

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

Memorial Service to Dame Millicent Fawcett.

We are glad to state that arrangements have been made for a Memorial Service to Dame Millicent Fawcett to be held in Westminster Abbey, as a tribute to her great work. Further particulars as to date, etc., will be announced later.

Disarmament.

With the steady progress of Anglo-American naval discussions and the emergence of concrete arrangements for the Prime Minister's Washington visit, the fleeting and irrelevant menace of armament rivalry between the U.S.A. and the British Empire gradually rolls away. With perfect confidence we venture to predict that the disarmament discussions of the future will move forward on the assumption that war between English-speaking peoples is an eventuality outside the bounds of sane consideration. One complicating factor is thus removed from the international scene. But what remains? Alas—a tangle of dark rivalries in continental Europe: the determination of France, Poland, and the Little Entente to reinforce the security of international guarantee by the pseudo-security of land armaments, and the unsolved problem of Franco-Italian naval dispositions. But the dictum: "to him that hath, shall be given" is a truth of universal application. The success of the two-power naval discussions now in progress will hand on a legacy of constructive achievement to the far more prickly, five-power naval discussions which will take place in January. Dare we hope that in a little while the mere mention of military limitation will evoke a more rational response than was accorded by the French Press last week to Lord Cecil's draft resolution on the subject for the Disarmament Committee of the League.

New Widows' Pension Scheme.

Reports have already been published in the Press, and of course many hints have been given by Ministers, as to the scope of the Bill to amend the Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act, which is expected early in the session. It is expected that the new Bill will become operative after 1st January of next year, and that among the beneficiaries will be the 45,000 women aged 65 and over who were not eligible for their old age pensions because their husbands were over 70 on 2nd January, 1928. Pensions for widows with children are to be extended until the youngest child reaches the age of 16. It is

also expected that something will be done for the very large class of aged widows without young children whose husbands died before the act became operative. It is thought, however, that these pensions to "pre-act" widows will be restricted to those over 60.

Report on the Employment and Training of Midwives.

The Ministry of Health's Committee on the Training and Employment of Midwives issued its report on 17th September. The Committee suggests the setting up of "a comprehensive maternity scheme related to National Health Insurance whereby, while retaining the principle of a cash payment as at present administered by approved societies, the scope of maternity benefit would be expanded to include the provision of essential health services, organized on a local basis and administered in co-ordination with other services of a similar nature by the Local Supervising Authorities responsible for the supervision of midwives under the Midwives Acts." The proposed scheme applies to ante-natal and post-natal periods, and includes the provision of doctors, midwives, and obstetric specialists, the free choice of doctor and midwife being retained. Important changes in the function of the Central Midwives Board are proposed. We shall publish an article on this shortly.

Training the Unemployed Juvenile.

The National Council on the Employment of Juveniles has recently reported with regard to the unemployment centres for young people between 14 and 18 which have been started during the last three or four years in most of the distressed areas. Their success is undoubted, and the Council recommends that every Local Authority that has in its area more than fifty unemployed young people, should start such a centre. They recommend, however, that thirty-five out of the fifty should be claimants for the insurance benefit. This means in effect that they must be over 16½ years of age, and have been out of work for at least thirty weeks. This limitation is deplored by many teachers' associations and others as making it impossible in many places to start centres at all. Unemployment among those under 16½ is considerable, and the hope that children leaving school at 14 will be prevented by these centres from falling into bad habits is virtually destroyed. We much hope that this recommendation will not be accepted. As to the curriculum, while boys are to learn the use of tools and handling of materials such as metal and wood, the training of girls is restricted to the domestic subjects. This is no doubt inevitable in view of the fact that domestic service is practically the only big industry in which the supply of labour is too small. We would, however, much like to see arrangements made for training for the girl who is not suitable for such work.

Child Marriage in India.

We publish in another column a letter with the signatures of many distinguished individuals and representatives of important organizations, calling on the British Government to do all in its power to facilitate the passage of the Child Marriage Bill, which proposes to raise the legal minimum marriage age to 14. On earlier occasions the Government has given the appearance of being against any such measure on the grounds that if carried too far ahead of Indian opinion it would necessarily be a dead letter and impossible to enforce. The letter shows, however, that enlightened Indian opinion is now on the right side, and we rejoice to see that the Government has already lent its weight in support of the Bill. Further information will be to hand next week as to the results of the deferred debate.

Coal.

It is generally expected that the Government will be tackling the coal question this autumn, and it is interesting, therefore,

to read of the scheme which the coal owners have themselves put forward for the rationalization of their industry, and which has already been referred to the districts for approval. The scheme proposes to establish a national committee to regulate both output and prices, and a system of district committees to distribute and allot tonnage among the various collieries. So much for this country. The international conference proposed by Mr. Graham at Geneva may carry the matter further. It is encouraging to read that at long last the coal owners are prepared not only to put their own house in order, but to look at the question from a national standpoint. It makes it all the more disappointing that they do not see fit, chiefly on account of their antagonism to Mr. Cook, to recognize the Miners' Federation. It is difficult to think that any rationalization scheme will be a success unless at the same time the goodwill of all those concerned in its production has been obtained.

The World League for Sexual Reform.

The World League for Sexual Reform conducted its third international congress in London last week, and its discussions were characterized by the great number of papers read, by the wide range of allied subjects therein discussed, and by the eminence and interest of some of their authors. The family, sex-education, sex-appeal, censorship, psycho-analysis, monogamy, polygamy, the right of sex experience, spinsterhood, dress, marriage laws, all these matters and many others came under review, and the resulting discussions presented as varied a mixture of sense and nonsense as might be expected. If the congress can be said to have expressed a collective outlook, it was one which may have gravely shocked the shockable members of the body politic, for in inevitable reaction against the taboos and begged questions which dominate the whole question of sex and marriage, it embodied a demand for greater freedom of sex-expression and a strongly critical attitude to the social and religious institutions by which such matters are at present regulated. Without respect to any of the conclusions put forward by the speakers or accepted by the conference, we cannot refrain from according a hearty welcome to the spirit in which the discussions were conducted. We are inclined to think that reasons other than irrational taboo and ecclesiastical tradition exist for some of the social institutions and reticences which members of the Congress called into question. But such reasons, if they exist, should be rationally formulated, ethical standards by which they are supported, clearly defined. A resounding challenge is the best means for securing that this shall be done.

War Films for Children.

The League of Nations has published an interesting educational survey which contains among other things the results of an inquiry in Bradford into the effect of war films on the attitude of children towards war. As a result of the questionnaire, which included the question "What did the film make you think of war?" over 95 per cent of the replies were definitely anti-war. So far so good. But the report goes on to deplore the lack of any constructive teaching as to the League of Nations and its work. In view of the undoubted fact that the ultimate success of the League depends in the last resort on public opinion, it is much to be deplored that more formal teaching with regard to the League's activities and possibilities is not given in our schools.

Evening Education in London.

This week is enrolment week in all the evening institutions under the London County Council. The steady and marked growth of those attending these institutions is one of the most interesting features of London education to-day. The institutions themselves are, of course, many and varied, and can be divided among those which give a vocational training, such as the polytechnics, art schools and commercial institutions, and those which cater for non-vocational interests, tastes, and recreations. These include men's and women's institutes, literary institutes, and colleges such as Morley College for Working Men and Women, and the Working Women's College, Fitzroy Square. There is no subject which anyone could conceivably wish to learn, which cannot be taken by London workers in their leisure hours, and in the case of the favourite subjects, provision is made in every district. Anyone requiring information should apply to the Education Officer, County Hall, S.E. 1, or to the institutions themselves.

Domestic Service—in Germany

The domestic servant problem in Germany has many features in common with our own, and it is interesting therefore to read of a bill, known as the "Servants' Charter", which is to be brought before the German Parliament in the autumn. The hours of labour are regulated by insisting that to be servants must have at least nine hours sleep, and be free from work for four hours every week-day and from three o'clock on Sunday. Specially trained women inspectors are to ensure that adequate food and sleeping accommodation are provided. Owing to the fall of the birth-rate, a clause has been added which is bound to prove controversial, to the effect that it will be illegal to dismiss an unmarried servant who is about to become a mother on the grounds of immorality alone if she has been in the same household for more than six months.

—and in the United States.

The Women's Bureau of the U.S.A. Department of Labour has given us in the course of its brief history a number of reports and inquiries which are of material help in appraising the position of women in the labour market. It is therefore welcome news that the Bureau is now turning its attention to the conditions of domestic service, in an attempt to ascertain the cause of the rapid turnover of labour which is a constant cause of distraction to American householders. As a preliminary investigation they are digesting a mass of information collected from Philadelphia domestic servants concerning the causes which led them to leave situations. An interesting comparison will arise when these results come to be co-ordinated with similar answers furnished by the employers of the same group.

The Drink Commission.

Our readers will remember the announcement of certain names appointed on the Royal Commission to inquire into the liquor trade, and the appointment at that time of one woman only, Mrs. Barton, of the Women's Co-operative Guild. The names of seven additional members have now been published in the Press, and these include Mrs. E. D. Simon and Dame Edith Neville. Considerable criticism had been levelled against the personnel of the Commission on the ground that while it represents many sides of the drink controversy, including brewers, prohibitionists, temperance reformers, state purchasers (it does not, by the way, include the supporters of local option), all these should come before the Commissioners as witnesses; what is wanted are people who are well accustomed to sift evidence and have good judgment. Several of the new names, however, are of people well known for their shrewd common sense and general experience, who will not come with preconceived ideas, but will be suitable to act as a jury. We are particularly glad to note Mrs. Simon's name. Her wide experience of public work, and ability fearlessly to defend her own point of view, will stand her in good stead. For all that, the general composition of the Commission creates inevitably a suspicion that so difficult will it be to arrive at any agreed report, that either its usefulness will be nullified owing to the number of reports, or it will be unable to come to any conclusions before the end of the present Parliament,—even should this last its full time.

Nationality of Married Women in Cuba.

Cuba can be added to the list of countries which permit their women to retain their nationality on marriage. Every country which makes a step in this direction will, of course, help the rest of the world.

Lady Heath.

Messages from the U.S.A. report that Lady Heath's condition, after her grievous air mishap, shows steady progress, and that fears for her eyesight are now happily abandoned. Reading between the lines of these reports one senses the operation of an indomitable will to live. We sincerely hope that it will not be long before Lady Heath once again takes wing.

POLICY.—The sole policy of THE WOMAN'S LEADER is to advocate a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women. So far as space permits, however, it will offer an impartial platform for topics not directly included in the objects of the woman's movement but of special interest to women. Articles on these subjects will always be signed, at least by initials or a pseudonym, and for the opinions expressed in them the Editor accepts no responsibility.

THE ENGLISH INFANT.¹

In 1926 the Health Committee of the League of Nations decided that an inquiry should be held into infant mortality in selected districts in different countries. This inquiry was to cover a period of twelve months, special attention being paid to deaths during the first weeks of life and to stillbirths. It was decided that in each country two rural and two urban districts should be selected, one having a high and the other a low infant death-rate.

The reports have now been prepared by the countries concerned, and the Health Committee of the League of Nations proposes to issue a general report summarizing their findings. That of Dame Janet Campbell, on behalf of England, has recently been published. The four districts selected were Sunderland and parts of Staffordshire, where infant mortality is relatively high, and Croydon and parts of Oxfordshire, where it is relatively low.

The report, while confirming much that we already know, brings to light many fresh facts. One of the most interesting of these is the relation of infant mortality to the position of the child in the family. Dame Janet shows that, apart from children of first pregnancies, infant mortality in general is found to increase gradually with the serial order of birth. Later born children, i.e. after the third child, are indeed subject to a mortality three times the general rate for all children, while first-born children are only 7 per cent in defect of the general average. The results of housing on infant mortality show that, as might be expected, the homes from which come the children who die in the first year of life are definitely of a low standard.

The reasons for death varied in the different social classes. In deaths due to syphilis, premature birth, bronchitis and pneumonia mortality increases with the social decline. Thus deaths from syphilis are more than five times greater in the two lowest than in the two highest classes, and bronchitis and pneumonia over three times as great. On the other hand deaths owing to birth injury are more than twice as great in the better-off classes, and those from congenital malformations once and a half times as great. Stillbirths and deaths during the first day are also somewhat greater in the better off, i.e. 53.0 as compared with 45.9 per 1,000 births in the two lowest classes. The deaths for all causes show a rate per 1,000 of approximately 81 in Classes I and II, 106 in Class III, and 94 in Classes IV and V.

The remainder of the report is occupied with suggestions for improvement, the inquiry having endorsed the well-known figures that the recent diminution in infant mortality is confined almost entirely to after the first four weeks of life. The report shows that of the 1,083 deaths investigated, 774 were either born

or died during the first month of life. It is clear that these deaths were in the main due to something wrong with the mother, and that their prevention is largely a question of midwifery. The first requirement of a maternity service therefore, Dame Janet points out, both for the sake of the mother and the baby, is more effective supervision during pregnancy. This involves in the first place more effective co-operation between ante-natal clinics and the midwives and doctors concerned, and a keener realization, both on the part of the mother and of her medical adviser, of the need for continuous and thorough supervision. At present the ante-natal service is not as thorough, nor the co-operation between individual midwife and doctor as complete as it should be. With regard to the confinement itself, the inquiry indicates that the technique of midwifery could well be improved so as to secure firstly a reduction in the number of stillbirths now associated with various difficult kinds of labour and secondly a reduction in the high death-rate among premature infants. Dame Janet points out that in all too many cases a premature infant is handed over to the nurse or midwife who has not had the necessary training to deal with the problem of its care. The mortality rate is scarcely likely to be reduced until the baby becomes the object of more critical medical interest and the student receives more direct and explicit teaching as to its management.

Dame Janet stresses the need for that improved maternity benefit under the National Health Insurance Acts which is now being demanded from all sides, so that the free services of doctor and midwife can be obtained for every woman as well as a cash benefit. The need for a greater number of infant welfare centres is also emphasized, as is the need for skilled nursing and treatment for the infant in its own home. This is especially important in the case of respiratory diseases and gastro-enteritis. Hospital accommodation is still inadequate, and a great many more hospital beds for both infants and mothers are needed, as are also services to help the mother in her own home to avoid fatigue and overstrain. Further scientific investigation into the state of infant hygiene and the diseases of infants and children is also desired.

We hope that the recommendations of Dame Janet's report will be pondered over by every Local Authority in the country, and we welcome in this connection the new circular which has just been sent round by the Committee on Maternal Mortality of the Ministry of Health with regard to the conduct and scope of ante-natal clinics.

PROBLEMS AT GENEVA: HUMAN AND POLITICAL.

By KATHLEEN E. INNES.

There is an important addition to be made to the list of appointments of women delegates, given last week. A woman, Miss Agnes MacPhail (Canada) has been appointed for the first time to the Third Disarmament Commission. The breakdown of the idea that the women delegates must be put on the Fifth Commission, and very rarely on any other, is much to be welcomed. Miss MacPhail's stand for measures directly promoting peace in the Canadian Parliament—notably her resistance, often almost alone, to military training of the young—makes it particularly fitting that her point of view should be represented on this Commission, and the Canadian delegation is to be congratulated on the courage and initiative, which made the appointment.

One of the chief obstacles to progress in certain spheres of the League work is a slowness which it seems very difficult to overcome in getting the necessary information from Governments, on which to base action. Two questions, of vital interest to human happiness, may illustrate that difficulty at this Assembly.

When the Slavery Convention was adopted in 1927, it was agreed, through Dr. Nansen's foresight, that reports of progress in combating the evil should be sent in each year from the States which signed it. But reports have been few, and unfortunately also a number of the signatories have been slow in their final ratification. Lord Cecil is, happily, again able to take his old place on the Sixth Committee. He was largely responsible for the original Convention and sponsored it through the

Assembly, and his vigilance has been seeking a way to remedy the unsatisfactory state of affairs. The setting up of the special Committee which he proposed is deferred, while the Secretariat takes further action, but the mere airing of the subject—as so often at the League—had its immediate effect. The representative of one of the States, which had not ratified, and which felt itself involved in the criticism—Liberia—immediately got into telegraphic communication with his Government, and by the end of the second week of the Assembly, was able to announce to the Commission that the ratification of the Convention would be put through as rapidly as possible.

The investigation concerning the traffic in women and children is another piece of work which has been made slower than need be from time to time, by the difficulty of getting replies from Governments. This year's Report contains comments on the "Annual Reports from Governments for the Year 1927". More than half the members of the League failed to send any at all. Of those who did "some . . . gave vague replies", and "some continued to reply to the old questionnaire instead of the new one, which was introduced *some years ago*"! An attempt to get information on the methods adopted for dealing with prostitution, in countries which have abolished the system of regulation, led only to "one or two replies". There is evidently much to do still in the education both of public opinion and of governments! Progress nevertheless is being made. Plans are laid for extension of the inquiry on previous lines to the Near East, Middle East, and Far East; the composition of the Special Body of Experts and the scope of the inquiry will shortly be settled. It is understood that funds will be forthcoming "from the same source as those provided for the previous inquiry".

¹ Report on Infant Mortality—International Inquiry of the Health Organization of the League of Nations. English Section. (H. S. O. 1s. net.)

It is well to remind ourselves that it is American money, in this as in so many humanitarian causes, that makes the work possible. The Indian delegate, the Maharajah of Kapurshala, in welcoming the investigations, paid tribute to the All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform which has met regularly since 1927, and is one of the factors in promoting the education of women in India, which is "essential to national advancement".

From among a multitude of questions one or two only can be selected for comment now, the important economic and legal developments being deferred till next week. The problem of Minorities is one which must not be passed over, for it is still a prime cause of a sense of unsettlement and lack of stable peace in many parts, particularly of Eastern Europe. It is always dealt with in important speeches, and it bristles with difficulties. There is no doubt that the newly created States, which are the only ones bound by the Minorities Treaties, regard the Treaties as a kind of servitude, destroying the equality of the States' Members of the League, and they declare themselves only willing to accept further machinery if that machinery is made universal. In any case, it is extremely difficult to know what reforms to press for. The end to aim at in the case of minorities is a state of contented political equality in which the very term "minority" will be forgotten, and cultural liberty is a matter of course. Meanwhile very real grievances exist, and the problem is how to improve procedure, which had admittedly not been satisfactory and yet avoid the kind of publicity which will only widen the gulfs already existing, and hinder, rather than further, the end in view. M. Dandurand, of Canada, who speaks from the standpoint of a country which has long ago solved its own problem, has put forward proposals which may lead to improvements. The gist of them is wider publicity, better information for all members of the Council, more definite Secretariat reports, and more frequent meetings of the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Council. It is essential for the peace of Europe that real grievances should not be suppressed; but it is also essential that the Treaties should not be used to keep grievances alive, or to help agitation. The question requires the utmost tact, and diplomatic handling in the best sense of the term.

With the laying of the foundation stone of the new League buildings at the end of the first week of the Assembly, a new era in League history has begun. There will be no more of the often idle talk of a change in the seat of the League, and the building will be a symbol of security and stability. It is the general opinion that the building will be dignified and fitting of its object, though not remarkable in any way. It will be in three blocks with the circular Assembly Hall (rather smaller than the Albert Hall) in the centre, terraces to the Lake in front, and the Library, built with Mr. Rockefeller's generous gift, as a right wing, and the Secretariat and Council Rooms to the left. It is expected to be some years before it is ready for occupation, but the day is now definitely in view when the League will move into buildings, adequate for its developing work and not unworthy of its assuredly high destiny.

THE LIBERAL JEWISH CONGREGATION AND THE HON. LILY MONTAGU.

A correspondent writes:—

A ceremony of interest to those who care for the position of women in churches, took place on Saturday last at the West Central Liberal Jewish Service. Money had been collected by the members of the congregation, and this had resulted in the gifts of an Ark, a reading desk and pulpit, and a perpetual lamp to the Hon. Marian Montagu, the Hon. Lily Montagu, and Miss Levy, respectively. Rabbi Starrels, in alluding to these gifts, paid the highest testimony to the work of these distinguished sisters, and called upon the Hon. Marian Montagu to open the Ark for the first time by placing in it the Scrolls of the Law—a function which has usually hitherto been performed by men. The Hon. Lily Montagu dedicated the pulpit by leading the congregation in prayer, and then reading passages from the Prophets. Dr. C. G. Monefiore was then asked to place the perpetual light in the beautiful chased lamp and, when calling for a blessing on the work of the congregation, alluded to the fact that this had been founded by the Hon. Lily Montagu who was responsible for the introduction of Liberal Judaism into England some twenty-five years ago, and for the growth of this movement as exemplified by the very large congregation in St. John's Wood—the largest congregation of Jews in England—and its offshoots in various parts of London as well as in Liverpool.

SLAVERY.

By C. NINA BOYLE.

PART II.

South Africa also made the *beau geste* of signing the Slavery Convention in 1925. The refinements of the original and simple forms of slavery in the Union are so ingenious and peculiar that it should be dealt with in a class apart.

In 1868 the highest judicial authority declared that polygamy among the natives must not be recognized. It would be *contra bonos mores*. On this lofty basis the godly Boers established, not that the first girl purchased should be the only wife, but that none of the girls purchased should be wives at all. The purchaser would be quite at liberty to collect as many girls as he could afford; but he could then go and marry "legally"—in church or before a white magistrate—another girl altogether, who would then be his only real wife. He would, after this beautifully civilized action, still have complete possession of the purchased wives and right to sell their daughters. This is represented by the gentlemen who consider it *contra bonos mores* to recognize polygamy, a cute way of weaning the native from it, for of course the "legal wife" would be younger than the shop-soiled and discarded ones. Nevertheless, to reinforce the masculine element in its entrenchments, "succession acts" were passed to enable the sons of the girls who may not be wives to inherit the tribal possessions.

Under that part of Natal that is under a law called the Native Code, the purchased girls are allowed to be wives. The Code lays down a legal price which may be charged; and then declares, having fixed their price, that girls are not to be regarded as chattels. The Code does not apply to Zululand, where the position is the irregular one described above.

In spite of the fact that the purchase does not confer wifehood on the purchased, a father can recover any price not paid up in the courts of law. It is *contra bonos mores* to countenance polygamy, but not, apparently, to bolster up by law and sanction enforced concubinage by sale.

The "powers attaching to the rights of ownership" are so rigid that, if the price of his daughter be not paid up, the father can take the girl away, even if she have children, and trade her to another man. Some fathers make an undue profit by thus farming them out to one man after another. If a girl runs away from her husband with another man, the husband can claim any children she may then have as his; he purchased her and her child-bearing properties. Any girl standing against fulfilment of a bargain made for her will be mercilessly flogged and dragged to the kraal of her purchaser, or thrashed into it. The Anti-slavery protagonists have been protesting violently because the law allows the employer of contracted boy and girl labour in Rhodesia to whip recalcitrant youths. They have said no word of these children, flogged into slavery for life.

Over the greater part of the Union—except the Transkei or Native Territories, and the Native Code area of Natal—the common law establishes the rights of majority at 21. The liberty obtained in this way is rigidly denied to the native woman, and in 1915 Lord Buxton put his signature to the Native Women Restriction Act of Basutoland. By this Act, such women as crossed into Natal or the Orange State to escape from undesired unions committed an illegal act, could be punished, and recaptured by the police.

Batches of widows, under these purchase schemes, are the property of the next of kin. Sometimes it is the son of one of the batch. Sometimes it is a distant relative. They are farmed out, or else cohabited with, to produce children for the heir. Daughters, if their father die, are inherited by their brothers, or the nearest male relation.

Two years after putting its signature to the Slavery Convention, the Government of South Africa passed an Act dealing with Native Affairs. This Act sets up special courts for native disputes, in which Courts native law or custom is to be administered: "Providing such custom shall not have been modified or repealed: providing further that it shall not be repugnant to public policy or natural justice: providing further that no such custom as lobolo or bogadi or similar custom shall be held to be repugnant to such principles."

Lobolo and bogadi are some of the special names applied to the purchase of wives. For the first time, therefore, two years after agreeing to the League definition of Slavery, compulsory concubinage by sale has been established in South Africa by law, not merely by custom; and the same Act establishes the provision that must be made for the slave concubines if and when their owner contracts a subsequent "legal" marriage. Not one signatory of the Slavery Convention had thought it worth while to raise the question of this gross and deliberate breach of its spirit and letter. (To be continued.)

CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA.

A LEGAL MINIMUM AGE.

The following letter is reprinted from *The Times* of 13th September:—

"SIR,—The Bill for the prohibition of child marriage which, as reported in your columns, is under discussion in the Indian Legislative Assembly, is so important that we ask your leave to urge those of our countrymen who have weight in Indian affairs to throw the whole of that weight into the scale on the side of reform in order that the Government may not be persuaded, as has happened on previous occasions, to consent to a further postponement. May we recapitulate the facts?

"There is so far no legal minimum for the ceremony of marriage in India. Child marriage is said to be growing less general, but is still sufficiently so to be a grave evil. In the report of the 1921 census there were recorded over 218,000 wives and 15,000 widows under the age of five; over 2,000,000 wives and 102,000 widows between five and ten. By the age of fifteen approximately two-fifths of the girls were married and over 396,000 of them were widows.

"It is sometimes said that these early marriage ceremonies are only equivalent to irrevocable betrothals. But while the practice varies as to the age at which cohabitation begins and there is evidence that it is tending to become later, instances of premature motherhood are still numerous enough to make discussion as to the proportion they bear to the whole unnecessary for our purpose. Thus Dr. Campbell, President of the Lady Hardinge Medical College at Delhi, told the Age of Consent Committee that she 'must have attended more than 1,000 Hindu girls for child-birth at the ages of 12½ to 16½ years,' and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, a lady so highly respected that she was elected Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Council, testified to having attended on 'many a child mother ranging from 12 to 15, not without many fears and misgivings as to the ultimate results of these unnatural labours.'

"In the days of Macaulay an Act was passed prohibiting the consummation of marriage till the age of 10; this was raised in 1892 to 12, and in 1925 to 13, the age of consent outside the marriage bond being simultaneously fixed at 14. Unfortunately this Act, so far as its effect within marriage is concerned, has been, in the words of Mr. Sarda, 'a dead letter, and has done little practical good except the slight educative effect that it has had on certain classes of people.'

"Since 1925 several attempts have been made in the Indian Legislative Assembly to raise further the age of consummation and consent, and also to fix a minimum age for marriage, the name of Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda having been especially associated with the latter venture, and that of Sir Hari Singh Gour with the former. On the last occasion, when Sir Hari S. Gour introduced his Bill in 1927, the Government promised an inquiry and appointed a Committee, which has just reported. The question of age of marriage was referred to the same Committee, and Mr. Sarda's Bill was likewise shelved by the intervention of the Government pending the Committee's report.

"The report itself is not yet available in this country. But according to the Indian Press it recommends that the marriage of girls under 14 be prohibited; marriages below that age being not void, but those responsible for them punishable for them by fine and imprisonment; that the consummation of marriage below the age of 15 be prohibited, and the age of consent outside marriage be raised to 18; that women police 'where available' and women jurors or assessors be used in the proceedings under these laws; that compulsory notification of marriages and births be enforced, and accurate registers kept by a Government Department. We understand that Mr. Sarda's Bill is on similar lines.

"Attempts to fix a legal minimum age for marriage have always been hotly opposed by certain sections of orthodox Hindu opinion, and it is obvious that this opposition is continuing. On the other hand, there is a large and growing section of opinion among Hindus as well as others in favour of this reform. From a mass of evidence of this we would cite only the resolution unanimously passed by the 1928 All-India Women's Conference on Educational Reform attended by women from all over India, which urged the fixing of the legal age of marriage at 16 for girls and 21 for boys, and quoted the precedent set in fixing a minimum age by Baroda, Mysore and five other Indian states.

"Whatever be the balance of numbers as regards support and opposition, we urge the Government, for the good of India and

the credit of Great Britain, to hesitate no longer in taking resolute action against an evil which, in the oft-quoted words of Mr. Gandhi,

Is bringing into existence every year thousands of weaklings—both boys and girls—who are born of immature parenthood... is a very fruitful source of appalling child mortality and still-births that now prevail in our society.

We welcome the assurance that Mr. Sarda's Bill has the support of the Government and express our hope that that support will be continued until the measure is placed on the Statute Book.—We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

ELEANOR ACLAND, President, Women's National Liberal Federation; PERCY ALDEN, Chairman, Save the Children Fund; MARGERY I. CORBETT ASHBY, President, National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship; W. WILSON CASH, General Secretary, Church Missionary Society; ANNIE R. CATON; MARY CHICK, National Honorary Secretary, Women's International League; WINIFRED C. CULLIS; BRENDA DICKINSON, Organizing Secretary, Six Point Group; GERTRUDE EMMOTT, President, National Council of Women of Great Britain; H. FRANKLIN; DOROTHY GLADSTONE, League of Nations Union.

MARGARET PATRICK GRAHAM, President, Women's National Free Church Council; H. GRAY; MABEL HARTOG; GERTRUDE M. KINNAIRD, Zenana Bible and Medical Mission; L. A. LOWE, ex-President, Association of Head Mistresses; EDITH LYTTLETON, KATHARINE LYTTLETON; VERA LAUGHTON MATHEWS, Hon. Treasurer, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance; H. J. MOLONY (Bishop), Chairman, Church of England Zenana Missionary Society; G. E. PHILLIPS, Foreign Secretary for India, London Missionary Society; H. M. PROCTOR, Chairman, Young Women's Christian Association Overseas Committee; ELEANOR F. RATHBONE; MAUD SELBORNE; LILIAN A. UNDERHILL (STARR); KATHLEEN VAUGHAN; U. GORDON WILSON, Association of Assistant Mistresses.

National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship."

TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILDS.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORK.

One of the aims of the Townswomen Guilds is to create an ideal of citizenship. Women have long had the Local Government vote, but the town dweller who is most directly affected by good or bad administration has been slow to appreciate the connection between her vote and the conditions under which she and her family live and work. She may have opinions on the kind of education provided for her children, she may suffer from ill-lit or dirty streets, or she may be seriously inconvenienced by the quality of the gas or the excessive rate for electricity, but she does not realize that she has any rights or means of influencing the conditions of which she disapproves. Townswomen's Guilds will bring women into personal touch with all these services. They will provide visits to the various departments of the Town Council's work, the cleansing and lighting, health and hospitals, trams and buses, that they may realize how these services are provided. Members will be encouraged to attend the meeting of the Town Council, the Education Committee, etc., and become familiar with their procedure. Reports of any business of special interest, such as the provision of maternity and infant welfare centres, or of playing grounds, with details as to site, plans, etc., should be reported to the Guild so that appropriate action may be taken before it is too late. The provisions of early morning buses for workers on a special route was obtained by one body of interested women.

Once women realize that these matters so closely concern their lives they will take a new interest in the election of men and women to Local Councils. One of the reasons they have come forward in such small numbers as candidates is that they have felt themselves to be unfamiliar with the duties involved, not realizing that much of the Town Councils' work is Housekeeping on a large scale, that the same interest and concern which the mother had for the rearing of her own children is required in the provision of child welfare clinics and day nurseries, and that the provision of good educational facilities is the concern of all—parents, young people and employers. Such interest will have its effect in securing better trained services in every department. The appointment of policewomen is a matter in which townswomen should interest themselves and united action by women citizens is at present the most effective method of obtaining this reform. Many women will wish to give active support to the preservation of all that is beautiful in their town and the country surrounding it. A careful watch should be kept on proposed plans for housing, cinemas and industrial buildings. Pride in the credit and good name and management of their town is a form of local patriotism which awakens a desire for social service and leads to a study of the laws relating to Local Government and a realization of a yet wider citizenship which women now share equally with men. M. B.

COMING EVENTS.

B.B.C.

Monday, 23rd September. 10.45-11 a.m., "Common Sense in Household Work: The House with a Maid," Miss Sydney Bushell.

Wednesday, 25th September, 10.45-11 a.m., "A Woman's Commentary," Mrs. Oliver Strachey.

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

1st October. 1 p.m., Luncheon, 17 Buckingham Street, Strand. Speaker: Mrs. Tucker (Bermuda Woman Suffrage Society); "Franchise in Bermuda."

MORLEY COLLEGE FOR WORKING MEN AND WOMEN.

27th September. 8 p.m., 61 Westminster Bridge Road, S.E. Professor Graham Wallas, "The World of To-day and To-morrow" (First of series of Public Lectures on "The World after the War.")

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

14th-18th October. Annual Meeting and Conference, Albert Hall, Manchester.

NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

7th-8th October. Caxton Hall, S.W. 1. Conference on Women in India, under the auspices of the Women of India Survey. Tickets and particulars from 4 Tufton Street, S.W. 1.

11th-14th October. Scottish Summer School, Allan Water Hotel, Bridge of Allan.

25th October. Reception to Women Delegates to the League of Nations Assembly, 50 Porchester Terrace, W. 2 (by kind permission of Hon. Mrs. Franklin).

OPEN DOOR COUNCIL.

24th September. 8 p.m., Harvest Road Schools, Kensal Rise, Miss Macmillan, "Washington Hours Convention and the Procrised Factories Bill."

ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE.

7th October. 6 p.m., St. Patrick's Clubroom, Soho Square. Miss Susan Musson, "Recent Legislation affecting Illegitimate Children." Chair: Miss FitzGerald.

TYPEWRITING.

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INCOME TAX RECOVERED AND ADJUSTED. Consult Miss H. M. Baker, 275 High Holborn, W.C. 1. Income Tax Returns, Super Tax Returns, Repayment Claims of all descriptions. Telephone: Holborn 0377.

FOR SALE AND WANTED.

FOR SALE.—South Africa, 35 miles from Port Elizabeth; 47 acre orange farm, rich soil, under irrigation, 500 Navel and Valencia trees all in bearing; Lucerne; small house, near railway; personal interview till 10th October.—Apply, E. G. Saner, Barclay's Bank, Circus Place, London Wall, E.C.

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.)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

LONDON AND NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE, 35 Marsham Street, Westminster. Secretary, Miss P. Strachey, Members' Library, Books on Suffrage, Sociology, and Economics, Hansard, latest Government Publications, Periodicals, Newscuttings. 10-8 (except Saturdays).

EDUCATED HOME HELPS BUREAU, 190 Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W. 1, requires and supplies educated women for all domestic work. Holiday engagements. Registration: Employers, 2s. 6d.; workers, 1s. Suiting fee: Employers, 10s. 6d.; workers, 2s. 6d. (Victoria 5940.)

FELLOWSHIP SERVICES, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 22nd September, 6.30 p.m. Rev. Malcolm Spencer.

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