

THE VOTE,  
MARCH 29, 1918.  
ONE PENNY.

## Special "Teachers' Conference" Number

# THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

VOL. XVII. No. 440.

(Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper and transmissible through the post in the United Kingdom at the newspaper rate of postage, but to Canada and Newfoundland at the Magazine rate.)

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 1918

**OBJECT: To secure for Women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.**

### THE EASTER OF VICTORY.

By S. Gertrude Ford.

She is risen again.

Who, as a lamb, was bought and sold and slain,  
Woman, the bondmaid of the centuries; she  
So bound that Man, her mate, might not be free.  
Who with the child she bore up Calvary pressed  
Weeping, a sharp sword ever at her breast  
And in her soul; a thorn upon her brow.  
She knew the Cross, the Sepulchre—and now  
Behold her that her passion was not vain!  
She is risen at last.

She is risen at last

Who lay so long in bondage to the past,  
In trammelling burial-clothes who lay so long.  
She is risen; a crown upon her, and a song  
Within her; on her cheek a flush of flame,  
And, on her forehead written, a new name  
That seals her Maker and Teacher; Freedom's spouse.  
As a bride goes unto her husband's house  
So she to Liberty's. Her grave-clothes cast,  
She is risen again

She is risen to teach.

The race she brought to being; she shall reach  
The roots of life with fertilising dew,  
With quickening sun; her hands shall shape the blue  
Morning from blackest night. The tender plant  
Who else with care so wisely ministrant  
Can prune, can train? Her dues let none deny:  
Sum them in one broad word—EQUALITY!  
New life she gives; new lore, to all, to each,  
She is risen to teach

She is risen indeed!

Woman, of every race and class and creed;  
And with her Man shall rise, they twain being one.  
Her face is toward the rising of the sun.  
Peace and the Prince of Peace are with her: who  
Shall bar His way, or hers that tends thereto?  
Truth rises with their rising; all the race  
Shines by the light upon the Mother's face.  
Mother and Teacher too—new-crowned, new-freed—  
She is risen indeed,

### THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE: Underpayment—Especially of Women.

The Cinderella of professions—teaching—has been brought into the limelight of public discussion by the excellent work of the Rt. Hon. Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P., President of the Board of Education, the new grant made for the increase of teachers' salaries, and the Education Bill now before Parliament, but there is very pressing need for the members of the teaching profession—men and women alike, but more especially women, since they will form a larger proportion in the future than has been the case in the past—to consider their position, and, realising the worth and dignity of their calling, to claim for it the consideration and respect it deserves but has never received either from the powers-that-be or from the public at large.

In this connection the recent Report of the Departmental Committee, inquiring into the "Principles which should determine the construction of scales of salaries for teachers in elementary schools," makes interesting and arresting reading. The Report commences by recognising that "Teaching is, by common consent, a profession." Exactly; but where do we find it recognised, as it should be, as the greatest of all professions? The Report goes on to speak of law and medicine; but where do we find the members of the teaching profession enjoying the same social standing as lawyers and doctors? Yet these are required only when the machinery of life has in some way broken down. Medicine is for the sick: "they that are whole have no need of a physician." Law is

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for the unsuccessful and the unhappy; the happy man spurns the lawyer. It is surely a greater duty to make a new machine than to patch up an old one; teaching is for the happy and the innocent, who are to be the successful men and women of the future. Belonging, then, to so great and noble a calling, the Report adds that:—

Teachers should be so remunerated as to have every reasonable opportunity of maturing their knowledge and widening their horizon through study, through social intercourse with educated men and women of their own and other callings, and through travel.

After this generous suggestion the Report proposes £90 per annum, rising gradually during a period of nine years to the magnificent sum of £150, as a sufficient remuneration for a woman teacher after a long and costly training. The writers of the Report may well add that "the pecuniary prospects before a teacher are best described as modest." Those teachers who for any reason remain uncertificated know that their "modest" salary is more likely to be from £65 to £70 per annum.

#### The Chief Sinners.

The Report touches indeed on a fact which goes far to explain the gross under-payment of teachers, men and women alike, when it points out that the teaching profession "is controlled in a large measure by local education authorities," and that "the Legislature has from the first concerned itself directly with its training, and indirectly with its efficiency and its salary." Here is indeed the weak spot. Yet, this being so, the Report can speak of "the standard of life proper to a teacher." Taking this in connection with the words quoted above, it is clear that though the Legislature requires in its teachers' training, refinement and wideness of culture in addition to enthusiasm and fidelity and love of their calling, it is not willing to pay for these qualifications.

Consider, again, the pension considered sufficient for the teacher who has spent his or her life in this most arduous of all work. The Report tells us that no pension yet paid has exceeded £69 6s. 4d. to a man after 45 years' service and £53 18s. to a woman after 44 years' service; and the writers callously add that "those teachers without private means who seek to assure themselves a reasonably comfortable existence in their declining years will have to do so out of their incomes in the course of their working lives." It is unfortunate that the Report omits to contain a paragraph saying how this is to be done out of the salaries quoted below.

#### Average Salaries: Men, £129 3s.; Women, £95 7s.

According to the Report, "a man attains a fairly substantial salary at the age of 34 and a gradual increase till he is 45." What do we actually find? The teacher in the lowest grade of school, in which work may be more arduous than in higher grades, receives as his fairly substantial salary at 34 years of age £150 per annum, and may rise thereafter to £190 per annum. Would any lawyer or doctor be content with this? In the case of a woman, the corresponding figures would be £140 per annum, rising to £150. This is the committee's suggested scale. In actual fact, the average salary for men teachers in England and Wales works out at £129 3s. per annum, and the average salary for women teachers at £95 7s. per annum.

#### Injustice to Women.

Women teachers have an additional grievance. Although their work is precisely similar to that of their men colleagues, the hours of work are the same, the qualities of sympathy, patience, tact, refinement, and mental culture equally requisite to both, and, to quote the Report, "the work of women, taking schools as a whole, is as arduous as that of men, and is not less zealously and efficiently done," men are paid a higher commencing salary and rise by larger annual increments to a higher maximum than

women. Among the forty-nine witnesses, of whom sixteen only were women, examined by the Committee, several spoke in favour of removing this injustice, and urged the principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work as a reform long overdue.

To mention out a few arguments in favour of Equal Pay for Equal Work: The antagonism and sense of injustice engendered between men and women teachers and between women teachers and other women workers; the necessities of widows supporting children, and unmarried women with aged parents and other dependents; the impaired health and early breakdown resulting from under-payment. These seem unanswerable, especially when weighed against the sole argument on the other side—that men teachers require sufficient to enable them to marry and maintain their dependents and "the standard of life proper to a teacher." No one could wish to gainsay such a claim, but it is pertinent to inquire how many men teachers allow their wives to continue teaching after their marriage in order to contribute to the support of their children, and how many unmarried men would be willing to receive the lower rate of payment as having no dependents?

#### The Added Insult.

The summing up of the Committee deserves quotation:—

In our view any scale of salaries, whether for men or for women, should offer an adequate provision. By adequate we mean that the scale of salary offered must be good enough to attract a sufficient number of recruits suitable for the work to be done. Before the war the deficiency of suitable entrants was much greater in the case of men. In order to secure the sufficient number of men for the schools it is contended that the salaries of men must be increased to an extent that would make the payment to women enormously expensive. The ratepayers and taxpayers of the country cannot in our view be asked to undertake the burden of paying higher salaries than are adequate in the sense in which we have used the word.

So here we have the practice of sweating—the trading on the necessities of those who accept a low wage—exalted into a principle and theory of Government which may be expressed thus: "Women teachers are easy to obtain: therefore, under-pay them; they will take what they are given. Men teachers are scarce: therefore bribe them to come in." The Departmental Committee perhaps scarcely realises that women teachers, already falling off in numbers, will, after this plain statement of the treatment they are to expect, not be quite so easy to obtain as formerly, and it is difficult to see how the Committee can hope to attract well-educated women, full of zeal and enthusiasm, after so great an insult.

Rejoicings over the educational reforms foreshadowed in the Education Bill now before Parliament may well be suspended before the realisation of the indubitable fact that only by a continued and increased supply of good and well-qualified teachers can the least of these reforms be carried into effect.

H. ESTELLA SERVIO, B.A.

#### National Union of Teachers' Conference at Cambridge, Easter, 1918.

##### WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE CAMPAIGN: Hon. Organiser-in-Charge: Alix M. Clark

The Women's Freedom League campaign at Cambridge will open on Monday, March 25. Miss Anna Munro will be one of the principal speakers; Miss Underwood will assist Miss Clark in organising the campaign; Mrs. Mustard, Miss Margaret Hodge, and Miss Helena Normanton, B.A., will also speak.

Will teachers and members of the Women's Freedom League who are spending their Easter holidays at Cambridge kindly communicate with Miss Clark, Post Office, Cambridge, *immediately*, as helpers are urgently needed? Another imperative need is £20 for this important work. Please send your donations as early as possible to the Hon. Treasurer at Headquarters.

#### WHO WOULD BE A TEACHER IN IRELAND?

Mrs. Moore settled herself for a talk. "What's the matter about the teachers, miss? Well, now, take my cousin, Mary Doherty, that quit teachin' last year. Teachin' forty-two years, she was; and in the highest grade when she was a slip of a girl of twenty. Now she's gettin' a pension, seventy-two pounds a year it is, and only had the full pay, a hundred and forty pounds, for the last three years. No, if I had a dozen childher, not one of them would I put to the teachin'."

The listener meditated on the situation. First, it should be remembered by the British reader that the Irish and British educational systems are totally different. Primary education in Ireland is controlled by the Commissioners of National Education, who are appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant, and are responsible to no one whatsoever, neither King nor Parliament! Only one member of this august body is a practical educationist. Until this year the proceedings of the Board have been unreported: it is a significant fact that for the first time in their existence the last meeting of the Commissioners was reported in the Press. The Board pays the salaries of the teachers; the religious bodies owning the schools provide buildings and equipment, and appoint and dismiss the teachers. But the salaries and rates of increment of salary are fixed by the Board, on the report of the inspectors, who are appointed by the Board. The rate of increment, which in Great Britain appears to be automatic, in Ireland depends entirely on the report of the inspector, who can practically give or withhold increment. The appointments to the inspectorate are made by examination, but the charge that influence is the determining factor is freely brought and generally believed. For the last vacancies in the inspectorate, four in number, there were four hundred applicants, and the figures are significant. The teacher who receives an unfavourable report has the right of appeal, but the appeal is to the head inspector, who is naturally inclined to regard the matter from the inspector's point of view rather than from that of the teacher's.

Mrs. Moore was ready to take up her tale again. "Then, miss, it's not just the little money they get, though that's bad enough; it's all they have to pay out. There's Mary's eldest daughter, Minnie, eighty-four pounds a year she's gettin', with what you call 'the war bonus.' Well, she has to pay six-and-six a quarter for cleanin' the place and keepin' it from tumblin' about their ears."

This statement of Mrs. Moore's is quite correct: The National Board pays half the cost of cleaning and upkeep; the other half is nominally paid by the manager (the clergyman of whatever religious denomination owns the school); but, in fact, the charge falls on the principal, who passes it on in turn to the teachers. If the money be not paid, there will be trouble with the inspector, and a bad report for the school.

"Last week Minnie had to help get up a concert to make up the money," remarked Mrs. Moore, "and come back after hours to teach the children their songs. And there's all the things they have to get, too. Sure, she was tellin' me the other day how, when the inspector comes, she sends a wee girl off to the room where they hang their coats, and the wee girl puts out a towel, to look as if it was always there, and the inspector says, 'You seem always to have a nice clean towel, Miss Doherty; it's a very good thing, teaches them to keep their hands clean,' and she says, 'Yes, it would never do for them to come into

the schoolroom without washin' their hands.' Now, sure, how could Minnie pay for the washin' of towels, and whose fault is it she has to humbug him that way? And them childher have to pay for the heatin', a shillin' a year it is for every one of them, and buy their own books and writin' paper too. I don't call that free eddication."

This charge for books and stationery is a real grievance amongst both teachers and parents. The principal's increment of £30 to £50 a year, given on report of the inspector, can be withheld if the progress of the children be unsatisfactory. As a result, to quote a teacher, "The children are slapped for not having books when they are not slapped for bad behaviour."

But Mrs. Moore had also something to say about conditions. "It's killin' work, that's what it is, miss; and would be that if they had twice as much money. There's Minnie, she had—what do you call it?—yes, a nairvish breakdown after she'd been teachin' just three years, lost weight she had, and was only eight stone, when it was eleven stone she weighed when she began her work. It's the worry kills them, miss. Mighty few of them ever lives to get their pension; savin' money for the Government it is, for they're done after five or six years. Sure, them inspectors go round lookin' to see somethin' wrong, and the weemen are worst of all, whatever you may say, miss. And in the country it's somethin' eruel. They have to lodge out, just in the farm houses, and you know yourself there's no rooms in them houses for a lodger. Minnie told me of one young wumman that slept in a bedroom with just a clay floor, and it was a passage room, and she had to rise at five in the mornin', for it was through that room the goodman had to come when he was goin' out to milk the cows. Minnie says they get the cough, and lots of them die. One girl had a little money of her own, from an aunt that died, and she went and bought a caravan, thirty pounds she paid for it, and lived in it, gey and comfortable she was too. Would she get a vote under that law you're always talkin' about, miss?"

The listener could not decide at once whether the lady in the caravan would be a householder or not. Certainly she is not occupying rooms taken furnished, so possibly may have the right of the vote. No class needs its protection more than the Irish primary school teacher. The situation was sufficiently hard before the rise in the cost of living, in those happy days when eggs averaged tenpence a dozen; meat, the best cuts, tenpence a pound; milk fourpence a quart in winter and threepence in summer; butter, an average of a shilling a pound. It is now intolerable. The war bonus, doubled this year, still brings the commencing salary of the male assistant teacher only to £94. Sometimes the teacher is driven to take work after hours to supplement this magnificent salary, and cases have been quoted where the profession of billiard marker or bar tender is adopted as an overtime job! The strain is increased by the very low admission age: nursery schools are almost unknown, and the children are generally sent at three years old. In Belfast, where many married women and widows with children work in the mills, children are often sent at two years old, to get them out of the way. The distraction and difficulty of the teacher are increased tenfold by the presence of these wee things.

No reform will be possible until the National Board be abolished and a responsible Minister of Education be appointed, with a generous Treasury grant. It is not well for the country where those in charge of the children are labouring under a deep and well-founded sense of injustice, are underpaid, overworked, and at the mercy of an irresponsible authority.

DORA MELLONE.

## THE VOTE.

Proprietors:—THE MINERVA PUBLISHING CO., LTD.  
Offices:—144, High Holborn, W.C.

FRIDAY, March 29th, 1918.

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### HOPES AND FEARS FOR EDUCATION.

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, the Minister of Education, has been indefatigable in addressing meetings throughout the country on his Education Bill. In this way he has learnt much from the people of what they desire, and has also created a public opinion in support of the measure, which has now passed its second reading, and bids fair to be the most important and popular Act of this session.

The Act is to establish a "National System of Education for all persons, and every county and county borough is to provide for the progressive development and comprehensive organisation of education in respect of their area."

The Act enforces:—

- (1) The attendance at day school of all children up to 14 years of age, and local authorities may provide classes for children up to 15 years.
- (2) The attendance at continuation classes of all young persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years, so that they may not be employed on full day work.
- (3) The formation of nursery schools in certain districts for the care of children between 2 and 5 years of age.
- (4) That no child shall be employed out of school hours under the age of 12 years; and children between 12 and 14 years may only be employed between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 p.m.
- (5) That no child shall be employed in any factory, workshop, mine or quarry.

The Bill further extends the powers of educational authorities to "reinforce the instruction and social and physical training provided by the public system of education."

All fees in elementary schools and continuation schools are abolished, and a Government grant of 50 per cent. of the cost is to be paid to the authority.

These new regulations are a distinct advance on the old Act, but we shall need to watch carefully the carrying out of some of the clauses. Everyone must realise that brainwork in school is a real strain on children. Local authorities may still allow children over 12 years to put in a good many hours at milk-rounds, paper-selling, etc. Labour has made the cry of "An eight-hour day" for men. When are we to have the same consideration for our little ones? The pernicious practice of class legislation was introduced into the Insurance Act by dividing the workers into those who were paid over and those who were paid under £160 per annum, and there is danger of its introduction into this Bill by compelling the attendance at continuation classes of children leaving school at 14 years, whilst those attending secondary and high schools until 16 years are exempt.

Then, again, local authorities are to establish nursery schools only in districts at their discretion. Does this mean in slums? Would it not be wise to

clear away the slums and then let nursery schools be opened where needed?

When local authorities make their bye-laws for children who may attend school up to 15 years, we should see that our girls get this advantage no less than our boys. We also want girls to have full benefit of physical training, swimming, baths, and holiday camps.

"It cannot be too strongly urged that to get improved education all authorities must treat fully qualified teachers as men and women engaged in a liberal calling, and so mould the conditions of their service as to make it possible for them to bring to their work a culture as wide and deep as can be expected of their years. With this end in view, teachers should be so remunerated as to have every reasonable opportunity of maturing their knowledge and widening their horizon through study, through social intercourse with educated men and women of their own and other callings, and through travel."

This is an extract from the report of the Departmental Committee, 1918. In connection with it, we quote the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—"Teachers cheaper than Scavengers.—While Arbroath scavengers are to be paid 39s. a week (£101 8s. a year), Arbroath School Board is advertising for teachers at £80."

We should like to see in the near future a courageous Minister of Education who would compel all schools, "Public," Church, Endowed, and State, to submit their curricula to a committee appointed by a reformed and restaffed Board of Education. Such a curriculum should determine the scope of primary, secondary and specialist education at the Universities, Military and Naval Colleges.

Mr. Fisher's measure provides for a greater quantity of education for the poorer people, but leaves untouched the education of the better-off classes in the proprietary and public schools—over which the Board of Education has no control. The Bill leads to no real reform in our educational system. Let women now bring pressure to bear on this subject, and so make a better England because a wiser one.

S. A. MUSTARD.

### Women as Solicitors: Bill Passed by the Lords.

On March 19 the House of Lords passed—for the second time—Lord Buckmaster's Bill enabling women to practise as solicitors. Lord Halsbury's attack, though supported by the present Lord Chancellor, failed, his amendment to reject the Bill being negatived on a division by 47 to 19.

The motion of Lord Stuart of Wortley to delay the operation of the Bill twelve months after the termination of the war was rejected without a division. It now remains for the House of Commons to find time to consider and pass the Bill. Opposition may be expected on the old and comfortable doctrine that no such change must be made in the legal profession while so many of its members are on active service. This doctrine was loudly proclaimed in the debates in Parliament on the woman's clause of the Representation of the People Bill, but was completely overruled. The House of Commons will have the opportunity to stand by its decision to do justice to women and break down the sex barrier so far as one branch of the legal profession is concerned. Strong support for the Bill inside and outside the House of Commons is assured. Meanwhile all who work for equality of opportunity for women and men will heartily thank Lord Buckmaster for his untiring and practical service, and hope that the professional barrier will soon be carried away, as was the political, by the compelling force of justice.

### WANTED—A NEW MOTIVE IN EDUCATION.

Our eyes are turned this week to the great and important body of national servants to whom the work of our children's education has been entrusted. The larger number of these are women, and since to many of them a new power and a new responsibility have come, we feel it is the moment to ask them if the time has not arrived when not only our educational system, but also the motives and ideals out of which it has grown, require revision.

It has always been a source of satisfaction to the Women's Freedom League that some of our most earnest and strenuous workers have belonged to the teachers' profession. We are convinced that the experience and training which have come to them in this and other Suffrage Societies during our years of struggle have drawn them together, widened their outlook, and increased their power for action.

Already they have given proof of their determination no longer to accept the inferior place assigned to them by male Governments; and this gives us good reason to hope that with consciousness of power present in their minds they will make still more momentous demands. For not only the status of teachers, but our educational methods, must be changed if we are to build up a true democracy—a nation that is at unity within itself.

As the foundations of a building are even more important to its stability than the material out of which it is framed, it may be as well, looking back into the past, to consider what were the motives that, consciously or unconsciously, actuated those who set on foot the present system. A writer and thinker in the mid-Victorian era, hating democracy, and yet foreseeing its advance, cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "We must educate our masters." Later, when Germany was beginning through national education to forge the weapon which she has been using with such deadly force, when America was stimulating the inventive faculties of her children, and France and Italy were following suit, there was another cry. "Great Britain will take a back seat in the markets of the world," it was said, "if her workers are less intelligent and well-informed than those of other nations. We must force education upon our people whether they are willing to receive it or not."

That was the political motive, and at the call of the politician the School Board, with all its multiform machinery, came into being. Yet another cry is going forth to-day. It has not reached its full compass. It is merely whispered, but it is arriving. "German militarism owes its demoniac power to education. We have nothing to do with the demon: our place is with the saints. But if saints are to live upon the earth they must be practised in the noble art of self-defence. Therefore, educate our children in militarism; let them be trained and drilled; let them handle early in life weapons of destruction; that is, let the boys be so disciplined and taught. The girls must be prepared to marry early that they may be mothers of soldiers!"

We do not pretend to say that these have been and are the generally accepted ideals, and we are well aware of the fact that many teachers, both men and women, are actuated by motives of a far higher order. None the less do we believe that the general school curriculum in elementary, and even in secondary, schools tends in such directions. Children are trained not for life, but for what is falsely called their position in life; not for joyous voluntary human service, which is divine, but for use which is servile; not to develop their own faculties and form their own ideas, but to receive, in all docility, that which it is thought wise to impose upon them.

Before the war there were signs of advance. The infants' classroom in some of our schools, where our babies with their strings of coloured beads and trays of sand taste the first joy of creation, the Maypole, the Morris dances, drawing and painting from nature, with the diminution of humiliating punishments, were all steps towards freedom. But the system remained: the large classes, the working up to a standard which would satisfy Government inspectors, the absence of demand for personal initiative in either teachers or scholars, the old, blind way of teaching history as if it were a mere record of kings' reigns and generals' prowess, and the emphasis laid upon physical rather than upon mental and spiritual achievement.

What do the children in our elementary schools know of the heroes of peace, of the men and women who have voluntarily given themselves in life and in death to champion the oppressed, to fight abuses, and to create joy for the world? Again, behind the present system of elementary education lies the tacit assumption that children in the future are not to be individuals, but instruments; their training is directed towards the formation of docile and obedient workers; and the effort to introduce militarism will strengthen this tendency. Boys and girls, if this new ideal triumphs, will be looked upon as pawns in the awful game to which the nations have set themselves, and their preparedness to play their part, when the moment arrives for another trial of strength, will form a determining factor in the regulation of their school life. That this will be destructive to character and inimical to the real interest of the child every true, heaven-taught teacher knows, and therefore we hope and pray that, gifted with a large accession of political power through the recognition of woman's citizenship, they will demand such a revision of the educational code as will stamp out militarism in physical training and servility in mental and moral teaching.

The truth is—and we would do well to face it—that the outlook of our people is changing. To that change the schools must adapt themselves. If we are to attain to the ideal set before us by such leaders of men as President Wilson, if we are to establish a stable, heroic peace, based on a League of Nations, we must have a new motive in education, and on this a new system will grow up. Its leading principle will be recognition of the fact that the child belongs to itself, that it has within it grand and awful potentialities. "Child of the great world, Father and inheritor of the ages," it is also a unit in the life of the universe, with its own special place to fill. What that may be it is the business of the teacher to discover, and this will be done, not by pouring in, but by drawing out. For in every human child exist faculties and qualities, waiting, like flower and fruit-seed, for the elements that can develop the life that is in it.

In that direction lies happiness. Given to the child the elements through which it may develop—physically, mentally, spiritually—the trained will, the power to concentrate thought and regulate emotion, with the time to work out its own nascent ideas—and the rest will follow; but, and we insist upon this, in order to attain, or, at least, to move towards, this ideal, we must have a new motive in education.

C. DESPARD.

### Nottingham Meeting.

Members are asked to note the date of our Café Chantant and to invite their friends. Offers of help with the concert should be sent to Miss Gunstan, General Hospital, Nottingham. Any provisions towards the refreshments, or subscriptions for the same, will be welcomed by Mrs. Buxton, 39, Gedling-road, Carlton. Admission 6d. Light refreshments will be on sale at café prices. Saturday, April 6, 7 p.m.



FRIDAY,  
MARCH 29,  
1918.

# THE VOTE

ONE  
PENNY  
WEEKLY.

Organ of the Women's Freedom League.

## "WOMEN MUST PUT THE LIBERAL PARTY RIGHT!"

On taking the chair at "Our Wednesdays" on March 20, Miss Underwood had the satisfaction of informing the audience that favourable replies had been received from the Home and Irish Offices relating to the two girls charged with infanticide, in whose favour resolutions asking that their cases might be reconsidered had been passed the preceding week. In introducing Mr. Joseph King, M.P., she spoke of the consistency of his support of the Women's Cause, mentioning warmly the great assistance which he had rendered in connection with the resistance which the Women's Freedom League had offered to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, now happily withdrawn. She believed, and the various political parties evidently believed, that women could influence public opinion; but, though various invitations had been accorded to them to throw in their lot with the parties, she had not noticed any wild rush on the part of women to accept their invitation. Having secured the vote, women will use it; but the point on which the women's societies were anxious to be informed was not how women could be organised in the interest of any particular party, but what these parties had severally to offer women.

Mr. King said he found it a pleasure not to be introduced as a criminal. He thought that some courage on his part was necessary to address women on what the Liberal Party had to offer them. For it was being asked to-day whether there still existed a Liberal Party devoted to Liberal principles, and, if so, who were its leaders? It was a further question whether these leaders still deserved their confidence, and what was their programme? He felt no confidence in answering the first of these questions. He believed that, in some form, the Liberal Party would continue to exist, since in all societies there were men and women demanding more freedom. This, the enlarging of the bounds of freedom, was the basic principle of Liberalism in all times and in all countries.

With regard to what the Liberal Party had to offer women, his opinion was that the Liberal Party offered women the great opportunity of putting it right, replacing it on the true lines from which it had wandered. He believed that the earnestness, sincerity and devotion of women would find a field

of labour in the Liberal Party. He understood that the late Liberal Cabinet had had a meeting the day before. Had he been asked to advise them, he would have said, "Consult the Women!" He thought that a conference between women and Liberal leaders would be of great value. Women had converted Mr. Asquith to their cause, they had converted the House of Commons, and, apparently, they had converted the country. In the Liberal Party they would find the opportunity of influencing the leadership. The question of the Liberal programme was difficult to answer; he did not think that Liberals were clear as to their own programme. It was on this point that the country desired to see clearly. The elements of that programme were certainly Liberty and Equality. The outrages which had been perpetrated on freedom of speech and freedom of meeting and freedom of opinion must be repaired on the first opportunity. Some of these wrongs should be righted immediately. What the Liberal Party certainly ought to stand for, if it is to be true to the principles upon which it is founded, is complete equality between the sexes. He was not satisfied with the recent Act. He could never be satisfied with any Act which did not give the vote on equal conditions to women as to men. A great deal more depended upon the principle of equality—not only equal pay for equal work and equal votes for equal ages, but a recognition in principle and practice that no official positions should be kept solely for men. It was a scandal that Cambridge and Oxford should deny to women the right to degrees for which these Universities had themselves certified their fitness. If they will not grant degrees to the women, then the Government ought to do it for them. The same means should be taken if the solicitors and barristers refused to admit women to their ranks. It was only fair that women should stand on the same level with men. This was not a policy which Mr. Asquith was at all likely to adopt unless he was pressed, but principles were all important, and women can insist upon their adoption. He asked women to exert their influence and to support the Liberal Party when they felt that it could be supported—a condition which the speaker evidently did not consider to be a constant one, asserting that many of the party leaders had earned his contempt rather than his respect; but, even so, he considered that there was more hope in the Liberal Party than in either of the others.

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