

THE VOTE,
August 28, 1914.
ONE PENNY

THE SUPREME HUMAN NEED.

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

VOL. X. NO. 253.

[Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper. FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 1914

Edited by C. DESPARD.

OBJECTS : 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.

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"THE MOTHER'S RIGHTS ARE NIL."

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

Women's Organisations and Distress Committees

We note with concern that in some quarters the Mayors of towns and boroughs are setting at naught the very definite instructions of the Local Government Board that women's organisations should be given adequate representation on the Distress Committees in each district. A letter from Mrs. Schofield Coates draws our attention to this, and the matter is raised not for the first time. A Mayor, or any other popularly elected official, has no right to take up the attitude that some have thought fit to do in this respect; and we trust they will soon be brought to their right mind. It has been apparent that in giving representation to trades unions and women's organisations on equal terms with charitable bodies and religious denominations, some persons have acted as if a concession or a favour were being granted instead of a right. In view of the fact that the strength and organisation of women's leagues, and of trades unions, is infinitely greater and more complete than that of the charitable bodies or even of the churches, such an attitude is ludicrous. We venture to say that it is from these strong, sensible and well-equipped forces that the greatest measure of help and the most practical ideas for dispensing it will be forthcoming.

Be Practical

Long before the Press, or Her Majesty the Queen or other influential persons or bodies had grasped the idea, Miss Boyle, on behalf of the Women's Freedom League, had sounded the note of alarm

and warning against the sentimental folly of a great amount of the "help" which is being organised in many quarters where good-will outruns good sense. The letter published in the *Times* and other leading papers over her signature had already appeared at Bournemouth and at Portsmouth, and was being discussed in W.F.L. centres, with a view to avoiding any interference by volunteer workers with established trade and paid work. The National Aid Corps has from the first adopted this principle; and its work will be steadfastly directed to maintaining the balance of industry where possible. There is one way, however, suggested by Mrs. Clark, in which skilful fingers may employ themselves, or in which work may be provided for even unskilful workers who need pay, which does not compete with established industry. There is no big organised trade in clothes for the children of the very poor. What they get is second and third hand, cut down, patched, pleated in and folded over. Good clothes for the children of the poor in the coming winter will be a necessity; and these could be provided in conjunction with the work of the Care Committees in feeding the school children. A mark could be set on all articles supplied, warning pawnbrokers not to accept them as pledged goods, and, as Mrs. Clark says, with good organisation, the Women's Freedom League might secure, this winter, for once, the entire and proper clothing throughout the country of the children of the necessitous poor. Only we beg all who may be drawn to this class of work to get sensible, up-to-date patterns, and not to provide for the poor what they would not dream of using in their own homes.

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FRIDAY August, 28th, 1914.

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Offices: 2, ROBERT STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.

EDITORIAL.

The Editor is responsible for unsigned articles only. Articles, paragraphs or cuttings dealing with matters of interest to women generally will be welcomed. Every effort will be made to return unsuitable MSS. if a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed, but the Editor cannot be responsible in case of loss.

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THE SUPREME HUMAN NEED.

It is, no doubt, quite in the nature of things that during the present terrible crisis the eyes of the nation—women as well as men—should be fixed upon the war area. The material side claims our attention. It is like an obsession. We cannot shake it off. As the vast German army advances, leaving desolation behind it; as we try to picture to ourselves the condition of Belgium, only a few weeks ago so fertile and prosperous, in the hands now of a ruthless foreign foe; as we think of our own fine expeditionary Force and see in imagination the wounded and maimed being brought back to their country and the dead lying stark on distant battlefields; as, above all, we, the women, feel to our heart's core, our impotence in the past to avert this disaster, our impotence now to stop it—the material loss—the material danger will naturally fill our minds.

This, of itself, brings us face to face with another danger, more appalling still, because it is not material but spiritual. For if the war-fever spreads, if, in the triumph of victory, as in the depression arising from temporary or apparent defeat, we allow ourselves to lose, even for a time, the assurance which we, in the Woman's Movement, have gained and have endeavoured to spread amongst the nations that Humanity is one, and that what seriously hurts and cripples any of the nations hurts and cripples all, we shall lose the opportunity that may be ours. We do not hesitate to say, and we believe events will justify us, that on the attitude of women and men of goodwill during the fiery trial-time we are passing through; on the earnest thought, the spiritual force, the practical science, the determined will they can bring to bear upon war's aftermath, the possibility of social redemption will depend.

The bare idea that when the initial horror is over; when, as is sure to happen, the resources in men and material on one side in this mighty conflict are exhausted, we, the people, men and women, can allow ourselves to fall back into the arms of the militarists on one hand or the masters in the dismal game of diplomacy on the other is intolerable. And yet remembrance of what has been done in the past must give us pause. Over and over again, in their hour of supreme need, the Peoples have given themselves over to great warlords and wily diplomatists. Witness France after the Revolution and the German States in the war panic of 1870. "Rest from the misery of war. Safety for ourselves and our children" has been the cry and the freedom, the noble self-reliance which, if we would only believe it, is our human heritage, has gone to the wall.

See how it is with us now! We have boasted of our enlightenment, our progress, the growth, not in our own land alone, of the democratic principle; and lo and behold! when democracy is most

needed, we cannot find it! Blindly Europe has rushed into war at the bidding of a knot of auto-crats. To quote from the *Nation*—

"How could they help it? The power of the peoples—nominally growing—had nowhere attained control over foreign policy. Women, the only possible party of peace left under the representative system, were excluded from it. Governments had become more and more potent."

Can we not see where the real danger lies? Can we not understand that it is spiritual? What, we ask, is the supreme human need of the moment? Many would answer: Peace. Something—anything—to keep these armed forces in check, to stop the carnage, to restore the nations to their normal life. That, indeed, is wanted; but unless in the remaking of the map of Europe, still more in the re-organisation of society, we allow wisdom, justice and freedom to rule, all the sacrifice will be of no avail. In the present war we have a terrible example of the futility of treaties, made at times of international stress, to guarantee peace amongst the nations. When the big militarists sound the war tocsin treaties are as useless as is waste paper in a conflagration. Let us be perfectly clear about this! A mere readjustment of territory cannot—*must* not—satisfy the betrayed Peoples of Europe. They want much more. If they are to have what they need; if there is to be any possibility of a lasting peace, they must take action now.

In order to do this it is necessary for us to go to the very roots of things. Consider well, for it is the ordinary everyday life of the European nations—it may even be of those in the Far East—that will be affected by what, in the near future, we suffer and achieve.

We possess what is called a civilisation. To some—the minority—it is sweet; to the great majority it is bitter. We are crying out—each in our own way, we are praying—for peace between the nations. Do we realise that within the nations; between man and woman; between class and class; between rival industries and creeds, a perpetual war is being waged. Military war has slain its thousands; industrial war has slain its tens of thousands. Until the spirit which makes for strife is eliminated, we cannot expect anything but brief periods of rest from actual war, and always war panics.

Therefore the supreme human need of this moment and of that other moment, more fateful still, when, out of the chaos of apparently clashing interests, a new European world will spring, is that the Peoples, in whom lies our only hope, shall awake from their dream of subjection, shall realise their mission and their power, shall chase fear, which is the parent of servility, from their souls.

To women amongst the nations—Slav, Teuton, Saxon, Latin—our sisters everywhere, we would say: Events are proving that the physical force theory is played out. You, in the forward movement, discovered that long ago. Act on your knowledge. In all that you are doing for the innocent sufferers in this time of misery, be sure you hold yourselves together, as Suffragists, as those who are convinced that the world of society, like its individual units, will never be rightly and happily moulded until you are allowed to exercise in the State that constructive quality which is your special human gift. The era of domination and subjection is passing. Energy, long misused and restricted, is being set free. The new world, silently forming, will sooner or later—"like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb"—burst the fetters with which it has been bound. The question for us, at this time of difficulty and danger, is: Are we to be there?

So far as our beloved League is concerned, we know what the answer will be:—"We are here together in the darkness. We will be there together in the light." C. DESPARD.

The Sign Post, CIVILIZATION?

The outlook is dark from the Sign-Post. Should the Powers of Darkness prevail, Europe would be under

Military thralldom for many generations and Civilisation, as we now understand it, would be set back for many a weary year.

But what has been our Civilization?

Have we been working in the right direction? Is not this cataclysm the almost inevitable outcome of the lines on which the world has been run?

The "Balance of Power,"

like scales trembling in the balance—a little more, a little less, and all the diplomacy involved in the delicate adjustment set at naught by the smallest difference!

Peace,

resting on the curious foundation of Armaments, with a steady increase year by year to maintain the unsteady edifice.

A Continuous Incitement

by Press and public opinion of nation against nation, making for fear, jealousy, distrust; and always more and more demand on the exchequers of the nations to keep up war-like preparations for—Peace!

One Result—

misery in our slums, degradation in our streets, unemployment in peaceful productions.

And another—

over ten million men who have no quarrel between each other, called to face each other, and with grim hands of death see which can kill the greatest number, and so claim the blessing of their God.

Into this war we may indeed go with no greed in our hearts for power or place, but because of

our word and bond of honour;

the cause of war is further to seek.

It is one of the inevitable products of our boasted civilisation.

It is only the other day that Mr. Wells gave us in his book "*The World Set Free*" his idea of how our present civilisation was to pass away and a better day dawn. In the light—or the dark—of present events this book is of great interest.

The big cataclysm—

according to Mr. Wells—was to come in 1955, and the "Atomic Bombs," which make that horrible war the last possible, we may congratulate ourselves, have not yet been invented.

But that awful war—called by some Armageddon—has now come, and out of it, as Mr. Wells shows,

A new era must dawn.

It is a strangely significant sign that even Seers, such as Mr. Wells, have not always clear vision as to cause and effect. This has been

a Man's World,

run on Man's lines, with Man's necessary limitations, employing only

half the intelligence,

intuitions, points of view, with which the world has been endowed—and the result is the

Glorification of War.

Yet in the Council of Nations called, after the world has been reduced to ruin and dust and ashes, to reconstruct it, Mr. Wells only sees

need for men.

His idea of

Women's extraordinary patience

is almost exaggerated, though we are indeed a patient sex! But in his vision of Hampstead

Heath, in the year 1933 he still sees a Suffrage meeting attended by a rather bored audience—that is truly

beyond any limit

we can imagine!

It is true that he grants Women a place on sub-committees, called into being by the Grand Council, but if future Mrs. Humphrey Wards will be satisfied with this, most of her

patient sex will not.

Women feel that the time has indeed come when the

"Never again"

must be the care of

both men and women,

and the civilisation that is to rise from the ashes of this war must be on a

very different foundation

from that of Armed Peace.

MARY MAUD.

THE NATURAL.

She was a natural, people said, or next door to one, born simple. Never from a child, had she been able properly to understand what most people accepted quite easily, and she didn't become wiser as she became older, didn't grow out of her simplicity. In some ways she was as clear headed as her neighbours; she did pretty well at school, and was better at sums than most of her companions; it was just that there were things she couldn't understand. You might talk till you were hoarse, explaining matters, and at the end she would look at you in her simple way and say, "I don't see how it fits in," or something of the kind, which showed that she hadn't in the least followed the argument and that all your trouble had been thrown away.

For instance:—

When the Suffragettes took to being militant and everybody said how dreadful it was and how wicked, the natural said nothing at all for a long time, and then she asked all sorts of ridiculous questions about history and what she had been taught at school, and said she couldn't see how it could be right for men to have stood out against injustice in the past and wrong for women to stand out against injustice now. There it was! She couldn't see it! And to everybody else in the village it was as plain as a pikestaff.

They sent her to the clergyman so that he might explain it all to her, and he explained, and it seemed as if she really did understand. He told her that violence was wrong because it was against the teaching of Christ and that any thing that was unchristian never could in any circumstances be right, and that the only right ways of achieving an end were ways of love and peace; and he pointed out that the things women were doing were upsetting the country, and that some women went the length of destroying property, and risked their lives and even, indirectly, the lives of others, and how wrong it all was and that there never could be a blessing on work done by such methods as these.

She looked at him in her wide-eyed way, more like a child, as everybody said, than a woman, and thanked him and said it seemed to fit in. And then, two weeks later, when war was declared, if she didn't run up to him in the village street and say how glad she was to see him, because she had been telling people all that he had explained to her about the wickedness of violence and that she couldn't get anybody to agree with her. Of course he pointed out to her that war was quite different; and who could blame him for being somewhat

ONE
PENNY

THE VOTE

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