

## The War Paper for Women

# VOTES FOR WOMEN

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

VOL. VIII. (Third Series), No. 380.

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1915.

Price 1d. Weekly (Post Free)  
1½d.

## WHICH IS STATESMANSHIP ?



June 5, 1915: In Denmark the Royal assent was given to the New Constitutional Law bestowing the Franchise on women, "with the determination to secure national unity in the face of the European crisis."

June 10, 1915: In our House of Commons, when asked to consider Denmark's example, "in view of the greater need for such a law in this country," Mr. Asquith replied that this was a highly controversial question, and could not be dealt with at the present time.







Articles and News contributed for insertion in VOTES FOR WOMEN should be sent to The Editors, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 4-7, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, E.C., at the earliest possible date, and in no case later than first post Monday morning prior to the publication of the paper.

The Editors cannot hold themselves in any way responsible for the return of unused manuscripts, though they will endeavour as far as possible to return them when requested if stamps for postage are enclosed. MSS. should, if possible, be typewritten.

Subscriptions to the paper should be sent to The Publisher, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 4-7, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, E.C.

The terms are, post free, 6s. 6d. annual subscription, 3s. 3d. for six months inside the United Kingdom, 8s. 8d. (2dols. 25cents) and 4s. 4d. (1dol. 15cents) abroad, payable in advance.

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## THE MYSTICISM OF WAR

Miss MURIEL MATTERS will deal with this subject at the Fourth of the FRIENDS' CONSTRUCTIVE MEETINGS ON PEACE, at DEVONSHIRE HOUSE, 136, DISHOPSGATE, E.C., at 6.30 p.m.

On WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23. Questions invited. No tickets.

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FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1915

## THE CASUALTIES AT HOME

The publication last week of the Registrar-General's report has concentrated public attention on a problem from which, in a really civilised and enlightened age, public attention would never have been diverted—the problem of how best to care for the health of expectant and nursing mothers, and to preserve the lives of infants. The facts of infant mortality are sufficiently appalling in times of peace. Roughly speaking, of every eight children born, one dies before it is twelve months old, and most of these deaths are unnecessary. We are steadily, year in and year out, wasting, destroying, slaughtering nearly a hundred thousand babies annually because we refuse to take the steps necessary for their preservation. In a community where the mothers of the race, where those who bear the pain and danger of bringing into the world these unhappy children, have no status and no political rights; in a community where the legislators are responsible to men only, the fact is (and even in such a community it seems an astonishing fact) that this annual casualty list has been accepted with indifference, with a stony silence, with at best a deprecatory lift of the eyebrows, by those whose elementary duty it was to save the children's lives. We do not pretend that legislation, even if coupled with able and sympathetic administration, could have done everything. It would not have saved all the children; but it could have saved most of them.

What people will not learn in the quiet, they have to learn in the storm. When there was no war, no pouring out of millions of pounds daily, no fear of an imminent shortage of human life in England, politicians had not time to deal with the wastage of child life; now, almost amid the very noise of the engines of destruction, they have found the time. The war figures are even more hideous than the peace figures. In London the infantile mortality is greater by 200 a week than in peace time, and the death-rate of children is rising all over the country. At last our Governors have noticed! At last something is to be done! And what? In the first place, the Notification of Births Act is to be made compulsory. Mr. Walter Long has explained that he anticipates no opposition in the House of Commons to this simple and necessary reform. We may well ask why in that case the Act has not been made compulsory long ago? That it would have been if woman had possessed votes is undeniable; that it would have saved many thousands of lives is equally undeniable—so the blood of the State has been drawn away for the mere sake of prolonging a gross national injustice. Anti-Suffragist Ministers have bought whatever satisfaction the suppression of women may have been to them by spending the very life-blood of the nation. Another reform foreshadowed is the enlarging of the powers of local authorities to deal with the care of mothers and infants. So far, so good; but all this is only a beginning.

A palliation of the existing horrors, which is

widely advocated and to some small extent practised, is what is called the "education of the mother." All education is good, and the science of infant management has doubtless much in it that can be taught, in the way of hygiene especially; but the difficulty is that there is often an element of impertinence in the attempt to teach poor women what they ought to do, instead of giving them the chance to do what they want to do. What is it but an insult to instruct in hygienic detail a mother who knows that what is killing her child is nothing more nor less than the poverty of the conditions into which the child is born? Lady Seeley, in an unpleasant letter to the *Times*, declares it is a mistake to suppose that women of the working class feel the burden of the war! Who in God's name does feel it if not the families who are being pinched and harried with the rise in the cost of living? How do Lady Seeley and her like account for the increase in the babies' death-rate? "A considerable number of babies' deaths," she says, "are due to the mothers' neglect." But even she will scarcely maintain that this cause has increased since the war began, so it can scarcely account for the increased result. And what, after all, is the truth about this alleged neglect? There are bad mothers, a few, among the poor as among the rich, but to say that poor women as such neglect their children is a cruel and an ignorant and a foolish calumny. Poor women put up on their children's behalf, against every form of social oppression and economic injustice, a battle so heroic that it should leave no one unamazed—particularly no one who, by being an Anti-Suffragist, is meanly insisting on poor women fighting without that weapon of the vote which would make the fight a little fairer. What poor mothers want (and most mothers are poor) is less poverty and more opportunity—not smug sermons on the utilisation of opportunities which they have never had.

That owing to separation allowances some women are better off than before is obvious (what a comment on our economic conditions in peace!). But that cannot conceivably apply to more than two millions (of course it does not in actual fact apply to anything approaching such a number), and already even in peace time we had nearly seven million women engaged in industry alone. Separation allowances will not solve the problem of infant mortality, if only for the reason that they are often paid to wives suffering from the bitterest personal anxiety, an anxiety which itself accounts for innumerable losses of infant life. Nor again will this or that item of legislation, however admirable and however long overdue. What is the good of spending a little money here and there to alleviate the dangers of maternity, when those dangers are themselves largely produced by shameful public conditions—conditions which keep women in a state of economic subservience, and debar them from any voice in the readjustment of wages or of status by legislation. What does Mr. Walter Long, with all his amiable intentions, know about the difficulties a poor mother has to face; what is his knowledge in comparison with the knowledge that the poor mother possesses? Yet she is to wait upon the pleasure of men as ignorant as Mr. Long for the simplest amelioration of her lot, and her infinite sufferings and services on behalf of the State are to go unrecognized. The education that women need is that education in citizenship which comes with the possession of a vote, and the only legislation which will touch the root-causes of infant mortality is the legislation that women will pass when they have the vote; for, in the nature of things, they and they only know the difficulties that must be met.

## COMPARISON OF PUNISHMENTS

LIGHT SENTENCES  
III-treating a Wife

The *Morning Advertiser* (June 14) reports case of a husband charged at the West Ham Police Court with assaulting his wife. The woman had her right arm in a sling, and was stated to be afraid of her husband, who was "a most violent fellow." She asked for the charge to be withdrawn. Sentence: Bound over to keep the peace for six months.

Our only comment upon these cases is that the "violent fellow" owed the light sentence to his wife's generosity. Her arm was broken, but she wanted to withdraw the charge, and pleaded on her savage husband's behalf that he "only gave her a clout," and it was her own fault for not coming when he called her. The chairman of the Bench thought her a plucky wife, and said he would call the man a "damned coward" if he were allowed to use bad language. But it seems to us that many men are likely to remain "damned cowards" so long as women place themselves on a level with dogs that deserve a "clout" when they do not answer the whistle.

## WOMEN'S CO-OPERATION

The Annual Congress of that very powerful body, the Women's Co-operative Guild, assembled in large numbers at Liverpool last Monday. The war and the problems of women's work arising from it have naturally occupied the greater part of their deliberations, and it is significant that a very prominent place was given in the agenda to questions concerning ultimate peace. Under the head of "The Basis of a Permanent Peace," resolutions were moved as to the future partnership of nations, various economic reforms, the consultation of the peoples as a whole upon questions of peace or war, and the inclusion of women as citizens of States. We are convinced that only on those lines can that "change of heart" be reached on which alone depends any hope of peace for the future.

Meantime, women continue very widely to extend their co-operation in the nation's general work. Another great London terminus has this week for the first time employed women as ticket-collectors. Reports of the employment of women in various forms of agricultural labour come from all over the country. The *Daily Sketch* of Tuesday had a series of pictures showing women at work in the hayfields of Middlesex; and a very interesting suggestion is mentioned in the London letter of the *Manchester Guardian*. The suggestion is that women should be appointed as pension officers to investigate the claims of women to the old age pensions. Women sit on the pension committees already, and have proved themselves much more regular in attendance than the men. As pension officers they would acquire experience which would be very useful to the country in arranging separation allowances and war pensions.

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## COMING EVENTS

The United Suffragists will hold a public meeting in the small Portman Rooms, Baker Street, on Thursday, June 17 and 24. (See page 306.)

Under the auspices of the United Suffragists Mr. John Scurr will deliver Lecture 3 on "The Theory and Practice of Politics in England to-day," at the Suffrage Club. (See page 306.)

The Women's Theatre, under the direction of the Actresses' Franchise League, are holding four War Relief Matinees at the London Pavilion on June 21, 22, 24, and 25, at 2.30 p.m. All particulars can be obtained from



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## COMPARISON OF PUNISHMENTS

HEAVY SENTENCES  
Theft

The *Warwickshire Advertiser* (March 13) reports case of a seaman charged at the Warwickshire Assizes with breaking into a shop and stealing thirty-eight silver watches and other articles. He had previously been convicted twice for breaking into the same shop. Sentence: Three years' penal servitude.

Miss Bensusan, 2, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.

The Women's Freedom League will hold a public meeting at the Fabian Hall, 25, Tothill Street, Westminster, on Wednesday, June 23, at 3.30 p.m. Speakers: The Rev. C. Warlow and Miss Nina Boyle.

## SOMETHING TO KNOW

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