

WOMEN'S SENSING
NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

The Prime Minister's Announcement.

On Wednesday afternoon of last week the Prime Minister made his promised announcement about Equal Franchise, and as we have always expected and predicted, it contained an assurance that he intended to carry out his pledge "for equal voting rights for men and women and at the next election." The idea of a preliminary conference or select committee was tacitly dropped. The Bill is to be introduced next Session and the question whether it would be passed in time for the new voters to vote at the next election was answered in the affirmative, unless some "unexpected catastrophe" brought Parliament to a premature close. There is to be no redistribution of seats. Nothing could have bettered this reply except in one respect—that the Bill should have been brought in this Session in order to minimize the risks of the unexpected catastrophe alluded to. But the need for watchfulness is not over. Our enemies have not abandoned hope and we know that in some of them, no nice scruples about the sanctity of "scraps of paper" will hinder them from doing their best—or worst—to bully, cajole, or trick the Government, whom they profess to support, and the Prime Minister whom they profess to admire, into breaking faith with the women. Therefore the opportunity should not be lost by women's societies and individual women voters of bringing the facts home to their Parliamentary representatives.

When is a Pledge not a Pledge?—Ask the *Daily Mail*.

In numerous leading articles during the past week, both before and after the Prime Minister's announcement, this amazing journal has reiterated its demand that the Government should "drop it," "shelve it," and their assertions that no pledges worth speaking of have been given or that anyhow, no sensible person bothers about pledges. For example, "nobody would think any the worse of Mr. Baldwin and Sir William Joynson-Hicks if they allowed those vague personal 'pledges' of theirs to sleep until they had been endorsed by their party as a whole." Of course, the pledges in question were not vague. They were as explicit and unqualified as words could make them (see the exact text in our last issue). Of course, too, they were not "personal." They were given on behalf of the whole Government. A Government which broke them could never expect to have its word believed again. The *Daily Mail* knows

all about the pledges. Its Editor has presumably sense enough to know that the women's societies would see to it that every elector knew all about them too if they should be broken. Yet still this egregious paper thinks pledges do not matter! What an object lesson for anyone who should ever think of being guided by the *Daily Mail* in forming their estimate either of facts or of the interpretation to be placed on facts!

Unemployed Women in the Lurch.

On the last day of the session, both Miss Lawrence and Miss Bondfield pleaded eloquently for the provision of more training for the unemployed in general, and especially for the unemployed women. Miss Bondfield showed that, in spite of there still being 100,000 unemployed women on the register, the sum allowed for training schemes—small as it has been in recent years—has again been reduced. Since the war, said Miss Lawrence, 34,000 women had passed successfully through courses which had enabled most of them to preserve their independence. Mr. Betterton could not put up any defence other than that of "economy" so-called for cutting down the training schemes for women. He referred, however, to the new scheme which had been agreed with the Australian Government for training women for domestic service in Australia at a cost of £7,500, to give parties of forty women a ten weeks' training, the expenditure being shared by the two Governments. Much has been done in the sacred name of economy which in the end spells extravagance and waste. Is this not emphatically the case when for lack of a comparatively small grant, large numbers of women are given no opportunities during their enforced leisure to fit themselves for more skilled jobs in which a shortage of workers may be anticipated once the industrial revival starts?

Sickness Rates of Married Women.

During the annual meeting of the Faculty of Insurance held on 9th April, Sir Walter Kinnear made some interesting statements with regard to the relative rates of sickness of married women, single women, and men. His comments as reported in *The Times* were as follows:—

In examining the sickness experience of recent years one could not fail to be struck with the fact that, although among unmarried insured women the proportion who fell sick was, as a rule, somewhat less than among men of the same age, the duration of the incapacity was much longer, and consequently the average amount of sickness among unmarried women was greater than among men. Among married women both the number claiming and the duration of the claim was relatively greater than among the unmarried. Indeed, the duration of sickness benefit in the case of a married woman claimant averaged the very high figure of 8½ weeks per annum. It was rather disquieting to find that the disparity between the sickness experience of women over men was steadily increasing, and this was even more apparent between the sickness experience of married women and the experience of unmarried women. At a period when the health of the general community was steadily improving they had need to ask themselves whether the apparent deterioration in the health of women, as reflected in the sickness claims, was not to some extent accounted for by a certain degree of laxity in the administration of the Act.

Scottish Universities By-election.

The Scottish Universities By-election caused by the death of Sir Henry Craik gives an opportunity to the voters in that constituency to bring the need for equal suffrage and other reforms to the notice of the candidates. Indeed, with votes for women at 21 imminent these candidates will be hardly less

responsive to the views of the disfranchised under thirties. These last have a special responsibility for bringing proof that the disfranchised themselves are demanding equal franchise. And where a constituency includes so many teachers, doctors, and civil servants it is to be hoped that a large number will write to the candidates asking them to support Sir Robert Newman's Married Women's (Employment) Bill, 1927, which proposes to make it illegal for Government Departments, Local Authorities, and other bodies financed by rates and taxes to refuse to employ women by reason of marriage. The candidates are Mr. John Buchan (Conservative), c/o Thomas Nelson and Sons (Publishers), Park Side Works, Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh, and Mr. Hugh Guthrie, M.A., c/o 108 West Regent Street, Glasgow. As the election is by postal vote it is important that any voter should ascertain from the Registrar of her own University whether her present address appears on the voting list and make arrangements for having her voting papers forwarded should some old address be printed in the Registrar of Voters. The voting paper will be posted to the electors on Monday, 18th April; and the poll closes on Tuesday, 26th April, and the three following days.

Nursing Homes.

Human nature is often very unlike the ideas which we choose to form of it, and when this is so it is usually shocking. Until the recent report on nursing homes was issued who would have supposed that so many would be content to condemn aged parents and relations to drag out the rest of their lives in disgusting misery? But to save a little money, or a great deal of care and trouble, they will, and do it cheerfully and without a pang. Their love, if love they ever felt, perishes with the mental decay of its object, and their only wish is to rid themselves of an encumbering presence, exacting duties, and melancholy reminders. Further than this, in some temperaments unattractive helplessness seems to produce what we may call an actively callous state of mind, if not definite cruelty. This being unhappily proved, the national disgrace of a Midwives and Maternity Homes Bill becomes inevitable, and we are glad that the Government seem disposed to give it facilities. The objections taken in the recent debate were obviously on matters of detail which can be attended to in committee, and we hope that local authorities throughout the country will prepare themselves to take effective action immediately upon the Bill's becoming an Act.

Miss Gertrude Bell.

This paper has often to undertake the pleasant duty of congratulating some lady who has reached a position, of no particular eminence in itself, which has hitherto been held entirely or almost entirely by men. The duty is pleasant, because these small successes are vital to a great cause, but it is sometimes disheartening as well to reflect that they still are vital. We are therefore delighted when we are able to draw attention to an exploit performed by a woman which would have merited admiration and gratitude if carried through by an angel, a demon, or a man. Such was the journey through Arabia, made by Miss Gertrude Bell in 1913-14—a journey not only remarkable in itself, but productive of exact information of the highest importance. Colonel Lawrence used the wells not only found but charted by Miss Bell. The British administration used her analysis of the political situation—an analysis no man would have been able to make, based as it was upon *harem* conversations carried on during her various detentions and semi-imprisonments: archaeologists and geographers are indebted to her for her discoveries and observations, and the tribes who had been her most unwilling hosts, were to find in her, during the peace negotiations, one of their most influential champions. This is greatness—such a combination of human and scientific interests; of courage, vision, learning, and intellectual integrity. Miss Bell was never able to find the time to write about this expedition the book which would have been a fit companion to *The Desert and the Town*. The story was told to the Royal Geographical Society by its President, Mr. D. G. Hogarth, who made it out from her papers with the help of her family. His audience were fortunate; the ordinary reader can only hope that his lecture will be printed in some form which will make it easily accessible.

Air Pilots and Women.

Our readers will remember that the International Commission for Air Navigation removed their ban on women becoming air

pilots some months ago. Recently the conditions under which women may become licensed for "B" (public transport) have been under consideration in England, and after investigation, it has been decided to issue licences for this country on the same standards of general efficiency as for men. Special requirements appropriate to the sex are laid down, and the medical examination will be every three months instead of every six months. It is expected that these regulations proposed by the British will be accepted by the International Commission for Air Navigation at an early date! So far so good, but what are the "special requirements appropriate to the sex"? And why are twice as many medical examinations required for women as for men? Truly, according to the powers that be "the female of the species is more dangerous than the male." Mussolini apparently thinks so too; he has forbidden marriage for all members of the Italian Air Force under the age of 30!

Questions in Parliament.

Wednesday, 13th April.

EQUAL FRANCHISE.—*Mr. Pethick-Lawrence* asked the Prime Minister whether he can now state the intentions of the Government with regard to the enfranchisement of women?

The Prime Minister: The Government has given this matter its most careful consideration, and it has decided to introduce a Bill during the next Session for extending the Parliamentary franchise to women of 21 years of age and upwards on the same terms as men.

Colonel Gretton: On a point of Order. May I ask whether, in the case of an important announcement of this kind, it is not usually given to the House of Commons in the first place, and may I inquire whether any information has been given to the Press before the announcement was made in this House?

Mr. Pethick-Lawrence: In thanking the Prime Minister for his reply, may I take it that the Government intend to carry the Bill into Law sufficiently early next Session so as to allow time for the new voters to be put on the next summer register of the year 1928?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but that is rather a difficult matter, technically. I would reply in this way, that should the life of this Parliament last its normal length, there will be no difficulty in the new voters being able to vote. The only case in which the new voters would not be able to vote would be in the event of any unexpected, shall I say, catastrophe, bringing the life of this Parliament to an end.

Mr. Clynes: Is there any intention to include in the Bill other features of the franchise than the one named?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid I cannot give any further answer than I have given. The Bill will take some time to prepare. It will not be prepared before the next Session.

Mr. T. Williams: When the right hon. Gentleman refers to the next Session, does he mean the next autumn Session or the Session of 1928?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member reflects for a moment, it will be present to his mind that I hope to bring this Session to an end at the end of July, and the new Session would begin in sufficient time to enable one or two principle Measures of the next Session to be given a Second Reading before Christmas.

Colonel Gretton: Will the Prime Minister answer my question?

The Prime Minister: No announcement was made that I know of.

Viscountess Astor: Is it not true that when the Prime Minister received a deputation he stated that it would be possible, even if this Parliament did not last its full time, to bring in a Bill and put these voters on the register so that they could vote in 1928?

Sir Robert Sanders: May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether, in framing the Bill, he will take into consideration the question of re-drafting the scale of election expenses?

The Prime Minister: It is very early to enter upon the consideration of these points, but I think that is a perfectly fair question and it is one which I should certainly desire should be discussed.

Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Hall: May I ask whether this increase of voters will entail re-distribution?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir.

Captain Garro-Jones: May I ask the Prime Minister whether he remembers that the Home Secretary has given a specific pledge that these new voters will be added to the register before the next election, and, therefore, if he advises a dissolution before that time it will be tantamount to breaking the pledge of the Home Secretary?

THE FREEDOM OF THE MARRIED WOMAN.

On the eve of Good Friday came the announcement for which women had so long been waiting, and three days after the reassembling of Parliament on Friday, 29th April, a principle which is implicit in the feminist formula, will be under discussion. The Married Women's Employment Bill, initiated by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, will be introduced by Sir Robert Newman, seconded by Mr. Pethick Lawrence, and backed by Lady Astor, Margaret Bondfield, Mr. A. C. Hurst, and Mr. Briant. It is certain to secure a lively debate on the occasion of its second reading, both on account of the ability of its supporters and the controversial interest of the subject. The L.C.C. has already announced its opposition and it seems too much to hope that the Government, itself an arch offender as employer in the Civil Service, will have experienced a change of heart. In fact, we fear that except among the married women concerned and among women's organizations who uphold the rights of married women to the same choice of occupations as other adult citizens, the bill has few friends. The Civil Service and Local Government organizations of women, though many of them support the bill in principle, cannot help having one eye on the possibilities of promotion for their members which would be retarded if married women remain in the Service. They have also, unfortunately, painful recollections of the privileges required on behalf of children by certain types of married women during the war. In this connection it cannot be too strongly stressed that in asking for opportunities of employment, married women should not expect to retain their employment when for any cause whatever their efficiency is impaired.

The arguments against the Bill can be roughly classed under four heads:—First, we are told that married women are supported by their husbands, and that it is unfair that two incomes should go into the same home. To this we reply that a public authority is not a relieving officer. Its duty is to appoint the best person for the job. If the principle of refusing to employ people who have alternative sources of livelihood is to be logically carried out, it should apply to anyone, husband, wife, brother, sister, son, or

daughter, living under the same roof. Is then a daughter, asks Mrs. Barton, of the Women's Co-operative Guild, to be allowed to earn while her father can support her? Are no people to be employed who have private incomes? Moreover, there are cases in which a husband is disabled or unwilling to work. The Civil Service ignore such possibilities altogether, while local authorities consider such cases on their merits; this means that a woman has to expose the inadequacy or wrong-doing of her husband as the price of her employment. The second case against the Bill is that employment of married women means unemployment of unmarried women. But surely unemployment cannot be tackled by cutting down the number of productive workers. Moreover, the wife engaged in professional or industrial occupations generally engages someone to work in her place. Thirdly, the argument that married women are bad time-keepers because their energies and interests are divided can only be answered by experience. This difficulty may be said to apply to all women who live at home, and some of those who do not. We have heard of a woman engaged in public work, who, after long and painful experience of secretaries recalled at critical moments by home claims, sought one with no relatives at all! As for the stock argument that "wcm's place is the home," and that she should not seek a sphere elsewhere, it can surely be passed over in these pages. It is true that a great responsibility rests on such married women as do adopt outside careers to show that they can be carried on with efficiency without detriment to their home life.

The tale of Local Authorities which dismiss their employees on marriage—irrespective of their capacity for the job—is now almost complete, though it is noteworthy that when any shortage of supply is felt they do not hesitate to turn to the married woman. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, as a means of safeguarding married women, broke to pieces in our hands, and the need is urgent for more effective legislation. If this Bill should not reach the Statute book, as we hardly dare hope at the first time of asking, it will at least be a gallant attempt, and will go some way in the direction of propaganda and the education of the public.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER.

BY OUR PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.

The last four days of the Session were crowded with interest. The Budget was discussed on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 11th to 13th April, and on the last-named day the Prime Minister made his long promised statement on votes for women. As was expected all along by the writer of these notes, he stated that the Government intended to enfranchise women at 21 and indicated that, if this Parliament ran its normal course, women would vote at the next election. To anyone dealing in political realities no other result was conceivable. Only two alternatives existed. The first was that the Prime Minister broke his promise, and a promise, moreover, which he had authorized the Home Secretary to renew and to extend as late as last year. Apart from dishonesty, a breach would be so extraordinarily silly that only an excited public opinion, or a Press that never rests in its attacks upon the Prime Minister, would ever believe so fanciful a charge. The second alternative was to give votes to both sexes at 25, a suggestion which is an admirable example of misleading logic, for to carry it out would have been political suicide for the party that adopted it. Hence to anyone capable of looking below the turmoil and the pother of the surface of politics, the result was always clear.

It is difficult to appreciate the fears of those who dread the change. It is a safe prophecy that the balance of parties will not be affected seriously; and, from the point of view of the country and in the interests of justice, two considerations which seem to have been forgotten in the present controversy, young women as well as young men have their special contribution to make to our national polity, and younger women in industry need such industrial protection as the vote gives.

The interesting reflection arises that this ends the extension of the franchise. A few individuals here and there, now left out, may be included, but there are no large blocks of our population who remain voteless. Therefore, the long controversy, which started at least as far back as the time of William Pitt, has now worked itself out to its proper conclusion. The democratic state has been perfected, and though the prophets are

busy vaticinating the gloomiest disasters, our orderly, established British life will go on very much as before.

It would be unsuitable in these notes, which try to hold up a picture of the daily play of Parliamentary life, to give a solid and systematic review of Budget changes. It is, however, interesting to point out one or two political tendencies. The first is that Mr. Winston Churchill seems definitely committed to a policy of expenditure. Every one of his Budgets provides for more taxation than the last, and people are beginning to ask when the curve is going to turn downwards. Secondly, there is a distinct division between front bench Labour and the Clyde section. Both Mr. Snowden and Mr. Graham made speeches which were acclaimed by Conservatives and denounced by Mr. Wheatley. Mr. Snowden, by the by, spoke under the shadow of physical suffering and immediately afterwards had to leave the House, to the general regret. Thirdly, the economists upon all sides have been very busy and have caught their prey in the destruction of three Ministries. These, Transport, Mines, and Overseas Trade, are to come to an end. And fourthly, there has been observed what always occurs when a Government economises. The shouts for economy in general are loud and deep; the applause for economical intentions is ecstatic; but no sooner is a particular saving introduced than there are howls of execration. Members on all sides of the House spent some part of the three days in belauding the condemned Ministries and abusing the Government for ending them. And this will always happen.

For the rest, Mr. Churchill dominated the House in a way to which the House is now resigned. He spoke on Monday for two hours and twenty minutes and very few Members left the Chamber, in spite of the long strain on their attention. Whether serious or gay, whether declamatory or persuasive, whether keeping close to his financial book or wandering far afield upon general observations, he showed the highest type of the Parliamentary mind, working upon a subject it knew well. Altogether the Debate reached a high level.

TREATMENT OF YOUNG OFFENDERS.

By C. D. RACKHAM, J.P.

The Committee appointed by the Home Secretary more than two years ago has just issued its report (price 2s. 6d.), and an extremely valuable and interesting document it is. It should be carefully studied by all those who care for the welfare of neglected or delinquent children. The recommendations clear away much that is obsolete and make many important proposals for the future; they are also in some respects disappointing and in others open to serious criticism.

Some of the most valuable suggestions have to do with Juvenile Courts and Probation. The Juvenile Courts are to deal with boys and girls up to 17 instead of 16 as at present. This seems a good age to choose. To raise the age to 18 would be to risk admitting to the Juvenile Court young burglars and prostitutes and the character of the Court would be altered. Most admirable are the proposals for improving the type of magistrates who sit in the Juvenile Court. The Lord Chancellor's appointments to the Bench are to include men and women with special qualifications for this work, and each Bench is to elect a panel every year. Magistrates should only be re-elected as long as they retain their full vigour of body and mind, and a Bench of three is quite sufficient. It is suggested that if it is necessary to remand a child or young person, he or she should be sent to one of three Observation Centres or Central Remand Homes which are to be set up for London, the Midlands, and the North of England respectively. Here expert advice would be available to report on the physique and mentality of the child. It is even urged that young persons up to 21 should be sent to these Homes so as to obviate the necessity of their being sent to prison on remand. The difficulty is the great distance that will have to be travelled by the young people and their escorts in going to and from the Remand Home. It is to be feared that at first at any rate, many magistrates will prefer to use their local accommodation when a remand is necessary. If mental examinations for adult offenders become more common (as is urgently to be desired) magistrates may be tempted to make use of the same professional assistance for their young people as they use for adults. These practical difficulties may be overcome when magistrates are educated up to seeing that an expert report is worth the trouble and expense of railway journeys.

The Committee are quite clear on the point that Probation involves "supervision in the open" and must not be combined with the stipulation that the probationer must enter an Institution. This practice has increased of recent years, so that in 1923, no less than 518 probationers were sent to Homes as a condition of their Probation. It is curious that the Committee in discussing the reasons for this action on the part of magistrates omit to give what is undoubtedly the true one in many cases, that the offender can be sent to a Voluntary Home for a short period as is not possible if the magistrates commit him to a certified school or recommend him for Borstal. Out of the 518 sent to Homes, 271 were sent for one year or less, and 184 for two years only. This is an illustration of the need felt by magistrates for some shorter period of training than is afforded by commitment to a school or to Borstal. With boys and girls over school age this need may be met by making residence in a hostel a condition of Probation, and this course is highly recommended by the Committee. It is much to be hoped that as a result hostels may be opened in all large centres where boys and girls who are on probation but whose homes are unsatisfactory may reside under discipline but go out to their daily work in conditions of freedom.

A most deplorable feature in the Report is that the committee, after adducing several reasons to show that whipping may be an undesirable punishment, then proceed to recommend its extension, to lads between 16 and 17, and for "all serious offences" instead of its being limited to boys under 16, and in the case of boys between 14 and 16 to certain offences only. It is almost incredible after all the psychologists have told us, that these greatly extended powers to order a punishment which has been condemned by the highest authorities as ineffective, if not actually harmful, should be given to magistrates. The three members of the committee who stood out against these reactionary proposals are much to be congratulated, and it is to be regretted that only one of the three women members is among them.

The Report is disappointing on the subject of Certified Schools. Nothing is said about improvements in education or in training. It would be interesting to know how many boys and girls in these schools have a chance of a secondary education or find permanent employment in the trade they are supposed to have learnt at school. The period of commitment is to be reduced to three years except for school children who are not to leave until the school age is passed. A fixed period of three years cannot possibly be the appropriate term for all the variety of child offenders with whom magistrates have to deal—the child from a good home who has broken his probation and needs pulling up, and the child from a bad home who has no chance unless he is taken right out of his surroundings. The fixing of this long period much reduces the usefulness of the schools to the magistrates and results in their not committing children to them even when other methods have failed.

The imprisonment of offenders under 21 is condemned in a very satisfactory manner. Much that is said about the harmfulness of prison would apply to first offenders of any age. Borstal training is praised with equal emphasis. It is expected that the Borstal population will be doubled, and that four new Institutions will be required. The minimum sentence is to be three years instead of two as at present; if a licence is revoked the period of control may last for nearly five years, and the second detention (which may be twelve months) is spent in the prison at Wormwood Scrubbs.

The Committee recommend that the power of sentencing young men up to 21 to this long period of detention shall be entrusted to magistrates in Petty Sessions. It is a very great extension of the powers of magistrates and it must be remembered that there is no free legal assistance available in the police court and the defendant's right of appeal is often quite illusory because he cannot pay the heavy cost. The reason given for thus extending the powers of magistrates is that the lad or girl will no longer have to go to prison while awaiting sentence at Assizes or Quarter Sessions, though as a matter of fact, lads do not escape prison in any case, as if sentenced to Borstal they go to Wandsworth Prison for examination. But if the Remand Homes for young persons under 21 are set up there seems no reason why these should not be available for those who are awaiting sentence, and the opinion of the experts there would be placed before the Judge or Recorder at the higher court.

Figures are quoted to prove the success of the Borstal training which show 35 per cent of reconvictions. It is pointed out that this is not a fair test as many lads who are reconvicted once afterwards make good. It may also be pointed out that the mere absence of a reconviction is not a very satisfying test of whether or not training has been "really successful." To say this is not by any means to question the value of the Borstal institutions or the splendid work they have done. But it is a very vital question as to whether such large powers of detention should be entrusted to Courts of Summary Jurisdiction.

WOMEN'S PROGRESS IN OTHER LANDS.

Women who are interested in the League of Nations and in the growth of harmonious international relations should not overlook the international aspect of the woman's movement. The April number of the *International Woman Suffrage News* is full of interest, though we regret the effect that the lack of harmony in the British movement may have in other countries. The leading article deals with the recent report on the Traffic in Women and Children. Another deals with the recent Hungarian elections and new developments in Government, including a decision of the Minister of Justice that all brothels are to be closed by May, 1928. Other efforts of the Minister to raise the standard of public morals have, however, their dangers, and the Hungarian women are on their guard against a proposal for the compulsory medical examination of waitresses and women hotel servants. It is curious to read in the notes from India that on the occasion of a recent debate on the enfranchisement of women the Government issued an order prohibiting a peaceful demonstration of women to the Council Chamber and permitting them only to go as far as the gates of the Secretariat, which were closed and guarded by the police. Only a few weeks ago a similar scene was enacted at Westminster, when a long queue of women from all parts of Great Britain came to interview their members on equal franchise, and were held up by the police at the entrance to Westminster. They were, however, unlike the Burmese ladies allowed entrance, in small groups.

THINGS INDUSTRIAL SEEN IN CHINA.¹

By DAME ADELAIDE M. ANDERSON.

IX.

The encouraging response of the late H. E. Yao Hsiao-Nan at my interview with him late in June, 1924, happened to be only a few days before I was driven by the summer heat away from Wuchang and Hankow, and to the heights of Kuling, 3,500 ft. up, above Kiukiang in Kiangsi Province. His attitude to the question of child labour sent me there in a hopeful holiday mood about the progress of the work of the Industrial Committee. Yet before the summer holiday had quite finished civil warfare had broken out in the Delta Provinces, the Kuling Estate could furnish no coolies to carry luggage or chairs down to the river for the steamer passage to Shanghai, since all had been commandeered by the local military authority. Had it not been for the friendly resourcefulness of my hostess's cook, who produced, as it were from nowhere, four luggage bearers and four chair bearers, who took me down the beautiful descent, in the company of American friends similarly supplied, the mood of confidence might then have been seriously dissipated.

My companions were going up stream to Hankow, while I was hastening down to Shanghai in order to be sure that I could move and act in spite of surrounding warfare. Friendly and helpful as the Chinese people and officials were in 1924, it was not to be expected that fighting operations should be interrupted to let me pass—as strange to say they were, from Tientsin to Taku in March, 1926, to let the Chairman and Chinese members of the British China Indemnity Delegation pass through on their voyage to Shanghai!

My thoughts nevertheless turned back to the Wuhan group of cities in the bend of the great river, concerning which so much of deep human interest must always remain to be said. I had been fortunate in spending a large part of my stay in June in the historical city of Wuchang—the capital of an ancient kingdom at least as long ago as 300 B.C., and in a mission compound from which a short scramble brought one out on to a high part of the old city wall. From there I could look westward in the direction of narrow streets of the poorest handicraft workers, umbrella makers or chopstick makers, past small weaving sheds, with only hand and treadle devices in use, to big Chinese cotton mills, equipped with the latest machinery and motor plant; here, where there is most of the old type of industry, some of the textile factories seemed newer and more modern than Shanghai textile factories. And yet the general condition of the labouring people is poorer and far grimmer than in the great seaport. It showed in 1926, as in 1924, more of the densely packed life of China and more of the immense poverty of the masses than I had yet seen elsewhere. There was none of the gay carving of house fronts so general in Ningpo, and less of the soft beauty of the old eastern cities, such as Soochow. Yet turn northward as you stand on the high wall, and the three cities are seen with something of majesty upon them, lining the Great River banks eroded by the swiftly rolling ochre-coloured waters, that when seen nearer, in morning sunlight reflect the vault above in myriad broken wavelets of sky-blue. Look eastward, and there are beautiful green fields, irrigating water-channels, and trees; southward, and there are lakes and the mountains beyond. Right through the depth of the city runs the dividing, long, rocky Serpent Hill that, advancing into the river, makes an escarpment and defence against the force of the currents and floods that without its opposition might long since have overwhelmed the city.

On this rugged old wall I thought of the standing marvel of the industrious endurance of the Chinese people and their capacity to live something resembling a human life in crowded quarters, packed sometimes almost as closely by sectional wooden partitions, horizontal and vertical, as bees in a beehive. The compound below was a small oasis, with fine trees and shrubs (Pride of Asia and Heavenly Bamboo) and delicious birds including golden orioles, but the neighbours' houses and their roofs cling close to it, and from outside more heart-rending cries of dogs were heard in eight days than ever were heard by my ears in all my previous life. "Curs," they were, no doubt, but the gate-keeper carried a message from the ladies, that they were made unhappy by the cries and for a while the dogs quieted down a little. In this city, as in many another, my eye has been caught, as I passed in a richa, by a "madonna-like"

¹ Previous articles appeared in our issues of 4th, 18th, and 25th February, 18th, 25th March, and 1st, 8th, and 15th April.

mother in a humble street, holding her child close, and swiftly yielding "a smile-giving" response to the foreign person's passing friendly glance.

From the atmosphere and setting of an ancient Chinese centre, such as this, where (as we saw in the previous article) the feudal or military type of overlord was ready to discuss certain principles of modern industrial civilization, I must turn backward a little in time, measured by the calendar, to the reception given at Peking, in March, 1924, to those principles by the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and (in a separate department) Industry.

Travelling by the Blue Express from Shanghai, via Nanking and Tientsin to Peking, a wonderfully interesting journey with the companionship of two fine Chinese women, I was sent by the Industrial Committee of the National Christian Council of China, with the necessary introductions, for two main purposes. First, I was there for the giving of a short course of university lectures on Western Factory Law and administration; and secondly, for a conference, with the Minister concerned, on my impressions of factory and other industrial conditions, after several months' service with the Shanghai Child Labour Commission and after study of the conditions on behalf of the National Christian Council of China, also to learn what he was ready to explain to me of the plans and activities of his office. The British Professor of Economics at Yenching University, Professor J. B. Taylor, introduced me on both occasions. The outstanding characteristic of each experience lay in the attentive and friendly courtesy that prevailed throughout. The exchange of ideas was most complete at the memorable conference with the eminent Minister, Dr. W. W. Yen, who at that time held the office. Had it been possible (and political conditions more favourable), to move towards practical application of the Peking Provisional Regulations for Factories, progress under his guidance would have been made. He had knowledge and understanding of the question, and sympathy with reform of the conditions of the workers. The outcome of the conference was summarized by Professor Taylor, and after the summary was submitted first for any needed revision to myself and then for approval to the Minister, it was sent to the Press for publication. It truly told that I

"was able to report an awakening interest on the part of officials and employers in the subject of industrial welfare, so that although the conditions, notwithstanding some notable exceptions, are generally speaking very terrible," the outlook was "hopeful." The great difficulty was the securing of co-ordinated action, and "the great desideratum a wider public appreciation of the issues involved. Emphasis was placed upon the need for the regulation of child labour, its exclusion from night work, and the provision of education; and upon the shortening of the hours of labour in view of the greater strain of work in factories using power-driven machinery." A hope was expressed that before I left the country "definite progress may be made towards improving the conditions of factory labour" in China, "which competent observers believe," the reporter added, "to be in greater need of improvement than those in any other civilized nation."

Dr. W. W. Yen showed strong interest in my plea for more accurate statistics in relation to the study of health and safety, for means whereby the workers could really voice their needs, and for travelling Inspectors of Factories; the preparations for sending a Chinese delegation to the International Labour Conference in Geneva were also discussed.

The wonderful beauty and interest of Peking, the temples, tombs, and other monuments of the metropolis and district—much of which I was enabled to see by the true kindness of the late Lady Agien in lending me the use of her car—absorbed part of my brief three to four weeks' visit. More time was given to inquiry into old-world and other industries, there and in Tientsin. It was unavoidable that I should turn southward as fast as possible to Shanghai for the concluding stages of the work of the Child Labour Commission. Also there was much to be seen of entirely Chinese large-scale industry in an important old city of the Delta such as Wusih—"the future Manchester of China" it has been called—and in Nantungchow, industrially the creation of a single family; further there was a momentous revisit, still to be accomplished, to Nanking, before the voyage up the Great River to Wuhan. These and other experiences have to be told in another place; and more fully than is possible in this condensed series of articles.

(To be continued.)

¹ This is a descriptive term I met in the Diary of the Lady Murasaki Shikibu, A.D. 1007-10, a Japanese Court lady of old Japan, which exactly fits the expression of the Chinese mother.

FUNDAMENTAL DATA.

Among the memoranda which will be submitted by the League of Nations (Economic and Financial Section) to the Economic Conference in May, is a study on the population, production, and trade of the world, which should form part of the texture of all international thinking in our present age. It is not easy reading for those unacquainted with the handling of statistical material, but even for such persons, the salient facts as they are summarized in Table 1, page 6, stand out clearly enough. It shows, in somewhat crude percentages, the rise or fall, as the case may be, in the population, raw-material production, and foreign trade, of various areas of the world, and of the world taken as a whole in 1913 and in 1925.

For the world as a whole, the period in question shows a 5 per cent increase in population, a precisely similar increase in trade, and a 16-18 per cent increase in the production of raw materials. On the whole, therefore, we may suppose that the world as a whole is richer per head of its population. But of this increased wealth Europe has obtained no share. Including Russia, its population shows a 1 per cent increase, its raw material a 4-5 per cent increase, and its trade an 11 per cent drop. Russia, however, seems to be largely responsible for the stagnation of trade and population. Excluding Russia, the corresponding figures are 4 per cent, 4-5 per cent, and 6 per cent respectively.

It is, of course, when we come to North America and South America that we get spectacular expansions under each head. North America shows a 19 per cent increase of population, a 26 per cent increase of raw material, and a 37 per cent increase of trade; South America a 22 per cent increase of population, a 34-5 per cent increase of raw material, and a 3 per cent drop in trade. Apart from North America, it is Central America and the Caribbean Islands, Asia (excluding Russia), and Oceania, that show the greatest increased trade percentages. With Africa they also show a spectacular increase of raw material production.

With the significance of these large comparisons the coming Economic Conference will of course have to deal. That there has been a considerable shifting of economic centres of gravity in the world at large, they undoubtedly show. How far may this shifting be attributed to the war? How far to the increasing importance of tropical products as a factor in the development of civilization? How far to the development of mineral oil as a source of power for industry and transport? Contemplating them in all their statistical nakedness our thoughts stumble into deep waters, and we find ourselves meditating upon the rise and fall of empires. But at any rate, taking the world as a whole—and as time goes on it becomes more justifiable to do so—we do not appear to be working at "diminishing returns." In that thought there is some comfort!

M. D. S.

MRS. AGATHA CHRISTIE'S JOKE.²

Is it possible that our friend Mrs. Agatha Christie is fond of what our other friend M. Hercule Poirot would call "a little deception"—a harmless mystification designed to try how much her public will swallow?

That seems to me to be the most plausible explanation of *The Big Four*. For this book, presented quite gravely to Mrs. Christie's habitual readers as a successor to *Roger Ackroyd* and the rest, bears every appearance of being a very clever skit. In it, she satirizes all her own fiction, and all the other detective and secret service fiction, that has delighted the British nation since Sherlock Holmes' aquiline features first began to appear in the pages of the *Strand Magazine*. She knows exactly how

¹ Memorandum on Production and Trade, League of Nations. (Published by Constable & Co., 1s. 6d.)

² *The Big Four*, by Agatha Christie. (W. Collins, 7s. 6d. net.)

to do it, and she keeps such a serious countenance that not every reader will realize what she is at. She has all the familiar devices of the detective story writer at her fingers' ends, of course. Here, she collects, and so arranges them as to turn them into nightmarish caricature. We have had stories of secret councils of immensely powerful, wicked men, prepared to use wealth, science, and intellect to overturn the world. But we have never yet read of any quite so secret, quite so powerful, or quite so wicked as the Big Four. We have had a good deal of sensational fiction revolving round mysterious, sinister Chinamen who lure innocent people into exquisitely furnished underground chambers where they threaten them with hideous tortures invented in the Far East. Mrs. Christie makes her Chinaman more remote and more sinister than those that have gone before. We have had Death Rays, Mrs. Christie talks of a Death Ray (invented by a woman scientist) which will outshine all that have gone before. In many previous secret service stories we have been amazed and a little irritated, by the ease with which the hero falls into traps, goes off alone into the lurking places of his enemies, thinks he is stalking them, and gets knocked on the head or overcome with narcotics or poisonous fumes. We have always known that he would come to himself in the next chapter, and that he would show as much ingenuity in his escape as he showed folly in letting himself be captured: but there has never been a book in which these familiar situations occurred so often, or were got out of by such improbable methods as *The Big Four*.

The reason of this is perhaps to be found in the characters involved, and it is here that Mrs. Christie's cleverest touch comes in. As the book is a caricature, the brilliant detective and the stupid, gallant hero we know so well are, of course, caricatured too. But does Mrs. Christie take Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson and call them Picklock Holes, etc.? No, she is much too clever for that. If she did that she would give away her joke at once. Her super detective, who does all the wonderful improbable things that all the detectives in fiction have done before him, in a more wonderful and improbable manner than they, who knows and is never known, who dies and comes alive again, and who always comes out top whatever the odds, is *her own Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective, we are all so familiar with, and who convinced us so plausibly in her previous works!*

It is a triumph! He himself would have forgiven his creator the insult because of her cleverness. It is hardly necessary to mention that the caricature detective's caricature foil is Captain Hastings. Not only the subject matter, but the style of previous sensational novels is satirized. Incident is heaped on incident; the explanations grow thinner and thinner, and the sentences more and more hurried; the fact that it is all a joke is given away as the story, (if one can call it a story), goes on. When the pseudo Poirot and the pseudo Hastings escape from the deepest recesses of an underground palace in the Dolomites, whence their terrific enemies are just about to launch the Death Ray upon civilization, by the simple device of telling one of them that they have found her long-lost child (not previously mentioned) and getting her to guide them out,—the intelligent reader can have no further doubt: Mrs. Agatha Christie has been amusing him and mystifying him as she has done before but in a different way; it is all a huge joke.

I. B. O'MALLEY.

DOGS' PROTECTION BILL
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Will you join us in support of Sir Robert Gower's Bill now before the House, and help (1) by writing to your M.P., asking his support; (2) by getting signatures for the Petition to exempt dogs from vivisection—at your home and place of business, at shops, clubs, churches, sports centres, etc.; (3) by helping at open-air meetings; (4) by joining one of the local groups working for the Bill. Particulars from the Secretary, Dogs' Protection Committee, Victoria Station House, S.W. 1.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS.

By BERTHA MASON.

A cartoon from *Punch* headed "Our Local Patriots" shows two well-dressed citizens standing on a railway station platform discussing and deploring election results:—

First Householder: "You voted, of course."
Second Householder: "No, did you?"
First Householder: "No."

Here we have an accurate description of the line taken by electors in the elections for the district councils and Boards of Guardians which took place on 2nd April or 4th April of this year.

Reports of local government elections published during the last six or eight years have revealed an appalling state of apathy, indifference, and neglect of civic duties on the part of electors, women and men alike throughout the country.

Information has been difficult to get this year, especially in regard to the part played by women, for unfortunately the local government elections are tending more and more to be run on purely party lines, and the returns given in the Press record mainly party successes or defeats.

We note that at *Harrow*, however, where there were straightforward contests for four seats between non-political and Labour candidates, the latter including *one woman*, the four non-political candidates were returned by substantial majorities.

Wealdstone.—There were ten candidates for four seats, four being put forward by the Ratepayers Association, two were Independents, and four, of whom two were women, were nominees of the Labour party. The four candidates of the Ratepayers Association, including two workers, were elected by large majorities.

Edmonton.—Seven Labour party and two Welfare Association candidates were returned. The position now is: Labour members, 19; Welfare Association, 8. Eight of the council are women.

Enfield.—The one woman candidate, member of the Labour party, was re-elected at the head of the poll.

Stevenage.—One woman nominated by the Labour party was returned.

Tonbridge.—There were fifteen candidates for seven seats on the district council. Miss Fayerman, an Independent candidate nominated by the Tonbridge branch of the Women Citizens' Association, gained the seventh place.

Matlock.—Here the women electors outnumber the men electors by 200. No woman candidate, so far as we can ascertain, went to the poll.

There are two facts in connection with the return of women to Urban District Councils which are distinctly encouraging:—
(1) The number of women is increasing, slowly, we admit, but surely, as the following figures show: There are to-day, so far as we can ascertain, 783 councils in England and Wales as compared with 803 in 1923. The number of women now serving, roughly speaking, is 251 as compared with 104 in 1923.

(2) Recent elections point to the fact that women once elected are willing to stand again and they secure re-election. On the other hand, it is discouraging to note that only on 169 urban district councils are women serving; in other words, 614 councils out of the total 783 are still without women members.

There must be, we are convinced, a considerable number of women in the country who have time to spare, and who are suitable for the very important work of Urban District Councils, who would come forward, as candidates, if approached. Why are their services not utilized?

Apparently much still remains to be done before local government electors, women as well as men, are really alive to the importance of their electoral responsibilities and duties, and to the need for the help of women on all local government bodies.

We believe that the apathy and indifference in regard to local government matters, of which further proof has been furnished lately, are due chiefly to ignorance of the meaning and far-reaching effect of good local government, and in the case of women electors, to ignorance of the connection between the administrative work undertaken by Local Government Authorities and the homes and health of the nation. The one remedy, so it seems to us, lies in systematic diligent education, in season and out of season, of the electors as a whole, and of women in particular.

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THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION.

Our members all over the country were with us in spirit at the House of Commons on Wednesday afternoon. Dame Millicent fortunately returned in time from Palestine, was there in the flesh, and sat besides Miss Eleanor Rathbone, Miss Crystal Macmillan, Miss Philippa Strachey, and Miss Macadam in seats in the speakers' gallery, kindly placed at Miss Rathbone's disposal by Miss Whitley. Several societies were represented including Kensington, Islington, Hampstead, Hornsey, and even from so far off a Society as the Ikley S.E.C., and undoubtedly a much larger crowd would have collected if the notice had been longer. The lateness of the announcement kept Headquarters hard at work up to the eve of the holiday, but at last the last Press call was answered, the last communication to societies dispatched, the last congratulations received, and the doors were closed and the staff dispersed happy in the feeling that a definite step forward had been reached. The decision itself is dealt with elsewhere in this paper, and we urge our readers to read carefully the comments of our Parliamentary Correspondent.

MALVERN WEEK-END SUMMER SCHOOL.

Friday, 13th May, to Monday, 16th May.

We would remind our readers of the Week-end Summer School which is being arranged by the Malvern S.E.C. The speakers will be Mrs. Corbett Ashby, Commandant Allen, and Mrs. Hubback, and the subjects to be discussed include Equal Franchise and other Legislation affecting women and children, Work of Women Police, Right of Married Women to engage in Paid Work, Women and Social Insurance, Work of Women and the League of Nations. Inclusive cost, accommodation and School fee £2 2s. School fee (non-residents) 4s. 6d. Single Lectures 1s. Applications should be made as soon as possible to Mrs. Freeman, Wyche Cliff, Wyche Road, Malvern.

NEWS FROM SOCIETIES.

NEWPORT W.C.A.

As President of the Women Citizens' Association the Mayoress, Mrs. A. T. W. James, received a large gathering of members on Monday in the Town Hall Assembly Room.

Miss Vivian, B.A., moved a vote of thanks to Mrs. Jens Muller, M.B.E., J.P., for her past services as a Vice-President. Appreciation of Mrs. Muller's work in Newport generally as well as for women citizens, and the sense of loss felt in the town at Mrs. Muller's departure, were expressed by Miss Vivian and Mrs. C. P. Simmonds. The Mayoress then handed to Mrs. Muller, on behalf of the Association, a book in which a simple inscription—beautifully designed by Mrs. Sinclair—denoted that it was presented "to Mrs. Muller, a Vice-President of the Women Citizens' Association, on the occasion of her leaving Newport." The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation. Delegates to the Annual Council of the N.U.S.E.C. then gave their reports. Dr. S. Tasker-Smith described the great equal franchise demonstration at Westminster Hall, and also reported on a conference on Social Insurance. Mrs. Poole dealt with the public luncheon and its speakers, and also with the League of Nations resolutions and the need for more women in local government. Miss Alger spoke on the women police resolutions and of the mass-lobbying of M.P.s by delegates with a view to ensuring support of an equal franchise measure. Mr. Clarry, it was noted, had already promised such support.

KENSINGTON AND PADDINGTON S.E.C.

Children's Courts and Child Delinquents.

A very interesting and well-attended meeting was held, by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. G. R. Gooch, in their beautiful library in Campden Hill, last week, when Mrs. Rackham, M.A., J.P., occupied the chair, and Cecil Chapman (late Metropolitan Magistrate), spoke on "Children's Courts." Mr. Chapman said "Children's Courts were a milestone on the road of general progress." Children's Courts were an example of the change of justice from that which is prohibitive and vindictive to that which is reformative and educational. Mr. Chapman then spoke of the question of putting the children on probation, also of Industrial Schools, where he said when the officials were humanly interested in the children there were splendid results. Our Children's Courts were models of excellence, and were copied by many other countries, France, Germany, Japan, and Holland.

GLASGOW S.E.C. AND W.S.A.

The annual meeting of the Society was held on Thursday, 7th April, in the Central Hall. In the absence of the President, Miss Melville, B.D., J.P., Mrs. James Taylor, Chairman of the Executive Committee, presided over a large audience. Resolutions on the following subjects were passed: Equal Franchise, Equal Moral Standard for Men and Women, Equal Opportunity and Equal Pay for Men and Women in Industry and the Professions, Child Adoption, the Appointment of a National Censorship of Films, Housing. The result of the ballot for election of members to the Executive Committee was declared at the end of the meeting.

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SECOND-HAND CLOTHING wanted to buy for cash; costumes, skirts, boots, underclothes, curtains, lounge suits, trousers, and children's clothing of every description; parcels sent will be valued and cash sent by return.—Mrs. Russell, 100 Raby Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. (Stamped addressed envelope for reply.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

LONDON AND NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE, 35 Marsham Street, Westminster. Secretary, Miss P. Strachey. Expert advice on Openings and Trainings for professional women; interviews 10-1 (except Saturdays) or by appointment.

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