

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

Suspense.

The mountainous complications of the Hague Conference ominously overshadow all our hopes for constructive international advance at the approaching League Assembly in Geneva. By the time this issue reaches its readers, a sudden access of the spirit of compromise may have released the deadlock and allowed the Conference to move forward at long last to the thousand and one contingent discussions which would arise out of a preliminary agreement on the distribution of the Young annuities. At the moment of writing, however, so fortunate a prospect appears to be held up by the determination of the Italian delegation to claim a second dose of financial consideration for the breakdown of Austro-Hungarian claims. And we may take it for granted that whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the matter, a failure of the present conference would let loose a cloud of mutual recrimination which would find its way, like poison gas, into every international conference chamber on both sides of the Atlantic. The jingo Press of Great Britain, which at the moment finds in Mr. Snowden a patriot after its own heart, is unlikely to throw this particular item into the balance against the universally acknowledged benefits of a policy of frank and uncompromising financial equity. For our own part, we regard it as no negligible factor, and the resulting evaluation of British policy becomes a matter of narrow margins and dubious enthusiasms.

Bravo Roumania!

Another country has joined the long list of those which can no longer resist the steadily advancing tide of woman's suffrage. This month Roumania has granted to women who fulfil certain qualifications, the right to vote at the age of twenty-one and eligibility to Parliament and municipal bodies. We hasten to offer our warm congratulations to the three woman's suffrage societies who have worked so hard to achieve this victory and to their Presidents, Madame de Reuss, Madame Meissner, and Princess Cantacuzène. The women eligible to vote under the new law are those who have followed the normal school course, all women in the employ of the State, war widows, those who have been decorated for exceptional services, and those conducting charitable or intellectual societies. The women who are not included in the new law are in the main the peasant women, many of whom unfortunately can neither read nor write, and the men peasants have adopted an antagonistic attitude in regard to their women taking any part in political life. We may safely leave their fate in the hands of the Roumanian women who have already shown themselves so successful in breaking down barriers. Women will vote for the first time in Roumania in November next.

Nationality of Married Women.

From Cuba comes the good news of the passage of a new nationality law providing that a Cuban woman who marries a foreigner shall retain Cuban citizenship unless she voluntarily has herself naturalized in her husband's country. Feminists in this country have arrived at the point when the right of a woman to choose her own nationality is looked on as an elementary piece of justice, and not likely to provoke a controversy as might certain advanced feminist views. However, at international gatherings a new light is often shed on questions and at the recent conference of the International Federation of University Women this subject of the nationality of married women proved to be quite a thorny one. The problem was felt to be urgent, in view of the forthcoming conference on the Codification of International Law to be held at the Hague next spring. A comprehensive memorandum, covering the previous history of the nationality of married women, the present law, the changes now being asked for, the recommendations of the Committee appointed by the International Federation to consider the question, and the Draft Rules and Agenda of the Codification Conference, was presented to the Conference, after a preliminary consideration by the Council. Unfortunately, the report of the Codification Conference Preparatory Committee, containing the information which it was essential to lay before the I.F.U.W. Conference, was not available until late in July, 1929, so it was not possible for Miss Chrystal Macmillan, who, as Convenor of the Committee appointed by the Council of the Federation to investigate the question, had undertaken to prepare the report, to submit the result of her labour before the eve of the I.F.U.W. Conference itself. Consequently, it was felt, and felt very particularly by the women lawyers present, that more time and further study would be necessary before some of the more detailed proposals could be adopted. There was, however, a large majority in favour of the main principle, and a resolution was carried declaring that "a woman, whether married or unmarried, should have the same right as a man to retain or to change her nationality." There was also complete agreement on the necessity for the meetings of the Codification Conference and the Nationality Committee of the League of Nations being held in public. The further question of the position of women as members of national delegations was considered. The general feeling expressed was that in countries where there are women jurists experienced in the practice of international law they should be included in the government delegations, and that in other countries they should attend as advisers to the delegations.

National Health.

Sir George Newman's annual report from the Ministry of Health has for some years past reproduced the unchanging spectacle of one class of the community standing grimly aloof from the bright stream of progressive improvement which characterizes the nation's health. The latest report, that for the year 1928, which appeared during the week-end, is no exception. The general upward drive is well maintained. 1928 was perhaps the healthiest year on record. The infant mortality rate of 65 per 1,000 is the lowest ever recorded. An enormous saving of life has been effected by this cause alone. But the maternal death-rate of 4.42 per 1,000 births is the highest recorded since 1911. Here, in spite of such development of the maternity service as there has been, no modicum of improvement has resulted. Sir George Newman himself is at pains to emphasize the need for continued attention to domestic environment. "I am convinced," he writes, "that for many years to come the majority of births will continue to take place in the homes of the people, and that it is therefore our business to improve domestic midwifery at the same time as we encourage better hospital accommodation."

Women and Radium.

The ordinary lay woman who is watching the development of the use of radium with interest naturally asks why in view of the remarkable work in this direction done by medical women, no woman has found a place on the Radium Commission which has now been set up in accordance with the provisions of the Royal Charter. At the same time comes the report that Madame Curie, the world-famed discoverer of radium, who is now a little over sixty, is coming to London next month to open the Radium Hospital for Women at Hampstead, which is to be named after her. The whole staff will be composed of women doctors and other women who have made a special study of radium. It is interesting, too, to note that the architect who has planned the conversion of this Hampstead house into an up-to-date hospital is Miss Elizabeth Scott.

The Lighter Side of Obituary Literature.

In times to come we shall have to accustom ourselves to the continual twinges of regret stimulated by the thought: if only Dame Millicent Fawcett were here to see this—to comment on that—as the case may be. Indeed that thought has already been provoked by a few of the obituary notices which a multitude of press cuttings have brought in review since her own death. They would have provided her with a feast of merry entertainment for the holiday season; possibly, even with an undercurrent of psychological speculation concerning the obstinate determination of certain male commentators to convince themselves and others that the real greatness of a great woman lies in the determined preservation of an interest in needlework and the human capacity to cherish a strong degree of family feeling. But perhaps the comment which she would have most vividly enjoyed would have been the editorial verdict of the *Spectator*; which recorded that "she never lost her feminine grace and charm, though her vigour of character and brain was almost manly." If only—if only Dame Millicent were here, to laugh with us at the male conceit of the *Spectator*!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS.

By BERTHA MASON.

COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCILS AND THEIR PLANS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE POOR-LAW.

In our last article we drew attention to some of the county schemes which up to the time of writing had been approved by their respective councils.

It will be remembered that under the Local Government Act, 1929, *County Boroughs* like *Counties* must appoint Public Assistance Committees, but whereas *Counties* must also appoint *Guardians* Committees, the creation of the latter, in the case of *County Boroughs*, is permissive. Where *Guardians* Committees are appointed, however, they shall include women, and "regard shall be paid to the desirability (*only desirability*, the italics are ours) of including persons who are members of the Poor-Law Authorities immediately before the appointed day." See Part I, L.G. Act, 1929.

From the schemes now open to inspection we have selected the following:—

Bath.

Three women Councillors. The scheme recommends that the Public Assistance Committee shall consist of 29 persons, of whom 20 shall be members of the Council, and the remainder persons who are not members of the Council, some of whom (number not specified) shall be women. It is further suggested that the first members of the Public Assistance Committee shall be nominated by the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Council.

Birmingham.

Six women on the Council. The Public Assistance Committee is to consist of 48 persons, 16 of whom will be co-opted, of whom not fewer than four instead of two, as suggested in the first instance, must be women. The Committee is empowered to delegate duties to sub-committees.

Burnley.

One woman on the Council. The scheme provides for a Public Assistance Committee of 24 persons, of whom 18 will be members of the Council. The first members of the Committee will be appointed by the Council on 9th November next.

A New Recruit for the National Portrait Gallery.

Mrs. Pankhurst has now taken her place in the National Portrait Gallery among the men and women who have affected the destinies of their own and later generations. Her presence there is a quiet tribute to the potency of Time in the assuagement of hot passions and the adjustment of personal values. For future generations the painted Mrs. Pankhurst will be something of an enigma, for it needs a greater artist than Miss Georgina Brackenbury to infuse into a canvas that curiously remote yet passionate intensity which enfolded the personality of the militant leader in the days of her militancy and provided the key to her political significance. Yet it is peculiarly fitting that Miss Brackenbury should have been the chosen medium for her own family group, two sisters and an indomitable octogenarian mother were at the core of the militant movement. They knew it from the inside, both personally and politically. The artist has a claim in her own right, as it were, to abide with her subject in the framework of a perpetual memorial.

A New Channel Record.

We offer hearty congratulations to Mrs. Victor Bruce on her achievement of a new cross-Channel speed record for outboard motorboats. By a matter of minutes she has now beaten Mr. Kaye Don's previous records, her time for the return journey being 79 minutes, 24 seconds.

Councillor Mrs. Laski.

We are glad to report the election of Mrs. Laski at a recent by-election to the Manchester Council by a majority of 425. Mrs. Laski has been a member of the Board of Guardians for seventeen years and has been chairman of the Board. Commenting on the election the Manchester Guardian said: "Next year the duties of the Guardians will be taken over by the City Council, and the presence on that body of Mrs. Laski, whose knowledge of the administrative side of the Poor Law is so far-reaching, cannot but be of unusual importance from the ratepayers' point of view."

Darlington.

No women on the Council. The scheme provides for a Public Assistance Committee of 14 persons; 12 members of the Council and two women co-opted.

At a meeting of the Darlington Board of Guardians it was stated that the scheme had aroused intense opposition. It seemed likely—if the present proposal were allowed to stand—that of the proposed Committee of 14, there would be only two male members with any practical knowledge of Poor-Law work, three of the five Poor-Law Guardians likely to be appointed having declined to accept nomination. Fortunately the two co-opted women members would probably be women now serving as Poor-Law Guardians.

Hull.

Three women Councillors. The scheme provides for a Public Assistance Committee composed of 26 members of the Council and 13 co-opted members. That 20 elected members and an appropriate number of co-opted members be elected in November next and the remainder in April, 1930, when the scheme for the extension of the borough becomes operative. All members of the Committee to be eligible to serve on Guardians Sub-Committees.

Liverpool and Bootle.

Seven women members on Liverpool City Council; two on Bootle Council.

Up to the present time Liverpool and Bootle have been part of the West Derby Union. When the transfer of Poor-Law functions takes place they will become separate Poor-Law areas, which creates a difficult situation. All the West Derby Institutions, with one exception, are in Liverpool. Bootle has no machinery for dealing with cases entitled to home and institutional assistance. Failing a working agreement with Liverpool, the Borough of Bootle may have to build or provide its own Poor Law Institutions, or come to some arrangement with the Lancashire County Council, whose institutions in some cases would be much further away. The first proposal to set up a Public Assistance Committee for Liverpool alone, consisting

of 90 persons, was rejected by the Liverpool Council. At the time of writing a scheme for a joint Committee for Liverpool and Bootle to deal with outdoor relief, leaving the management of the Institutions in the hands of Liverpool, is under consideration.

Manchester.

Eight women Councillors. The Parliamentary Sub-Committee which has been working out a scheme has now completed its task. The report which it is stated "raises problems of far more than local significance" will come before the City Council at its next meeting. We hope to comment upon it later.

Nottingham.

Four women Councillors. It is proposed that the Public Assistance Committee shall consist of 18 members. Of the six co-opted persons at least three are to be women. The Education Committee to undertake the care and maintenance of boarded-out children and children in institutions. The Health Committee to be responsible for the control and management of the hospital, the care, nursing and maintenance of blind, sick and mentally defective persons, medical out-relief and domiciliary treatment. No mention of Guardians Committees.

Norwich and Derby Councils.

Seven women on the Norwich City Council, three on the Derby Council.

The special feature in the schemes of these Councils is *No Co-option*. The Public Assistance Committees are to be composed in each case entirely of members of the Council. In the case of Norwich the scheme to be experimental for twelve months.

(1) It may be noted that the schemes, County and County Boroughs, to which we have drawn attention have yet to receive the approval of the Minister.

(2) It will be some time before the personnel of the Committees is announced. The appointments will probably not take place till November.

(To be continued.)

A HOUSE IS BUILT.

We believe that the name M. Barnard Eldershaw which appears on the title page of the novel before us,¹ comprises in fact the names of two young Australian women who have, in indistinguishable collaboration, produced a first novel. That it is indeed a *first* novel, is borne out by a certain clumsiness of technique which makes itself apparent when gaps of time have to be bridged, and by a habit of occasionally thrusting forward with the trick of prophecy, at points when the steady unfolding of a chronological narrative would more fittingly serve the character of the book. That it will not, or at any rate *should* not, be a last novel is even more definitely indicated by the high quality which it reaches and by the strength of its personality. For the English reader it gains incidental interest by reason of the vivid and convincing light which it throws on the development of Australian social life through three generations of nineteenth century, middle-class activity. The surprise incursion of a perambulator into the streets of Sydney in the eighteen forties does nothing to disturb the vigorous life of this moving picture. Moreover it is possible that the word "prams" has its own significance in the Antipodes and was applied to a different kind of hand vehicle to that which made its appearance in London during the late Victorian age.

A House is Built traces the fortunes and misfortunes of the Hyde family, from its foundation by the indefatigable Quartermaster Hyde in 1839, through a period of expanding pioneer prosperity based on the success of his Quayside provision store, to the final stabilization of its economic position in the unadventurous gentility of a surviving grandson. In bare outline this family history may conform to a type—a type which would very probably emerge strongly from the analysis of a number of business histories having their starting points in the "push and go" of a gifted individual. The double influence of an improved economic environment on later generations, operating side by side with the progressive dilution of the original stock is a familiar phenomenon, and its normal results would probably find illustration in a good many well stabilized twentieth century individual unearned incomes on this side, as well as on the other side of the globe.

But the inhabitants of this particular *House* are something more than types. They are strongly individualized personalities, whose fortunes the reader will be tempted to follow with interest as far as the authors allow.

M. D. S.

¹ *A House is Built*, by M. Barnard Eldershaw. (G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 7s. 6d.)

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RECEPTION TO WOMEN DELEGATES TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Friday, 25th October.

We are very glad to announce that this reception will again be held at 50 Porchester Terrace, W. 2 (by kind permission of the Hon. Mrs. Franklin), to whom we are greatly indebted for her renewed offer of hospitality which added so greatly to the success of the occasion last year.

Mrs. Hamilton, M.P., and Mrs. Swanwick have both kindly consented to speak on those aspects of the work of the League most directly of interest to women's organizations, and in addition we are hoping to have the privilege of welcoming Dr. Roberta Jull (substitute delegate for Australia), and of hearing her speak on the work of the League.

CORRESPONDENCE.

LOCAL OPTION.

MADAM,—The proposal of Miss Monica Whately in your issue of 2nd August, to make Local Option a major issue in the woman's programme is one which I should like to support. The sufferings and privations of women and children caused by the national drinking habit are only too well known, and a measure of local option, for many years the goal of those who have seriously studied the drink question, is indeed long overdue.

But if it is to be of real service, it needs a different background from that of to-day. The vast majority of the people of this country are not prepared to make proper use of the powers that local option would give them, because they have never been taught to understand the meaning of the problem which the country is up against. They do not know the nature or effects of alcohol.

How many of them know for instance that the common belief in the whipping up powers of alcohol upon work are purely subjective and not objective; that the investigations of many scientific researches into this vital point have proved that alcohol whether taken before severe muscular labour, skilled handwork, or thinking, depresses both the quantity and quality of the output, that in fact, as Sir Charles Sherrington put it, "it monkey's the machine"? How many of our business men and manufacturers have noted that (as computed by one of America's leading economists, Professor Irving Firkles), the elimination of alcohol from the life of the American workman has added 7% in efficiency to America's competitive power in the world's markets? And how many realize that our costs of production and our economic losses are intimately bound up with the fact that the common drink of our people is a narcotic drug, first affecting the highest centres in the brain (those for judgment and self control) and acting from first to last as a depressant of the nervous system. Herein lies the explanation of the expenditure since 1918 during a period of tension, widespread unemployment and distress of the insane sum of over £3,200,000,000 upon alcoholic drink.

If a check is to be put upon this waste, the country needs not only legislation but education. Mr. Fisher, when Minister of Education, published a syllabus called the "Hygiene of food and drink." It is not a temperance tract. Its subject matter is the physiological nature and effects of alcohol. There is no compulsion to teach it without exception in the schools, though there are no exceptions to the need for it, for it is perfectly safe to say, there is not a man, woman or child in this country who either directly or indirectly is not affected by the alcohol problem.

I would therefore beg Miss Whately as a member of the party in power that while pressing forward her legislative reform she should bring all possible influence to bear upon the Minister of Education, in order to ensure that in all Training College Examinations a question, not merely optional but obligatory, should be asked, upon the subject of the syllabus and that the teaching of the syllabus itself should be insistently recommended in all State-aided schools to the Local Education Authorities by the Ministry.

If this were done we should in a short time have a public instructed in the fundamental aspects of the alcohol problem and prepared to use the power entrusted to it for the common good, but above all for that of the children.

ELDRED HORSLEY (Lady).

Kensington, W. 8.

THE CHRISTIAN AND BIRTH CONTROL.

MADAM,—The truth about Birth Control is, that it is *never* convenient, or economical, to have a new baby. It is a struggle to carry it, a struggle to bear it, and a struggle to rear it. But though all this is well known to the careful student of economy and convenience, what is not known (when the years have flown by) is the Reward.

There is something very thrilling and very touching, in being thanked by your children for having given, to each, his band of friends, allies, and play-mates!

M. SMITH.

Llangollen, Denbighshire.

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PROFESSIONAL.

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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.

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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.)

DRESS.

GOWNS well cut and fitted by experienced dressmaker. Terms from 21s. Ladies' own materials made up. Renovations a speciality.—Grace Mayman, 168 High Street, Notting Hill Gate. Phone: Park 2943. Appointments.

GRACE MAYMAN begs to state that she and her staff will be on holiday from 17th August to 10th September, when she hopes to receive the patronage of old and new clients.

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.

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, 1st September, 7 p.m. Maude Royden, "The Voices of God. In Silence."

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