

The Common Cause

The Organ of the National Union of

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Societies.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE	PAGE
Notes and Comments 317	The Women's Movement in
What Mr. Asquith's Answer	Russia 325
Means 318	Correspondence 326
Deputation to Mr. Asquith ... 319	In Parliament 327
International Medical Congress	Notes from Headquarters 328
and the Social Evil 322	COMMON CAUSE Competitions ... 328
Maternity Benefit 322	News from the Federations ... 330
Children's Care Committees ... 323	Items of Interest—Women at
Factory Girls and Gambling ... 324	the Medical Congress 331
Women's Suffrage in Ireland ... 324	

Notes and Comments.

Mothers and Children.

An article appearing in the *Manchester Guardian*, under the heading, "A Sad Case," once more calls attention to the astonishing way in which anti-suffrage theories work out in practice. The view that women are, before all things, mothers, and should not be allowed to have any other duties or interests than those of the home, is translated in practice into the harsh facts of "A Sad Case." A mother, who is also a widow, removed herself and her children from the workhouse, with the intention of supporting them by her own efforts. She failed to get work, was charged at the County Police Court with "wilful neglect," and the children sent back to the workhouse. Is it not almost incredible? Here is a mother who desires to look after her own children. The State, with no suggestion that she is unfit to do so, prefers to pay someone else! And a gentleman who defends this position in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* proudly points to the fact that the children were not actually sent back to the workhouse, but were placed out with a foster-mother in a Cottage Home. This last absurdity leaves one breathless. Nothing is left to add but the announcement that the mother "will be allowed to visit her children," and what payment is demanded from her is asked "with the idea of reminding her of her responsibility." It is clear that men can solemnly do these things, and write these things down, and not see the absurdity of it all. But where women have the vote, they have discovered that if anyone has to be paid to look after children, the children's mother is the most suitable person for the job. They do not preach that a woman's whole duty is to her children, and then take them from her, pay a "foster-mother" to do her work, and—oh, crowning irony!—exact part of the payment from the mother, in order to remind her of her responsibility. In the countries where men and women work hand in hand and side by side, there is a better understanding of the sacred duties of motherhood, but here—

"Man, proud man,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
As make the angels weep—who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal."

The Result of the "Maternity Benefit" Debate.

Many people must have been as much confused as Members of Parliament undoubtedly were by the changing fortunes of

the Maternity Benefit clause. We publish in another column the opinion of Miss Llewelyn Davies, who is the spokesman of the Women's Co-operative Guild. Here we only desire to record once more our satisfaction at the admission of the economic importance of the wife's work in the home. While Mr. Roberts' speech defending the amendment which sought to destroy this position (in fact though not in principle) was received with chilling silence, that of Mr. Ward was cheered to the echo. He clearly and positively stated his position as resting on the fact that the wife earned half the income, and therefore had a right to the benefit. Although, owing apparently to some misunderstanding—the amendment was carried by a narrow majority, and the position not entirely recovered by Lord Robert Cecil's clever motion, yet this principle is of the greatest value. We hardly think the House of Commons realised how far it may lead them.

Taxation and Representation.

It is true that under Government Whips the House endeavoured at once to retrace its steps, and declared that the incomes of husband and wife were to continue to be regarded as one for the purposes of taxation. We deeply regret the spirit in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer treated Mr. Cassel's amendment on this subject. He admitted that the law as it stood constituted "a humiliating grievance" to married women, and one which he had promised to remove. But to keep his promise would cost the Exchequer £1,250,000; therefore he was not going to keep it. He proposed instead, as Lord Robert Cecil pointed out, to go on penalising marriage by taxing those who, if they chose to live together without legal marriage, might go free.

Prevention or Cure?

At the International Medical Congress, Dr. Stiles asserted that he had constantly known cases of tuberculosis in which "the causal relation between milk and disease was absolutely established." But it is too late now to ask for the Pure Milk Bill. It has gone the way of many other bills concerned with the protection of life and prevention of disease, and we plunge into the business of building "first-class hotels" for the cure (?) of the disease we might in many cases have prevented. It is sometimes a little difficult to refrain from bitterness of spirit when one contemplates these great and costly congresses of doctors, this apparatus of (largely futile) effort to cure an almost unconquerable disease, this death-roll of children and adults who cannot be saved, because we leave the housing problem and the pure milk problem to settle themselves, and exercise our ingenuity in trying to undo what we have done when it is too late. Is it really so wonderful that we Suffragists think our cause one not of great, but of greatest importance?

A Women's Referendum.

In a very friendly and sympathetic letter to the *Times*, the Bishop of Sheffield proposes to submit the question of women's suffrage to a Referendum, but to a Referendum of women only. While admitting that those who ask for a vote are asking what they "have a right to claim," he says he "cannot but believe that, whatever the issue" (of the Referendum), "the suffragettes and suffragists would accept the verdict of their own

sex." Leaving aside for the moment the question what the issue would be, we, with all respect for the Bishop's evident wish to be fair, ask him if he holds that the desire for freedom could or should be abandoned because some of the un-free still prefer un-freedom? We are often taunted with the existence of an Anti-Suffrage League, partly composed of women. Those who taunt us forget that there were slaves in America who fought against the abolition of slavery. They have not heard, or have forgotten, Abraham Lincoln's answer to a deputation of slaves who went to him to protest their preference for slavery. "If the iron of slavery has indeed entered so deep into your hearts," he said, "how much greater the need that your shackles be struck off!" And so with us. The fact that there are women so accustomed to un-freedom that they shrink from freedom with alarm, and protest against the imposing upon them of its responsibilities, not only does not shake, but it confirms us in our desire for freedom both for them and for ourselves.

The Bishops and the Cat-and-Mouse Act.

We are in hearty agreement with all that the Bishops of Lincoln and of Sheffield say in their condemnation of the Cat-and-Mouse Act. Dr. Hicks writes in the *Times* :—

"The demand of women for the vote has come to be one of the greatest moral and social movements of our time. It gathers strength and volume daily; all the forces of progress are working in its favour; it cannot be set aside. It only awaits the handling of a sympathetic, courageous, and constructive statesman, who has imagination to conceive of the England that is to be.

"Methods of repression and expedients like the Cat-and-Mouse Act would deserve only ridicule, were it not for the sufferings they involve. The only sane and lasting remedy for the present discontent is truly Liberal legislation; that is, the extension of liberty through the franchise."

Deputations to Mr. Asquith.

We notice that the Bishop of Lincoln did not join the Deputation of clergy who insisted, in spite of refusal, in going to Downing Street to see Mr. Asquith, and we believe he was right. It must, however, be getting a little awkward for the Prime Minister to be so bombarded as he is with requests to receive deputations when he is prepared to offer them nothing but refusals and a private secretary. Forty thousand Trade Unionists from Hampshire are now demanding that their deputation be received. This comes well after Miss Margaret Robertson's speech;—and Mr. Asquith's.

Rowdyism and the Police.

It will be remembered that the National Union sent a deputation to Mr. McKenna to protest against the inadequate protection afforded to Suffrage meetings. The Home Secretary asked for exact information, and an enquiry was instituted, the results of which are given in another column. It will be seen that there is grave cause for suspecting that in more than one instance the rowdyism was organised, and that prejudice was deliberately excited by the charge that the Pilgrims were not really law-abiding Suffragists. In some cases, also, the police refused to interfere. At one very disorderly meeting the inspector said that the disturbance had been planned for days beforehand, but he refused to take any action unless the meeting was abandoned. It was not until threatened with "a question in the House of Commons" that he became active. All this evidence has been laid before the Home Secretary. We are confident that as a result both police and public will be disabused of the idea that Suffrage meetings may be broken up with impunity.

A Revised Marriage Service.

Suffragists who are members of the Anglican Church will be greatly interested in the "Prayer Book Revised," which was published last week, with a preface by the Bishop of Oxford. From this revision almost all that offends modern opinion in the marriage service of the Anglican Church has disappeared. The vows made by the man and woman are equal, and provision is made by which the woman may, if desired, give a ring to the man, with precisely the same words—"with this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow"—as he uses to her. The "reasons" for marriage are expurgated, and "the prominence given to the Hebrew Patriarchs in connection with Christian monogamy" has disappeared. It is to be regretted that the ceremony of giving away the bride has been retained. In the preface, the anonymous editor calls attention to the fact that "unequal vows" as between husband and wife, "do not make their appearance till about the fourteenth century, and even so did not find their way into the Roman or Ambrosian rites, nor into those of the Eastern Orthodox Church, in all of which both questions and vows are still equal."

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NOTICE.—*This paper is obtainable at newsagents and bookstalls by mid-day on Friday. If any difficulty is found in obtaining it locally, please communicate with The Manager, THE COMMON CAUSE, 2, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.*

Contributors are requested to note that the latest time for receiving news for the week's issue is the first post on Tuesday. Federation correspondents are asked to send in their reports not later than Monday, first post. All unsolicited contributions should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies being a body which exists solely to obtain the enfranchisement of women, holds no official view upon any other topic. Opinions expressed upon other subjects must not be regarded as necessarily those of the Union.

What Mr. Asquith's Answer Means.

It is hardly necessary to point the moral of Mr. Asquith's speech to the National Union deputation which visited him on Friday, August 8th. He told Mrs. Fawcett in writing, and he repeated it at the time, that he received the deputation because he understood that it had fresh evidence of popular support to lay before him. He had refused other deputations because he had nothing to add to what he had always said with regard to Women's Suffrage. His opinions are unchanged, and apparently they are unchangeable; he is not prepared to listen to further argument upon the subject. But he was prepared to hear the National Union. It had no fresh argument. It had fresh evidence of support.

The Prime Minister added that when the country demanded Women's Suffrage, the most determined of our opponents would bow to its will. We believe that he gravely misinterprets the signs of the times. It is harder than he quite realises for the leader of a party—or for any party politician—to know what the country does demand, if that demand is not a party one. Speaking regularly at party meetings, to which, generally speaking, those go who are already party men; listening to the inevitable applause which greets the inevitable reference to the glorious virtues of his own party and the sordid vices of the other; witnessing the perplexity with which any allusion to reforms not on the party programme is met by the well-trained party audience; it becomes extraordinarily difficult for him to gauge the real feeling of the country. It is true that, in a sense, this difficulty confronts not only the party politician, but the preacher of any special reform. But when such preachers go out into the highways and byways, to speak to any audience that comes together to hear them, on a subject on which it had not been told beforehand what it is to think, we believe they are more likely to get at the truth than the party politician can be, even when he most earnestly desires it. And it is possible that if those who, from their position, should lead and not for ever follow public opinion, wait too long to "bow to the public will," they may find themselves altogether swept aside. Signs are not wanting that this is likely to happen to the Liberal Party. Nothing impressed Mr. Asquith more than Miss Margaret Robertson's evidence of the changed feeling of the working-men—and especially the working-men of the North of England, where the strength of the Liberal Party lies—towards the question of the enfranchisement of women. It is becoming in their eyes what it has always been in ours—a question, not of sex, but of democracy. When once that is established in their minds, the Conservative Party will still have a logical and honest position to hold: but what of the Liberal Party? How will the party of democracy look to the people who associate the Anti-Suffragist with the Anti-Democrat? Is it not time that the Liberal Party set its house in order?

"We shall bow to the will of the people," said the Prime Minister. "How is that will to be expressed?" asked Miss Robertson. "Through their representatives elected to the House of Commons," was the reply. We have our answer. Nothing weighs with the Prime Minister but votes; neither argument, nor entreaty, nor hatchets. It becomes our duty, as pointed out by himself, to turn votes against the Government of an Anti-Suffragist Prime Minister.

The Deputation to Mr. Asquith.

The National Union deputation was received by the Prime Minister on Friday, August 8th, as a result of the Pilgrimage. New evidence of support, especially from the working people, could be and was laid before him. The question of Anti-Suffrage finance came up, and Mr. Asquith was deeply interested to hear of the effect of the "secret subscription list" on working class opinion. Mrs. Fawcett called upon him to find a way out of the political "impasse."

MRS. FAWCETT INTRODUCES THE DEPUTATION.

Mrs. Fawcett introduced the deputation, and at once called on Miss Margaret Robertson to speak.

MISS ROBERTSON: My experience lies chiefly with the industrial men and women of the North of England, Scotland, and Wales, and I have noticed a very great change in the attitude of the working-man towards Women's Suffrage of recent years. Four or five years ago, for instance, I was often asked by a man in the crowd: "Would my wife have a vote?"

injustice done to them by the press, which always exaggerates the working-man's "militancy," just as it tries to represent the Suffragist movement as all "militant." The same complaint might be made in both cases with justice.

MR. ASQUITH: I quite agree. You are perfectly right.

TRADES UNIONS AND CHEAP WOMEN'S LABOUR.

MISS ROBERTSON: The Trades unions are deeply interested in Women's Suffrage, and believe that opposition to it comes from capitalists, who want to keep women cheap. As it is the working women who are cheapened and the men's labour that is undersold, the unions are increasingly determined that the women must be enfranchised. I believe you would be surprised to learn how many Trade Unions have had women's suffrage up for discussion during the last year. And I think you hardly realise how much and how deeply working-men trust their women.



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[MISS STRACHEY, MISS MARSHALL, MRS. RACKHAM, MRS. HARLEY, MRS. FAWCETT, MISS COURTNEY, MRS. AUERBACH, MISS ROBERTSON.]

SOME OF THE DEPUTATION.

And if he thought there was any chance of her having one, he was in opposition at once. Now I am still asked this question, but the answer hoped for is "Yes." Working-men have come to regard this question not as a sex question, but as a democratic one. They think their class should have more representation, and have begun to identify Anti-Suffragism with the war of capital against labour. In this belief they have been confirmed by the finance of the Anti-Suffrage League, as revealed in their "secret subscription list," which has recently got into the press, and shows that the finance of the League came almost entirely from a few very wealthy men, such as Lord Rothschild.

MR. ASQUITH: I haven't seen that. I should like to see that.

MISS ROBERTSON: I will send you a copy, sir. I wish to add that the working-classes are, in my experience, not so "obsessed" by the terror of militancy as others. They have the same

MRS. HARLEY: I have to testify to the enormous crowds and genuine sympathy with which the Suffrage Pilgrims have almost everywhere been met. I agree with Miss Robertson that a great change has come over the working-classes in their attitude towards the Suffrage, and we proved that such opposition as we have met was directed against militancy rather than the Suffrage, by the fact that where the law-abiding attitude of the Pilgrims was understood there was no trouble; and even where there was disorder at the first meeting, a second held in the same place was invariably well received. I walked through a very thickly populated district, and everywhere our meetings surpassed all records. In Hanley we had a crowd of ten to twelve thousand.

UNDUE NEGLECT OF WOMEN'S INTERESTS.

MISS ROYDEN: I had the privilege of hearing your speech in the last Suffrage debate in Parliament, sir, in which you

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Orders are already coming in for the Holiday Selling Competition. A correspondent writes that she has sold three dozen copies of the last number on the shore at Hunstanton.

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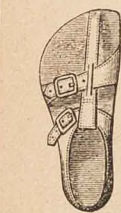
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Hooliganism and the Police.

REPORT SENT TO MR. MCKENNA.

As a result of the deputation from the National Union, which waited on Mr. McKenna on July 30th, the Home Secretary asked for a full report of the experience of the pilgrims on all the eight routes by which they approached London, so that enquiry might be made into cases where it was alleged that the police made no adequate attempt to maintain order at the suffrage meetings.

In the course of compiling their report, the National Union has collected some interesting information as to the nature and causes of the hooliganism which was so conspicuous in certain places. It seems evident that in many instances the disorder was deliberately organised. The ringleaders were generally men who did not belong to the locality, but preceded the Pilgrims from place to place, and collected bands of rowdy youths to create disturbance, and particularly to pursue the speakers after the meeting and use them roughly.

In the following instances among others, there seems ground for believing that the disturbances were organised:— STRATFORD-ON-AVON, July 16th.—A brake-load of young men arrived in the afternoon of the day of the meeting and paraded the town with umbrellas labelled "Votes for Women."

GUILDFORD, July 22nd.—An Anti-Suffrage meeting was organised the evening before the Pilgrims arrived, and was kept secret till the last minute. The speaker, Miss Mabel Smith, told the meeting that although the Pilgrims carried "law-abiding" banners, they were, in reality, militants. After this meeting broke up the Secretary of the Guildford Women's Suffrage Society saw that there was a group of men standing near the platform who had all voted for the resolution, and who seemed to break away from the rest of the crowd, and go off shouting and laughing, and saying: "Oh, we will be here to-morrow," &c.

STEVENAGE, July 21st.—Boys sang all the time during the meeting, and said they had been paid to do it. The Pilgrims were also told that a man who insisted on making speeches in the middle of the meeting was a paid agitator. He had been seen at several of the meetings. It was specially noticed that when a meeting was held which had not been advertised beforehand, there was never any disturbance.

Press Report.

There has been no lull of Suffrage news in the Press after the culmination of the Pilgrimage, as was anticipated in some quarters. The deputations from the N.U.W.S.S. to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., have provided ample means for keeping the question of Women's Suffrage before the general public.

The Daily Citizen, in a leading article on August 11th, dealing with the deputation to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, says:—"The Labour Party are all the more determined in this matter because the political equality of women would speedily lead to their legal equality, and because their legal equality would both redress an immense mass of private suffering and break into the apathy which is the main deadweight against onward popular movement."

Report of Literature Department.

The newest publications of the department include a pamphlet, "Service versus Subjection: The Meaning of the Women's Movement" (price 2d.), which is a reprint of an interesting address by Miss E. J. Taylor on the changing ideals of service in this generation.

Hon. Sec. to Literature Committee.

Treasurer's Report.

The total amount of the Pilgrimage Fund is now £8,422, and donations are still coming in. Some of the collections en route surpassed all expectations; one of the Watling-Street Pilgrims, who set out to collect £20, took altogether £36 9s.

Special Offerings.

Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage.

Table with columns for names and amounts. Includes entries like Mrs. Stephen, Miss Moore, Miss Elsie Blomfield, etc.

Table with columns for names and amounts. Includes entries like Mrs. Jocelyn Bray, Miss Thomas, Mrs. Jordan, etc.

Further lists to follow.

Selling the "Common Cause."

From Edinburgh comes news of 900 COMMON CAUSES sold during the month of July. The Scottish capital has been specially active in street selling; and we are also indebted to its Society for collecting for our "Extra Pages" Fund.

A member of the Whitty Society, Mlle. Stes, is reported to have sold nineteen dozen COMMON CAUSES on the day of the demonstration in Hyde Park. We hope that our Holiday Competition sellers will be equally successful.

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MAP OF ENGLAND AND WALES, showing branches of the N.U.W.S.S., very suitable for presenting to anti-suffragists, 1d. each, 7s. 6d. per hundred. Postage extra.—Mrs. Kellett, 4, Belvoir Terrace, Cambridge.

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