

THE WOMAN'S LEADER

AND THE COMMON CAUSE

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NOTES AND NEWS.

German Disarmament.

Early this week at Geneva an agreement was reached which should have two—and both of them excellent—results: it should relax the tension between France and Germany, and re-affirm the prestige of the League of Nations. On 31st January next the Inter-Allied Military Missions in Berlin and the other ex-enemy capitals are to be withdrawn, and their places taken by a Permanent Advisory Committee of the League. This committee, moreover, instead of continually functioning, will act only on receipt of a definite complaint about a particular country, when, through its experts, it will conduct an investigation. Some such transfer of authority was, of course, contemplated by the Treaty of Versailles, but it was not to have taken place until the Conference of Ambassadors were satisfied that German disarmament was complete. The point of the agreement lies precisely in the fact that the Conference of Ambassadors is not satisfied—they continue to boggle at two German claims—but nevertheless the withdrawal is to take place. The Commissions are to go not because France is satisfied that Germany is completely disarmed, but because one or two French statesmen have at last been persuaded that no great people can ever be completely disarmed, and that a harsh insistence on minor details of the Treaty will only create a spirit bent on destroying the Treaty as a whole. The two points which so worry the Ambassadors—questions relating to some fortifications at Königsberg and the German claim to be allowed to sell military goods—will, therefore, instead of blocking the whole proceedings simply be referred back to the Conference, and if this body cannot deal with them by the end of next month they will be reported to the Council of the League. This in itself is good news enough, but it carries a further good in that it shows that even a politician is essentially a friendly and responsive creature who values the good opinion of his colleagues. Put his desk between an Admiralty and a War Office and military nightmares will destroy his rest, military ideals will limit his vision. Send the same man to a place where the buildings round him contain people working for peace, where his neighbours at dinner will esteem him in proportion as he can contribute to that work, and he will soon be lifting his thoughts to a Nobel prize. That this seems to be happening at Geneva is at once a compliment to those who have formed its atmosphere, and our firmest guarantee for the recovery of Europe.

The Prime Minister and the Waters of Lethe.

So the session has ended, and bi-weekly questions have not succeeded in eliciting any statement from the Prime Minister with regard to Equal Franchise, beyond that recorded in our issue of two weeks ago, that a Cabinet Committee is considering the question. The last question was put this week by Mr. Hore-Belisha, and was based on the Memorial which is being organized by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship to be signed by Members of Parliament. Mr. Hore-Belisha pointed out the need for legislation to reach the Statute Book before June, 1927, in order that women may vote at any General Election which may take place before October, 1928. He further asked whether the Prime Minister recollected "that the Home Secretary stated we were to have a conference of all parties in 1926 on this question", to which the Prime Minister replied: "I do not remember that". Women's organizations are not to blame for this shortness of memory on the Prime Minister's part. Over and over again they have reminded him of the pronouncement made by the Home Secretary in February, 1925, when asking the House to throw out the Labour Party's Franchise Bill, "that the conference could be set up in 1926 and any legislation which might arise from it could be introduced the following year". If on reading this in cold blood we admit that it is not a literal pledge, it was perfectly clear that it was interpreted as such on the occasion on which it was made. Loss of memory is a fashionable complaint just now and we trust that the Prime Minister will recover his fully after the holiday rest.

The Legitimacy Bill—Hail and Farewell!

The Legitimacy Bill has at last ended its Parliamentary career which has extended over many years, and has successfully passed through its final stages. On Monday a heated debate took place on the chief controversial point in connection with the Bill, viz. the proviso excluding from the benefits of the Bill those children one or both of whose parents were married at the time of their birth. So strong was the feeling against this proviso that the Government had to allow a free vote. Captain Hacking expressed the point of view of the Government that if this proviso were not included a wife might be subjected to pressure from her husband to bring a divorce in order that he might be free to marry to legitimate his children. Those who supported the proviso announced their intention that they would do their best to introduce a one clause Bill on the point next session. It is an interesting constitutional point to note that when those opposed to the proviso intimated their desire to push the amendment again and again in spite of the undoubted fact that the House of Lords would throw it out, they were informed that the machinery of the Parliament Act 1911 could not apply in the case of Bills, such as this, which were introduced first into the House of Lords.

The Lead Paint (Protection against Poisoning) Bill—Last Lap.

The Lead Paint (Protection against Poisoning) Bill passed its final stage when the House of Commons agreed to the amendment inserted by the House of Lords, which provided for the retention in the industry of women at present employed in it. This amendment was agreed to with no discussion whatsoever. The request for an inquiry into the relative susceptibility to lead poisoning of men and women which the N.U.S.E.C. hoped would be made on this occasion, will now have to be made in connection with lead processes in the Factories Bill.

A Clean Press.

If the Judicial Proceedings Bill, which received its third reading in the House of Commons on Friday, is, as we understand, hurried through the Lords this week, in a few weeks' time no

newspaper will be able to print more in respect of matrimonial cases than a short statement of the charges and defences, the names and descriptions of principals and witnesses, the result, and the judge's summing up. The first effect of this measure will be, let us hope, to destroy the circulation of the paper whose deliberate policy has been to print as much filth as possible. It is a reproach to English journalism and a menace to English life, unless we consider that without it the present Bill would never have been framed. . . . Almost certainly we suppose the next consequence of the Act will be a national turn for the better: the vicious circle of supply and demand in these matters will be broken. After that it is more difficult to say what its results are likely to be. On the one hand, there may be fewer hasty divorces, impatient young people will not have the idea of divorce thrust at them every time they open an illustrated paper. On the other, after a year or two, the deterrent of publicity may be found to have weakened. It acts now most capriciously and unfairly, and only in certain classes. Few cinema stars or sellers of motor-cars on commission are kept out of the divorce courts by publicity, but nearly all doctors, schoolmasters, and solicitors are debarred from using it by public opinion. As the reports lose their sensational interest divorces in the first class may decrease, but in the last three they may very well rise. In debate the Opposition to the Bill made two main points. The first that as the text stands at present, importers of the most respectable foreign and colonial papers, should they happen to contain a report of a matrimonial case which included some of the evidence, although it were perfectly decent, would be liable to prosecution on a criminal charge. The second is that judges are after all human, and that it is unfair to the parties to divorce proceedings that their reputation should depend upon the judge's pronouncement, unchecked by any publication of the evidence. There is of course no reply to this, as there is no end to the mischief wrought by an unjust judge. As to the first, the answer given was that in such cases the law would not move. It is always a pity to create offences which are not intended to be treated as such, perhaps some form of words which would lessen the risks run by importers might be worked out in the House of Lords.

Suppressed Evidence.

Nothing is more difficult than to foretell the results of any alteration in the law. When towards the end of the last century a prisoner was permitted to give evidence on his own behalf, and further to place in the witness-box his wife (or her husband) if he so desired, no one could have supposed that the result might be a grave injustice to the husband, or, more generally, the wife in question. Yet a recent trial for murder showed that this right of the prisoner to say what he pleases and prevent the other partner to the marriage from speaking at all, may create an almost intolerable position. In this case the accused man shot a friend whom he had frequently accused, both in speech and in writing, of being his wife's lover. He shot him in his wife's presence, and at the trial she, the only eyewitness of the scene, was not called to give evidence. So far so good, but the result was that she was prevented from defending herself against the imputation of adultery or even from denying that it had taken place. No evidence of her guilt was produced, except the bare belief in it of a drunken, jealous and excitable husband. Nevertheless, the whole conduct of the defence was an attempt to gain sympathy for the husband on the assumption of his guilt; he was acquitted in the midst of great emotion, and his unfortunate wife was hissed in the streets. Now it may be that in a murder trial most wives would be willing to shoulder a sin which they had not committed in order to defeat justice and save an unworthy husband from the gallows. But the same holds good in respect of less grave offences, and it ought surely to be possible when serious accusations are made against persons who are not allowed to give evidence, to permit them to defend themselves, or, at any rate, to deny the charge on oath, even if they cannot be heard on the main issue.

Hillcroft.

Last Saturday the Residential College for Working Women, which for seven years has flourished at Beckenham, celebrated a second chapter of its existence with a cheerful "house-warming" in its new and more spacious quarters at Hillcroft, Surbiton. Miss Fanny Street, the Principal of the College, spoke to the guests on its past and future hopes. Hillcroft, it appears, can provide a year's residence and general education for a working woman at a cost of £80. Sometimes this break

in the routine of life precludes an advance into a new and more ambitious career. But it is interesting to note that in about 50 per cent. of cases the students return to their old environment as missionaries for education, carrying back with them a more abundant life of interest, beauty, and appreciation. In concluding her speech Miss Street made a public appeal for money—more money, more accommodation, more students; and the College has a waiting list. In support of her appeal Mr. Wall, the hon. treasurer, undertook to add 10 per cent. to any response made—an act of generosity which is best appreciated by those who know what Mr. Wall has already done for the College, and indeed for the whole cause of adult education. But Mr. Wall is a very unostentatious educationalist. Few of the people who eat his excellent ices in the street, know where the money goes! But we have known for a long time; and our knowledge has always added a sort of spiritual flavour to the excellent physical flavour inherent in those refreshing and popular confections.

Education for Industry.

It is too soon to comment on the recommendations of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Education for Industry which has just been issued. The relations between Education Authorities and the Ministry of Labour with regard to the employment of juveniles, have long been a source of controversy, and the solution proposed by a committee appointed jointly by the Board of Education and the Ministry of Labour that the central responsibility should be relegated to the Ministry of Labour strikes us as the only logical and sensible course. It is recommended, however, that the statutory powers of local Education Authorities in connection with "choice of employment" shall remain unchanged. But discussion of these and other interesting proposals must be held over for a future occasion.

The "Avocate."

Last week a French woman barrister, Maître Juliette Veillier (to whom we offer congratulations and respect) performed a rôle entirely unprecedented in the history of the French Bar. She was one of the two orators chosen to make set speeches at a ceremony known as the "conférence du stage"—a purely professional event at which only members of the Bar are present and at which the Judges are guests.

The Holiday Season.

Next week we propose to give our readers a respite from politics and will offer for their holiday consumption a "literary" number with reviews by different writers on the books that "everybody" will be reading during the holidays. Our New Year's issue has already been announced. We remind our readers that applications for extra copies must be made as early as possible, and not later than *Tuesday, 28th December*. Every woman who follows public events intelligently will welcome a copy of the Special Number *Women in 1926* as a useful form of a New Year's card. Orders sent to the office for New Year's Day will be promptly dealt with. We repeat our appeal for new subscribers; nothing will give us greater encouragement in beginning a New Year.

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER.

(Continued from page 399.)

direction. No member approves of the licence which some publications allow themselves. At the same time, there is grave misgiving at closing law courts to publicity, and a feeling, strong if vague, that you do not cure social evils by hushing them up. Other arguments, however, prevailed, and we shall see what the result will be.

The House will have separated before this is in print, and will not meet until February. Next year will be one of extraordinary interest. Great movements are visible, and the clash will come over industrial legislation. It is not known yet which road the Prime Minister will tread, whether he will go for restriction or for conciliation. Restriction of some kind there must be, for it is obvious that a general strike will be declared to be, and to have always been, outside the law. But will he move beyond this? Big issues depend upon the answer to this question.

AN UNEQUAL MORAL STANDARD.

On Thursday of last week Lord Balfour of Burleigh moved the second reading of the Public Places (Order) Bill in the House of Lords. Our well-informed readers will remember that this Bill was first introduced by Lady Astor in the House of Commons in July of last year, to use her own words, "as a demonstration—a peg upon which to hang a demand for a full inquiry." A distinguished woman at an international gathering stated recently that in her country the most respectable measure of reform proposed by a woman was treated as an illegitimate founding until it had found a man willing to father it. In this case, though Lady Astor has shown herself pre-eminently capable of defending her own Parliamentary children in this, as in other instances, the prospects of success are brighter for a measure which possesses a parent so able to defend it in each House. As a matter of fact, the real parent of the Bill, as both its foster-parents readily acknowledge, is the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, which recently called a conference on the subject. This Association has been at work on the subject for many years, and the name of the late Mr. George W. Johnson will always be gratefully remembered for his persistent and devoted service in the reform of the solicitation laws. In 1917, 1918, and 1920 clauses extending the operation of legislation against "prostitutes" were defeated in successive Criminal Law Amendment Bills, and in 1923 it drafted the Bill now before the country.

The debate in the House of Lords last Thursday has brought the matter a stage further. Lord Balfour of Burleigh in a convincing speech which cannot fail to win the grateful thanks of all who care passionately for equality and justice, urged the inquiry on the subject which the Government had already promised. The terms of the Bill, we may surely presume, are familiar to our readers. In brief, the present solicitation laws are repealed, and evidence of annoyance must in future be produced by *the person annoyed*. As Lord Balfour pointed out, the existing laws are obsolete; they operate unfairly as between different classes and as between men and women. He quoted the opinion of Mr. Forbes Lancaster, until recently a Metropolitan Police Magistrate, which, with the rest of Lord Balfour's admirable speech, readers should study for themselves.¹ We have only space for one sentence: *The whole system under which it is sought to put down prostitution is an elaborate hypocrisy, and to my mind is a disgrace to a community which professes to be Christian.* . . . So far the results of this second "demonstration" are all to the good. We have been assured of the sympathy of the Home Secretary, still unfortunately laid

NEWS FROM WESTMINSTER.

BY OUR PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT.

Two Parliamentary events of importance, one greater and one lesser, have occurred during the week: the vote of censure debate and the passing of the Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Bill. To clear away unimportant incidents first, various minor measures were wafted on their way. The Palestine and East Africa Loans Bill, after considerable discussion, reached Report, the Labour party pressing for fair treatment for native labour, and receiving Mr. Amery's assurance. Then the Bill to prevent sale of short measure was read a second time, and referred to a committee of the whole House. It will be substantially amended, but will no doubt become law. No party opposes it, though in a matter so intricate, difference of opinion is unavoidable. The Fertilizers and Feeding Stuffs Bill, Indian and Colonial Divorce Bill and the University of London Bill all got through third reading. The amount of legislation which this Parliament has passed is truly overwhelming, and a cynic has suggested that, since all new laws are unpopular, the opposition are trying to choke the Government with their own output.

The vote of censure debate took place on Wednesday, 8th December. It was notable for the circumstance that the attack lay with the Government. As long as the stoppage remained, Conservative members felt that silence was best, but now that it was over, they threw off restraint. Consequently there was an interesting duel between the back benches on both sides, in which victory on the whole lay with the Conservatives.

But to come to the protagonists. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Walsh and the Chancellor of the Exchequer all spoke. Mr. MacDonald was

¹ *House of Lords, Hansard*, Thursday, 9th December, 7d. post free, may be obtained from the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, Orchard House, Great Smith Street, or the N.U.S.E.C., 15 Dean's Yard, Westminster, S.W. 1.

aside by illness, and the Government has promised to appoint a committee of inquiry early in the new year.

At the conference on the subject, already referred to, strong support was given by men and women whose opinions were based on personal knowledge and experience, such as Dr. Mary Gordon, ex medical inspector of women's prisons, Mr. Mayell, chairman of the Visiting Justices Committee Holloway Prison, Mrs. Bramwell Booth, and Mr. Cecil Chapman. This is a matter on which men feel as strongly as women. A Dutch lawyer, Mr. Van Nes, spoke of the investigations he is carrying on concerning public morals in different countries; though impressed by London as compared with other European capitals, he is unfavourably impressed by the police evidence against women in the London streets. He claimed that the conditions of the streets were good in Holland, though there were no special laws against prostitutes.

There is a pleasant journalistic touch about the suggestion in one of the morning papers, that the Home Secretary's "intention to reform the solicitation laws" is due to the deep impression made on his mind by the Hyde Park episode in Galsworthy's play, *Escape*, which is still running. Certainly no one who has seen the play can fail to have been moved by the chivalrous attempt on the part of the hero to save the girl from her own folly and from a system which throws her on the mercy of a chance police constable. However admirably the police discharge their duties, this power on the part of a single individual is unfair not only to the woman concerned, but to the officers themselves.

The next step is the inquiry, and efforts should be made to induce the Government to appoint a joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament instead of a Departmental Committee of the Home Office, for reasons fully stated in a letter on page 403 of this issue. In April, 1928, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Josephine Butler will be celebrated. The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, under another title, was founded by her in 1869; over half a century later we find it engaged in the present campaign to remove from the Statute Book, the present unequal, unjust, and futile solicitation laws, heavily weighted against the woman, and to substitute a reasonable and just measure to ensure order and decency on our streets. The wheels of Government inquiries and of Parliamentary Bills turn very slowly, but with the remarkable unanimity among those who know, and the will to succeed, there appears to be no reason why this centenary should not be celebrated by the accomplishment of this long overdue act of moral justice.

fresh and vigorous, handicapped perhaps by the knowledge that he was himself opposed to the vote of censure, but still making his points effectively. The Prime Minister has been heard to better advantage, for he undoubtedly was feeling the reaction from the strain he had gone through. Mr. Walsh, winding up the debate in a tired and petulant House, was not at his best, and it was not until Mr. Winston Churchill rose that matters became lively. He has acquired a remarkable hold over the opposition by using humour instead of invective as a method of attack. And a very effective method it is, too, for whilst his opponents are laughing, they find themselves transfixed. His chaff of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was extraordinarily amusing, but under cover of laughter he made some successful hits. His predominance in debate, always great, is growing, and he stands in the direct line of great Parliamentarians.

Mr. Lloyd George had a difficult task. He wanted to damage the Government, and yet could not vote for nationalization which the Labour motion included. His speech was therefore cut into two parts, for as long as he belaboured the Conservatives he was cheered by the opposition, but when he announced that he was against nationalization, he was met with a cry of "You have swallowed the land policy, why not swallow coal too?" And he made somewhat heavy weather. In the end, some Liberals voted for the Government, some abstained, and the motion was lost by over 200 votes.

On Friday, 10th December, the Judicial Proceedings Bill passed third reading, and will be law by the time these notes are read. The majority in its favour was large, but there is an uneasy feeling below the surface that it is a step in the wrong

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THIS MONTH'S COUNCIL MEETING.

By HEBE SPAULL.

The forty-third session of the Council of the League of Nations met from the 6th to the 12th December at Geneva. The outstanding matter on the agenda was the transference of the control of German disarmament from the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control to the League of Nations under the terms laid down under Act 231 of the Treaty of Versailles.

It was a problem bristling with difficulties, for no less than a hundred questions relating to Germany's disarmament had to be settled before agreement could be reached. At first it looked as though the Council would disperse without a conclusion having been arrived at, but fortunately ninety-eight of the questions were settled before 12th December, and it was agreed that negotiations in regard to the other two points should be continued before the Conference of Ambassadors and the jurists who drafted the agreement. These questions relate to German fortifications and the export of semi-manufactured war material. It was agreed that the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control should be withdrawn on 31st January and that after that date supervision will be undertaken by the League of Nations Investigation Commission. In the event of agreement not being reached in regard to the two questions under dispute, the matter is to be referred to the Council. This latest success on the part of the League is full of hopefulness for the future.

Amongst other matters which came before the Council was the question of the reconstitution of the Health Commission. When the Health Organization was created three years ago it was agreed under the constitution that the Health Commission should be appointed for three years. A suggestion which aroused some interest during the discussion relating to the appointments to this Commission emanated from Sir Austen Chamberlain, who recommended that one of the members of the Commission should be a woman. Unfortunately this suggestion was not acted upon.

Several other matters of outstanding interest which came before the Council related to applications to the Council for help in raising international loans. The question of the Bulgarian loan for the settlement of refugees, along similar lines to that already carried out by the League in Greece, came before the Council once more. The loan is to be floated quite shortly. This makes the fourth reconstruction scheme with which the League has been associated, the other three schemes, of course, relating to Austria, Hungary, and Greece. About 120,000 refugees are to be dealt with by the new loan.

An application from Estonia in regard to raising an international loan for the purpose of putting the Estonian currency on a gold basis was also approved by the Council. The loan will be guaranteed by certain revenues of the Estonian State, placed under the supervision of a trustee appointed by the Council. M. Albert Janssen, of Belgium, has been appointed to this post.

The Free City of Danzig, too, has appealed to the Council for the issue of a new loan. This was conditionally authorized by the Council. The League has, of course, a special interest in Danzig, as it is under the protection of the League, with a constitution guaranteed by that body. The League is represented in the city by a High Commissioner. The League established a new currency for Danzig in 1923, and later floated a loan of £1,500,000 to assist the industrial development of the city.

At the September Council meeting considerable discussion arose over the now famous Mandates questionnaire. The matter came before the Council again last week, and the questionnaire was referred back to the Mandates Commission. It is difficult to see why objections have been raised to the questionnaire by this country as already Great Britain is supplying, in another form, practically all the information now asked for by the Mandates Commission, to the Commission. The questionnaire, therefore, visualizes no drastic changes.

In conclusion one may perhaps be permitted to point the moral of this month's Council Meeting. The question of the control of Germany's disarmament appears to be satisfactorily settled. It now remains for public opinion in this country to insist that the question of an all-round reduction of armaments, such as is contemplated by the proposed Disarmament Conference, shall be pressed to an equally satisfactory conclusion.

A NEW OPENING FOR WOMEN.

For the first time a woman, Miss H. F. M. Court, has been put in charge of an important administrative office in the House of Lords, viz. head of the Costing and Accounts Department. Her three assistants are all women.

PARTY POLITICS IN MUNICIPAL WORK.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.—BY A LIBERAL.

The consideration of the working of the party machine in municipal work seems to divide itself into two parts, namely: (1) the selection of candidates and the organization of elections, and (2) the organization of work within the Council. I propose to take the latter first. The party meets the evening before each Council meeting, and goes through the minutes as printed, page by page. Any member is at liberty to ask a question or make an explanatory statement on any minute. Varying points of view are frankly stated, and sometimes a long discussion ensues. The procedure is not very formal, and the discussion is often terminated by the chairman saying "So-and-so will ask a question or move an amendment on this and each member is free to vote as he thinks right." The person who raised the matter will, in this way, have gained a fairly accurate idea as to the amount of support he will gain, should the matter be pressed to a vote. Only very rarely is a formal "whip" sent out. It cannot be considered unnatural that so great an amount of individual freedom should be allowed to members of a party when the nature and method of municipal work are called to mind. Each councillor is the representative of a ward, i.e. a locality with needs and interests of its own, which vary from, and often even conflict with those of other districts. For example, I have known the Council to be divided on a question of tram fares, into sections representing the outer and inner wards with almost complete disregard of party lines. Again, the fact that a councillor has special knowledge of some trade or the district may give to his vote on certain matters either a degree of enlightenment or prejudice, which makes him out of harmony with the rest of his party.

Then, too, the fact that all business is first dealt with in committee, often results in individuals taking a strong line on some question before the views and policy of the party are known to them, and in such a case, they may feel too deeply pledged to draw back. Hence almost any vote in Council will show instances of cross voting. It is, however, considered a point of honour not to move an amendment to the minutes of a committee of which a member of the party is chairman or deputy chairman, without having first raised the matter at the party meeting. A strict party vote is also expected at the annual election of chairmen of committees, though even in this case an openly expressed intention either of abstaining from voting or of supporting the rival nominee considerably mitigates the offence. Naturally no one would wish to remain a member of a party with which he was more often in disagreement than in agreement.

The chief value of the association of members lies in the full, frank, and informal discussion of all points of difficulty; and this is particularly the case for younger members who have not yet grasped the main lines of policy of the different committees—the sense of unity on fundamentals is often very strong, even when there is sharp difference over details.

For a woman councillor, being as she still always is, either the only representative of her sex or the one of a small group, attendance at the party meeting has a special value. She does not meet the members of the party in business nor at luncheon—nor even in the smoking room at the Town Hall. The party meeting is therefore her chief opportunity of getting to understand the attitude of her colleagues. Many of them do not shine as orators in the Council Chamber, and to appraise their true worth it is necessary to meet them more informally. The approved method of the present day "getting together round a table" is very necessary when men and women have to work together in public life; and the party machine affords one way of doing it. Moreover a woman who considers herself elected primarily to look after the interests of women and children is not precluded by belonging to one party from joining with the members of others, especially with other women in support of her objects, and she has the additional advantage of being able to put her case within the party much more often and more freely than she can do in the Council Chamber, and in taking her share of the ordinary work of the Corporation she stands to benefit at best as much as men do from the experience of others.

In the matter of selection and election of candidates, the party machine appears less satisfactory. The ward meetings tend to choose candidates from among those well known to them, especially for safe seats. But the running of independent

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MISS SMEE, J.P.: MAYOR AND MAGISTRATE.

By A. DAWE.

Mens Sana in Corpore Sano, a healthy mind in a healthy body is a great asset to its possessor, and when to that is added a sane and well-balanced judgment, together with a keen but kindly sense of humour and a wide and sympathetic range of interests, such a combination of gifts, mental and physical, is an invaluable qualification for public life and for anyone who has a share in guiding the lives of others.

Miss Smees' connection with the municipal life of Acton began in 1911, when she became a member of the District Council. She was the first woman, and for eight years the only one, to sit on the Acton Council. Within a year of her election as an independent Councillor, Miss Smees was appointed chairman of the Public Health Committee, and was re-elected to this office for five years in succession. She was also chairman of the Education Committee for three years. In 1920 she was unanimously elected chairman of the Acton Urban District Council, holding this office during a year which, owing to labour troubles, was one of exceptional strain and stress. She had to face grave difficulties with courage and resolution when the Acton Baths were seized and the Council offices were surrounded by 2,000 of the unemployed. In 1921, when Acton became a Borough, Miss Smees was elected an alderman, and in 1924 she became the fourth Mayor of Acton, and fulfilled with apparent ease the double functions of Mayor and Mayoress. When at the close of October last Miss Smees announced her intention of resigning the office of alderman, and retiring from the Council, the news was received with the greatest regret. It was felt that an interesting and eventful chapter in the history of the government of the town was closed, and that the deliberations of the Council would be the poorer for the loss of her wide experience and advice.

Miss Smees has had an unequalled record in the number of responsible offices she has held in the administration of the affairs of the Borough. Her last great achievement was the acquisition, during her Mayoralty, of Gunnersbury Park, as a beautiful and health-giving open space for the permanent enjoyment of the people of West Middlesex. This scheme was very near to her heart, and she never rested until she had brought it to pass. In addition to her strenuous work on the Borough Council, Miss Smees has been engaged in many other activities of public life. In 1922 she was permanently placed on the Commission of the Peace, and was one of the first women in Middlesex to sit on the Bench. As a magistrate, she has served on the Holloway Prison Visiting Committee, is a member of the Acton Probation Committee, and is on the special appeals rota for Middlesex Quarter Sessions.

Miss Smees has been essentially a pioneer. In many paths of public usefulness she has led the way, in the hope that others would follow in her steps and would even widen out the track. As an instance of this we may mention the well-established Acton Women Citizens' Association, of which she was the founder and first President.

A mere list, however exhaustive, of the many offices Miss Smees has held in the course of her public life and social activities would be an inadequate record of her work. It might, indeed, act as a stimulus to ambition, but it would not take into account the underlying spirit which made her public life both an example and an inspiration. A well-known Acton resident on one occasion well and simply expressed what all present were feeling when he said: "It is not so much *what* Miss Smees has done, proud though we are of that, as *how* she has done it that has endeared her to all her fellow-citizens."

PARTY POLITICS IN MUNICIPAL WORK.

(Continued from previous page.)

candidates, while it may in some cases secure the return of persons of outstanding merit, does also open the door for the candidature of interested persons run by a clique for less reputable purposes than would be countenanced by any of the parties.

The use of the party machine in the ward affords an easy way of organizing an election, and probably reduces the expense. The chief objection to it would seem to lie in the fact that local influences tend to blur party lines, and that municipal elections are much more of an individual affair than are Parliamentary ones. The conclusions that the present writer has arrived at after four years of experience is that any one who is sufficiently convinced of the superior merit of any party to give it her allegiance, will find it an easier and a happier task in municipal affairs to work as a member of her party, and that, ultimately, she will accomplish more than if she remains independent.

THE THIRD VOLUME.¹

Now that the third volume of this long book is published it would be possible to review the thing as an artistic whole; and in the attempt to do so a horde of neat and telling little sentences would rush to the end of the pen. But by this year of grace it is somewhat unnecessary to let them off; for Mr. Wells has defined his position in the world of letters, and everyone has already formed an opinion based on the mass of his work. And in fact this book does nothing to alter it, one way or the other. But while we refrain from commenting on the book, as a book, we cannot let its doctrines—or suggestions, or whatever they are, pass without comment.

For Mr. Wells is always provocative and speculatively exciting. There are fine splashing outbursts in this book which are enjoyable, whether one agrees with them or not. There is a terrific attack upon schoolmasters and universities for example, and a lot of rather mysterious suggestions for a new revolution to be conducted—or as Mr. Clissold says, floated—by great financiers, in favour of a world Republic. Everyone then is to be "fully adult" (whatever that may imply), and newspapers are to be superseded by a steady stream of technical monographs—which are somehow to take the place of the present tedious processes of democracy. All this we can read and even perhaps turn over in our minds, and feel no desperate concern. For we are a long way from being in the Clissold sense, "fully adult."

There are, however, parts of this third volume which we do not treat so dispassionately, and those are the parts concerning the present, future, and fundamental characteristics of women.

When anyone—even Mr. Wells—sets out to dogmatize about women, our bristles begin to rise. And this time they have something, not very tangible, but very pervasive, to rise for.

As we said in reviewing the first two volumes, there is a curiously distasteful element in this author's treatment of this particular subject. He says, indeed, that he wishes to see a state of society in which women have "more freely developed personalities," in which they live "happily and beautifully," and are "fine spirited and wise," and it is impossible to quarrel with that. But whether it is that he patronizes, or simply that he does not himself believe in his own views, he leaves one very uneasy. There are little side-lights here and there, too, which make us catch our breath. Speaking of rich men, for example, who leave their wealth to their widows, he says, "A man who has been privileged to direct a great business, has no right to encumber its controls or impoverish its reserves with his domestic by-products." True enough, perhaps, of the business: but is a widow really a domestic by-product? But then there is the whole question of marriage and home life, which Mr. Clissold discusses so fully. "Few of us realize," he says, "how rapidly family life, home life in a little group of parents and young fades out of modern existence." That is all very well for a modern generalization, but what about the three hot meals a day, and the actual unavoidable needs of the young? Mr. Wells needs to realize a few practical facts, we think. It would do him such a lot of good to be a woman, for a space, and then write this volume over again. The main drift might be the same, but the taste of it would be better. But in any case the whole work is decidedly interesting. Even if one cannot face reading it through one can go on skipping about in it for a long time—and with a great deal of mixed profit, pleasure, indignation, amusement, and approval. R. S.

TWO BOOKS ABOUT FOOD.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIET IN RELATION TO HEALTH. Routledge. FOOD, ITS USE AND ABUSE. By Kate Platt, M.D., B.S. Faber and Gwyer. 2s. 6d. net.

These two little books deal with the same subject, but in a different way. The first consists of lectures delivered under the auspices of the People's League of Health, by such eminent authorities as Professor Leonard Hill, Professor Halliburton, Sir D'Arcy Power, etc., on various aspects of the food question. In the second, which is one of the Modern Health series, edited by Professor Fraser Harris, Dr. Platt gives particulars of the foods in common use, and their value in proteins, calories, vitamins, etc., and gives suggestions as to their preparation and use. Hers is, in fact, a practical handbook, while *The Importance of Diet* is more suited for the general reader.

I. B. O'M.

¹ *The World of William Clissold*, by H. G. Wells.

NATURE AND BIRTH CONTROL.¹

Mrs. Monteith Erskine published some time ago a theory of sex causation in which she claimed that, by choosing dates and times of the month, in accordance with regular laws, a woman could determine whether to have sons or daughters. This book has now been followed by another, based upon the same theory, in which she sets forth a method for the voluntary limitation of families against the no possible objection, either hygienic or moral, can be urged. If her theories are true there is indeed a wonderful way of escape from many of the difficulties and troubles of women's lives; and there is a new power placed in their hands, which adds enormously both to their responsibility and to their freedom.

As with the first book, so with this, there is nothing inherently improbable about the theory, nothing painful, nothing unpleasant, nothing surprising. It is a little complicated—but so in all conscience are a woman's insides!—and there are hundreds of details in most women's experience which tend to confirm the tale. There is a certain mixture of moralizing in the book, a slight tendency to condemn sophistication and to preach the return to nature; but most health books inevitably have that basis, and doubtless they would be incomplete without it. And but for that the book is a simple and direct explanation of a perfectly possible theory.

Mrs. Erskine says that the only serious critics of her discovery are the Mendelian biologists; but for most of us these would seem rather serious critics. They claim, it seems, that sex is a characteristic imparted by the male alone, or by the male and female together. She claims that it is in the control of the female alone, and that the possibility of conception at all, and also the sex of the child if conceived, depends entirely upon the periodicity of the woman and is thus to a very large extent in her own control.

It is a curious fact that in the dark ages of women's history, that is to say, between the fifth century B.C. and the eighteenth century A.D., it was assumed that women had nothing to do with the essential life of their children. Heredity was assumed to be in the male line only, and women, so the old doctrine ran, were but the nurses of the young, the transmitters, but not in any sense the creators of life. The tables are turning now with a vengeance!

Unscientific people cannot enter into the technical discussion, nor attempt to say which is the biologically true theory. But we can allow ourselves to imagine what would be the outcome if Mrs. Erskine is right. And all the prospects it opens up are attractive. For if the normal women of the future can, as she says, be wholly delivered from the fear of unwelcome pregnancies, can be assured of having children when they want them, and of the sex they select, and if all this can be achieved naturally and easily, without appliances or artificialities, without undue interruption of married life, and without anxiety or ill-health, what a fine future lies ahead!

To anyone who has experience of women in relation to their child-bearing functions this way out will seem wonderfully welcome. The anxiety, the uncertainty, the worry and the mystery of the operations of nature in this particular weigh upon the female population like a millstone. To go for years with a secret and an intimate preoccupation, to spend weeks and months of anxious watching for the symptoms of pregnancy, to long in vain for the son or daughter who will not come, or still worse to dread their coming—all these things make up a mass of mental and nervous suffering which adds a thousandfold to woman's traditional "burden." But if the new theory is true, the burden will be gone, and instead there will be a new freedom, a new power and joy. And then at last the economic independence of women may dawn, and their enfranchisement become complete. We can only hope that scientific study will confirm beyond all question this glittering prospect.

R. S.

THE DANGERFIELD TALISMAN.²

This is an excellent book for those who like detective stories but do not like horrors. There is not the least little murder in it, not even the harmless kind in which the victim is a repulsive millionaire. Even the stealing is only kleptomania. On the other hand there is a capital mystery, including a cipher and a treasure hunt. Quite suitable for family reading. I. B. O'M.

¹ *Nature's Law of Birth Control*, by Mrs. Monteith Erskine. (Christophers, 7s. 6d.)

² *The Dangerfield Talisman*, by J. J. Conington. (Ernest Benn, 7s. 6d. net.)

ST. MARYLEBONE EQUAL FRANCHISE MEETING.

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance held on the evening of the 6th December an Equal Political Rights meeting in St. Marylebone constituency, in which the Alliance's office is situated. The speakers, all but one of whom were voters or potential voters in this constituency, were Miss Griffin of the Young Suffragists, Miss Nancy Lightman of the National Union of Women Teachers, Dr. Octavia Lewin of the Women's Freedom League, Miss Adeline Bourne of the Actresses' Franchise League, and Miss Helen Ward of the N.U.S.E.C. Mrs. Crawford, Chairwoman of St. Joan's Alliance and a member of St. Marylebone Borough Council, presided. The resolution "to demand an immediate government measure giving votes to women at twenty-one and on the same terms as to men" was passed unanimously, and it was further resolved to send a deputation to Sir Douglas Hogg, Member for Marylebone. He has since agreed to see such a deputation since it will be made up of his constituents. In view of his speech at the Kingsway Hall on the 1st December, in which he implicitly deprecated the measure demanded by the resolution, as likely to throw the electoral system into disorder and to put the government of this country into the hands of women, the approaching interview will be important.

A TRADE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

An interesting exhibition of the work of pupils at the L.C.C. Trade School for Girls was held at Queen Square, W.C. 1, on 8th December. It is a pity that more publicity is not given to these admirable training centres. Girls leaving elementary, and in some cases secondary schools, can be trained there in such trades as dressmaking, tailoring, millinery, lingerie-making, and photography. A two-year course is usual, and the parents must give an undertaking that the girls will enter the trade for which they train. The fees are usually £1 a term, and in some cases scholarships and maintenance grants are given. The beautifully finished work that was shown had the professional touch to an impressive degree, and demonstrated that these girls would be sent out with a definitely marketable all-round ability. The school does not turn out merely "skirt-hands," "bodice-hands," "buttonhole-hands," but workers experienced in all the branches of their particular trade. Designing, even, is done in the art rooms. The photography course is especially interesting. The girls taking this course are expected to have a certain artistic ability—the drawings and designs exhibited by these students were of a really high standard—and they are trained in all branches of photography except the actual operating. It is interesting to learn that most of the West End photographers get their assistants from trade-school pupils. No doubt secondary education for all who can profit by it is an ideal that should be realized, and many will feel that children by going straight to a trade school from an elementary school are being robbed of their just inheritance. It should be pointed out that one-third of the time in these schools is devoted to a general education, so that these girls are better off than their contemporaries who go direct from school into some firm's employment. The happy and intelligent-looking girls working at the exhibition were the best kind of advertisement for the system. And it must be remembered that however much the school leaving age is raised, the trade school will still be able to fulfil its necessary function.

OBITUARY.—LORD EMMOTT, G.C.M.G., G.B.E.

We offer our most heartfelt condolences to Lady Emmott on the sudden death of her husband. Lord Emmott, who died suddenly on Monday, 13th, has all through his distinguished and useful life been a champion of progress and of most of the causes for which this paper stands. His figure will be greatly missed from the House of Lords and elsewhere.

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CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

The office will be closed from Thursday evening, 23rd December, at 5.30 p.m., to Wednesday morning, 29th December, at 9.30 a.m.

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NEWS FROM SOCIETIES.

BARNESLEY S.E.C.

On Wednesday, 8th December, the Society was addressed by Miss Monica Whately, on the Oxford Liqueur (Popular Control) Bill. Much interest was shown and questions asked, and Miss Whately's excellent address was greatly appreciated. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor G. F. Wood, kindly presided, and declared himself in favour of the Bill.

ILKLEY S.E.C.

The 13th Annual Meeting of the Ilkley S.E.C. was held in the Wesleyan Ladies' Parlour on Thursday, 9th December, 1926. An interesting address on the Work of Women Magistrates was given by Miss J. B. Kitson, J.P. (Leeds). The retiring officers and committee were re-elected, and the meeting agreed to renew the guarantee of £25 per annum to the N.U.S.E.C.

CROYDON W.C.A. AND N.C.W.

A General Meeting of this Society, with Mrs. Hugh Crosfield in the chair, was held in the Adult School on Tuesday, 7th December. The subject before the meeting was "Family Endowment", which was introduced by Miss Rathbone in a most stimulating and enthusiastic address; the case against the various schemes of family allowances was put by Miss Helen Fraser, who made some most effective points, and had so encouraging a hearing that one felt the audience was entirely with her, until the numerous questions put to both speakers at the end of the meeting reversed this attitude; and all one was sure of was that both speakers had so interested the two hundred or so women who were present that the subject would be pursued still further—especially as little groups sat about discussing its pros and cons quite heatedly for half an hour or so afterwards.

BIRMINGHAM N.C.W.

A crowded meeting of the Birmingham Branch of the N.C.W. was held on 8th December for the discussion of the following motion: "That scientific information with regard to Birth Control should be available to all married women who desire it." The resolution was proposed by Mrs. Spring Rice, and opposed by Dr. Letitia Fairfield. There were several speakers on both sides, a lively discussion ensuing.

BANGOR LOCAL CORRESPONDENT.

At a meeting held at Colwyn Bay last Monday, a resolution in support of Equal Franchise was passed *nem. con.*, and sent to Local Members of Parliament. The meeting was organized by the N.C.W., with Councillor Mrs. Hyde in the chair and Mrs. Tho lay as speaker.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE PUBLIC PLACES (ORDER) BILL.

MADAM.—May I call your attention to the fact that the Public Places (Order) Bill obtained Second Reading in the House of Lords on 9th December and the Government has promised to appoint an Inquiry Committee in the New Year. The Hansard verbatim report of Lord Balfour of Burleigh's speech is well worth reading. Copies can be obtained from this address, price 7d. post free.

Committee of Inquiry.

My Committee would be glad if you would ask your Society to send a resolution to the Home Secretary, noting the Government's promise to set up an inquiry, and urging upon him the desirability of these matters being inquired into by a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament rather than by a Departmental Committee of the Home Office.

My Committee's reasons for this preference may be briefly stated as follows:—

We think an inquiry into such matters as the law and the administration of those laws by the Courts and by the police, which would include also questions of the protection of the lawful rights of unconvicted prisoners, ought to be made by persons who sit as quite impartial and disinterested judges. The Home Office, by the very nature of the case, could not be altogether impartial and disinterested in matters which touch it so closely.

We feel too, very strongly, that the evidence given should be fully reported and should be available subsequently, *verbatim*, for study by social workers. Publicity is necessary to form a right judgment and also to educate public opinion.

My Committee is glad to have been instrumental in calling attention to the grave injustices of the existing law and procedure on those matters and earnestly asks for your support in obtaining an equal law and equal administration.

ALISON NEILANS,

Secretary,

Association for Moral and Social Hygiene.

Orchard House,
Great Smith Street, S.W. 1.

CHILDREN AND SANTA CLAUS.

MADAM.—I write to beg that your readers will help me to bring brightness and joy to many children this Christmastide in a mining area. The children are not starving, though ill-fed; but their clothing is threadbare, their boots leaky, poverty extreme. Day by day Christmas comes nearer. For many of them, it will bring no good cheer, an unmet unknown friend think of them, and send me some little help for them. Their parents have many months of rent arrears, heavy debts at the grocers. What can they do? It would bring much brightness if every reader I know—and every reader I don't know, would send me some gift of money however small. The question *now* is being discussed whether or not a Christmas tree and gifts can be provided for the children. I am doing what I can, but it cannot go far amongst the children of three thousand men. Unless help is forthcoming, there will be no Christmas cheer, no Christmas pudding, and many eager expectant children will be bitterly disappointed, for to them there will be no Santa Claus.

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FELLOWSHIP SERVICES, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Sunday, 10th December; 3.30 p.m. Miss Maude Royden on "The Debt of Theology to Science." 6.30 p.m., Miss Maude Royden, "Refusing the Light."

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