorities are in many instances contemplating the dismissal of married women teachers, that non-provided schools are expected to follow suit, that closing the doors to married women teachers will result in encouraging other employers of woman labour to dismiss their married employees, and that if this course is persisted in and universally adopted it would result in dismissing possibly some of the best teachers; and whether, in view of the growing resentment that is developing amongst teachers on this account, he would take steps to advise local authorities to refrain from adopting this course? Major Barnston (who answered in the absence of Mr. Wood) said the answer to the first two parts of the question was in the affirmative. As regarded the third part, he could express no opinion. The principal reason for the action on the part of certain local education authorities in terminating the employment of married women teachers was a reluctance to employ such teachers at a time when other teachers who are dependent on their profession for a livelihood are unable to find employment. He had no authority to prevent local education authorities from exercising their discretion in the matter, but he believed they would exercise it with discrimination and humanity.

#### Women in the Civil Service.

Lieut.-Col. Pownall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of the fact that three fresh appointments of women are about to be made to fill vacancies in the administrative class of the Civil Service, he will state what precisely in the nature of the duties attaching to these three vacant posts renders them appropriate to be filled by women, but not appropriate to be filled from the class of ex-Service temporary administrative officers, some of whom are at present under notice of dismissal? Mr. Baldwin replied that it was impossible within the limits of question and answer to give details of the posts, but he assured Lieut.-Col. Pownall that they were specially appropriate to be filled by women. The extent to which the claims of women to equality of opportunity have to give way to those of ex-Service men is shown by the fact that, of some 200 vacancies since mid-summer of 1919, it has only been possible to fill a maximum of three by women.

#### Married Women in Government Departments.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his attention had been called to the question of married women employed in Government Departments whose husbands are in full-time occupations, and whether he will exercise such discrimination as will lead to the employment of many ex-Service men who are now idle? Mr. Baldwin said that established women officers are normally required to resign their appointments on marriage. The Lytton Committee recommended that, save where such action would entail considerable hardship or be seriously prejudicial to the efficiency of the Department, the services of all married women, temporarily employed, should be dispensed with. Action had been taken on these lines, and Mr. Baldwin was not aware of any cases of the kind to which Mr. Gould referred.

#### Supervisory Women Officers.

Mr. Wignall asked the Minister of Pensions whether many supervisory women officers in his Department receive less than those supervised, and whether he would refer the matter to the Industrial Court? Major Tryon replied that the rates of pay of temporary supervisors are in all cases higher than those of the grades whom they supervise. There are a few instances where a temporary clerk is temporarily drawing less pay than a clerk in

the grade below. This is due to the fact that the minimum pay of the higher grade is below the maximum pay of the lower. These scales of pay are, he said, common to the temporary clerical staff of all Government Departments and were agreed with the staff associations concerned. Mr. Wignall then asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he knew of the petition, which was presented before the dissolution of the last Parliament, appealing for an Industrial Court hearing of the case for and against further reductions in the rates of pay of temporary women civil servants? It can be proved that the majority of women who would receive the proposed reduction in salary already have insufficient food and clothing for full efficiency to be maintained, having to contribute to the support of others on inadequate wages, and in view of this fact Mr. Wignall urged that such a hearing should take place now. Mr. Baldwin's very unsatisfactory reply shows that he has no intention of giving the women clerks a just hearing.

#### Crosby Hall.

For some time the British Federation of University Women has been contemplating the acquisition of Crosby Hall, so that women graduates from all parts of the world who come to London to study may find a home. The present owners of Crosby Hall have given the Federation a six months' option for the purchase of a five hundred years' lease of the whole property at the remarkably generous price of £10,000. It is calculated that at least £25,000 is needed to make it possible to acquire the hall and build a wing for forty residents which can be run on a self-supporting basis. With further funds another wing could be built. The scheme has been enthusiastically welcomed by the bodies of university women in the associated countries, and an endowment fund has been opened and donations may be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Miss L. F. Nettlefold, LL.B., at the B.F.U.W. Office, 92 Victoria Street, S.W. 1. Sir William Plender and Sir Robert Kindersley are joint honorary treasurers.

#### Women's Peace Conference.

A resolution was adopted by the Conference of the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom, which met at The Hague last week. It urges the allied Premiers to devise reconstruction measures which shall restore confidence in the world, make it possible to stabilise the exchange, build up international commerce again, and renew international co-operation. In her opening speech Miss Addams, the President, said the "New Peace" they were there to discuss could only be constituted on a large basis of right and mutual understanding if the treaties of peace were revised by victors, vanquished and neutrals on an equal footing.

#### Women Police Patrols.

Captain Wedgwood Benn returned to the attack last week, and asked the Home Secretary whether inquiries into the question of the women police were yet completed. Mr. Bridgeman was not able to make any statement on the subject.

#### Nurses' Registration.

In 1919 an Act was passed by Parliament providing for the registration of nurses for the sick. Under that Act a General Nursing Council was established, one of whose duties was the formation of the Register of Nurses. Work on its preparation has been going on steadily since that time and the Minister of Health has just given notice as required by Statute that the Register has now been compiled. The effect of this notice will be that after three months from the 5th December (the date of the Notice) the unauthorized use of the title "registered nurse" will render a person liable to a fine not exceeding £10 for a first offence and £50 for any subsequent offence. The first Register is now being printed and will be published by the General Nursing Council, 12 York Gate, Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

*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.

## NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER.

By OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT.

*[The views expressed in this column are those of our Parliamentary correspondent, and are not our editorial opinion. Like so many other things in this paper they are expressly controversial, and comment upon them will be welcomed.—ED.]*

We said last week that the Party spirit was returning to the House of Commons, and this week has indeed borne out the statement. Not since the pre-war period has such a riot of accusation and counter-accusation been known at Westminster; and we must confess that the sight and sound of the turmoil is unpleasant. There is, in the first place, the grand attack of the ex-Ministers upon Lord Curzon, begun in the election time by Mr. Winston Churchill, and now boldly pursued by Lord Birkenhead. No doubt it is very tempting to attack "his Lordship". His personal peculiarities of manner, and the aroma of pomp with which he surrounds himself, must often be galling alike to colleagues and enemies; but in the matter of the Gounaris letters he seems to be in the right of it all the same. It is always a dangerous business for one member of a Cabinet to attack another, and when one is out and the other still in it has an ugly look. And yet no doubt the temptation is almost irresistible. To the public, however, the importance of the incident really lies in the evidently careless and casual way in which matters of grave public concern have been handled. It makes one exceedingly uneasy.

The second scandal of the week was the attack made upon Mr. Asquith by the Labour Member for Stirling and Clackmannan—an attack which raised the House to a greater show of feeling for the Liberal leader than it has shown for many years. On the face of it, the thing was unpardonable—begun without notice, worded with offence, and not withdrawn when denied. In manner, and no doubt also in intention, Mr. Johnston was as offensive as he could be, and it is natural enough that the House became exceedingly excited. And yet here, too, the temptation to attack was no doubt very great, and it is worth while to try to stretch the imagination to understand it. The new Labour Members, or at any rate some of them, come to Westminster with a very definite intention, namely, to attempt

to break up the capitalist system. They see about them a settled order and an assumption that "as things have been they remain". They begin to feel conscious of the subtly moderating influences of responsibility: they see about them men whose whole outlook is inconceivably unlike their own. They begin to realize what they are up against in a House with a Conservative majority, and they feel that they must at once begin to protest. They look at the other Progressive people, and find them just as firmly opposed to any sudden break-up of the social order as the "Tories" themselves: they find everyone assuming that prosperity for this country lies in the revival of the very thing they look upon as the arch-enemy,—big business. And so they hit out wherever they can. They disregard tact and wisdom, and even the ordinary rules of honourable conduct. What do they care? Down with the capitalists root and branch. The interjection of Mr. David Kirkwood during the angry cries which greeted Mr. Johnston's refusal to withdraw, typified the whole thing. "Listen to their united front," he said. And so it is they see it. The United Front of the rich against the poor, of the haves against the have-nots. It maddens them and drives them wild. Now, for our part, we do not see the world like that, nor do we approve the ways and means these new Members are adopting. We are shocked and troubled by what they say and do: but for all that they have more good stuff behind it, and more disinterested human idealism than the baiting of the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston.

The business of the week has been incessant, and there has been so much to be done (and above all so much to be said) that the hours have been very late indeed. The Session, too, has been prolonged, and the quiet sleep of the Treasury Bench much troubled with dreams. Let the Prime Minister say what he pleases, it is no rest cure to be in Parliament in these days.

## WOMEN'S SERVICE.

The Woman's Movement is great and wide, with many aspects. In the early days it had two fundamental objects to attain, namely, the securing of education for women, and the securing of political enfranchisement. Both those objects have been attained—not quite entirely in either case, it is true, but substantially. And now there remains the next steps. The ultimate goal is, of course, the real freedom of women to live their lives under conditions as good and in all ways parallel to those of the men of their place and generation. The practical problem is how the next steps towards this end are to be taken, and this is the problem which has been exercising those numerous women's organizations existing up and down the country which have the equality of men and women as their object.

In the old suffrage days the interrelations of these societies were comparatively easy to formulate. Since 1918, however, the field of endeavour having both widened and diminished in consequence of enfranchisement, matters have become more confused. Some of the groups of workers have cared most for one aspect of the new work, some for another. All have remained in general sympathy with each other over the whole field: but some have regarded the education of the woman voter as their immediate task, and others have concentrated upon the reform of the law as it touches moral offences. Others, again, have considered that the outstanding problem of the next decade is the economic one, and that the greatest of the remaining advances towards the freedom of women will be the improvement of their wage-earning and money-holding position.

Among the societies affiliated to the N.U.S.E.C., the London Society for Women's Service has always put this object in the forefront of its programme, and last week at its annual meeting it formally decided that for the future it would make this its sole concern and that it would be ready to work both inside and outside the Metropolitan area. This decision is an important one, both in itself and in its reactions upon the interrelations of women's societies. That is not the most important aspect of their

decision, interesting though it undoubtedly is. The important question is whether or not the decision will work out to the advantage of the general movement, whether, in fact, it is true that economic progress is the next step, and whether, if it is, concentration upon that object is possible and desirable.

We do not propose to answer these questions editorially. In a self-governing Union it is for constituent societies to do this for themselves: and the matter is worth their very serious consideration.

The argument advanced by the London Society for its present course is based upon the experience of the Women's Service and Employment work they have been doing ever since the outbreak of the war. It is, in outline, that progress towards economic equality depends not so much upon propaganda and mental conversion as upon material facts. Each woman wage earner must do her personal share in the equal pay struggle, and to do that she must be fully equipped for the equal work side of her case. She must have the opportunity to learn her job: and to that end she must have access to all the skilled advice and information upon openings that is available. There are, of course, many industrial and professional organizations working to that end. There are the great Trade Unions, some of them friendly and some unfriendly to the main feminist contention in this matter. There are political societies adopting "Equal Pay for Equal Work" as a general motto, but unable to take concrete steps to realize it. And there is Women's Service, whose aim is to collect outside support for the special technical societies, and to focus the general political sympathy upon those particular and topical examples which come within the reach of Parliamentary or Local control. There is no doubt that the task is a great as it is a difficult one. The reputation of Women's Service in such matters stands deservedly very high. It will need, however, the living support of a great many different kinds of people if it is really to be equal to the great task to which it has dedicated itself.



## INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS IN THE EAST END.

From a SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

The return from prosperity and the rosy hopes born of war time conditions, to the sombre hues, the disappointment and the dreary outlook of war's aftermath is the tragedy which is being enacted in the East End at this moment.

Gradually the worker's home is growing barer and more depleted, first of its small luxuries and comforts, then of the very necessities of life. Men and women become shabbier, more worn and despondent, and even the children are seen to grow paler and thinner, in spite of the efforts that have been made on their behalf.

This change is, in great part, the result of the unemployment which has prevailed since July 1920. "Unemployment is not only more severe than ever before, it is nearly twice as serious as in the 'bad year' of 1909, more than twice as bad as in 1908 and 1910, and more than four times as bad as in any other year before the war."<sup>1</sup>

When the period of depression began, even among the very poor there were war savings to fall back upon, but as these become exhausted there is a tendency to return to habits of pawning and borrowing. Not long ago the case of a poor woman who committed suicide after having borrowed at a rate of interest of 400% was brought to the notice of the public, and appeared to astonish the newspaper reporters who, perhaps, were ignorant of the fact that, in the district where the incident occurred, a suicide because of debts contracted at a rate of interest of from 400 to 1,000% is anything but an unheard of event. An old man who was visited on the day of the occurrence declared—with some pride—that both his neighbours had killed themselves, and one of them was a woman deeply in debt who could not face her creditors. The money-lender is, for the most part, a woman living in the same street as her victims, or "just round the corner". Very often she takes the initiative by tempting her improvident neighbours with the offer of a shilling or two to go towards making up the sum due for rent when the collector is on his rounds; or, worse still, she may stand in or near a public-house ready to provide the means for obtaining a drink. It is difficult to see what practical purpose is served by allowing this lending at an exorbitant rate of interest to continue, since hardly ever is the debt contracted for a productive purpose. It is merely an attempt to balance the budget of a weekly expenditure which, in most cases, will be not easier, but still more difficult to balance on the week following that upon which the debt was incurred.

But not all women are shiftless. When the man's wage becomes insufficient for the upkeep of the home, many wives and mothers try to eke out what is needed by earnings of their own, and family life, too often, must be sacrificed to the need of maintaining the family. However detrimental to the children the mother's absence from home may be, her going out to work is often the only possible solution of the problem of existence.

Families which include young girls and women living at home are, in many cases, relying almost entirely upon the earnings of the latter—the masculine element being merely "out of work," and these young women are no doubt the proudest and happiest members of the community. Young girls, though, for the most part unable to secure the clerical work which they so ardently desire, are being taken on in large numbers in girls' trades, especially in the clothing trades. Unlike boys of their own age, they are not excluded from skilled work by the Trade Union regulations that limit the number of apprentices which a firm may employ.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the fact that work in the clothing trades is plentiful in many cases has enabled girls to obtain rates of payment well above the legal minimum.

<sup>1</sup> *Unemployment in East London*, pages 8 and 9.

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of apprentices to the number of skilled men which any one firm may employ varies with the trade, and is vastly lower than the number of boys anxious and suitable for entrance into each trade. Glass bevelers admit no apprentices at all. Fortunately this is not a trade which boys clamour for.

Useful and necessary as the minimum rates of payment fixed by the Trades Boards undoubtedly are, yet their action of late would seem to be that of lowering the learner's wages. Even during periods of depression the tendency of most of the firms which came under our observation was to deviate but slightly from the war-time standard, until, after a new scale of minimum rates had been fixed by the Trades Boards, some of the payments came down by leaps and bounds. In the feather trade, for instance, the beginner's wages decreased from 15s. per week in 1920 to about 6s. 9d. now. Dressmakers and milliners paid 10s. per week quite willingly to girls of 14 in 1920 when the Trade Board minimum was 9s. per week. Now that this minimum has been lowered to 5s. it is very difficult to prevail upon any mother to allow her daughter to accept that wage, and when firms are busy they must offer from 6s. to 10s. per week in order to secure the learners that they need. In the tailoring trade some firms are offering 10s. and even 12s. per week instead of the Trade Board minimum of 7s. per week. Others again cannot be persuaded to pay more than they are legally obliged to. In sweet factories beginners' wages have fallen from about 13s. 9d. to 7s. 9d. per week.

As regards women's wages, some firms have scarcely begun to cut down their piece rates, while others have made the most of the opportunity. In the majority of cases the complaint is not that the reduction is great, but that a reduction, however small, is a calamity when it is imperative to increase one's earnings because the rest of the household is out of work.

Women's trades are, for the most part, seasonal. During the busy season employers in the tailoring trade complained that skilled handworkers were "simply not to be had," and while the busy season lasted good money was earned by handworkers as well as by machinists.

But women's work can hardly be looked upon as an ideal solution of the problem of Unemployment. It is said to have a deteriorating effect upon the stronger sex.

A few days ago a mother took a bright little girl to an Employment Bureau, declaring that the work which she wished the child to obtain must be of such nature that it could not possibly be carried on in the home, nor must it on any account involve learning a trade. "I, myself," she explained, "have suffered too much that way already. When you know something you get leave to do it; yes, you work hard all your life, and then what does nothing gets looked after by others. No trade for my girl!" No doubt at moments when men's jobs are scarce the man who is willing to seek work, yet is perhaps not sufficiently energetic to obtain it, might well be drawn towards a woman who could adapt her working capacity to his requirements and those of the home. To propose to a young woman who would forfeit regular earnings of from £2 to £3 per week by marrying is quite a different matter. In cases of engaged couples the greater security attached to the woman's earnings and their consequent superiority over those of the man has caused the ceremony to be indefinitely postponed. The manager of a large firm just visited gave as his reason for a scarcity of vacancies the fact that none were being created by the departure of the older girls, who, at ordinary times, would be passing out of the firm in order to marry.

And well might a worker dread the moment when the only possibility of substituting a woman's earnings for those of a man involves the abandonment of the home and the neglect of the children. It is only by becoming a homemaker that the mother of young children can hope to benefit them by her work, and this she often does at great cost to herself. But though homework is useful for subsidizing a husband's earnings or even his Unemployment benefit, it is now no longer possible to depend upon it for the support of the home, since homeworkers are chiefly used as a convenience for handling the overflow of work which accumulates during the rush seasons, and they are more or less left out of account during the months of slackness.

Homeworkers have not benefited by the prosperity of the clothing trades to the same extent as indoor workers have. Machinists working at home must strain every nerve to try to force an old treadle-machine to compete in speed with the up-to-date plant of the big workshops, and the same piece rates which yield a generous wage to the power machinist may, in some cases, mean a starvation wage to the homemaker. Yet there

are women with children to support who prefer the homework on account of the unlimited number of hours which they can devote to it, whereby, adding night work to day work, they can succeed in making up the amount that is needed for the upkeep of the home. Or, rather, it is truer to say they would prefer it, were it not that theirs is the first work to cease when the slack season begins, and that their periods of unemployment are not relieved by the Unemployment benefit, since a homemaker can have no part in it. If, even in the clothing trades the homemaker is badly off, her case is far more pitiable in other trades which have suffered from prolonged depression.

But even when plentiful and well paid the gain secured by women's earnings is mostly cancelled by the loss involved by the mother's over-work. Too often her health breaks down in her attempt to combine the care of the home with night and day work, and, in the end, she must fall back upon the parish.

It is due to the Guardians' scale of out-relief—generous as compared to pre-war days—that actual hunger can still be averted. One shudders at the thought of these allowances being reduced. At present the workers' minds seem to be directed towards a reduction in the rates, and they are not sufficiently far-sighted to understand that this desired reduction might, in the end, lead to the collapse of their own home. The ratepayer, dependent though he may be upon a continuance of circumstances over which he has no control, does not visualize the possibility of himself becoming an applicant for out-relief, and is easily won over to the side of economy.

The extension of Unemployment benefits has also prevented the collapse of countless homes, and there is cause for gratitude

even though one agrees that provision of work would be preferable. Unemployment benefit and out-relief have averted starvation, and, while the suffering is great, it is in most cases possible to preserve an appearance of respectability.

It is always easier to criticize than to help. There are some who may think that the men's high wages have helped to produce unemployment, and that the working man is to blame for his lack of co-operation, for his desire to benefit the workers in his own trade, regardless, perhaps, of trade as a whole, or of workers in general. But those who have watched men and women making use of the opportunities which a period of temporary prosperity had afforded them, and who now see their painful struggle and pathetic unwillingness to return to a lower standard of life, cannot leave it at that. It is impossible not to grieve as one sees misery gradually closing in upon the workers, and feels them to be sinking back to the lower level from which they had so joyfully arisen.

Nor is it merely a question of a return to pre-war conditions, but one of pre-war conditions aggravated by the war. Higher rents must be paid for houses growing daily more insanitary through unavoidable overcrowding; nerves are broken, health is impaired, the mind is weakened, and only the recollection remains of a short and fleeting golden age when women had the opportunity to improve their homes and to take adequate care of their children. Has war alone the power to do this, one is tempted to ask, and must our hopes be centred upon further destruction of life in order to show the feasibility of raising the standard of living among the workers who are the strength of the nation?

## DIVORCE LAW REFORM: ANOTHER VIEW.

By MARY ALEXANDER.

Readers of the *WOMAN'S LEADER* will remember that in the issue of October 20 an article was contributed by Mr. Athelstan Rendall, M.P., giving an account of the efforts he had made to secure alterations in the existing divorce laws, and of their repeated frustration through the influence of Church organizations. Recognizing that Mr. Rendall and his colleagues are sincerely convinced of the need and the beneficence of their measures, and that they see in their opponents a body of persons actuated by religious prejudice to a total disregard of the injustice and hardships which the present divorce laws occasion, we respond to the Editor's invitation and offer another view, knowing that in a journal of so modern an outlook every view will receive a courteous hearing.

Mr. Rendall suggests by his use of the epithet "sacerdotalists" and "their Church" that his opponents are a small body of fanatics whose opposition is of an ex-parte character, and he regards them, apparently, as having a Church of their own. It should hardly be necessary to point out in reply that the very bedrock of this apparently fanatical opposition is:—(1) the belief that re-marriage during the life-time of the other party has been forbidden by Jesus Christ—possibly with one exception, viz., in the case of adultery. We say "possibly," because this solitary exception is supported by the text of one gospel only. In the other gospels the prohibition is absolute, and this absolute injunction is supported by the general teaching of other New Testament writings. (2) The belief that Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority for all men and women who profess and call themselves Christians; that He is Lord and Master of all Christians and not merely of some particular sect of "sacerdotalists." We go further: we claim Him as "the Lord of all good life." (3) The belief that Christ's prohibition rests on the indissolubility of marriage as a natural institution (see Mark x, 6). "From the beginning of the creation" the Creator intended that the union of man and woman should have a monogamous and indissoluble character; or, as we might paraphrase in modern speech "Monogamy is a creative idea in the mind of God," our modern eyes looking forwards, not backwards, in history for the complete realization of the Divine idea in the evolution of the human race. (4) The belief that since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, man's nature has been reinforced by a power which we may or may not agree to call super-natural, but which is, nevertheless, to human experience for nineteen centuries, a power coming from without themselves enabling men and women to reach a moral standard deemed unattainable by an earlier age.

This power is not available merely for the unco' guid: it is Catholic, i.e. for every man who desires it and is willing to receive it on certain conditions.

This somewhat theological disquisition has been pursued in order to explain that the Christian churchman's opposition to extending facilities for divorce rests for him on an indisputable Divine authority, and on the condition that Christ does not ask of His followers what He does not give enabling power to perform. It is in this hope alone that the indissoluble marriage contract is undertaken by Christians.

Marriage is only one phase in the whole Christian life lived in the sphere of the higher spiritual power technically known as "grace."

But, it will be objected, on their own principles, how can Churchmen in justice demand a rigoristic standard from men and women who do not subscribe to Christian dogmas? Frankly, they can not.

Nevertheless, they invite the consideration of the following propositions:—(1) the State in their country is still nominally Christian. When it definitely repudiates Christianity as an ultimate authority, Churchmen may be able to retire to the more comfortable position of asking merely for liberty to live by their own moral laws as a free corporation in the modern State. Until that day comes they are morally bound to raise their voices in protest at legislation which is contrary to the expressed teaching of Jesus Christ. (2) Human experience has proved—what belief in its Divine sanction would pre-suppose—that monogamy is of the highest value to human society. Churchmen oppose facilities for divorce and re-marriage because they see in them retrogression. They are a step backwards to the conditions of animal life, when the evolution of human family life demands stability and continuity of parental care. They are indeed "sacerdotalists," in the sense that they believe, in so doing, they stand upon the Godward side for human kind—which is the priestly office. (3) The ideal of indissoluble marriage, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health," is inter-twined with the Christian principles of self-sacrifice for the unfortunate and afflicted, for even the very sinful, and with the Christian belief in the efficacy of vicarious sacrifice for the redemption of human society.

Do these ideals make no appeal where the Christian facts may not be altogether accepted? Are they worth preserving, or is it better to exchange them for legislation which desires to eliminate such hard cases?



NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

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NEWS FROM SOCIETIES.

EDINBURGH S.E.C.—Deputation from the Child Assault Protest Committee to the Lord Provost's Committee.

A large and representative deputation from the Child Assault Protest Committee was recently received by the Lord Provost's Committee. Among the Societies represented were all the Co-operative Women's Guilds, all the Women's Political Societies and Labour Groups, the Medical, Nursing, and Child Welfare Societies, Juvenile Societies, Vigilance, and Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The deputation was introduced by Councillor Mrs. Millar, who said that the delegates present from the Societies represented a membership of at least 8,000 persons. She stated that the Committee had been formed about two years ago, in order to watch the conduct of all cases of child assault, to press for the more stringent treatment of such crimes by the Courts, and to urge for greater efforts on the part of the Municipality for the prevention of child assault in the City. Dr. Aimée Gibbs, who was the first speaker for the deputation, brought forward four points for the consideration of the Lord Provost's Committee, especially in connection with the employment of women police in the Criminal Investigation Department:— (1) the need for having women police in the witness-box with children giving evidence; (2) that a policewoman should take evidence in cases of assault from little children, both for the sake of the child itself and in the interests of obtaining the facts of the case; (3) that investigation of serious cases, such as incest child murder, should be carried out by women police, and that it was necessary in order to obtain corroborative evidence that there should be two policewomen; (4) the desirability of having women police for special watches with children. For these purposes, she said, at least two women were necessary in the Criminal Investigation Department. Mrs. Wilkie (Co-operative Women's Guild) pleaded for the appointment of uniformed policewomen, stating that she, as a working woman, was greatly concerned for the protection of children from assault, and said

that it was no economy to permit the crime and have the cost of prosecution and imprisonment. Mrs. Gould (Co-operative Women's Guild) said that she was a working woman, and represented some hundreds of working mothers, and knew that in her district (Easter Road) the anxiety the mothers had in permitting their little children from 3 to 6 years of age to go out in the streets. She knew of many cases of assault on little children which had taken place and had never come under the notice of the police. Mrs. Glass thanked the Committee for hearing the deputation. In reply, the Lord Provost said that, as a former magistrate, he appreciated some of the difficulties which had been put forward. He assured the deputation that the matter would receive the greatest consideration of the Committee.

NEWPORT W.C.A.

A meeting on "Rotary" for women only was held at the Town Hall on 29th November, Mrs. Horace Lyne in the chair. The speaker, the Rev. Thomas Richards, dealt with the origin of the Rotary movement and its high and altruistic ideals. The meeting was well attended, and the audience manifested its interest at the close of the address by questioning the speaker.

SOUTH WALES.

We are very glad indeed to welcome the affiliation of two large and influential Women Citizen Associations in South Wales—Abertillery and Ebbw Vale. A recent visit to well-attended and enthusiastic meetings of both these societies revealed the fact that admirable educational work among women voters had already been carried out in these towns, though comparatively little work on the programme of the N.U. has been done in South Wales during the last few years. Closer association with these two Societies will be a source of strength to the N.U., and will, we hope, be the beginning of further developments in Wales.

PROHIBITION OF FOREIGN WOMEN IN TOLERATED HOUSES.

(Abridged Memorandum.)

During the Third Assembly of the League of Nations (September, 1922), the following Resolution was adopted:—

That, in view of the fact that the system of State Regulation which exists in certain countries is thought in many quarters to encourage the traffic in women, the Advisory Committee should be asked by the Council to consider whether, pending the abolition of the system, it could be agreed that no foreign woman should be employed or carry on her profession as a prostitute in any licensed houses. . . .

ATTITUDE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORAL AND SOCIAL HYGIENE.

The Executive Committee of the A. M. & S. H. has carefully considered this matter, and is unable to support that part of the Resolution dealing with the prohibition of foreign women in licensed brothels. . . .

Nevertheless, the Resolution is a most important one, and we are glad that it was supported by Mrs. Coombe-Tennant (Great Britain) and Mrs. Dale (Australian Commonwealth), and adopted by the Assembly, as it must inevitably raise the whole question of regulation and the tolerated brothels. . . .

The A. M. & S. H. attitude on these matters is necessarily defined by the principles of the International Abolitionist Federation. We are out for the total abolition of "maisons de tolérance," and we cannot have anything to do with attempts to improve the brothel regulations, nor can we give active assistance even to schemes designed to afford greater protection to the women in the brothels. We fully sympathise with and appreciate the intention, but no Abolitionist can support special legislation or regulations concerning prostitutes, or servants, in licensed brothels for the following reasons:—

1. In nearly every country in the world where State-regulated Prostitution exists it has no legal basis and no statutory recogni-

tion. It is, in fact, an illegality. If, however, we consent to laying down regulations forbidding foreign women to be in licensed houses this has two important results.

(a) It implies acquiescence in the presence in such houses of women who are not foreigners as either prostitutes or servants.

(b) It gives legal recognition and status to the "maisons de tolérance" and to the whole system of regulated prostitution.

2. Any such regulations would have to be carried out by and through the assistance of the "police des moeurs." Flexner, in paying a tribute to the excellent reputation of the European police, adds:—

But this exemplary reputation does not belong to the morals police. Once more the head officials are nowhere involved; charges of corruption and grave impropriety on the part of the patrolmen in the morals service are, however, all too common. The situation created by regulation is indeed an impossible one.

Prostitution is treated as inevitable; it is authorized and "regulated" on the ground that men will indulge themselves. And yet the morals police, who are closest to it, are expected to hold aloof! Again, women are exploited by pimps, by liquor-dealers, by bordell-keepers; yet regulation assumes that the morals police, who are every moment in position to sell favours, exemptions, and privileges, will refrain from doing so.—(Prostitution in Europe, p. 270.)

It is essential to the brothel-keepers that they should be able to obtain what is so graphically and terribly described as "fresh goods"; it is repugnant to the authorities of any country that their own nationals should be in their own brothels. The conjunction of these two factors open up possibilities of almost certain bribery and corruption.

In the view of this Association the "police des moeurs" in all Regulationist countries are too closely connected with the brothel-keepers to be a suitable or reliable body to entrust with the carrying-out of regulations for the protection of women in brothels. The "maisons tolérées" are so closely linked on the one hand with the "police des moeurs," and on the other hand with the traffic in women, that the three really form one system. Any attempt to enlist one part of the system in destroying another part is not likely to be successful.

Moreover, the proposal does not include any suggestion of repatriation. Foreign women turned out of a licensed house will either remove themselves (or be removed) to one of the many unlicensed houses which everywhere exist in the shadow of the licensed ones. It would be in the power of the morals police either to turn them out of, or allow them to remain in, the licensed houses. Whichever course they took, such foreign women would be liable to even greater intimidation by the police than are the non-foreign women. We are unable to see, therefore, from a practical point of view, how such a measure would reduce the traffic in women, but we do see that it is likely to promote grave abuses under the special powers exercised by the "police des moeurs."

3. Even under the best administrative conditions the proposal could not be carried out unless there was a special definition, agreed to by international covenant, as to what is meant by the term "foreign women." The complexities of the nationality laws in the various countries renders such a definition extraordinarily difficult and offer the greatest possibilities of error and fraud in proving nationality. Even if a suitable working definition of "foreign women" could be internationally agreed upon it would, in a large number of cases, be evaded by deliberate lying and by falsification or exchange of papers.

An example of the difficulties in deciding nationality appears in *The Times* (7th December, 1922). An English woman married a Dutchman. He left her. On application to the Dutch Consul she was informed she was not a Dutch subject as she had failed to register every three years in accordance with Dutch law. According to English law, however, she was still Dutch in consequence of her marriage.

The above items give the general grounds of our objection. As Abolitionists, we cannot do anything to improve a system or an institution which we declare to be abominable, nor can we agree to a proposal which implicitly recognizes the brothel slavery of any woman, foreign or otherwise.

CORRESPONDENCE AND REPORTS.

STATE PURCHASE AND CARLISLE.

MADAM,—Your readers will notice that Mrs. Whiton's letter admirably supports my case. She speaks of the assistants in the reconstructed houses under private management selling—as business men—as much as possible of what there is to sell. This keen enterprise under State management would be safe enough and especially so if (as at Carlisle) the assistants got commission on their sales of non-intoxicants. But when we remember that practically 90 per cent. of these privately owned premises would be tied-houses it is an entirely different matter. It is idle to assume that, say, Messrs. Bass will run their reconstructed tied-houses or promote their (tied)-assistants for any other reason than selling as much as possible of one commodity, i.e. Messrs. Bass's own bottled beers. Enlargement and reconstruction then ceases to be safe.

M. COTTERELL.

WOMEN'S PIONEER HOUSING.

Women's Pioneer Housing, Ltd., held its second General Annual Meeting at 92 Victoria Street, on 25th November. Good progress was reported in the provision of unfurnished flats for professional women. The Society now owns six houses, three of which are converted into flats and three are in process of conversion. The Chairman, Mrs. Ralph Durand, was able to announce that the Society was doing so well that the committee confidently expects to declare a full dividend of 6 per cent. to the shareholders at the next meeting of shareholders, which will be held in February next. The Society appealed for more investors, so that capital may be available for the purchase and conversion of more houses.

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## COMING EVENTS.

## LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION.

DEC. 15. Nottingham University College. 8 p.m. Speaker: J. E. Herbert, Esq.

DEC. 17. Dudley. Speaker: Rt. Hon. Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P.

DEC. 18. New College Literary Society. 8.15 p.m. Speaker: Miss Holtby.

DEC. 19. Wallasey Town Hall. 8 p.m. Speakers: Rt. Hon. Sir Maurice de Bunsen, Bt., G.C.M.G. Miss Muriel Currey, O.B.E.

## NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN TEACHERS.

JAN. 2-5. Annual Conference. Technical College, Cardiff.

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DEC. 18. "At Home." 7.30-10 p.m. Bramdean, Headingley.

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