

# THE WOMAN'S LEADER

## AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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### CONTENTS.

	PAGE
IN THE QUEEN'S HALL . . . . .	47
NEW FREEDOM AND NEW DUTY. The speech of the Prime Minister, Queen's Hall, 8th March, 1928	47
EQUAL CITIZENSHIP . . . . .	48
THE STREET OFFENCES COMMITTEE . . . . .	49
COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS. By Bertha Mason . . . . .	50

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

#### Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Bill.— The Promised Land.

The great day has arrived, and on Monday, 12th March, the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Bill was presented by the Home Secretary, supported by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Home Office. The sub-title

assimilates the local government franchises. This involves two interesting new types of qualification, one for men and one for women. For the parliamentary franchise, women are to receive the business qualification and just as a wife of a man with a business qualification is enfranchised to-day under the present law, so the bill provides that the husband or wife of a person with such a qualification shall also be enfranchised. It will be remembered that with regard to the present local government franchise women may be said to have had an advantage, in that the wives over 30 of men qualified as local government electors are enfranchised, whereas no provision is made for the husband of women so qualified. The new bill proposes that both husbands and wives of local government electors shall themselves be qualified to vote from the age of 21. An interesting little anomaly which has been removed is one by which at present the wives of soldiers and sailors who would have been qualified to vote if their husbands had been in residence are unable to do so. An important clause (5) makes special provision with respect to the register of electors to be made in 1929. The qualifying period for this year is to end on December 1 instead of on the following June. This new register is to come into force on the 1st May, 1929. We regard this as a definite indication that the Government intends to stay in office until after that date,

#### THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE QUEEN'S HALL DEMONSTRATION.



Reading from left to right, front row—Miss MARGARET RIFFE, Mrs. BALDWIN, THE PRIME MINISTER, Miss ELEANOR RATHBONE, Miss MARGARET ASHTON. Back row—Sir OLIVER LODGE, Miss NANCY PARNELL.

reads: "A bill to assimilate the franchises for men and women in respect of parliamentary and local government elections; and for purposes consequential thereon." It gives equality, entire equality, and nothing but equality. It leaves unchanged practically every point in the existing Representation of the People Act other than those making special regulations for women. In addition to assimilating the parliamentary franchise to that of men, by the simple process of repealing those sections in the present act solely relating to women and substituting the word "person" for "man" in those sections relating to the parliamentary franchise for men, the bill by a similar process

and we earnestly hope, for this purpose at any rate, that nothing will happen to force an earlier election. The title of the bill will prevent amendments relating to other points of electoral reform being put down. The financial memorandum shows that about 5¼ million names will be added. It is estimated that the increase in cost of registration for the first year will be £280,000, and for subsequent years £70,000. So much for the bill. We await its second reading and later stages with the utmost confidence. We feel indeed like those who accompanied Moses when he gazed over the promised land from the top of the mountain, and we gratefully accept the Joshua provided in the Home Secretary.

### The Only Fly in the Bill.

Our only reservation arises on the registration dates. We should infinitely have preferred the Bill's being through by 1st June, 1928, so that new voters are enfranchised by 5th October. Failing this we hope to see it amended so that new voters can vote before May, 1929.

### "Only a little one."

The text of the National Health Insurance Bill is now published. It is an extraordinarily disappointing measure: useful as far as it goes, but going such a little way. It is practically confined to facilitating the remaining in insurance of persons who have been unemployed for long periods, and to the excusing of arrears of contributions due to unemployment. A genuinely unemployed person is to be given a period averaging 2½ years before his insurance is terminated, so that if he returns to employment during this period he avoids any break in the continuity of his insurance both for health and unemployment. In order to secure that persons who have been unemployed for a long period shall not lose their old age pensions through genuine unemployment after the age of 60, provision is made that they shall have their insurance continued year by year until they attain the age of 65, if they can prove that they have been genuinely unemployed. They are not, however, to be entitled to sickness benefit during that period. The position of deposit contributors is improved in that a special section in approved societies is to be set aside for those who prove they are unable by reason of the state of their health to be admitted to a society. An improvement is made in the position of insured women who cease employment on marriage, in that sickness benefit is to be paid at the usual rate instead of at the present reduced rate of 7s. 6d., and the maternity benefit payable up to two years is not to be reduced on account of arrears of contributions. It should be noted, however, that a special class is still retained for married women. It is with the greatest possible disappointment that we realize that no provision whatever is made for making any fresh benefits statutory. None of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on National Health Insurance with regard to the financing of such new benefits by the pooling of surpluses of approved societies have been adopted. No attempt has been made to make the insurance a national scheme in the sense of making provision for wives and children. No attempt has been made to improve medical benefit, and to bring in much needed dental benefit. Last, but not least, no attempt has been made to tackle the dread problem of maternal mortality by improved provision under the Act.

### The County Council Elections.

"Public indifference in the County Council Elections has been marked," states the *Lancashire Daily Courier*, and this view has found expression in various other provincial journals. A Leamington paper referred to the "remarkable apathy", and the *Heris Advertiser* inquired if the ratepayers of Hertfordshire were completely satisfied with the members of the County Council just ending their three years' term of office, or were they too apathetic to care as to who represented them. Contests took place in only a few divisions in many counties. In the West Riding of Yorkshire 57 of the 90 members were returned unopposed; of the 69 members of the Derbyshire Council 42 were unopposed, and in Cardiganshire 40 of the 50 divisions had no contest. The Dronfield constituency of Derbyshire had the experience of a contest for the first time in 12 years, Miss Outram, U.D.C., being one of the candidates. She was defeated by 46 votes. In London 38 per cent of the electorate polled, and 21 of the 65 women candidates were elected—the same number as in 1925. A list of the women elected to the London County Council on 8th March is given next week with additional names of those elected in the provinces. We note with pleasure that the Soke of Peterborough Council is no longer without a woman member, also that Mrs. Alderton, J.P., ex-Mayor of Colchester, where she had been a Councillor for the past 12 years, was on Saturday elected to the Essex County Council. This is a gain of one woman to the Essex County Council.

### Scottish Education Authority Elections.

In the nominations recently made throughout Scotland for the election of the education authorities on 23rd March, the number of women candidates is interesting. The larger towns and their surrounding districts show the greatest proportion of women to men, and the ratio seems to fall according to the remoteness of the area from large centres. Glasgow heads the

list with 20 women among 79 candidates; Renfrewshire has 12 women in a total of 59; and in Aberdeen there are 6 women to 22 men. Of the 52 nominations in Edinburgh, 8 are of women candidates and in Dundee there are 4 women among 29 nominees. Country districts show a smaller proportion; in Ayrshire of 73 candidates only 7 are women, in Lanarkshire of 76 only 3. In Stirlingshire there are only 2 women in a total of 49; in Fife, where there are 44 seats, only 3 women have come forward, and in Dumfriesshire there is one solitary woman candidate. In the nominations for remoter country districts there are women's names sprinkled through the small lists, but on the whole this is the exception rather than the rule. The general position is not all that could be desired, but the solid front presented by women candidates in the towns is hopeful and gratifying.

### What Manchester Thinks To-day.

On Wednesday, 7th March, the following resolution was passed with a majority of twelve by the Manchester City Council: "That the second paragraph (of the Education Committee's minutes) be referred back, with an instruction to the Committee that the resolution requiring women teachers to resign on marriage be rescinded, so that any teacher who has given satisfactory service and who wishes to continue to teach after marriage may do so." This notable and unexpectedly quick victory over the obscurantism of an education committee may, for the guidance of other local women's organizations interested in the matter, be ascribed to three circumstances in fortunate conjunction. First, the existence of an active woman councillor willing to take the initiative and fight the matter from stage to stage. Second, the existence of an organization prepared to support her personal efforts by lobbying the various ward representatives. Third, the existence of a local Press, willing to give publicity to the irrefutable justice of the case against the penalization of married women, and the mobilization of letter writers to deal with the various points and misrepresentations involved. In this particular case Mrs. E. D. Simon, the Equal Citizenship Group of the Manchester N.C.W., and the *Manchester Guardian*, supplied the necessary three elements. We hope that their activities may prove to be but one successful skirmish in a mass offensive against this particular manifestation of the "Turk Complex" on a multitude of local fronts.

### London Lock Hospital, Harrow Road.

After many months of work done by those who have at heart the interests of the London Lock Hospital, Harrow Road, in particular, and Voluntary Hospitals in general, to bring pressure to bear, we have the satisfaction of learning that, at the invitation of its own Board of Management, the Ministry of Health has appointed a Committee of Inquiry into its administration. An account of the unsatisfactory nature of the general management of the Hospital was published in this paper as long ago as 17th June, under the title "A Hospital Scandal", and since then the L.C.C. has given notice of the withdrawal of its annual grant of £12,000 and the Ministry of Health is not prepared to assist with the expenses of any patients sent there by Poor Law Authorities. It is very much hoped that the Committee's investigation will lead to the immediate reorganization of the Hospital on sound lines, and that women will be given a fair share in the management of a hospital which is for women.

### Equal Citizenship.

The cause of equal citizenship, so far as political equality is concerned, is all but won, but the discussions at the recent Council meetings of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship are convincing enough evidence that a true equality of liberties, status, and opportunities is not yet within sight. Women in industry and in the professions are still fighting an unequal battle. Witnesses in high and responsible positions of authority, speaking before the Committee on Street Offences, have shown that they believe an equal standard of morals between the sexes to be unattainable. Last but not least, women in the home are handicapped by conditions that would not be tolerated by any male worker in factory or workshop. A correspondent asks what is "feminism," and we hope to deal at greater length with her question in a subsequent issue. But whatever may be the precise definition of feminism, we believe that the full enfranchisement of women will bring to the front a host of new problems. Such problems must be scrutinized from the feminist angle; they require study and research from specialists in the "woman's movement." We cannot believe that the time has yet come when organizations which stand for "equal citizenship" can put up their shutters.

### IN THE QUEEN'S HALL.

Acute consciousness of Space is apt to play havoc with the significance of Time. We hazard this profound remark, reckless of its philosophic import, in explanation of the strange medley of impressions generated by last week's Equal Franchise meeting organized by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in the Queen's Hall.

Here was our familiar meeting place, full to the doors, the old banners, the old demand, the old responsiveness of audience to speakers. There were touches of unfamiliarity of course, the unwonted activity of the Press table, the presence of the Prime Minister (playing so graciously the rôle of honoured guest at a family party), nor did the Hall itself look quite familiar without its old hanging lamps and musty colours. All the same, memory played strange tricks. Sober sense told us that it was a Thursday night of the year 1928. But something irrational whispered that it was a Monday afternoon of pre-war days. Why—there was Mrs. Pankhurst herself on the platform. Not the Government candidate for Whitechapel, but the defiant, indomitable fugitive. Mrs. Pankhurst of the abominable "Cat and Mouse Act." But where was Christabel? In prison doubtless—one expected gaps of that sort on those Monday afternoon meetings. What a jumble of memories, what a confusion of events—the voice of Margaret Ashton, the face of Mrs. Pankhurst, red, white, and green, purple, white, and green, green, white, and gold, Edith Palliser, I. O. Ford, Lady Constance Lytton,—somehow one could not exactly fix these three, but they must be there, naturally they would be there—disappointing meetings, exciting meetings, triumphant meetings, criss-crossing one another like alternative wave-lengths on an ill-managed radio set, until at last with a wrench the consciousness readjusted itself, came back to rest in time, and there we were on the eve of our last Franchise Bill, listening to the Prime Minister, applauding his singularly apt and pleasing oratory, and (strange experience for a hard-bitten suffrage audience) trusting his promises.

There were many features worthy of record at this particular meeting, and not all of them struck the indiscriminate imagination of the daily Press. But the *Manchester Guardian* commented accurately upon Miss Rathbone's opening speech from the

### NEW FREEDOM AND NEW DUTY.<sup>1</sup>

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE QUEEN'S HALL, 8th MARCH, 1928.

"This wonderful meeting represents the greatest common measure of agreement on one great political issue amongst women who, on every other subject, probably hold diverse views. It is representative of the united democracy of all franchise societies who support equal citizenship. We represent all parties and all ages. I have no desire to conceal my party from you—my age is my own matter."

Referring to Disraeli's support of women's franchise, the Prime Minister said that Disraeli made it quite clear that if the franchise were a right, or anything approaching a right by no logic could women be excluded. That, in 1848, was a very remarkable testimony. He proceeded: "Disraeli was right. There are no grounds, no logic, and no expediency for withholding the franchise to-day from one sex more than from another. In a few weeks you will have a legal recognition of that equality; and I feel at home in this gathering because—and it is not always the case in politics—I have no reason to-night to weigh my words with particular care or to disguise my thoughts, or even to dilute my convictions. I would offer my warmest congratulations to your chairman and to those who have worked with her. I should like to assure them that I have selected the Home Secretary, with some sense of the fitness of alliteration, to be the Joshua who shall lead you into the Promised Land."

This evening, for the older members of this great company, is an evening of triumph, and an evening of thanksgiving. We have amongst us many of those who, through good times and through evil, worked for the good cause in which they believed, and it is owing to that largely that victory has been made possible in your time. It was Matthew Arnold who complained, not without injustice, that the English mind was not flexible, it was not quick, it was not clear. There is an element of truth in that, but we have many compensating qualities. It might be because of that that many years elapsed before the majority of the people of this country became convinced either of the importance of the franchise or the justice of the claim for equal civic rights.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Times*, 9th March, 1928.

chair, when it used the word "notable." Miss Rathbone herself adequately summed up the occasion as "a great moment in a great movement." With the gist of Mr. Baldwin's speech we deal elsewhere. It was precisely the speech which the occasion demanded. Sir Oliver Lodge, rising to sudden thunderous applause from the "under-thirty" section of his audience, addressed that particular section in terms of wise and benevolent paternalism. Miss Nancy Parnell, of the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, so young, so engagingly unpretentious, and yet so effectively eloquent, tempted us to the fervent hope that she may never be spoiled. Bewildering personal success lies in wait for a young woman who can hold a large audience as she held the Queen's Hall—a devil to be held at bay only by "prayer and fasting." But if the traditions of the suffrage movement hold, she will escape unscathed and survive as one of the leaders of the younger generation. Miss Margaret Ashton, trenchant and fiery as of old, appeared to have passed her fourteen years or so of respite from suffrage campaigning in some tireless existence which has left no mark upon her appearance or her vigour. How excellent it was to hear her again! Miss Rippe, of the Hillcroft Working Women's College, spoke for the younger generation of working women, and her reasons for urging their speedy enfranchisement were incontrovertible. And at the very end, when the Prime Minister had departed to "another place," and the evening hours had lengthened, Miss Rebecca West (coming hot-foot from the overflow in the Mortimer Hall) held weariness at bay with a quick speech of such finished brilliancy, and such icy castigation of the anti-suffrage opposition, that our praise and laughter was tempered with a kind of ghoulish pity for the enemies (if such there be) of Miss Rebecca West.

Among the songs sung with gusto by audience and choir in the intervals of the speeches, was one of intimate suffrage memory, Blake's "Jerusalem." There was, incidentally, a peculiar reason for desiring at that particular moment to "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land." Dame Millicent Fawcett is in Jerusalem, and we want her in England. So, as best we can, we must sing her back for the occasion of our triumph—and her triumph.

It is sixty years ago this year since John Stuart Mill moved a Franchise Bill in the House of Commons to omit the word 'men' and insert the word 'person'. Incidentally—and here I am betraying a secret in the emotion of the moment—that was the year in which I was born. There was no extension of the franchise from 1832 to 1918, or, if you like, 1928, but there were men who prophesied disaster and woe. But circumstances changed. It was 200 years ago when arguments, convincing in themselves, were used by Condorcet and 100 years ago when Mary Wollstonecraft used the same arguments. It was sixty years ago when Mill used them, and history and the logic of events has now brought us to the day when those dreams are going to be realized.

In the interval, women have made good in every department of public life. There are those who think that women—that women's work—has always to be confined to the home. This is not historical. Woman has laboured with man on the land from the days of Eden, and your opportunities, your responsibilities, during the last half century have multiplied beyond all belief, and I think England will never forget what the Great War meant to you and to us. So it is that by a mere procession of time, ideas, customs, and conditions perfectly natural to our great grandfathers became perfectly absurd to us.

Women have, in fact, always had as great a stake in the welfare of the country as men, but it has not been in fact admitted. It is to-day. Nobody challenges your position—at any rate not enough nobodies to make any opposition. At the next election neither man's will nor woman's will is going to prevail, but it is for both of us, men and women, to exercise the best influence we can for the sake of the country. Whatever the result, the whole nation, men and women alike, will express themselves effectively in the ballot box without any qualification or disqualification of sex.

That prospect does not alarm me in the least. The step we are all taking together is a big one, but I am convinced that the country as a whole is now prepared for it. Many of you who have been long in this movement look for a new heaven and a new earth. I have been too long in politics to take the Apocalyptic view.

But, after all, what equal franchise may achieve depends on you, and on you alone. A new legal right confers upon all of you a new social duty and obligation. All barriers to the full exercise of your personality will be removed.

I have faith in free democracy. I rejoice in its advent, and I believe that the public life of this country will be enriched by the step which we are taking. But it is for you to justify my faith, and much more than my faith. You have to justify the faith of those women whose names, if not on your tongues, are all in your hearts to-night—those who saw this goal from afar, but to whom it has not been permitted to reach it themselves.

Equality is almost a mystic word, and it has been very potent in the world's revolutions. So long as by equality we mean that fundamental right of every human being to be treated as an end in himself or herself, and not as a tool or a slave—that is an equality for which we would all fight. But often the word is used to mislead by people who are blind to the unescapable differences in human capacity. The uniform franchise gives the same right of the franchise to men and women at the minimum age of 21. But there is, together with that, every kind of circumstance and personal attainment. Franchise does not only mean franchise, but it means obligation and opportunity. Do try to realize that a new freedom only means a new duty, for freedom without duty and without obligation is merely licence and anarchy.

To-night I think we may all feel that the time of agitation has passed. You are on the threshold. You have but to pass it, but what are you going to make of the Promised Land? It is yours to plough and to sow and to reap. Yet I do not think that we would say that the sixty years of agitation have been wasted. They have had their educational and disciplinary value. Remember that in all democracies a vigorous and a vigilant opposition is essential for good government. You have had your share of opposition, but would you have been without it? I do not think so. When there are no new worlds to conquer it is a parlous state for the warrior. Each new achievement brings new horizons, and if I myself am half as bad as Mr. Wells says, what a joyous struggle to get rid of me!

Again I congratulate you all on the consummation of this struggle of half a century with its hopes and its fears. The tale of that struggle will be told for many generations to come, and the protagonists will be remembered for their indomitable courage in a cause they believed in and for which they were prepared to suffer.

The Prime Minister, concluding, said: "You will all remember those lines that Gibbon wrote, the last words of his 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'. He wrote on the night on which he finished it: 'The air was temperate, the sky serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected over the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame.' But far more touching are the words of Carlyle to Emerson when he finished the 'French Revolution'. He said: 'I did not cry, I did not pray, but I could have done both.' That was how so many of us felt on 11th November, 1918, and I have no doubt those feelings are those of many who are here to-night.

But if emotional feelings be uppermost to-night I would have this remembered, that we have in this room—and I say this for their encouragement—we have the young generation present too, full of vigour, faith, and hope, who are going forward to improve the good work that their elders have done. Let me say to you, especially to the younger ones, always keep an eye on that blue distance. Some day humanity will get to it, and will find it as it looked in the distance. But in our time, now that you have got to the goal and the haven of those who worked for you, you will find the road rough and the thorns sharp. Come and help us who have been working for many years to make the roads smoother and to clear away those thorns, to whatever party you belong, and then in that way alone will you help humanity to advance into that blue distance where we hope and believe there may be peace and happiness for the human race."

#### SIX POINT GROUP

**A DEBATE** "That the Influence of the Daily Press is Detrimental to the Position of Women."

will be held on Tuesday, 27th March, at 8 p.m.

ASSEMBLY HALL, MARY SUMNER HOUSE, TUFTON ST., S.W. 1.

Proposer: DR. LETITIA FAIRFIELD. Opposer: LORD RIDDELL.

TICKETS: 3s. 6d., 2s. 6d., 1s. (unreserved), from the Secretary, Six Point Group, 92 Victoria St., S.W. 1. Tel. Victoria 0905.

### EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.<sup>1</sup>

It was hardly surprising that the annual Council meeting of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in the year 1928, which is to see the fulfilment of labours which have extended over sixty years, was the largest on record since 1919. As in previous years, the Parliamentary situation at the moment presented special interest. Many delegates took the opportunity offered to interview their Members on Equal Franchise, for the last time we hope, and on the Edinburgh Corporation Bill. Others attended the sittings of the Committee on Street Offences, at which Miss Crystal Macmillan and other representatives from the Edinburgh Society for Equal Citizenship were giving evidence. But the main interest centred in the great Queen's Hall demonstration, at which for the first time in the history of the Suffrage Movement a Prime Minister was to be the chief speaker and at which, moreover, he would speak on the eve of the introduction of the Bill which is to remove for ever all past sex inequalities.

The opening afternoon, at which there was a record attendance, both of delegates and visitors, was devoted to preliminary business. The President's address summed up the work of the Union during its long lifetime in two words: "Pertinacity and constructiveness." In moving the election of vice-presidents, Miss Dawson (afterwards elected a member of the new Executive) referred to the deaths of three Vice-Presidents during the year: Mrs. Frank Marshall, Dr. Estlin Carpenter, and Sir Francis Darwin. Many of those present must have recalled the presence of both Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, both devoted friends of the movement, at many Councils in the past. On their account, as well as her own, delegates were glad to see Miss Catherine Marshall, Parliamentary Secretary at a former critical period of the Union's history, present at the Council.

The Annual Report, presented by Mrs. Hubback, naturally emphasized the work on behalf of Equal Franchise, and it was stated that one of many results of the year's campaign was the reduction of the list of Unionist members by over 100. New Societies or groups at Sutton, Alexandra Park, Hull, Manchester, Bangor, Aigburth (Liverpool), Dulwich, Leslie, and Prinlows were accepted on application. Pride of place was, of course, given to the resolution on Equal Franchise when Mrs. Hubback gave a summary of an unflinching record of work during the past ten years. Reference was made to the loss of Mrs. Hubback as Parliamentary Secretary, after ten years' service, and much gratification was expressed that, as a member of the Executive and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, she is able to continue to guide the political activities of the Union. Following this a resolution moved by Miss Alison Neilan on behalf of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene paid tribute to the memory of Josephine Butler and urged Societies to associate themselves with the centenary celebrations being held this year.

Thursday morning was spent in discussion of the numerous proposals on the agenda dealing with the limitation of the Council business. Ultimately the resolution proposed by the Malvern S.E.C. was commended and passed as follows:—

That in the opinion of this Council it would be disadvantageous to alter the Object or the Immediate Programme of the Union, or to change its policy with regard to Restrictive Legislation until the fate of the Suffrage Bill is known; this Council therefore agrees to suspend Rule VII, 3, relating to the date of the Council, so that the Council which would normally be held in February or March, 1929, shall be held at the earliest practical date compatible with full preparation and opportunities for a good attendance; and if possible so that the Council shall take place before the second reading of the Factories Bill.

In the afternoon, the controversies of the morning settled, the Council settled down to business. The following urgency resolution, dealing with the *Street Offences Committee*, was carried:

That this Council, while regretting that the Government did not appoint a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament, welcomes the appointment of the Street Offences Committee to inquire into the law and procedure in regard to solicitation. This Council takes note that many of the official witnesses have stated that the evidence on which thousands of women have been convicted is artificial evidence, and that such women have been sentenced for conduct "likely to cause a breach of the peace" when there has admittedly never been any likelihood of a breach of the peace; of "annoyance" when no person was annoyed; and of "riotous or indecent behaviour" when there was, in fact, no such behaviour. This Council calls upon the Government to publish verbatim all the public evidence received.

Much interest was aroused in the Edinburgh Corporation Bill, against which the Edinburgh S.E.C. in conjunction with other

<sup>1</sup> Resolutions passed at the Council will not be printed in this paper, but may be had on application to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, price 6d.

### STREET OFFENCES COMMITTEE. (FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

*2nd March.*—Mrs. Neville Rolfe and Sir Walter Greaves-Lord, K.C., M.P. (British Social Hygiene Council), wanted uniform law for whole country, words "common prostitute" deleted, and abolition of offence "soliciting for an immoral purpose". The offence should be to molest, insult, or importune another person; it would probably be necessary to rely on police evidence. The witnesses got into difficulties over penalties. They did not want fines in "moral cases" but first offender to be bound over; for subsequent offences "institutional probation" for 12-18 months (for women). The Chairman pointed out that their proposal abolished "moral cases"; how then could they commit to institutions for a simple offence of annoyance, say, by a flower-girl asking one to buy her flowers? The witnesses replied that the Court must discriminate. Mrs. Rolfe proposed that if an habitual offender refused "institutional probation" she should be placed under compulsory detention for a long period. The habitual offender should be dealt with and not the occasional offender. The Chairman then remarked "So we get back to the 'common prostitute'!" Mr. E. B. Turner, F.R.C.S., followed, on the improved state of the streets.

The British Social Hygiene Council is in the awkward position of having taken a long step in the right direction but since it will not go all the way its position is open to damaging criticism. The next group of witnesses were opposed to the principles of the Public Places (Order) Bill. They represent some of the older rescue and religious societies, but admitted they could not speak for all their affiliated societies. It would be interesting to know what numerical strength they do represent? Their views are certainly not the view of the younger generation of rescue-workers, nor of that great rescue society—the Salvation Army.

Mr. Archibald Allan (Associated Societies for Care of Women and Children) said solicitation for immoral purposes should be an offence in itself; it is a danger to the community and against good order and decency. In the case of men soliciting women the women aggrieved must make a charge, since a man would not have a "known immoral character", and, therefore, further proof would be necessary. Pressed by Miss Fry if women were to be convicted on police evidence only, Mr. Allan said he would leave it to the Court to decide whether that was sufficient. For a third offence, three months imprisonment; women under twenty-one, should be compulsorily committed to a Training Home or modified Borstal. Mr. Jowitt, K.C., asked the witness how many of the societies he represented had really come to a considered opinion that mere solicitation—without any indecency, molestation or anything of that sort—should be made a legal crime, subject to a sentence of compulsory detention? Mr. Allan said that not all agreed and some had not formally assented, but he thought most of the societies would agree that people had a right to be protected from temptation in the streets.

Mr. Tyrer (London Council for Promotion of Public Morality). This Council would enact that "Any person in any public place habitually or persistently soliciting for an immoral purpose" should be dealt with. Their investigations (carried on by pensioned police officers acting as detectives) showed three women soliciting to one man doing so. They want a clearly defined offence, and the streets cleaned up. Women offenders should be put on probation but if they decline then compulsory detention. The treatment of men could be left to the magistrates. Miss Fry asked the witness if his society constituted an amateur *police des mœurs* and if they use these privately paid detectives because they think the ordinary police either can't or won't take action? The witness ignored the last query but said that before asking the police to act they liked to prove their case and so employed private agents.

*3rd March.*—Mr. Sempkins (National Vigilance Association). This was a straightforward plea for suppression. Prostitutes are a clearly recognizable class; the present laws work very well and are effective. The improvement in the streets is mainly due to police administration of the law. The penalties call for some criticism as fines and imprisonment do not enable the Courts to deal effectively with the persons concerned. Solicitation is an annoyance of a special kind. He quoted Flexner as being in favour of special laws against solicitation. He thought the habitual offender could and should be dealt with; these women were a distinct class working for gain. He doubted if the words "common prostitute" caused any injustice, but agreed that care should be taken that no one should be so described until the fact has been proved by recording repeated police cautions. He

women's societies, is waging a valiant opposition. A resolution supporting the action of the Society and against the Bill was carried by a large majority. The resolution on the work of married women under local authorities derived added interest from the news of the success of the recent campaign in Manchester, referred to elsewhere in this paper. Two resolutions dealt with women in hospitals. One of these embodied a protest against the growing tendency of medical schools to exclude women students. The other dealt with the recent charges against the London Medical Hospital.

The report on Social Insurance asked by the Council in 1926 was presented by Miss Martelli, and a resolution urging that differential scales of contribution and benefit if judged necessary on actuarial or administrative grounds, should be based not upon sex or age, but upon rates of remuneration, was carried. Another important resolution dealt with the better provision for maternity under the National Health Insurance Acts. Some highly urgent matters were dealt with. One resolution called upon the Government to introduce a measure making the legal age of marriage 16 for both sexes. Others asked for investigations into maternal death in childbirth, still-births, and maternal mis-carriages, and called upon the General Medical Council to consider how best it could give effect to the resolution passed in 1922, with regard to training in midwifery of students in medical schools. A resolution supporting the Bastardy Laws Amendments Bill was moved by the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child.

A resolution moved by the Executive Committee and seconded by the League of the Church Militant, reaffirmed the conviction of the Council that the full ministry of religion should be open to both sexes, and urged upon the Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church the importance of dealing with this matter at the forthcoming Lambeth Conference in 1930.

A very interesting and topical group of resolutions dealt with international problems, the responsibility towards the women of India, the Kellogg proposals, and the reduction of armaments by international agreement.

On the closing morning the Council returned to domestic business. The previous question was carried on the proposals that the office of President should not be held for more than three consecutive years, and that the Council meetings be not always held in London, and a report on the policy of delegates' fares was presented. It was agreed to try this as an experiment next year.

Finally after a report on THE WOMAN'S LEADER and an appeal from the Treasurer the Council resolved itself into a committee to consider by what means the about-to-be-enfranchised women might be drawn into the women's movement. Mrs. Corbett Ashby made valuable proposals and there was a good discussion. Then ended a memorable Council. The last we believe before Equal Franchise is reached. The impression left on the minds of those who attended must certainly have been that much still remains to be done before a complete equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women in industry and in the professions, and a truly equal standard of morals is reached.

#### THE LIGHTER SIDE OF THE COUNCIL.

The great demonstration was of course the feature *par excellence* of the Council, but the reception given by the executive and the delegates at King's College for Women, Campden Hill, kindly lent by the House Committee, was a delightful occasion. The songs of Miss Walker, whose mother played the organ at many if not all of past suffrage demonstrations, and the 'cello playing of Miss Platt, accompanied by Mrs. Walter Layton, gave great pleasure. The reception offers the only opportunity delegates have of meeting each other and is valued on this account. The luncheon was the largest that has ever been held, the guests numbering 300. The chief guests were Mrs. Philip Snowden, Mr. Walter Layton, and Sir Robert Newman, described by Miss Rathbone as "our guardian angel in the House of Commons."

#### OURSELVES.

At the request of delegates we have departed from our usual custom and are reproducing the photograph of the speakers at the Queen's Hall Demonstration because the presence of a Prime Minister at a Suffrage meeting for the first time invested that gathering with a unique historic interest. We are ordering extra copies in faith and hope our readers will support us by ordering extra copies, especially those connected with societies affiliated to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship.

thought that a recommendation from an Inquiry Committee about cautions preceding arrest would be appreciated by his Committee, but added "not that we think it necessary". Prostitutes commit a "continuing offence" and should be dealt with as such. The laws are a protection to ordinary women, who, although some may occasionally accost, do not do it habitually. He agreed that men persistently soliciting women was a worse offence than prostitutes soliciting men. In the cases of men "you should get the best evidence you can", and give them a severe penalty. There should be special laws for the habitual offender, and an equal law for men and women not habitual offenders, but guilty of occasional accosting; the "insulting words and behaviour" section would do for such people, omitting the words *re* "causing a breach of the peace". The witness wanted "annoyance" to be omitted; solicitation by a "common prostitute" should be an offence in itself. Questioned on the subject of evidence he stated that in a certain town (later identified as Manchester) the magistrates had recently been requiring the evidence of the annoyed person. Consequently the convictions fell to nothing and the streets became worse; many more young women and men were now doing this sort of thing. Mr. Sempkins was told by Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy that his report did not at all agree with the evidence of the Chief Constable and magistrates of Manchester, which was the most recent evidence available. The witness definitely disapproved of the Public Places (Order) Bill; he regarded it as quite impracticable to treat offences of soliciting for an immoral purpose as general offences; it would be unfair to persons charged with really minor annoyances. Under the Public Places (Order) Bill men might be falsely accused; it might lead to blackmail. Asked if he approved the Scottish clause about men importuning women he said "Yes", but he did not think it would be operative. "I doubt very much if there are many men who go about soliciting girls habitually." He would be quite willing to have men arrested for a single solicitation if the evidence could be procured, but one ought to bear in mind that with the woman it was an habitual course of conduct.

**Penalties.**—He would like probation offered in suitable cases but where unsuitable, institutional treatment; it was not possible to eliminate fines and imprisonment in all cases. He would send a girl to a voluntary home on six months residence. Asked what he would do if she refused to go: "If she won't go I should make her." If she runs away "I would then utilize an Institutional Home something like Borstal." The witness was quite definite on these points. "If she refuses the voluntary terms offered I should give the magistrate power to send her to a compulsory institution, not necessarily a prison, but perhaps an approved Home." Chairman: "It would be a form of imprisonment, one need not blink it . . ." Sir Chartres Biron pointed out that a Home is either voluntary or not voluntary. If it is not a voluntary Home, enforced residence is undoubtedly a form of imprisonment; the difficulty in which magistrates are placed is that soliciting for an immoral purposes "is not exactly a criminal offence".

**Miss Blair** (Scottish National Vigilance Association) had been a Glasgow Policewoman for five years. She wanted to abolish the term "common prostitute", but approved of the Scottish law that solicitation for immoral purposes should be an offence.

The report of the evidence of Lady Emott, Miss Tancred, Mrs. Bramwell Booth, Mrs. More Nisbett and Miss Chrystal Macmillan is unavoidably held over till next week.

(Continued from next column.)

Ishbel MacDonald, Poplar South (Lab.); Mrs. M. Dollar, St. Pancras, S.E. (Lab.), Mrs. Day, Southwark Central (Lab.); the Hon. Lady Lawrence, St. George's (M.R.)—the last named unopposed—were returned.

In Hammersmith, N., Mrs. Worsthorne (M.R.), a member standing for re-election, lost her seat, and in Battersea, N., Mrs. Galway was defeated.

Total number of women returned in 1925, 115.

Total number in 1928, approximately 124.

Estimated number of Electors who voted in the L.C.C. Election, 38 per cent of the total on the register.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH SCHOOL, PECKHAM ROAD.  
SUNDAY, at 7 p.m.,  
MR. ELDON MOORE  
"RACE CULTURE OR RACE SUICIDE."  
QUESTIONS INVITED.

## COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS.

By BERTHA MASON.

Before this article appears in print the elections for County Councils which are in full swing this week, will be over and done with for three years. As a matter of fact, most of the counties outside the London district have already polled, and many of the results are dealt with in this article.

One of the outstanding features of the elections in the country, judging by the returns before us, has been lack of interest and apathy. "The unsatisfactory thing about County Council elections," writes a correspondent in the north, "is that year after year the general run of electors show little or no interest in them; and this is shown again this year by the large number of unopposed returns."

"There are, of course, men and women who deserve to be returned unopposed. And there are others. In every case, opposition is healthy."

That the number of unopposed returns is an outstanding feature of the 1928 elections throughout the country, is shown by the following returns, a few taken from those which are to hand at the time of writing.

**Northumberland.**—27 contests. 4 women returned.

**Cumberland.**—Few contests, lack of interest was again conspicuous in this election.

**Yorkshire, North Riding.**—Only seven contested seats. **West Riding:** Fifty-four members returned unopposed; thirty-six contests. "County Council work," it is stated, "does not seem to attract women in Yorkshire. There were, it is true, two women serving on the Retiring Council, West Riding, who are now Aldermen, but there is only one woman nominated for councillor." Not returned.

**Lancashire.**—The greater proportion of the retiring member have been returned unopposed. Amongst them two women. Twenty-four new members have been returned of whom two are women; this brings the total of women to four.

**Cheshire.**—Few contests.

**Herefordshire.**—No fewer than forty-three of the fifty-one retiring members have been returned unopposed. Four of the remaining eight vacancies have been filled with the unopposed returns of new members. The outstanding feature of this election was the opposition to Mrs. Dymond, the only retiring councillor to be opposed. Mrs. Dymond was the first woman councillor in Herefordshire. "The question to be considered by the electors," writes a correspondent, "is whether the breadth of mind, high sense of public duty and conscientious work of Mrs. Dymond for the county are to be ignored in favour of a candidate of vastly less experience."

**Wiltshire.**—In fifty-four of the sixty divisions there have been unopposed returns. Three new women candidates have been elected, bringing the total of women members up to five.

**Surrey.**—Five contests in sixty-eight divisions. At Merton a new electoral district, the fight was between Dr. Bradley (Conservative) and Lady Ida Scott Hall (Labour), the former being elected.

**East Sussex.**—Four contests in forty-eight divisions, in one of which (Saltash) a woman, Mrs. Bruce Richmond, secured the seat.

**Herefordshire.**—Fifty-four retiring members out of sixty returned unopposed, four being women.

**Huntingdonshire.**—The majority of retiring members returned unopposed, two being women.

**Essex.**—All old members (except one) defending their seats were returned. In the Belchamp division the Vicar of Ringwell defeated Miss Majendie, of Headingham Castle.

**Norfolk.**—Lady Suffield, who was opposed by Mrs. Solomon, retains the seat she won eight years ago. The returns at the time of writing point to a slight increase in the number of women County Councillors.

**London.**—Considerable activity prevails in the London County Council district, polling taking place on the last possible day, 8th March. The feature of the election was the greatly increased number of three-cornered contests. Altogether there were in the field 340 candidates for the 124 seats, viz. 124 Municipal Reformers, 82 Liberals, 104 Labour, and 30 Independent and Communist. Eight Municipal Reformers have been returned unopposed. Three years ago 49 women were nominated and twenty-one returned. This year 65 are in the field.

Results of the poll declared on the night of 8th March show few changes, the majority of the retiring members who stood for re-election being returned.

In Hackney (Central), Miss Adler (Lib.) regained a seat on the Council. Mrs. Nathan, Bethnal Green, N.E. (Lib.); Miss

(Continued in previous column.)

## NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

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Parliamentary Secretary: Mrs. HORTON.

General Secretary: Miss HANCOCK.

Offices: 15 Dean's Yard, Westminster, S.W. 1.

Telephone: Victoria 6188.

### ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING.

The Annual Council Meeting and the various functions connected with it were a great success, the meeting being quite the largest and keenest held in recent years. The Queen's Hall Demonstration on Equal Franchise will long be remembered by the many suffragists, whether old or young, who were fortunate enough to be present. A report of the Council and the various functions connected with it is published on another page.

### HONORARY OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

As a result of the withdrawal of twelve of those standing for election as Honorary Officers and/or as Members of the Executive Committee, there are fewer candidates than vacancies and the following, therefore, stand elected:—

President: Miss Rathbone.

Treasurer: Miss Macadam.

Members of the Executive Committee:

Mrs. Anthony.	Mrs. Blanco-White.
Mrs. Adrian Corbett.	Mrs. Corbett Ashby.
Miss Courtney.	Miss Dawson.
Miss Fulford.	Mrs. Hubback.
Mrs. Hughes.	Mrs. Layton.
Miss Picton-Turbervill.	Mrs. Ryland.
Mrs. Stocks.	Mrs. James Taylor.
Mrs. Van Gruisen.	Miss Ward.

### REPORT OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING.

This report will be circulated to Secretaries of Societies and to Local Correspondents as soon as possible. Copies of the report, price 6d., post free, can be obtained on application to Headquarters.

### NEW VICE-PRESIDENTS.

The Annual Council at its meeting last week elected six new Vice-Presidents: Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, the Earl of Lytton, Sir John Simon, and Mr. Pethick Lawrence, as old and valued supporters both in and out of Parliament of the Suffrage Movement; and Miss Hovey and Mrs. James Ward as life-long supporters of the cause for which the Union stands.

### EQUAL FRANCHISE BILL.

The Government's Equal Franchise Bill is now printed, and copies can be obtained from Headquarters, price 3d. or 4½d. post free.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### EDINBURGH CORPORATION BILL.

MADAM,—As one who was born in Edinburgh, though no longer a resident, and also as one who has taken a very special interest in the subject of venereal disease, being the author of a little book *Truth about Venereal Disease* (praised in the House of Lords by both opposing parties at the time of the discussion), I feel an acute interest in the subject of the Edinburgh Corporation Bill.

I am much distressed that apparently THE WOMAN'S LEADER is encouraging women's societies to vote against the measure. I emphatically urge serious women to support the Edinburgh Corporation Bill.

The fact that Edinburgh has the greatest success in the country in its voluntary system entitles it as a pioneer to make a fresh step in advance, and without doubt compulsory treatment is a further step in advance. Apart from prejudice, not only about this but about other matters, how can any sane person consider it right to permit virulently infectious people to be at large in a crowded community such as we have in this country? We have compulsory powers in connection with smallpox, which is a trivial disease from the racial point of view in comparison with the venereal diseases.

The Edinburgh Corporation Bill, in my private opinion, does not go nearly far enough! I hope to live to see the day when compulsory detention will be universal for all who have venereal disease until they are completely cured. It is only our dulled senses, accustomed to the horror which these diseases involve, which enable us to tolerate them in the racially destructive and criminally careless way we are at present doing, and I say thank God for Edinburgh's efforts—so wise, so moderate, so successful. Anyone who opposes Edinburgh's Bill is taking on an awful load of racial responsibility.

Heatherbank,  
Hindhead, Surrey.  
M. C. STOPES.

[We cannot agree with Dr. Stope's view as to the best means of preventing "virulently infectious people from being at large in a crowded community," though it seems hardly necessary to add that we are as anxious as she is that this should be avoided. Where we differ is as to means. We feel that there will be fewer infected people at large under the voluntary system, which encourages the largest number to come forward, and which can, therefore, treat them at the most "virulently infectious"

stage of their disease, to wit, the first few weeks, than under any form of compulsion. It is because we are convinced that the fear of compulsion will deter larger numbers of people from coming forward for treatment than compulsion itself will succeed in detaining, that we are opposing the Bill. It is noteworthy that in Bradford since legislation providing for compulsory notification of the same classes of people for whom Edinburgh wishes to provide compulsory treatment, there has been a considerable falling off in the numbers of those who, fearing they have the disease, come voluntarily to the clinics.—ED.]

### "WHAT IS FEMINISM?"

MADAM,—May I press for an answer to my former question as to what authority, if any, we of the N.U.S.E.C. have for interpreting the word "feminism" as equivalent to a belief in the equality of the sexes. Does not anyone at the office of THE WOMAN'S LEADER or at headquarters of the N.U.S.E.C. possess an up-to-date dictionary?

May I also draw attention to what is in practice, though not in theory, a very real inequality between men and women in the matter of the franchise, namely the refusal of the law to allow more than two occupiers of one dwelling-house to be included in the Burgess-roll of our towns or the electoral registers for the rural and urban districts—a refusal which involves hardship and injustice to great numbers of women who are joint householders and joint ratepayers with, say, their sisters or a mother and sister. As it is very unusual for three or more men to live together as joint householders, there can, I imagine, be very few male ratepayers who suffer from this anomaly in our electoral law. I cannot help suspecting that men would not tamely submit to such injustice. And I am anxious to know whether the N.U.S.E.C. are taking any steps towards getting this most vexatious anomaly removed in the forthcoming Franchise Bill?

INQUIRER.

[We do not feel we can ask for preferential treatment for women in a Bill in which we have been asking for votes for women on the same terms as men. The fact that more women happen to live as joint householders than men is not, we feel, a reason for departing from the great principle of equality. As to the interesting point our correspondent raises as to the definition of equality, we hope to deal with this more fully in a later issue.—ED.]

### LAUGHING LAST.

MADAM,—While full of affection for Mr. Baldwin for wearing so well his ready-made clothes, I do not forget that Mr. Asquith first designed these garments, when he summoned the Speaker's Conference. And that he saw to it that the design should not be packed away on the shelf by the Coalition Government.

The President of the Immortals can be trusted to choose his creative artists, and may still be allowed to watch with amusement the spread of their influence amongst those others who would fain consider themselves the leaders of fashion. LIBERAL.

### DISTRESS IN MINING AREAS.

MADAM,—I spent recently a week in the Rhondda Valley, and as a result of conversations with men and women whom I met there with experience of the conditions, I suggest the following methods of helping:—

1. Immediate relief in clothing, especially men's clothes and children's boots.

2. Raise the school leaving age to minimize youth unemployment.

3. Organize training of suitable young men (single) for emigration.

4. Organizing family emigration.

5. It is, above all, necessary to tackle the problem of unemployment on broad lines—possibly those suggested by Sir Herbert Samuel in the current number of the *Spectator*.

Before sending these suggestions I shall have submitted them for criticism to a group who have been engaged on relief work in the Rhondda Valley for some months past, and whose knowledge of the conditions is beyond dispute. LUCY B. CADBURY.

### QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Snell asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that dissatisfaction exists with the system of investigation of matrimonial cases of separation, etc., by the police court administration; and will he consider the advisability of establishing special courts to deal with such cases affecting the poor?

Sir W. Joynson-Hicks: I have seen some criticisms, but I believe that the interests of persons of modest means have been well served by the extension of the jurisdiction of the Summary courts in these matters, and I know of no ground for considering any change of system.

### ERRATUM.

In the account of Women's International League annual meetings printed in our issue of 9th March, the sentence in the second last paragraph referring to the Kellogg proposals should read instrument of national policy.

<sup>1</sup> Boot repairing centres are being staffed by voluntary labour to repair the worst of the boots of the school children.

## PUBLIC DEBATE

"That the Roman Catholics are right in attacking Dr. Marie Stopes."

Proposed by CHARLES PILLEY, Esq. Opposed by Dr. MARIE STOPES.

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## COMING EVENTS.

## BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

MARCH 27. 7 p.m. 17 Buckingham Street, W.C. Luncheon. Lady Ryrice. Chair: Mrs. Corbett Ashby. "Some Electioneering Experiences."

## NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

Preston W.C.A. MARCH 27. 7.30. Orient Café, Friargate. Rt. Hon. Tom Shaw, M.P. Chair; Councillor Mrs. Pimblett.

St. Pancras S.E.C. MARCH 21. 8 p.m. 27 Grove Terrace, Highgate Road. Mrs. Lowe, L.C.C. "Possible Developments in Education."

## ST. JOAN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ALLIANCE.

MARCH 17. 2.45. St. Patrick's Club Room, Soho Square. Members only. 5 p.m. Miss Alison Neilans, "The Solicitation Laws."

## SIX POINT GROUP.

MARCH 20. 8 p.m. 92 Victoria Street, S.W. 1. Miss Chrystal Macmillan, "Women in the Legal Profession." Chair: Mrs. Pollard.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS.

LONDON AND NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE, 35 Marsham Street, Westminster. Secretary, Miss P. Strachey. Information Bureau, Interviews, 10 to 1, except Saturdays. Members' Centre open daily. Restaurant open to 7.30. (Not Saturdays.)

EDUCATED HOME HELPS BUREAU, 190 Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W. 1 (new address), requires and supplies educated women for all domestic work. Registration: Employers, 2s. 6d.; workers, 1s. Suiting fee: Employers, 7s. 6d.; workers, 2s. (Victoria 5940.)

FELLOWSHIP SERVICES, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 18th March. 3.30. Prof. Noel Baker. 6.30. Rev. B. Spaul, "The Idea of Providence."

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## The Woman's Leader

### THE QUEEN'S HALL DEMONSTRATION NUMBER

contains

John Stuart Mill's Speech, 1867  
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The N.U.S.E.C. Council Presidential  
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A Message from Dame Millicent.

A Message from Sir Oliver Lodge.

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