

# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

## AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

#### The Opening of Parliament.

The Opening of Parliament on 10th February will lack inevitably that touch of excitement for which we have been accustomed to look at this time of the year. For this year's opening is not that of a new Parliament, nor even of a new session. The King's Speech, with its forecast of forthcoming legislation, was made in December, and we know pretty well what we have to expect for better or for worse. Nevertheless, we confess that our pulses quicken to a certain extent. Many of the statements in the King's Speech were necessarily vague. The Government had not been in office sufficiently long to enable it to be prepared, in many cases, to make more specific statements. We know, for instance, that subjects such as Housing, the Guardianship of Children, Probation, Separation and Maintenance Orders, Factories, Juvenile Employment, are to be tackled; but how? That is still to be declared. And what of the points that received no mention in the King's Speech—Equal Franchise, for instance? The Prime Minister has been asked by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship to receive a deputation on this point, and this request has been backed up by many other organizations. During the Parliamentary recess, moreover, much has happened in the realm of public affairs, with some aspects of which we deal in our leader this week, which will inevitably produce comment and discussion of a lively nature.

#### Mr. Baldwin on the League of Nations.

Mr. Baldwin's speech at the Reception of the League of Nations Union last week was of the kind that may mean little or much. "I hold myself," he said, "and so do my colleagues, that we have to cling to the ideal of the League and do all in our power to make it effective. But I always prefer to understate rather than overstate. It is very easy to push about the League of Nations, but not so easy to steer a right course for that vessel." A very characteristic speech, but we have yet to learn how much Mr. Baldwin's plain, blunt speeches really stand for. One section of his speech, however, will be unreservedly welcome, as he spoke strongly of the need of having

the Foreign Secretary as the representative of the Government at Geneva. He also emphasised the importance of full discussion before the Geneva meetings so that there should not be a clash between the attitude of the British representatives at Geneva and that taken by the British Government or the Dominions when it comes to carrying out the decisions of the League. This is all sound sense, and if Mr. Baldwin does not lose sight of the fact that idealism has as real a value as common sense the League of Nations may find solid support in him.

#### The Liberal Party Convention.

A notable feature of the historic Liberal Party Convention, which opened last week at the Kingsway Hall in London, is the ingenious part played by prominent women Liberals. On Thursday, 29th January, the position of women in the party was the subject of special discussion. Mrs. Frances Acland spoke in favour of including both men and women in a single organization. This met with some opposition from representatives of the Women's Liberal Federation. Mrs. Alderton, Mayor of Colchester, pointed out that men and women of the same household were often unable to attend the same meeting at the same time, and Miss Sydney Brown, of Manchester, pressed the need both for a joint organization and for separate women's organizations. Sir Donald Maclean, to test the feeling of the meeting, asked whether there was general agreement with the Liberal Party Reorganization Committee's recommendation that one third of the officials on the committee of all Liberal associations should be women. He was greeted with shouts of "no." There was, however, general agreement that, apart from any mandatory proposal, women should be more adequately represented.

#### Widows' Pensions and the Liberal Party.

On the following day the question of Widows' Pensions came up for discussion in connexion with proposals for wider conception of social insurance, which is familiar to students of Liberal policy. Dr. Macnamara put forward a reasoned plea for an "all in" insurance scheme, ably supplemented by his daughter, Mrs. Elias, with a special plea for the adequate treatment of widows. Referring to her election experiences in London, she declared that no question so much occupied the hearts of women as the question of Widows' Pensions. We ourselves are not enthusiastic about this particular solution of the problem of the widow with dependent children. We would infinitely prefer to see the widowed mother treated under a non-contributory scheme having no reference to the irrelevant consideration of somebody else's industrial services. We hold that she is entitled to her pension not as the "relict" of an industrial worker, but as a person who is herself actively engaged in rendering an arduous service of national importance. Nevertheless, we are political opportunists in this matter, and were we to find ourselves faced with the sad alternative of adequate widows' pensions on an insurance basis *now*, and a non-contributory scheme in some misty and uncertain political future, we should leap without hesitation at the "bird in the hand." Therefore we are glad that the claim of the widow should be pressed, and forcibly pressed, wherever and whenever the extension of national insurance is under discussion. We are glad to note that the section on "Women and the Family" was strengthened later in the day by a declaration in favour of "equality—legal, social, political—between men and women."

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**Lady Astor's Portrait.**

We are glad to learn that, failing the Houses of Parliament, the portrait of Lady Astor has been lent by the First Commissioner of Works to Bedford College "until such time as the Government may require it." Bedford College can claim the honour of being the first university college for women founded in the country and as such it is a fitting place to house this memento of the first entry of women into the legislature of the nation. We hope, though, that the College Authorities will see their way to give an opportunity to women interested in this historic event to view the portrait.

**Women and the International Care of Children.**

We have been asked by the International Woman Suffrage Alliance to draw attention to the position with regard to the care of children under the League of Nations. The League has agreed to take over the work of the Association Internationale pour le Protection de l'Enfance and to extend the functions of the Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children for this purpose. In order to enlarge the Committee by the addition of persons especially qualified to deal with the care of children, the Council of the League agreed to appoint five new assessors, and have invited the following bodies to name them: the International Association for the Protection of Children, the International League of Red Cross Societies, the International Organization of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants, and Dr. Bascom Johnson. It will be noticed that the women's international organizations have not been invited to nominate an additional assessor, although they have a representative on the Traffic Commission. They are protesting against this omission on the ground that health and welfare organizations are not capable of dealing with all aspects of the question. None of the organizations represented by these new assessors have any especial interest in such questions as the legal position of the child in the family and the State, the treatment of the young offender, the illegitimate child, child-marriage, or maintenance and separation laws. If the Committee is to deal with the question of the care of children from every aspect, the international organizations of women feel that they should have a representative on the Committee. They have always regarded the care of children as one of their chief duties, and have a wider knowledge of this question involved than is possible for any specialized organization. A letter on these lines has been sent to *The Times*, and signed by the International Council of Women, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the World's Y.W.C.A., the International Federation of University Women, the Medical Women's International Association. The Council of the League meet on 17th February, and the societies concerned are anxious to get as much evidence as possible to show they have support of the women of this country behind them. Copies of any references or letters on the subject which can be got into the local Press should be forwarded to Sir Eric Drummond, K.C.M.G., C.B., Secretary General of the League of Nations.

**The Minor Offence.**

A correspondent calls our attention to the Press report of a peculiarly outrageous case of child cruelty from Warrington. It appears that a boy of 3½ years was found naked, and with his hands tied behind him, in a place where coal is stored. His back was bruised and lacerated as though by heavy strokes with a buckle. His face was badly discoloured. Such a serious view did the local magistrates take of the matter that both parents were given the maximum sentence of six months. We are struck anew with the leniency of our legal system in its dealings with injury to human life in comparison with the severity with which it regards interference with private property.

**Summer School.**

We publish in another column particulars of the Summer School for Citizens and Magistrates which is being organized by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, at St. Hilda's Hall, Oxford, from 25th August to 8th September. The main groups of subjects to be studied are (1) the Status of Women, (2) the Administration of Justice as it specially affects Magistrates, (3) Problems of Urgent Importance of special interest to Social Workers, and (4) Political Party Ideals, including the ideals and programmes of the three political parties. Special arrangements are being made for visitors from overseas and for mothers with families. In making their summer plans our readers are advised to consider very seriously whether they cannot fit in some time at Oxford. The Summer School movement is spreading rapidly on account of the success of the many schools

that are now being held. The combination of both intellectual and holiday pabulum is a very alluring one.

**The Government and Health.**

Last week Mr. Neville Chamberlain received a deputation from the People's League of Health which submitted the resolutions passed at the Conference held at Wembley last year. These resolutions covered a very wide field, and Mr. Chamberlain's answers to some of the points raised were of considerable interest. The questions brought forward included questions of diet and the need for further publications on the subject; the need for further regulations with regard to infant foods was also raised, and it was urged that the labels should declare the constitution of the food and the use of preservatives which, it was said, were often used as a substitute for cleanliness. On this point, Mr. Chamberlain said he proposed to accept the recommendation of the Food Preservatives Committee. He also foreshadowed the introduction of certain Bills. He had already given a pledge to Lord Newton that a Smoke Abatement Bill would be introduced, though it might not be possible this session. On the question of preventive tuberculosis work, he was prepared to give general powers to Local Authorities to remove tuberculous cases compulsorily; many local authorities had already taken power to do this in Private Bills and general powers could be given in amending the Public Health Bill, which he contemplated introducing as early as possible. That Bill would be a preliminary to the consolidation of the Public Health Acts, and he hoped to get both measures through this session. Other points to which Mr. Chamberlain gave his sympathetic assent were the co-ordination of the Hospital Service treatment of children suffering from the after-effects of "sleepy sickness" and the treatment of mental cases at an early stage. With regard to the last point Mr. Chamberlain pointed out he himself had introduced a Bill to meet this under the last Unionist Government, but the dissolution prevented its completion. Further action was now hung up pending the report of the Royal Commission sitting on this subject. He understood the Board of Education was making special provision for children who were suffering from the after-effects of sleepy sickness.

**An Opportunity for a Woman.**

The Trustees of the Albert Kahn Travelling Fellowship have forwarded to us the following statement which we have pleasure in handing on to our readers: "Nominations for the Albert Kahn Travelling Fellowship are to be made at the end of February. The value of the Fellowship to be awarded this year is £1,000. Women as well as men are eligible for election, but candidates must be British subjects and graduates of some University of the United Kingdom. Nominations are in the hands of the Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of the United Kingdom, the President of the Royal Society, and the President of the British Academy. The Trust is administered at the University of London and the election takes place in May. The essential object of the Foundation is to enable persons of proved intellectual attainments to enjoy a year's travel round the world free from all professional pursuits, with a view to an unprejudiced survey of various civilizations and the acquisition of a more generous and philosophic outlook on human life. In no sense is it the intention of the Founder to further any special line of individual or academical research." It may be recalled that the first appointment of this most enviable Fellowship made after the war, was that of Miss Eileen Power, late director of Historical Studies at Girton College, Cambridge, and at present lecturer in Economic History at the London School of Economics. Miss Power was the first woman to receive the Albert Kahn Fellowship. Readers of *Time and Tide* will no doubt recognize in her recently published poem, "Pekin," a wholly delightful by-product of her Far Eastern travels.

**Belgium and Women's Suffrage.**

The question of Women's Suffrage seems likely to lead to a political crisis in Belgium. The question has continually threatened the relationship of the Liberals and Catholics in the Coalition Government, and the Liberals have made it known that they would leave the Coalition if their Catholic colleagues in the Government forced a discussion of the question in Parliament. Last week the Catholics, supported by the Socialists, succeeded in passing a motion that the question of women's suffrage should be discussed immediately after the forthcoming debate on the salaries of State Officials. It is probably that this will lead to a split in the Ministry and the dissolution of Parliament.

**THE MENACE ON THE RHINE.**

With the conclusion of the London Agreement last August, followed inevitably by a League Assembly made memorable by the harmonious presence of the French and British Prime Ministers, peacefully disposed Europeans breathed again. The old prickly problem of Reparations had been removed, as it were, from the arena of hot indeterminate conflict and set on a workable, non-political business basis, under the cold shadow of the Dawes Plan. It almost seemed, in those days, as though Europe might be about to reconstruct its life on an orderly basis with the rational ideals of a profit-making joint stock company. So, too, it seemed in the autumn of last year when the German loan was successfully floated. So it still seemed when Mr. Austen Chamberlain took over the direction of the Foreign Office. Almost—at that time—did it appear as though the League of Nations might really, and for the first time, come into its own as the universal provider of "security" and the ultimate arbiter of international discord.

And now things seem to be going all wrong again. There has been more tearing up of treaties and a new scattering to the four winds of "scraps of paper." Our Foreign Office has managed to combine in a truly nauseating degree the policy of blustering to the weak and pandering to the strong. We have spoken with a loud voice in Cairo and Berlin; while to the politicians of Paris we have resumed the old futile acquiescent whisper with which we condoned the betrayal of the Fourteen Points and the illegal invasion of the Ruhr.

In accordance with this policy our troops and France's troops remain posted on the Rhine in defiance of Treaty obligations which required their withdrawal last month. Not a single responsible British politician, not a single thoughtful citizen, in his heart believes in the validity of the excuses given for that continued occupation. We justify our joint breach of contract with the excuse that Germany has failed to fulfil the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. If this is so, why was the decision against evacuation taken and announced before even the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control had issued its official report? If this is so, again, why was not the German Government precisely informed of the directions in which it had failed to honour its treaty obligations? Why is the British public not precisely informed? But it is not so. The real reason for the continued Allied occupation of this German Northern Zone is not the excuse so thinly given and so sceptically received. The real reason is that the French, being determined to retain

their military hold upon the Ruhr, are not in a convenient strategical position for a military withdrawal from the zone behind it. And our own Government, knowing full well that a withdrawal of British troops from Cologne would be the prelude to a stubborn and probably oppressive occupation of that area by the French, are not disposed (and rightly so) to hand over the destinies of Germany to our distrusted Allies. But was it beyond the wit and tact of Mr. Austen Chamberlain to make this position clear to the German Government, and provide it with a reason for our continued presence which would not, like the present dishonourable fiction, immensely strengthen the hearts and hands of the German Nationalists? We are ready to admit, with the deplorable history of the "Peace" fresh in mind, that it was beyond this power to coerce the French Government into an honourable discharge of its Treaty obligations. But we have yet to encounter the serious critic of statesmanship who would admit that it was beyond his power to avoid the menacing international friction which has resulted from the recent exchange of diplomatic notes.

What, we are tempted to ask, is the use of employing bankers and economists on the constructive business of hammering out a "Dawes Plan" if their work is to be prejudiced at the outset by the marching of troops and the recriminations of politicians? What is the use of rendering verbal homage to the Covenant of the League (a document, by the way, to which our representatives, as well as those of France and Italy, have solemnly set their names) so long as the Allied nation is required to honour an agreement which does not at the moment happen to accord with its own individual conception of its own individual security?

"France's presence on the Rhine is the essential, perhaps the only, guarantee of her security." So spoke M. Herriot in the French Chamber last week, in a speech which, it is proposed, should be placarded throughout the country as a signal of his return to the Jingo fold. It is the most sinister menace to the power and purpose of the League that has been put into words since Mussolini's repudiation of its Covenant in connexion with the Corfu crime. For the aggrandisement of the League's power and for the fulfilment of its purpose we continue to work and hope. And for this cause, if not for the cause of common international honesty, we share the views of the more critical Conservative, Liberal, and Labour organs of opinion concerning the present Allied military occupation of Germany, and the reasons given to the world for its continuance.

**TWO SPRING VISITS TO PALESTINE, 1921, 1922.<sup>1</sup>**

By MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT, G.B.E., J.P., LL.D.

**CHAPTER XII.—THE HADASSA ASSOCIATION AND THE JEWISH COLONIES.**

Another very useful Jewish activity ought to be mentioned. It is a society called the Hadassa or Esther Association, and is mainly run by the American Zionist women for spreading the knowledge of hygiene and sanitation throughout the towns and villages of Palestine. We heard an address explanatory of its activities given by Miss Zjold, one of its principal representatives, at the Ladies' Club in Jerusalem. The Hadassa Committee are in process of spreading this association like a network all over the country.

I had heard so much about the Jewish agricultural colonies that I was extremely anxious to see something of them; and my wish was gratified through the kindness of Mrs. Bentwich and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Franklin, who drove me in their car on 23rd March to see two colonies in the neighbourhood of Jaffa, Rehoboth, and Rishon-le-Zion. The drive afforded a good illustration of the variations in climate of a mountain country. As we left Jerusalem, barley was in its earliest stage, with fine grassy leaves about three inches high, but as we neared the sea-level the barley was in ear. This threw a light on what I had formerly considered a pious legend. The story is that Herod sent Roman soldiers in pursuit of the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt. These soldiers passed a field in which the harvest was being reaped, and asked the reapers if they had seen the Son of Man pass by. They said "yes." Being further asked "when," they replied "when the barley was being sown." So the pursuers thought a long time must have elapsed and gave up the pursuit.

<sup>1</sup> This is the sixteenth of a series of weekly articles which will extend over a period of about six months.

Our journey gave us the experience of passing in a few hours from a cold spring morning to midsummer heat. Rehoboth, which we reached first, is surrounded by beautifully cultivated vineyards and by orchards of orange and lemon trees laden with fruit. We went to the house of one of the principal residents, and had a most hospitable reception from Mr. Sachs and his wife. He proved a very entertaining conversationalist, and gave us several amusing examples of postal vagaries in Palestine. After luncheon he took us round the village; he said that when a colony was founded the first public building to be put up was always the school, and the next was the synagogue, for which the highest point in the village was always chosen. In the colonies I visited, the inhabitants remained orthodox Jews, strictly observant of all the laws and ceremonies of their religion. The vital statistics of these colonies are almost incredibly good. The death-rate in Rehoboth was only six per thousand. Rishon-le-Zion is the great wine-producing colony. Rehoboth grows grapes, but either sells them as table fruit or sends them to Rishon to be made into wine. The village is neat and orderly, and boasts of a very pleasant clean little inn. These Jewish agricultural colonies have an excellent system of local self-government. What we should call a Town Council is elected annually. Since 1918 all adults, including women, vote and are eligible for the Council. At Rishon it consisted of seven persons, four of whom were women. Each member elected has charge of a special function—education, sanitation, law and justice, and so on; in the event of disputes remaining unsettled, those who are dissatisfied have the right of appeal to Jerusalem. To Rishon, as one of the richest and best organized of the Jewish colonies, about fifty poverty-stricken Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe had been allotted, and it was one of the duties of its Town Council

to provide them with housing, food and clothing, work, wages, and education. The Council had applied themselves to the task with vigour and success. Rishon has a wine-producing plant, carried out under the direct patronage of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who had provided the colonists with instruction in the best French methods of viticulture. The Baron had built himself a pleasant villa in Rishon, and to this we all adjourned for a magnificent repast, too splendid to be called afternoon tea. I had received, on arrival, one of the greatest of surprises, a regular Suffrage ovation. I was overwhelmed by enthusiastic thanks, bouquets of lovely flowers were presented to me. It was such an entirely unexpected experience to be seated in Baron Edmond de Rothschild's house, surrounded by a little group of enthusiastic suffragists, who spent about three-quarters of an hour making suffrage speeches to me and to each other.

We had a wonderful drive back to Jerusalem in the sunset, and as we neared the city saw the full moon rising majestically over the towers and walls of the city. We grieved that it was not as peaceful as it looked, and thought of the troops of Indian cavalry we had met on our way towards Ramleh in the morning to guarantee an Easter undisturbed by broils and possible massacres.

### FAMILY ENDOWMENT.

A REPLY TO DAME MILLICENT FAWCETT'S OBJECTIONS.

By ELEANOR F. RATHBONE.

Nothing that Mrs. Fawcett writes (one slips irresistibly into the old title), and no opinion she holds, can fail to weigh heavily with the innumerable women, myself among them, who through the long years of the suffrage struggle learned to regard her as the wisest, bravest, sanest leader any movement could have.

It was therefore with a somewhat anxious and heavy heart that I opened my WOMAN'S LEADER and began perusing her case against "Family Endowment" (let me at once disclaim responsibility for the name. I did not invent it and am not sure who did). I was relieved to find that her objections apply almost entirely to one of the three possible methods of making direct economic provision for children which are usually grouped under the obnoxious title. These are:—

1. Family Allowances, paid for by the State out of taxation for all children and possibly also for their mothers.

2. Family Allowances, paid for by an extension of the system of contributory compulsory insurance.

3. Family Allowances, supplementary to wages, paid for out of the product of industry, either directly by individual employers or through "Equalization Funds" on the French model, which is spreading so rapidly abroad.

It is obvious, I think, not only that it is the first of these methods that Mrs. Fawcett has chiefly in mind, but that it is the only one of the three to which her arguments are really applicable. The gist of her whole case is her objection to "relieving parents of their legal obligation of their maintaining their children," and so weakening, as she thinks, the father's incentive to industry. I do not admit myself that this would be the effect even of a universal State scheme. But in any case, even those who believe, as I do, that such a scheme will be the ultimate and best solution, will agree that it is not at present, nor probably will be for many years, within the sphere of practical politics.

Leaving State provision then for the moment aside, can it be said that provision for childhood either through contributory insurance or through Equalization pools would "relieve parents of the responsibility of maintaining their children"? Much of course would depend on the details of the scheme, but it is probable that in either case the children's allowances would be contingent on the father's employment. When he was out of work, the allowances under that particular scheme would stop, and they would have to be maintained, as they are at present, by another kind of collective provision, by the dependents' allowances attached to unemployment pay, or by out-door relief, or by a combination of both. There is a strong case for doing away with the overlapping which now exists between these two sources. But that is another story. The point for us here is that, as regards the children of those who either from fault or misfortune have ceased to work, the community has already long ago thrown over the principle that their parents are legally obliged to maintain them. It has more recently even abandoned the practice of offering public assistance only in its most repellent form of "the House." As a result, in some of the worst paid

occupations, such as agriculture and unskilled labour, a man with five or six children is often actually better off when living on unemployment pay plus out-door relief than when working. In such cases, a system of Family Allowances for children of workers would positively increase the incentive to retain or regain employment.

But, it may be said, the alternative is not merely between employment and unemployment. The question is: would men on the whole work less hard and less efficiently, would they make less effort to improve themselves, if they knew that in addition to their wages an allowance would be paid into their homes for each dependent child so that the household income would bear some rough relation to the number dependent on it? It seems to me contrary to all we know of human nature to assume that they would. Does anyone think that, on the whole, men with seven children work better than men with five, men with five than men with three, and so on? It is true that men of indolent disposition and of an exceedingly low standard of life would find it easier to satisfy that low standard on a small wage, and so far the incentive to industry would be diminished. But are not such men a small and decreasing minority? Most parents desire other things for themselves and their children besides the bare minimum of physical subsistence—a good house, country holidays, travel, opportunities for education, a wireless set, a motor car, etc., etc. On the other hand, does not the very greatness of the strain which the present system places on the father of a family often defeat its own ends? The years when the children are young are ordinarily the years when the wage-earner should be at his best. But how can he realize that best when the food is insufficient to keep up his strength, when the overcrowded home offers no privacy for study, when anxiety about how to make both ends meet fills his mind to the exclusion of ambition or self-improvement, when his wife's bad housekeeping and nagging tongue (the natural results of an over-tasked and under-fed body) set his nerves on edge and upset his temper?

Another generally overlooked result of the present system of providing for children through wages which bear no relation to their number is that it supplies the careless and neglectful parent with an ever-present excuse. It is patent to everybody, let us say, that A's children are always thinly and shabbily dressed, inadequately provided with dinner, while the reverse is true of B's. But only the few who know precisely the incomes of the two homes in proportion to the size of family, can judge whether Mr. A or Mrs. B, or the economic system of which both are victims, are to blame for the deficiency. Under a Family Allowance system, the offending couple would be tried at the bar of their neighbours' and work-mates' public opinion, and there is no Court whose verdicts are more respected.

Mrs. Fawcett has read my book, but she has not told us how she meets the figures, quoted from Dr. Bowley and Sir Josiah Stamp, which prove the practical impossibility of satisfying out of the present resources of industry, the reasonable "human needs" of Labour through the present system of flat-rate wages; nor those other figures, drawn from Dr. Bowley and Mr. Rowntree, which show that of the families living in "primary poverty" (i.e., below subsistence level) in nearly three-fourths the cause was the insufficiency of the wage to support families of the size dependent on it. It is these and kindred facts, I believe, which have induced Sir William Beveridge, the Director of the London School of Economics, to declare, as he did the other day, that he believes some system of Family Allowances to be absolutely inevitable, because he sees no other cure for poverty.

I would therefore make a fervent appeal to Dame Millicent, and to all who share her views, that they should not—just because this or that form of Family Endowment seems to them open to grave objections—therefore shut their minds against the whole idea; but rather that they should join with us in seeking a method of realization which will avert the dangers they fear while securing the great good for which we hope.

### OBITUARY—SIR JAMES YOXALL.

We regret to learn of the death of Sir James Yoxall. During his time as member of the House of Commons he was a steady supporter of the causes for which we were working. He will, however, probably be remembered less for his political work than for his work in connexion with the National Union of Teachers. His chief interest in life was the welfare of the school child and its teachers, and he leaves a name which will stand for much in the history of British Education.

### FAMILY LIFE AMONG THE BOLSHEVIKS.

So much was said at the last general election concerning the deplorable effects which commercial intercourse with Russia might have on English family life, that we gladly welcome any publication which seems to throw light upon the potential source of infection: the Bolsheviki's home. And the recently published translation of M. Trotsky's *Problems of Life* (Methuen, 2s. 6d.) certainly carries us a stage towards fuller knowledge. Here, that debonaire and delightful personality surveys a wide field. Politics and their incapacity to fill the whole of life, the evils of drunkenness, the possibilities of the nationalized cinema as a popular substitute for religion, bureaucracy and its evils, the struggle for cultured speech, and "civility and politeness as a necessary lubricant in daily relationships"—all these matters of universal interest claim the service of M. Trotsky's versatile pen. There are, of course, moments when we are tempted to question the author's consistency. For instance, is "let the twaddlers babble away" cultured speech when translated into Russian? We doubt it. But there—the point is immaterial to the main drift of this article which is concerned with M. Trotsky's conception of family life and the position of women. In its practical applications his outlook is that of Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gillman, as set forth in her well-known work *Women and Economics*. It has, too, many intimate points of contact with our own Labour Party's report on "Motherhood and Child Endowment." Let none of our readers take fright—there is no "free love" involved; apart from the element of "free love" which is involved (to the more rigidly ecclesiastical of us) in the insistence upon a purely civil marriage. The development of home life which M. Trotsky foreshadows consists merely of a further speeding up of the process to which we in this country have already accorded a modicum of allegiance: the provision of communal public services. From communal education and communal medical attendance to communal meals, dress, laundry, mending, club-rooms. . . . And all this in the interest of greater freedom, greater opportunity for leisure and self-development on the part of the woman. "A revolution does not deserve its name if, with all its might and all the means at its disposal, it does not help the woman—twofold and threefold enslaved as she has been in the past—to get out on the road of individual and social progress." In another passage M. Trotsky records the plaint of certain women to his colleague Kartchevsky: "You only think about yourselves and you have no thought for us." It is quite true, our author confesses: "There are no limits to masculine egotism in ordinary life. In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women." Or, in yet another passage: "To institute the political equality of men and women in the Soviet State was one problem and the simplest. A much more difficult one was the next—that of instituting the industrial-equality of men and women workers in the factories, the mills, and the trade unions, and to do it in such a way that the men should not put the women to disadvantage. But to achieve the actual equality of man and woman within the family is an infinitely more arduous problem. All our domestic habits must be revolutionized before that can happen. And yet it is quite obvious that unless there is actual equality of husband and wife in the family, in a normal sense as well as in the conditions of life, we cannot speak seriously of their equality in social work or even in politics. As long as woman is chained to her household, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her chances of participation in social and political life are cut down to the extreme." Such is M. Trotsky's feminist faith. Not a bad one, we are inclined to add. At any rate, if he has a "Turk complex" he is not sublimating it in the written word! Nor is his feminism all his own. Here, at least, heretic though he may be, he speaks with the voice of his regimented and doctrinaire party. In all countries (no less in the East) shall it be the duty of Communists to enlist women on a basis of equality and independence, to accord to them a full and equal share in the "construction of new forms of society" and "to recognize the functions of motherhood as a social function, promoting and supporting appropriate measures to aid and protect women as the bearer of the human race." Such are the world orders of the Communist International as embodied in the decisions of its third Moscow Congress in the summer of 1921.

But there is another side to the picture: a destructive as opposed to the constructive side. M. Trotsky does not deny that "family relations are shattered." "This was stated as

a firmly established fact in the debates of the Moscow Propagandists, and no one contested it. They were only differently impressed by it—each in his own way. . . . It was, anyhow, clear to all, that some big process was going on, very chaotic, assuming alternatively morbid or revolting, ridiculous or tragic forms, and which had not yet had time to disclose its hidden possibilities of inaugurating a new and higher order of family life." And this our author attributes largely to the upheavals of the war and revolutionary period, quoting typical cases: the man or the woman who is drawn into the wider life of active revolutionary citizenship leaving a disgruntled and bewildered spouse outside its mental orbit: the decline of home comfort where both go forth and set their shoulders to the political wheel: the struggle over religious symbolism abandoned by the husband at the behest of his Communist "call" in the teeth of his wife's conservatism. This, in outline, is Trotsky's diagnosis of an evil which he recognizes and (most properly) deplures.

But is it the whole story? With all deference to our distinguished author (who must, after all, know more about the conditions of his own country) we venture to think not. There is—and we have often expressed this view, for it is the ground of our general opposition to the Bolsheviki régime—a fundamental inconsistency between the broad philosophy of Communism and the ungrudging feminism which is its most pleasing aspect. The first is based upon a frank materialism in which violence, coercion, and bloodshed have their necessary and unavoidable place. The second can, we believe, never flourish in practice save in a society which has definitely turned its back upon the employment of these three weapons as a determinant of human affairs, and adopted an absolute standard of ethical values which our Communist contemporaries are not disposed to accept.

We do not as a rule go out of our way to castigate the exponents of physical force in Eastern Europe, because there are still a sufficient number of them masquerading under most respectable party colours in our own country. Nor can we wholeheartedly castigate an author who expresses so strong and generous a brand of feminism. All the same—there is a dangerous snag in it!

M. D. S.

### THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

The Birmingham Branch of the National Council of Women is fortunate in combining women of all classes and every shade of political opinion in work for the social reforms so urgently called for at the present time.

First and foremost we attempt to educate public opinion by disseminating the knowledge obtained from experts on various national and civic problems. Largely attended Council meetings are held each month where, in addition to the ordinary business, an address is usually given by some well known public speaker on such subjects as "Family Endowment," "The Solicitation Laws," "Equal Guardianship," "Prison Reform," etc. Our meeting last month was devoted to short addresses by local women Councillors and Guardians, in order to persuade more women, and especially the younger women, to take up Local Government work.

The activities of the Society are many and varied. Recently a series of talks by our members has been broadcasted. Several sub-sections have been formed, so that our work may be more expeditiously accomplished.

The Citizenship Sub-section is always busy. With it is amalgamated the local branch of the N.U.S.E.C. Not only is this section engaged in pressing the claims of Bills approved of by that Society and the National Council of Women, but through its speakers it is helping to interest and educate women of all classes on a great many matters. A list of nearly forty voluntary speakers is sent out each year to some 250 women's organizations in the city and surrounding country. Women's institutes, Mothers' Meetings, Girl Guides, Adult Schools, Co-operative Guilds, etc., are addressed on a variety of subjects, ranging from Parliament and Local Government to Home Nursing and travels in many countries.

Three years ago a Discussion Society was formed. Many of our speakers have found the experience gained through it invaluable.

In the spring of every year a Citizenship Competition is arranged by this section, and all the societies addressed by our



COMING EVENTS.

GUILDHOUSE W.C.S.

FEB. 9. 3 p.m. The Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. Miss Edith Picton-Tuibervill, O.B.E., President of the Westminster Housing Council, on "The Problem of Housing in Westminster."

LONDON SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE.

FEB. 10. 5 p.m. "L.C.C. Elections, 1925: (ii) The Council's Workers." Speaker: Miss Rosamond Smith, L.C.C.

NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

Barnsley S.E.C. FEB. 11. 5.30 p.m. Lady Mabel Smith on "Impressions of Rome." Lantern Lecture at St. Mary's Parish Room.

Edinburgh W.C.A. FEB. 11. 8 p.m. Royal Society of Arts Hall, 117 George Street. "Women and the Press: an Experiment in Journalism." Speaker: The Viscountess Rhondda, J.P. Chairman: Mrs. Chalmers Watson, C.B.E., M.D.

Hereford W.C.A. FEB. 12. 8 p.m. Miss K. D. Courtney on "Family Allowances."

Kensington and Paddington S.E.C. FEB. 9. 3.30 p.m. Annual meeting at the New House, Campden Hill Road, W.8. Miss K. D. Courtney on "Family Endowment as a Solution of the Equal Pay Problem."

Malvern S.E.C. FEB. 13. 5 p.m. Miss K. D. Courtney on "Family Allowances."

SIX POINT GROUP.

FEB. 10. 5 p.m. Committee "At Home," 92 Victoria Street, S.W. Mrs. Corbett Ashby on "Equal Franchise."

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