

# The Common Cause

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## Notes and News.

### The 'Bus Strike.

By the strike of the women 'bus conductors the fundamental question of Equal Pay for Equal Work, which confronts us at every turn, is raised again. The issue is as clear as in the case of the women teachers, but is more likely to be confused and tangled because of the inconvenience suffered by the public and the general dislocation which a strike on so great a scale is bound to cause. It is all the more important that the facts of the case should be known to all and the blame laid at the proper doors. These women entered the trade on the strict understanding that they should do the man's job and get the man's rate of pay. This agreement has been invalidated by the recent decision of the Committee on Production, which granted a war bonus to the men but refused it to the women conductors. The women heard once more the familiar cries, "A woman needs less than a man," "The men have families to keep; the woman probably lives at home, and her pay is pocket money," and, most pernicious of all, "So many of these women are receiving separation allowances or pensions, they do not need the money." The women's answer is emphatic. At the end of July they held a meeting of protest, announcing their determination to "take drastic action" on August 16th if their protest received no attention. On August 17th they stopped work sectionally, and late that night a special meeting of the Executive Council of the Union approved their action and called a general strike.

### The Support of the Union.

The women teachers fought their battle in spite of the efforts of the men in the profession; the women conductors have the sympathy and powerful support of the men members of the Union of Licensed Vehicle Workers, which has staunchly stood by the principle of Equal Pay. Unlike the Committee on Production, the officials of the Union have grasped the lesson of the "sweated industries", and certain other fundamentals of economics, and they see that to countenance a policy of unequal pay is to prepare for the future a labour market flooded by the dislocation which peace must bring, in which women undercut men, and other women, by accepting low rates of pay, and the standard of wages and of work is reduced in every direction. The present strike is to enforce the recognition of this principle, and it is due, in the opinion of the Union, to the attitude adopted by the Committee on Production and accepted with glee by the employers. We trust sincerely an understanding may be reached with as little delay as possible. We are fully awake to the disastrous results of a long strike, especially at such a moment, yet at the same time we know that women in every profession and trade are watching with sympathy and admiration the stand made by the 'bus women, not for their own interest but for the ultimate interest of their country.

### The Outrageous Order.

Day by day the police-court reports in the daily papers throw fresh lights on the working of 40 D., D.O.R.A., and add to the indignation which increasing numbers of women are feeling. In a case of a soldier's wife at Lambeth, on August 16th, Mr. Muskett, prosecuting on behalf of the police, said, in answer to a question from the presiding magistrate, that he did not consider it necessary for him to prove that the woman knew she was suffering from venereal disease: "if knowledge had to be proved affirmatively the Order would become unworkable." At Westminster, last Tuesday, a young woman refused medical examination. Mr. Muskett then remarked that "in the event of a refusal to be medically examined at all, the magistrate might draw from this an inference unfavourable to the prisoner." Under this pressure, the girl consented to be examined. She was found to be free from the disease. The danger to the liberty of all women entailed by this Order becomes clearer every day. Any woman may be arrested on the accusation of any soldier—an accusation which may be prompted by spite or revenge. If she refuses to submit to a horrible physical examination, the magistrate is asked to infer that she is guilty. If she does submit to it, and is found to be suffering from disease—which, if she is a married woman, she may have contracted from her husband, and may not know she has got—this may be regarded as a proof of her guilt, though in fact it is no such thing. If she is found to be free from disease she is discharged; but what compensation is made to her for the horrors to which she has been subjected? We fear that the Order may be a discouragement to respectable women from doing any work which brings them into contact with the Forces and so exposes them to false accusation, and we have no hesitation in saying that the proceedings under it are an outrage on British justice.

### Suffrage Feeling in America.

The American Senate will meet again early in September, and Suffragists have every hope that one of the first things it will do is to give a favourable vote on the Federal Amendment. Public sentiment in America is now overwhelmingly in favour of Women's Suffrage, and it is hoped that some of the anti-Suffrage Senators may be among those who have experienced a change of heart. One of the events which have contributed to the increasing feeling in favour of Women's Suffrage is the enthusiasm shown by the women of Texas in the first election in which they had the opportunity of taking part. Three hundred and twenty thousand of them cast their votes on July 27th, so that there were almost as many women voters as men in the State. This is all the more remarkable because the suffrage movement had not been considered very strong in Texas. We look forward with hope to the speedy enfranchisement of all American women.

### India and Women's Suffrage.

We learn with pleasure that the Indian Home Rule League has definitely ranged itself on the side of Women's Suffrage in India. At the last Executive Committee Meeting of the League, held in Poona, the matter came up before the members, and the following resolution was passed: "That the Indian Home Rule League interprets the word 'people' used in the Congress-League Scheme as meaning women as well as men, and that it supports the recent All-India Women's Deputation in the request they made to the Secretary of State on the subject of the position of women in relation to the coming political reforms." The All-India Women's Deputation to the Secretary of State request that when a Franchise Bill is drawn up, women be recognised as "people," and that it may be worded so as not to disqualify the female sex.

## DO NOT DISBAND!

UGHT we, now that the vote is won, to maintain organisations and societies for the defence of women's interests?

It is not too early to put the question, nor is the question an idle one. Already voices are raised telling us that all parties and societies are more or less freely open to women as to men, and that it is "undemocratic," "reactionary," &c., to uphold separate women's organisations any longer. Let us try to endure these epithets and look at the problem squarely.

And first of all, let us delimit the ground which is common to all of us. Whatever are our views on the matter, we all agree in rejoicing that many parties, professional bodies, trade unions, and organisations of every sort are open to qualified persons of either sex. Unhesitatingly we should recommend women to join any society, appropriate to their work or opinions, which admits members without any sex embargo. Is not, indeed, the great object for which we strive the removal of handicaps, the attainment of equality of opportunity, the sharing of work by women and men in accordance with their gifts and powers? Certainly, this is our object: we are in no dubiety here.

The real difference is between those of us who say that equality is not a state of being won once and enjoyed in a "happy-ever-after" condition of blissful inertia, and our friends who seem to hold the opposite belief. If women were presented with, so to speak, tickets of admission to the highest offices in the State and the administration of the law, to Parliament and to all the educational, professional, scientific, artistic, and other bodies, they would have attained a great measure of justice for themselves as individuals. There would still, however, be no guarantee that the interests of women in general would be adequately represented or kept sufficiently before the nation's attention. The individual women Ministers, M.P.'s and the rest might become immersed in party politics or in private professional concerns. Even were they eager to work for some cause of peculiar importance to women, they would find that without a women's organisation to give them their "brief," they would be working only by the dim light of their individual ideas. The attainment of equality is one thing: the maintenance of equality is another and much more difficult undertaking. People are not on an equality by simply making a statement to that effect, but only by maintaining their equality through their own persistent labour.

Therefore we would venture to utter a word of warning to those women who, in accepting invitations to join men's organisations, prepare to disband their own societies. We believe that they are acting wisely in joining the men's societies, but that in the majority of cases they ought to hold their own forces together as well. In short, they ought to pursue the affirmative policy in the one case, but not accompany it by a destructive one in the other.

Women who have the time and ability to devote to public

life must remember that they are in some sort the trustees or representatives of many other women; and they must ask themselves most carefully whether in joining a mixed body—be it a town council, a trade union, or the executive of a political party—they are doing all in their power to rectify the social and economic grievances from which women suffer. They must ask themselves whether, as members of these mixed bodies, they will find themselves sufficiently strong to carry the reforms which they and their women friends believe to be required. Can they carry these reforms without the help of some women's society—call it committee, board, sub-committee, or what you will—which would provide them with a clear programme to bring into the council chamber and would at the same time offer a continuous pressure on behalf of such a programme? These and similar questions they must answer to their own satisfaction before they resolve to merge themselves in the general body; else they may find that in merging themselves and their causes in some great piece of human machinery they are unwittingly committing suicide.

We repeat that women do rightly in accepting offers of membership in all public and private bodies. But doing this should not imply that they disband their own women's societies. For the mixed body and the women's society are two essentially different kinds of mechanism, and each of them is indispensable. The mixed body, when it does push forward a woman's reform, can push it with great momentum and success. This has been shown lately in the case of various professional societies and trade unions, whose demand for higher and equal pay (for example) has, when made, proved undeniable. But the mixed body, by its nature, cannot give all its attention to the interests of its women members. It has to respond to the demands of many people, and, in so doing, it gives its women members an opportunity of seeing their claims in relation to the needs of the community. But the alacrity with which a mixed body pushes certain claims is affected by the organised force exerted on the body itself by its own members. Those women members who are few in number and unrepresentative of any coherent section outside, are working under a manifest disability. Occasions will often arise in such circumstances when the words "sex equality" will taste more like a food coupon than a nourishing substance.

Just because women have the entry to many mixed assemblies, societies formed to advance women's interests (which will be preponderantly, though not exclusively, societies of women) are the more needed. For the societies which make women's interests their business have now an opportunity for getting something done. This is no argument for what is termed a "Women's Party," because that would cover too much general ground and would presuppose a uniformity of ideas among women which does not exist. But it is a plea for the continued existence of any committee or society which studies the needs of women and endeavours that these needs shall be fulfilled in the realm of public affairs.

## The Working Woman's House.

By MRS. SANDERSON-FURNESS,

Hon. Secretary, Housing Sub-Committee, Labour Party.

It is generally admitted that any reform which is to affect profoundly the lives of the people must, if it is to achieve success, be brought about as the result of a strong popular demand. Imposed from above, it runs the risk of failure, or at all events, of incomplete success; but as an expression of the will of the people, a reform will be likely to develop on the best lines. One of the most urgent of the problems with which the country will have to deal in the near future is that of the housing of the people; if this much-needed measure of reform is to be carried out successfully, and if the whole housing problem is to be dealt with along lines worthy of a free and democratic country, it is surely essential that the working woman, who has suffered from the inconvenience of the past, and who is ultimately responsible for the well-being of the home, should give the matter her full attention and see to it that no mistakes of the past are repeated in the housing of the future.

It is often stated that women as a whole take very little interest in anything outside their homes, and that this is true it is impossible to deny. But it has to be remembered that up to the

present time, the full rights of citizenship have been denied to woman, and, without the power of the vote, demands, however insistent, receive but little attention. The extension of the franchise, however, combined with the experiences of the past four years, has already given women a new outlook. Since the war many women who formerly depended upon their husbands for advice on all important matters, have had to stand alone—to act independently, to think—often to struggle for themselves and for their children. The lesson of independence has been learnt in a hard school, but its results may be far-reaching, and women have less to learn of the duties of citizenship than would have been the case before these years of war and loneliness.

Another reason which has contributed much to the apathetic attitude of women towards affairs outside the home, is surely to be found in the life of drudgery which they have been compelled to lead owing to bad housing conditions. The home of the working woman generally lacks nearly all the conveniences and labour-saving devices which are found, in a greater or less degree, in the homes of the upper and middle classes, and this notwith-

standing the fact that while these classes are able to afford help, the working woman is entirely responsible for the comfort of home life. Where a sufficient amount of bedroom accommodation, a hot and cold water supply, a bathroom and other means of lightening labour, are absent, the life of the housewife is a constant round of hard work—work which removes her from all possibilities of social life, and imposes so great a strain on mind and body, that only in exceptional cases has she the power and energy to devote to matters which concern the community as a whole.

It is an interesting and significant fact that the extension of the franchise has coincided with a unique opportunity for the reform of the working woman's house. Building has practically ceased since 1914, except in a few munition areas, and the shortage of houses, which was a grave problem before the war, has now become so acute that it seems doubtful whether the returning soldiers will find themselves provided with homes. The Local Government Board estimates the shortage at something like 500,000 houses, but the Labour Party is probably nearer the mark when it gives the figure as 1,000,000. Committees are sitting, schemes are on foot, and cottage plans are being prepared, but it remains for the working woman to see that the houses which are to be built meet with her requirements, and give her opportunities for the minimum of labour and the maximum of comfort and leisure.

It has been frequently stated that the working woman on the whole, if not altogether content with present housing conditions, is at all events unable to suggest reforms, and is quite undecided as to what she wants. That this statement is altogether incorrect has been fully proved by the Housing Enquiry now being conducted by the women in the Labour Party. This Enquiry, commenced in the latter part of the autumn of 1917, has revealed a definite and decided point of view on the part of working women from all over the country. A leaflet was issued, entitled "The Working Woman's House," containing simple plans of two cottages and a *Questionnaire* dealing with the most essential details of a house, e.g., water supply, bathroom and scullery fittings, cooking and washing arrangements, flats or tenements versus the self-contained cottage, &c. Up to the present time between 6,000 and 7,000 women have given answers to the questions, and the unanimity expressed by countrywomen as well as townswomen is most striking, and plainly reveals the fact that there are certain essentials which all women regard as absolutely necessary.

Perhaps the most important is the water supply. "No hot water laid on," "No water supply in the house," are the first answers generally given to the question "What is wrong with your house?" Anyone who has lived in a country district knows the effect on the health of the women when all water has to be fetched in pails on yokes from a well "up the street" or at the bottom of the garden; and when it is remembered that all water has to be heated, with the additional labour of heavy kettles, it is hardly surprising that our women are old before their time. In a well-laid-out plan of a new town or village it should be possible to arrange for some form of central heating, and this might include radiators for the passage of the house and for, at all events, some of the rooms. The question of the bathroom was dealt with by Miss Madge Mears in *THE COMMON CAUSE* of August 9th, and her experience of what is needed is fully borne out by our Enquiry. With very few exceptions women condemn the bath in the scullery, and are in favour of a separate bathroom upstairs, with a good lavatory basin and some form of heated linen-cupboard. Once the question of the water supply has been satisfactorily solved, the well-fitted upstairs bathroom will present but little difficulty.

Opinion seems to tend in the direction of cooking being done in the scullery-kitchen, and with this in view, it would seem that the scullery of the modern house should contain a gas cooker and a good cupboard. The old-fashioned kitchen range should give place to an inter-oven, and the dresser, with its open shelves collecting dust, to a cupboard in the wall with glass doors in the upper part.

It seems likely that electricity will, in the near future, be within the range of all houses, small and large, and women are showing a marked interest in the subject. Even from a small village in Devonshire a report reached us lately that the women were all agreed that "we want to cook by electricity." Cupboards in every bedroom are regarded as a necessity and also as a saving of expense, since the provision of cupboards will do away with the need for a wardrobe—an expensive and unnecessary piece of furniture. These cupboards should reach from floor to ceiling, avoiding the dust-trap of a shelf at the top.

While insisting on three bedrooms being regarded as a minimum, working women should see that the third bedroom

really is a bedroom, and not a cupboard, which is too often the case, even in quite modern cottage plans.

Again, with regard to the question of the parlour as against a living room only, the evidence received by the Labour Party's Enquiry is entirely in agreement with that of Miss Mears. The reasons put forward by her correspond with those given to us, but it seems that if the working woman considers that the provision of a parlour is essential to her, that should be enough reason for its retention.

In all cases, in fact, it cannot be too strongly urged that the working woman knows better than anyone else the sort of house which will suit her comfort and convenience; and the best method to ensure that the new housing schemes shall achieve the fullest measure of success is that no houses shall be built and no plans adopted before her counsel and advice have been obtained.

Working women should make it their first duty as citizens that the Housing Question should find its perfect development in "The Working Woman's House."

Readers of *THE COMMON CAUSE* can render no better service to the generation of women who are to build up the new world than to see that nothing is lacking which can make the home beautiful and comely.

## Partners.

By R. F. CHOLMELEY.

The position of women in education cannot be defined by itself, any more than education can be defined by itself; what both will be depends upon what sort of society the commonwealth will be. Germany and China are perhaps the only examples of a society whose character has been determined by an educational system: in this country, at any rate, it has not been so, but our education, systematic or unsystematic, has reflected very faithfully the characteristics of our blundering, haphazard, alternately adventurous and timid way of life. We are not likely to change that relation, nor is it desirable that we should; the fears of those who denounced Mr. Fisher's Act as an attempt to Prussianise the next generation would be reasonable, if they were not entirely unreasonable; for the regimentation by Act of Parliament of a generation of English children—to say nothing of Scottish, Irish, and Welsh children—is a horrid prospect for anyone who thinks it possible, but a quite impossible prospect for anyone who reflects upon both the strong and weak points in our national character.

The two most hopeful discoveries made within the last few years, not by professional workers but by the nation generally, are the discovery of children, since the year 1870, and the discovery of women, which is not yet complete. The passing of Mr. Fisher's Act, though it does not imply quite so universal a zeal for education as is sometimes fancied, would not have been possible unless the national conscience had been aroused to a conviction of sin; it does mean that on the whole we have come to be ashamed of exploiting children, not merely for gain—which is so obviously wicked that we have been ashamed of it even while we have done it—but also for amusement, which is a more plausible but equally detestable denial of our responsibilities. The discovery of women would in any case have been bound to follow close upon the recognition of our duty to children: the war has only hastened it; and perhaps the greatest compensation for the long agony of the war lies in the fastening upon our minds of the truth that our salvation now and for ever depends upon a real, permanent co-operation between men, women, and children—for without the co-operation of children there can be no education—in the building of the commonwealth. The most conspicuous change in education that the war has brought about is the employment of women, as in every other form of work, for duties which had been sometimes deliberately, sometimes thoughtlessly, reserved for men. In elementary schools no new principle would seem to be involved. In those schools women, as well as men, have always played various and important parts; all that has happened is a considerable change in their proportionate numbers; a much greater call upon women for work which some women, at any rate, have been thought able to do. Even this change has not taken place without considerable disturbance of mind among employing authorities. Those who were accustomed, often unconsciously, to think of a woman as merely a cheaper kind of man have found it difficult to readjust their focus, especially as the teaching profession itself has not always given them the help which might have been looked for. Thus the London Teachers' Association, a body which received the subscriptions but despised the opinions of a very large number of women

teachers, persuaded the London County Council that a salary scheme once blessed by it would satisfy everybody. The sudden indignation of many thousands of women was met by an obviously surprised and pained allusion to market price, which was thought by the Chairman of the Education Committee to settle their business: and so it did, for the women had observed, what the authorities had apparently forgotten, that in the market it is not only the ring of buyers that always controls the price; they used the weapon that they were challenged to use, and threatened to strike. The Council, horrified at discovering that it was actually in the market instead of controlling it, lost its temper, but submitted, setting up a Round Table Conference to consider the position, and accepting its recommendations—15s. a week war bonus all round, to date from April 1st last, without prejudice to the improvement of the salary scheme at a later date. That result should be of the greatest value. The Chairman of the London Education Committee said in his vexation that the women were clearly determined to strike, regardless of the injury they might do to education: in fact, he went so far as to say that they were ready to "wreck the educational system." He did not say, what by this time he may possibly feel, that to wreck an educational system based upon female cheap labour may be to do a considerable service to education. One conclusion, at least, must have been reached by everybody: that it is not wise at one and the same time to appeal to teachers, whether men or women, in the sacred name of education, and to tell them that their remuneration is just a matter of the market price. The Federation of Women Teachers were, and are, most fortunate in their leaders, and, above all, in the wisdom and courage of Miss Agnes Dawson.

This story could not be omitted from any discussion of the position of women in education; but it belongs, as has been already stated, to that part of our system in which women have long had a large share. The schools in which women have taught for the first time because of the war offer a particularly interesting field for speculation. These include most of the grant-earning secondary schools for boys, and many even of the great country public schools. There are schools in which nobody before the war would have thought that a woman could, would, or ought to teach, but in which now women may be found teaching every sort of subject to boys of the most various ages; and it is an agreeable and instructive thing to see a competent young woman taking a class of public schoolboys of the average age of fifteen in Swedish gymnastics. It would not be difficult to find among such schools some in which from one-fourth to one-third of a large staff consists of women: and the profoundly interesting question arises: Has this development come to stay? The answer will depend largely, but unfortunately not wholly, in present conditions, upon the effectiveness of the work done. An obstacle to the completeness of the experiment is caused by the insistence of many local authorities upon the payment of lower salaries to women than to men for the same work, which makes some headmasters reluctant to employ women where they would like to do it, and perhaps tempts a few to employ them, for no more satisfactory reason than the desire to lighten a financial burden. Still, on the whole, a large experiment has been made. It has been made at a time when there is enormous competition for the services of capable women, not only to meet the ordinary demands of the educational system, but for work calculated to appeal to many of those most likely to grapple successfully with the obvious difficulties of the experiment; and if the knowledge gained so far has not been enough to destroy all the old prejudices entirely, it has certainly shaken them to tottering. There has been at least one favourable condition: the women who have come to the help of the boys' schools have done it in the main because they wanted to teach. It may be surmised that in some cases the boys have realised this, and have been helped also to realise more quickly than they might have done that they themselves wanted to learn. Even that realisation does not entirely clear away the difficulty of discipline, since even a boy who wants to learn may be capable of making himself a nuisance and enjoying it, but it makes a difference. It may be doubted whether in schools which still look with misgiving upon the introduction of women teachers from this point of view, the discipline was ever of quite the best kind. That is not necessarily the fault of the school: school discipline depends more than is yet thoroughly understood upon home discipline, and so long as there are homes in which a boy is taught to obey his mother merely because his father may beat him if he does not, there will be schoolboys too uncivilised to be won by a woman teacher unless she can somehow contrive to terrify them—which has been done, though perhaps it is not desirable. The moral of this is that the school cannot be really civilised until the family has been civilised—and

it will no doubt be observed that the implication is that in a really civilised school the inclusion of women in the teaching staff might be taken for granted. How in the world so much as one-tenth of the educational reforms that we are pledged to can be brought about without the co-operation of women at every stage and in every department, is to me at least inconceivable. There never have been anything like enough women concerned either in the teaching of boys or in the administration of boys' schools, and we should have been bound, in the interests of education, to make a great change in this respect, even without the pressure of the war. If that pressure has encouraged those who hoped for such a change, and soothed some who looked forward to it with trepidation, it has done a great service to the cause of educational progress.

## Primary Education in Ireland.—II.\*

By DORA MELLONE.

The last article dealt with the conditions of Irish education as affected by the system of "average attendance." This, and not efficiency, determines the salary of the teacher. Public opinion on the point is so lax, and the law so unsatisfactory, that even less than the prescribed 75 per cent. of attendances in the half-year often qualify. The teachers have no control over attendance, and there is every pressure on them to overlook other faults, to induce parents to send their children.

How does all this work out industrially? The ability of the Irish people is high; they are capable of most original and highly-finished craftsmanship—as witness the lace and gold work in the National Museum. Here is no sloppiness, no want of finish. To anyone familiar with the best specimens of Irish work, ancient or modern, it is exasperating to hear platitudes about the inherent incapacity of the Celt for exact and accurate work. To those who realise in part what incessant drudgery is required to reclaim the tiny patch of tilled ground from the stony mountain side in Clare or Mayo, it is quite as trying to hear of the innate idleness of the Irish people. What is wrong? For, industrially, Ireland is not where she should be. It is said that the present flow of orders to shirt factories in Londonderry will be lessened when war conditions in Great Britain cease, not only because the very much larger and better equipped factories there can produce more economically, but because the workers are more efficient. Mill managers say it is most difficult to find efficient Irish foremen. An Industrial Education Conference, convened by the Technical Education Committee of the city, was held in Dublin in 1917, and in the Report it is stated that "Employers testified that skilled tradesmen were often unfit to be sent to work in the country because of their inability to keep the simplest accounts, or to write legible letters clearly expressing their business, (not to mention shortcomings in other directions essential to their efficiency). . . . Employers and Technical Education authorities were unanimous in stating that 75 per cent. of the lads entering industrial life were unable to pass a simple qualifying examination, necessary to enter the Technical Schools."

Irish Trade Board rates follow the English at a lower figure, partly because allowance has to be made for cost of freightage, &c., but also because the employers urged with truth the lesser efficiency of the Irish worker. The shirtmaking trade, to which these remarks refer, is mainly carried on in Dublin, Belfast, and Londonderry. In Dublin, the comparatively low level of output is largely due to a low standard of physique, caused by bad housing and underfeeding. In the machine-knitting workrooms, organised by the Central Committee on Women's Employment, piece work wages steadily rise, as the girls are by degrees able to feed themselves somewhat better. Bad housing has its share also in keeping down the physical efficiency, and therefore lowering the output, of the Derry girl who dwells in the narrow backstreets of that ancient city. In Belfast the work of the mother in the mill, and the loss of health through the half-time system, may partly account for the lower standard. The real explanation is to be found in those facts set out in the first of these articles in THE COMMON CAUSE. The child may run the street and drop into school when so minded. Probably nothing will happen; and why should Biddy bother herself to go to school when the community cares so little whether she does so or not? So Biddy sharpens her wits and tastes the delights of casual labour, which she will not willingly forego when age brings the need for larger earnings. How can the girl of fourteen suddenly become the

\* The first article on "Primary Education in Ireland" appeared in THE COMMON CAUSE of August 2nd.

type of worker required by modern factory conditions—punctual, exact, able to stand the speeding up, with sufficient mental alertness to be transferred from work with one class of material or one type of machine to another? A small toy factory, started by an amateur in September of 1914, found one of the greatest difficulties to be the irregular attendance of the girls. It was on a tiny scale, and the absence of one girl from the plaster room meant delay right through the factory. The consequent loss of piecework wages was not a sufficient deterrent to girls accustomed to drop into school at whatever time and on whatever days they pleased.

Then there is the question of poverty. The children are so indifferently fed that the long hours—ten to three—constitute a serious evil. School dinners supply the only way out. Much has been done to further this especial movement by the Irishwomen's Reform League in Dublin, and a Social Service organisation is working in the same direction in Belfast; but it is a matter for the education authorities.

The results of the lack of medical and dental inspection in the schools are easily seen by those who watch the sickness cases among the textile girls in Belfast or the applicants for the Relief Fund in Dublin. An expensive and excellent system of Technical Education is provided, from which no proportionate benefit is gained, owing to deficiencies in primary education. The country is handicapped industrially through the undeveloped physical and mental capacities of the workers. In ancient days, a Teacher who wished to convey a lesson placed a child in the midst. Let those who wish to know what is wrong in Ireland to-day do the same and study the problem of the Irish children.

## Emily Brontë.

Just a hundred years ago Emily Brontë, the most gifted woman poet of the British race, was born at Thornton, in Yorkshire. Had she lived under more favourable conditions, she might have ranked with the greatest poets and novelists of any race or sex. But her opportunities were small. Her actual work was done in poverty-stricken surroundings and in the intervals of petty domestic duties of the most soul-destroying kind. She studied while the bread was baking in the oven, and wrote her verses in odd moments snatched from dressmaking and housework. No brilliant society or great library was at hand for her instruction, and there was no opportunity for the life of passionate adventure for which she craved. Fate dealt out grief to her with unsparing hand, but gave her nothing else. Sorrow and Nature were her only teachers. Nevertheless, she deserves, by right of inborn genius, a place among the highest.

Silent, self-contained, and almost incapable of human friendship (for even with her sisters she was profoundly reserved), she lived continually in a world of her own creation, with the moors and the great hills as her companions and her friends. Here her wonderful novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and the great majority of her poems were conceived. It was a world of romance and dangerous living, of tragedy and high endeavour, of fidelity and unchanging love. What greater expression of undying devotion is to be found in any language than that of Catherine's love for Heathcliff?

"If all else perished and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained and *he* were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it."

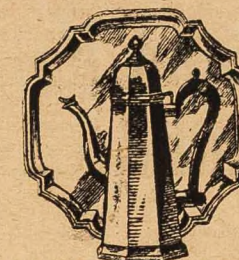
The remainder of her poems, except a few which were purely mystical or personal, were inspired by a love of nature not inferior to that of Wordsworth. It is aptly depicted in the reproach which she ascribed to the genius of a solitary place:—

"Few hearts to mortals given  
On earth so wildly pine;  
Yet few would ask a heaven  
More like this earth than thine."

She was pre-eminently the poet of the Yorkshire fells, and perhaps it is only to those who, like herself, were born and bred among the moors that Emily Brontë makes her full appeal. Stray lines in her verse, and stray passages in her prose, evoke in exiles from the "North Country" a nostalgia almost greater than they can bear, for they echo the very spirit of the moors. And it is possible to use the same words in describing her poetry as in speaking of the cry of the Golden Plover, that most characteristic of moorland birds:

"Clear as the ripple of a mountain stream  
And wild as the trackless waste,  
Sad with the sadness of all things desolate and remote,  
Aloud, it is, and tameless;  
In it the everlasting hills have found a voice."

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