

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

Parliament at Work Again.

The House of Commons reassembled unobtrusively on Tuesday afternoon, and set grimly to work upon the remaining stages of the Local Government Bill. As far as our own particular reforms are concerned, the fight is still to come, and the Government's time table suggests that it will be a short one. Seldom indeed in the history of social legislation have momentous administrative changes received a severer hustling. Meanwhile, we cannot refrain from extending a certain sympathy to the seven dissentient Conservatives, including Lady Astor, who voted with the minority in favour of an amendment to exclude the tobacco and drink industries from the benefits of derating. We are not oblivious of the technical difficulty of disentangling specific industries from the whole scheme, but it is cold comfort for temperance reformers to be assured, in this connection, that lower production costs, operating through price reduction and increased consumption, is likely to stimulate employment!

Women and Health Insurance.

At a conference of Trade Union Approved Societies held in Manchester last week, Mr. Walter Davies, chairman of the Manchester Insurance Committee, delivered an address on sickness and mortality among insured women. He presented his audience with figures which illustrated the disproportionate incidence of sickness among insured women and suggested that the National Health Insurance Act "would not, from the women's standpoint, carry the strain." What was the remedy? The chief difficulty lay with insured married women; and he suggested the possibility of their exclusion from sick pay, with "a marriage dowry of some kind and a greatly improved medical service in lieu of sick pay." In this connection he drew attention, in some detail, to the stagnation of medical science in relation to maternal mortality, and its heavy incidence due to illness arising from childbirth. He was, indeed, inclined to suggest that pregnancy cases should be lifted out of the Act, "and in lieu, preventive science placed to a much larger degree at the call of the mother-to-be." It is in our opinion difficult to blame those responsible for the administration of a definite piece of social machinery such as the National Health Insurance Act, when they press for the exclusion of so upsetting an actuarial factor as the insured married women. It is a matter of common experience that the health of this particular category is deplorable, and preventably deplorable. We are glad, too, to notice that Mr. Davies did not neglect the positive side of the problem. We are inclined to believe, however, that the administrative difficulties of the insurance machine are a useful material spur to the public conscience, and that any attempt to relieve these difficulties by a policy of exclusion might in effect relegate the chief sufferers to the position of obscurity and neglect already

enjoyed by the uninsured married working women. This is more especially the case at a time when Government policy, by the withdrawal of percentage grants, is likely to aim a bad blow at the expansion of such public maternity service as already exists.

The Turn of the Birth-rate.

The Registrar-General's report for the week ending 29th December, completes the material necessary for a tentative calculation of the 1928 birth-rate for England and Wales. This appears to work out at 16.7 per 1,000, as compared with 16.6 in 1927. We thus get, for the first time since 1921, an upward movement. Whether this represents a turn of the tide, an indication that with the low birth-rate of 1928 we touched bottom, time alone will show. Meanwhile, in order to get some notion of the reactions of this movement on the growth or otherwise of our aggregate population, we must bring the death-rate into play. This appears to show a drop to 11.7, as compared with 12.3 in the preceding year. Thus, as a result of the double movement, more births and fewer deaths, we may expect a net increase of population in 1928 to the extent of round about 200,000, as compared with 170,000 in 1927. It is satisfactory to note that such figures as are available suggest also a sharp decline in infant mortality; the rate of deaths for children under one year being 65 per 1,000 births, as against 69 per 1,000 in 1927. With an unprecedentedly low infant mortality rate, and a general crude death-rate 0.1 above the lowest ever recorded for England and Wales, we may therefore acclaim a growing capacity for economy in the production and conservation of human life. So far so good. Whether the increased survival rate which results from a combination of such conservation with an increased birth-rate, is equally a matter for congratulation, is less clear. The economic, æsthetic, social, and international consequences of an increasing density of population in what is already the most densely populated country of the civilized world, are considerations which transcend the scope of this note.

Mussolini and the Population Problem.

Signor Mussolini, however, has no such doubts concerning the desirable movement of population in his own relatively well-peopled domain. He wants more and more and still more babies; and because of this, further measures have been promulgated by his cabinet with a view to securing their more rapid production. Married men with children are to receive preferential treatment in the Government service, and in the allocation of flats under State housing schemes. Married women workers are also to receive a month's holiday before and after childbirth, with a guarantee of continued opportunity for work under their former employers. Here, as in his recently recorded opposition to the dismissal of women on the ground of marriage, Signor Mussolini shows his capacity for doing the best things for the worst reasons—since his published speeches suggest that his thirst for population is inspired by considerations of military power and imperial expansion rather than by considerations which relate the conception of an "optimum" population to improved economic and cultural standards of life. But the birth-rate is an incalculable and intractable factor in social life; as the prophecies of economists and the history of legislative experiments show. It may be that by raising the material standards of the family Signor Mussolini's admirable measures may at the same time increase the sense of responsibility under which human life is generated. If so, what will happen to the birth-rate? It is, of course, impossible to answer such a question without knowing to what extent, by what methods, and in response to what motives the Italian birth-rate is at present being deliberately checked by individual parents.

Women and the Relief of the Mining Areas.

It seems unfortunate that there are now no women on the large joint Executive Committee which has been formed in London to administer the Lord Mayor's Fund for the relief areas. We understand that the committee is composed partly of members nominated by the Lord Mayor and partly of members nominated by the twenty odd voluntary societies which are now co-operating. It was, we understand, expected that some of the latter would be women, but this is not the case. We have no personal knowledge of the working committees in the actual areas concerned, but are informed that women do serve on these. Work of this kind is confined to the relief of actual want—food, boots, clothes, with no doubt special help for expectant mothers; women, we are often told, are encroaching on the work of men, but here is surely a glaring instance of work for which no one questions women's special fitness and experience, left wholly in the hands of men, at all events so far as central administration and policy are concerned. We have no wish to say anything that may check the present flow of liberality; for every penny is urgently needed. But we have the strongest possible objection to the creation of a new *ad hoc* relief department for the delicate and responsible task of relief work on a large scale, from which women are wholly excluded.

Women in the Salvation Army.

We have no wish to express any opinion on the present deplorable crisis in the Salvation Army, and we regret the lime-light that has been thrown by the Press on every detail of the proceedings. We welcome, however, the reminder given in an admirable article in the *Sunday Times* that one source of strength to the Army in the past was its recognition of the place of women in its service. "Catherine Booth, the mother of the Army, was no less a power than William." Women were included among its officers; they shared the peril with the men and were not offered a shelter which they did not desire for themselves. Whatever the future may lead to, we hope that this equality between the sexes which has always characterized the Army, though so conspicuously absent in the churches, will not be lost. Only in one point does it appear to fall short. A rule dictated by the General himself prescribes that the retiring age for women officers shall be five years less than that for men—a difference which finds no justification in actuarial calculation of expectation of life.

"Scotts Wa' Hae!"

On Monday night the winner of the Victory Scholarship, a silver medal and £150, was officially announced at the Royal Institute of British Architects. The subject set was a design for "a faculty of fine art in a university." It seems that the competitors comprised twenty men and one woman. In the end the one woman, a twenty-two year old student at the Architectural Association, carried off the prize. As her name is Miss Betty Scott, it may possibly be suggested by the superstitious that she was foredoomed to success. Students of architecture must be growing chary of entering competitions whose lists comprise this magic name. On the other hand, it is a name which needs living up to, and we congratulate Miss Betty Scott upon being the second woman to shoulder that responsibility.

"Conspicuous Ability."

It is doubtful whether Miss V. J. M. Stephenson's task in defending John Holmyard on a charge of murder was made easier or more difficult last week by the Press publicity given to the fact that she was the first woman barrister to shoulder such a responsibility. On the one hand it focussed an intensified lime-light of attention upon her case, on the other hand, it divided personal interest from the plea to the pleader. But whether or no it made her task more difficult, it must have made it a great deal more unpleasing. And the evidence showed it to be, from the beginning, a task which offered no reasonable hope of a favourable verdict. Nevertheless, she discharged it, in the words of the Judge, "with conspicuous ability," and "in a manner which reflected the highest possible credit on her carefulness and on her own ability." We may add, knowing the ways of our world and its infinite readiness to generalize from particular instances, that she discharged it in a manner likely to enhance the prospects of other women barristers in the sphere of criminal law.

Lady Bailey's Homecoming.

Lady Bailey reached Croydon on Wednesday of last week in her redoubtable Moth, and on the following day was entertained

at lunch by the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Royal Aero Club, the Air League of the British Empire, and the Society of British Aircraft Constructors. Lady Bailey consistently attempts to discount the personal skill and endurance of her long African flight. She was, she says, "just flying about." The engine "kept running," though "she knew so little about it." We suspect that the matter was more accurately gauged by Col. the Master of Semphill (President of the Royal Aeronautical Society) in his telegram of welcome: "In admiration we send you our warmest congratulations on completion of your successful African tour that has proved to the world yet again and in the most convincing fashion the sterling qualities of the British light aeroplane, and perhaps more important still, brought us to realize how large a debt we, and in particular those who follow us, will owe to gallant women pioneers."

The Listener.

We offer a hearty welcome to our new contemporary *The Listener*, and in so doing dissociate ourselves wholly and emphatically from those wide sections of the Press which have greeted its coming as a threat to entrenched vested interest. The time has gone by when the issue of a popular periodical by a public corporation could be characterized as a blast of unfair competition in a fair field of private enterprise. The gradual syndication of the British Press into vast and impersonal combines which maintain an inflated news circulation by means of advertisement revenues, football coupons, and insurance benefits, has undermined the claim of the vast majority of our periodicals, daily, weekly and monthly, to be regarded and respected as organs of independent public opinion. With honourable exceptions, their news content and criticism has become subsidiary to irrelevant elements of commercial policy. Into such a world *The Listener* comes as a breath of fresh air, from a disinterested source, determined to give all the support in its power to the educational activities of the B.B.C., and to make that object its sole concern. We are delighted that its critics and opponents have so far cut so little ice in Government circles, that *The Listener* has appeared in spite of their efforts, and that its first issue, dated 16th January, 1929, gives promise of high quality and wide interest. We have already had occasion, moving among thoughtful working men students, to note the genuine appreciation and interest which its diverse contents have evoked.

Married Women's Property in France.

A trivial legal dispute over the possession of an "American bar" has, it appears, had momentous and beneficent consequences for all British women domiciled in France. The case in question involved a conflict of application between the French and British law regarding married women's property rights. The bar was formerly the property of a Mrs. Ashley, who in 1913 married an English national domiciled in Paris—an ex-clown known as Footit. After their marriage they worked together in the bar, and on their death a dispute arose between Footit's son by an earlier marriage and the late Mrs. Footit's relatives. The former claimed that under French law the bar became by Mr. Footit's marriage, the joint property of her and her husband. The latter claimed that under British law its ownership remained with Mrs. Footit. The Courts decided in favour of the late Mrs. Footit's relatives, on the ground that since the deceased were British subjects, their property came under the English Married Women's Property Act. This finding establishes once and for all the property rights of all British married women domiciled in France.

Women's International Bibliographical Bureau in Paris.

The International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship has established an International Bibliographical Bureau in Paris, 4 rue de Chevreuse (6E), open Mondays and Fridays from 2 to 6. This Bureau aims at collecting the bibliography of all questions concerning the social, economic, and political activities of women, and is prepared to give accurate and complete information on all subjects within its scope to the best of its ability. Feminists, students, women writers, women in politics, can obtain from it the information they require. All feminists are asked to help the work of the bureau by sending to it all documentary information they may possess, and making its activities known. Those who have personal memories of pioneers of the woman's movement would be doing a service to the Bureau if they would send notes of their reminiscences before the end of March, as a collection is being made of the biographies of the best known feminists throughout the world in preparation for the Berlin Congress in June, 1929.

HUMANIST OR PURITAN.

The report of the Street Offences Committee, reviewed in our columns last month by Miss Chrystal Macmillan, concerns a subject of such complexity that though usually unable to spare space for long reports of meetings, we think it necessary to reprint in full the two opening speeches at the meeting held last week by the Association for Social and Moral Hygiene.

Miss Alison Neilans spoke on behalf of the A.S.M.H., and Mr. Sempkins on behalf of the National Vigilance Association. On the whole, we find ourselves in agreement with the Chairman, the Rev. Dr. Geikie Cobb, who, describing the rival points of view presented as respectively "humanistic" and "puritan," pronounced himself unhesitatingly on the side of the humanists. But we cannot deny the difficulty of the problem for which neither the Street Offences Committee nor anyone else appears to have found a really satisfactory solution. It seems at first sight so obvious and so plainly just that before anyone is convicted either of "annoying" or of "importuning," the evidence of the person annoyed or importuned should be required. Yet the Street Offences Committee fail to recommend this and were apparently of the unanimous opinion—for there is no reservation as to this—that it would result in the law becoming practically a dead letter since such evidence would hardly ever be forthcoming. Miss Neilans proposes to meet this by omitting reference to "an immoral purpose" on the ground that passers-by will then more readily give evidence. She further points out that the law as recommended by the Street Offences Committee would, if fairly carried out, be equally a dead letter, since prostitutes do not, in fact, usually importune, if by importuning is meant pestering the clients whose custom they are soliciting. The truth is that it seems beyond the wit of man to conceive

any method free from unfairness of effectively ridding the streets of prostitutes of either sex, so long as willing sellers and willing buyers of their wares continue to exist in considerable numbers. The real "social evil"—as the fine quotation from Milton with which Miss Neilans closed her speech, indeed, implies—consists in the will to immorality rather than the technique of publicity which for ages has existed to gratify that will.

Conferences similar to that convened by the A.S.M.H. should be organized all over the country. With a General Election approaching, women's societies should lose no opportunity of forming the opinions of their members and the outside public on a subject which, whatever its difficulty, is of deep concern to all. At the annual council meeting of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship the subject will be fully discussed, with a view to the policy to be adopted both at the General Election and in the next Parliament. The report of the Street Offences Committee, whatever its defects, at least marks a very considerable advance in public opinion. The proposal to repeal existing legislation relating to solicitation between the sexes would mean the disappearance, at least from the legal code, of that tragic figure, "the common prostitute." That in itself would be a great step forward. The provision that evidence should be necessary in charges of frequenting for the purpose of prostitution is, at least, a half-way house towards the requirement of such evidence in all cases. But it is a far cry from the report of the Committee to the translation of its recommendations into Statute law, and even if these recommendations were so translated we cannot believe that they would in effect result either in purifying the streets or in establishing complete equality of a moral standard so far as the administration of the law is concerned, but they would go some way towards that end.

THE REPORT OF THE STREET OFFENCES COMMITTEE.¹

TWO POINTS OF VIEW.

Miss Alison Neilans: representing the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene.

Miss Neilans said that the only part of the Report which need concern them that day was the Committee's own summary of Recommendations on page 28. The first Recommendation proposed sweeping away all the existing legislation in England, Scotland, and Wales, dealing with solicitation of one sex by the other. It was obvious then that the law which the Committee proposed to take the place of the existing legislation was the crux of the Report. She proposed to deal mainly with that Recommendation as the Report would stand or fall by it.

The A.M.S.H. cannot accept the proposed substitute law—

- (i) because it eliminates annoyance as an essential part of the evidence;
- (ii) because it makes an "immoral purpose" essential to proof of the offence;
- (iii) because it does not require the evidence of the person importuned and convictions can follow on police evidence only.

Elaborating these objections, the speaker said that since neither importuning nor immorality, nor prostitution, nor solicitation were in themselves legal offences, the only legal offence which could rightly be charged was annoyance, obstruction, or danger to passengers.

The objection to the inclusion of the words "immoral purposes" was that it was entirely contrary to the whole principle of British law to make the purpose of an act an offence when the act, if achieved, was not an offence. If the purpose were not a criminal purpose the law had no concern with it. Finally, "immoral purpose" is not capable of satisfactory proof. On this point Miss Neilans quoted three legal opinions.

Turning to the question of evidence, the speaker pointed out that if the definition of importuning given in the Report, namely, "offensive words and behaviour," were strictly and impartially applied, the law must be practically a dead letter. Against ordinary men and women it would be impossible to prove an immoral purpose, and against a prostitute it would very rarely indeed be true to say that she importuned by offensive words and behaviour. Therefore if the Committee's Recommendation would prove a dead letter they might just as well have recommended that the evidence of the person importuned

¹ Report of opening speeches at meeting held by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene on Tuesday, 15th January, 1929.

Mr. Sempkins: representing the National Vigilance Association.

Mr. Sempkins said that Miss Neilans had dealt particularly with the findings of the Committee and had strongly criticized the suggestion to deal with importunity. He himself took strong exception to the second main suggestion which dealt with frequenting, because that suggestion was quite ineffective and would be a dead letter. Those suggestions were, therefore, clearly open to criticism.

The Report was certainly not unanimous so far as the suggestions were concerned, but it was unanimous so far as the findings of fact were concerned. No consideration of the suggestions could be adequate without a consideration of the findings on fact which the Committee had arrived at. He proposed, therefore, to go through those findings, compare them with the findings of the National Vigilance Association, and see in what respects they differed.

There was first the problem. The National Vigilance Association agreed that the law should not deal with private immorality but with a nuisance. The Committee took the same position with one point of difference. The National Vigilance Association linked their interpretation of a nuisance with the idea of protecting the young against that nuisance. The Committee dealt solely with adults.

The second point was the people concerned. His Association found it necessary to consider different classes separately and the Committee had accepted the same division of classes.

There was next the question of the existing law. The National Vigilance Association found that it was not perfect in wording or application but had in general been admirably effective. The Committee said that it had worked reasonably well in practice. That was, perhaps, as much as any law could be expected to do.

There followed the argument as to whether any laws were of use in this matter. The National Vigilance Association protested strongly against any policy of laissez-faire and asked for definite laws to deal with a definite nuisance. The Committee agreed with that in an almost dogmatic manner.

But the existence of laws necessitated consideration as to who should prove the offence. His Association said without hesitation that the police should. The Committee took the same view.

The Association maintained that corroboration of police evidence was both unobtainable and unnecessary. So did the Committee.

should be required to prove the offence. They dismissed this suggestion on the ground that it would be a dead letter, and put forward another proposal equally or even more unsatisfactory in this respect.

Miss Neilans laid stress on the fact that the Street Offences Committee had apparently rejected the definition of offensive words and behaviour expressed in the first note of reservation by Mr. Jowitt, K.C., Sir Henry Fairfax-Lucy, and Miss Margery Fry. She reminded the audience that 12,000 women a year had been convicted on what the Committee itself called "perfunctory evidence," and which the official witnesses called "legal fictions" and "artificial evidence", yet that the Street Offences Committee had the temerity to state the existing law had been administered without injustice, although so large a number of women had been convicted of offences which in fact they did not commit. Was there any guarantee that the evidence of offensive words and behaviour in the future would not be equally perfunctory, fictitious, and artificial?

Referring to the police and the question of black sheep, Miss Neilans said it was absurd to talk of a few black sheep among 20,000 men. The police who dealt with these offences in London, at least, were a very small group of specially selected men: selected for experience, integrity, and high character, and it was within this small group of specially selected men that the last year or two had revealed a serious state of affairs. She also gave the official figures for the number of police compelled to resign by their superiors or dismissed for misconduct. Were these police then specially bad people? She suggested they were not, but that they were placed in a position of overwhelming temptation, both sexual and monetary.

Referring to Recommendation 4, "frequenting any street for the purpose of prostitution or solicitation so as to constitute a nuisance," she said that the A.M.S.H. was glad to see the Committee under this section required the evidence of the persons aggrieved. The only objection the A.M.H.S. took was the inclusion of the words "for the immoral purpose of prostitution or solicitation."

Turning to Recommendation 6, which continued to deny to men, charged with soliciting men, the right to a trial by jury, she said that her Association regretted very much the Committee had not proposed to remedy this grievance, which it was believed led to very serious injustice to men.

In closing Miss Neilans said that both the proposals of the Street Offences Committee and of the A.M.S.H., if fairly applied, would still leave prostitutes in the street free to patrol, but so long as prostitution existed and was so largely accepted as a necessity, it was well we should be constantly reminded by the obvious presence of the prostitute how far we had failed in our social order. It spurred us on to deal with the causes of prostitution in both sexes, which incentive would be lacking if we succeeded in sweeping the prostitute off the streets while not changing the public attitude of mind which brought her there.

On the question of the temptation to men Miss Neilans ended by quoting from Milton:—

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary."

OCTAVIA HILL.

OCTAVIA HILL: Early Ideals. Letters edited by Emily Southwood Maurice. (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 7s. 6d.)

Octavia Hill, though a contemporary of Ruskin, may be said to belong to the present century, which witnessed some of her best work. She died only two years before the outbreak of war; she was a vigorous member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws which reported in 1909, and the present writer recalls her visit to Liverpool in company with other members of the Commission to investigate Poor Law institutions of different types. Many living and still active persons worked with her and drew their inspiration from her. Possibly her name is known to a wider circle to-day than during her life-time. The "Octavia Hill" system of house property management is discussed in Council chambers and on housing committees and visitors to the loveliest parts of our island have reason to bless it. The volume which lies before us is a welcome supplement to the life written by her brother-in-law; it gives us a deeply interesting glimpse of the thoughts and ideals of the girl Octavia developing into strong, confident womanhood. Artist and dreamer, and at the same time half hard-working teacher

He thought that the most valuable decision of the Committee was the recommendation that proof of annoyance should be eliminated from the statutes.

The remaining question was that of penalties. He was of opinion that it was impossible to abolish fines, though they should only be imposed when absolutely necessary. The proper method was a probationary order and the recommendations of the Committee for increased penalties would go very far to meet the position adopted by the National Vigilance Association.

There was, therefore, substantial agreement between his Association and the Committee on points of fact. They split quite clearly on the question of action against the common prostitute. The Conference should appreciate the fact that the reason given by the Committee for not using those words was not connected with unfairness or with the unpleasantness of the words. It was solely because of agitation and those responsible for it were entitled to the fullest credit for the result of that agitation, although the speaker emphatically disagreed with it. He desired as strongly as any one to do away with the words if possible. He could see no method of doing so in practice. In their own suggestions to deal with a "nuisance by frequenting," the Committee had recognized the necessity for taking action against this class, but the decision to delete the words "common prostitute" made it quite impossible to them to suggest an adequate law to deal with the problem they had so correctly visualized. In connection with the suggestion actually made to deal with "nuisance by frequenting" it would be even more difficult to obtain the evidence of aggrieved persons than it was in the case of an individual annoyed by an individual prostitute.

Nothing in the Report made him change his view that the suggestions made by the National Vigilance Association were preferable to those of the Committee. They were reasonable and would be effective were they adopted, whereas those of the Committee would be in practice a dead letter.

(Continued from preceding column.)

and practical social worker as she was, the social reformer in her discloses itself at an early age. In 1856, aged about 17, she writes after attending a meeting about "Ragged Schools," a pet scheme of mid-nineteenth century philanthropists: "I'd rather be a table than a ragged school child! not an attempt to show how the teaching influences the children themselves, plenty of statistics about numbers of Bibles given away."

But the real interest of this book to the ordinary reader lies in the letters which cover the period of Octavia's friendship with Ruskin. John Ruskin was her teacher, her benefactor, and unquestionably her intimate friend. He was a great deal older than his young disciple; he died at the beginning of this century after many years of retirement from work, and his influence, unlike hers, belongs almost wholly to the nineteenth century. It just happens that another book published about the same time as these letters has done much to rekindle interest in his life. *The Tragedy of John Ruskin*,¹ by Mrs. William-Ellis, is a study of the deepest human interest and the present writer has enjoyed both books the better because she read them together. It was John Ruskin who gave Octavia Hill the opportunity which opened out for her the career of usefulness for which she is remembered. Her reverence and affection for his friendship was deep and strong, but she on her side, strong, decided, self-reliant, had something to give which he deeply appreciated, though there are indications in the letters that her unflinching optimism, her young "All's right with the world" attitude towards life sometimes jarred on his ultra-sensitive fastidious spirit. "I cannot understand how you maintain your faith in good coming out of evil to the person themselves," he writes in one place, and again, "I sometimes think that you are too successful to be quite right." In one of the last letters printed he refers to Octavia Hill's work as "only mitigating of mortal pain," while on the contrary his own is "radically curative." "London," he writes, "is as utterly doomed as Gomorrah . . . but I have to labour wholly to fence round fresh fields beyond the smoke of her torment." In these lines we read something of the tragedy of his nature. The palliative enterprise which he criticized was the foundation of the system of housing reform for which Octavia Hill became famous while his "radical" reforms were forgotten.

But we cannot, however, forget that the practical worker owed much to the idealist—inspiration as well as the tangible means of giving effect to her schemes. Who can tell now the full extent of Ruskin's unrecorded influence on the lives of other men and women whose work lives after them, though the origin of their inspiration is unknown? E. M.

¹ *The Tragedy of John Ruskin*, by Amabel William-Ellis. (Jonathan Cape.)

THE LAW AT WORK.¹

This Report has a very good frontispiece. It is a broadsheet, published about 100 years ago, telling the story of Thomas King, a boy of 12, who after a life of crime was sentenced to death. The sheet gives a picture of the boy in his cell and a copy of verses. After this beginning the Report is somewhat disappointing. To say this is not for a moment to undervalue the services which are being rendered to neglected and delinquent children both by voluntary workers and by officials; but not much advance is being made. This is the more noticeable as no Report has appeared for three years, and there has been time for progress and new developments. To take an example, in 1925 an exhaustive account was given of the Juvenile Courts which clearly showed the extremely unsatisfactory conditions under which many of them are held. In this Report there is nothing to show what improvement has taken place except that a new Court has been built at Birmingham through the generosity of a private benefactor.

In one respect there has been an advance: the number of Courts at which there is no Probation Officer has fallen from 147 to 16. But the number of part-time officers is still very large, and there are several hundred Courts without the services of a woman. The anomalous position still persists whereby Probation Officers are in so many cases the agents of voluntary societies, and we are told that in London there are special part-time officers to deal with Nonconformist boys and Jewish girls!

Particulars are given of the early history of 1,000 lads who have been sent to Borstal during the last three years; nearly one-half had appeared in the Juvenile Court before the age of 16. It is pointed out that some of the lads had been put on probation again and again, and it is suggested that too great a burden is being placed upon the probation system. This may be the case, but it might equally well be pointed out that probation might have been successfully used for some of the 40 boys who were birched, the 58 sent to industrial schools, or the 14 sent to Reformatories—all for their first offence. It is curious that, with the great increase in the number of probation officers, the number of probation orders made in 1927 is actually less than in 1926, 15,973 as against 16,596. It does not look as if—speaking generally—probation was being used too freely. It is disappointing too that fewer probation reports are being sent by the Courts to the Home Office, so that it is difficult to judge how the system is working or to summarize the results.

The number of children in industrial schools and reformatories has fallen from 6,871 in 1926 to 6,550 in 1927; the number committed during the year also fell, and three schools are mentioned as having been closed for want of children. An interesting account is given of the various forms of training in the schools, with a special chapter devoted to farm training for lads. As farming is carried on in 17 out of the 22 reformatories for boys it is rather surprising that only 13 per cent of the boys go to this occupation on leaving the schools. This seems to show that lads are not sent to farming unless they show a real taste for it. The time spent in the training is very long—three years' full time work spread over four years in the institution—when it is remembered that it is impossible to reproduce outside conditions on institution premises, and that the tendency is for the boys to work very slowly. It is very satisfactory that so many girls have gained scholarships to secondary schools. One school in London is specially set apart for these girls. One regrets that there is no corresponding arrangement for boys.

One of the most valuable proposals in the Report of the Committee on Juvenile Delinquency—published now nearly two years ago—was that hostels for probationers should be established. The only progress recorded in this direction is that the hostel at Liverpool has been approved by the Home Office, and that the Leeds probationary committee is recommending the establishment of a hostel in that city. Hostels are urgently needed, but it is difficult to see how the need is to be met while their establishment depends entirely on local effort. When the large centres of population have established hostels (and this is happening very slowly indeed) they will need the accommodation for their own boys, and the needs of the smaller places which could not maintain a hostel of their own will not be met.

A chapter of the Report is devoted to the subject of offences against children. There has been a tremendous decrease in the number of persons tried for cruelty to children. It has fallen from 4,106 at the beginning of the century to 1,200 last

(Continued at foot of next column.)

¹ The Fourth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch. Home Office, November, 1928. Price 1s.

A MESSAGE FROM DAME MILLICENT.¹

It is one of the chief joys of the elder suffragists to watch the important developments which are constantly taking place among those who were among our early supporters. I cannot pretend to give an exhaustive list but I can mention two cases which I never think of without a thrill of gratitude. I refer to the *Men's League for Women's Suffrage* which came into being about a quarter of a century ago, when Mr. Asquith was a most vehement opponent. At that time it required considerable physical as well as moral courage to show us friendship. The chief creator and organizer of the Men's League was Mr. Malcolm Mitchell, then quite a young man, and he was associated with Dr. and Mrs. Wilmot-Herringham. Between them they did much to protect the friends of women's suffrage from physical violence and ill-treatment from enraged Liberals at public meetings. Now Mr. Malcolm Mitchell is the secretary of the Carnegie Trust, which has done so much to develop all kinds of social and educative activities for both men and women in every part of the United Kingdom. Women's Institutes, Village Libraries, and a hundred other valuable activities have been and are being promoted by him. And Dr. Herringham is now General Sir Wilmot-Herringham and is chairman of the Council of Bedford College. It was mainly through him that women were rendered eligible for the Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians. I had the pleasure of a call from Mr. Mitchell the day before I started on this little holiday cruise, and it delighted me to hear how greatly the work of the Carnegie Trust had developed on all sides.

EVENTS THAT MUST NOT BE MISSED.

We propose from time to time to give under this heading information of dramatic, artistic, and literary events of special interest to our readers. Under "Forthcoming Events" we shall continue to chronicle notices of meetings mainly of women's organizations, which are sent us. We invite the co-operation of our readers in this, and shall be glad to have suitable events brought to our notice.

Interpretation of Classical Plays. By Dorothea Spinney. *The Bacchae of Euripides*. 28th January. 8.30. Arts Theatre Club, Great Newport Street, W.C. (Leicester Square Tube). Particulars from Miss Alice Michaelis, 10 Canfield Gardens, N.W. 6.

The Lady with the Lamp. By Reginald Berkeley. From 24th January, Garrick Theatre (transferred from Arts Theatre Club); see "The Real Florence Nightingale," page 388, last week's issue.

The Story of Westminster. Told in four lectures with lantern slides. 5.30 p.m. Westminster School, Large Hall. 19th February: *Its Churches*, by Dr. Jocelyn Perkins. 25th February: *Its Schools*, by Lawrence E. Tanner, F.S.A. 5th March: *Its Highways and Byeways*, by A. H. Blake, Esq. 12th March: *Its Palaces and Houses of Westminster*, by T. Wilson, Esq. Tickets and particulars from Westminster Housing Association, 32 Charing Cross, S.W. 1.

(Continued from preceding column.)

year. Unfortunately the position as regards sexual offences against children is much less satisfactory. There has been a large increase in the number of indecent assaults: those on boys have increased from 43 in 1909 to 125 last year, those on girls from 593 to 959. In each case there is also an increase on the figures for the previous year. It is very disappointing that this increase should persist. It is now three years since the Committee on sexual offences against young persons presented its Report, and it is deplorable that so little should have been done to carry its recommendations into effect.

We want many things—another experiment in Reformatory treatment on the lines of the Little Commonwealth, an observation centre where delinquent boys and girls could be examined both medically and psychologically, proper Remand Homes in which children could be detained pending necessary inquiries, a thorough reorganization of the Juvenile Court. And with regard to offences against young persons we want women to be associated in every way with the proceedings so as to lessen the strain on the children and young persons, we want less delay and we want some overdue changes in the law. And there is nothing in the Report to tell us of progress in these directions.

CLARA D. RACKHAM.

¹ The above short article was written on the S.S. Otranto en route to Ceylon.

COMING EVENTS.

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LEAGUE.

29th January, 1 p.m. 17 Buckingham Street, Strand. Luncheon. Mrs. Dalton, "Some Race Problems Affecting the Women of the British West Indies."

GUILD OF GIRL CITIZENS.

13th February, 8 p.m. The Guild House, S.W. 1. Public Meeting. Miss Ishbel MacDonald, "The Work of the L.C.C." Chair: Lady Maurice.

GUILDHOUSE WOMEN CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION.

4th February, 3 p.m. The Guildhouse, S.W. 1. Miss Biggs (Secretary Westminster Housing Association), "Housing in Westminster: What remains to be done."

MORLEY COLLEGE FOR WORKING MEN AND WOMEN.

7th February, 8 p.m. 61 Westminster Bridge Road, S.E. Professor Graham Wallas, "America." Chair: The American Ambassador.

NATIONAL UNION OF SOCIETIES FOR EQUAL CITIZENSHIP.

8th February. Great Hall, University College, London. Conference on the "Education of the Citizen." Chair: The Duchess of Atholl, M.P. Speakers: Dr. Cyril Norwood, M.A., Albert Mansbridge, M.A., J. H. Badley (Bedales School), Miss Pennethorne (P.E.N.U.), Mrs. Wintringham,

Miss Matheson (B.B.C.), B. Ingram, Esq. (L.C.C. Continuation Schools), and many others. First session, 2.30 p.m.; second session, 5.30 p.m.; third session, 8 p.m. Tickets 2s., or 5s. for the three sessions, from the Secretary, 15 Dean's Yard, S.W. 1.

Acton W.C.A.—25th January, 8 p.m. Committee Room, Acton Municipal Offices. Miss Macadam: "The New Voter and the Coming Election."

Barnsley S.E.C.—30th January, 5.30 p.m. St. Mary's Parish Room. Miss Patricia Hall: "Peace, from the point of view of the Under-thirties." Chair: Councillor J. Jones.

Preston W.C.A.—31st January, 7.30. St. John Ambulance Hall. Annual Re-union.

OPEN DOOR COUNCIL.

7th February, 7 p.m. B.B.C. Debate. Dr. Marion Phillips (Chief Woman Officer of the Labour Party) and Mrs. Elizabeth Abbott (Chairman Open Door Council) will broadcast a debate on Restrictive Legislation.

UNION OF WOMEN VOTERS.

28th January, 5.30 p.m. 55 Chancery Lane, W.C. Miss M. Scott, A.R.C.M. (Founder of Society of Women Musicians): "Is there Equality of Opportunity for Women Musicians?"

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