

The Common Cause

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Notes and News.

Women's Services Closing Down.

The end of 1919 saw the official demobilisation of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, the first and the largest of the Women's War Services. During their three years of devoted service, the Waacs have earned the gratitude and regard not only of the army, but of the whole nation. True, there have been some who expected, in a service of between 50,000 and 60,000 members, that because they were women each individual member must be perfect. Strange to relate, this has not proved to be the case, but if the above students of feminine human nature have been disappointed, we do not think that the reputation of the Waacs for loyal, cheerful, and efficient service has suffered much in consequence. We are able to publish, on page 509, a retrospective article on the work of the Corps. The Women's Royal Naval Service, a much smaller but very successful organisation, came to an end two months ago. We hope to publish in an early issue an article on the work women have done in the Navy.

The Women's Forage Corps.

Another of the women's war organisations which has been recently disbanded is the Women's Forage Corps, R.A.S.C., which came into being on March 1st, 1917. The urgent need for the substitution of men by women in 1917 created the necessity for a special women's branch of the Forage Department, and under the supervision of Mrs. Atholl Stewart, 8,000 women were enrolled and distributed over Great Britain and Ireland. The organisation of the Corps was difficult owing to the women being so widely distributed. The rank and file have been employed mainly in work connected with hay baling. Transport drivers undertook the entire charge of horses, and were responsible for the transport of the hay to the railway stations. Other branches of the work included chaffing, wire stretching, tarpaulin sheet mending, sack mending, and sack making. The Quartermaster General has issued to officials and members a message of appreciation of their services, in which he says:—"It is largely due to the loyal co-operation of all ranks of the Women's Forage Corps that it has been found possible to maintain the constant flow of forage necessary for the maintenance of the Army at home and in France. I would also like to congratulate the Corps as a whole on the high standard of discipline and conduct which has been brought to my notice as being an outstanding feature during the period the Corps has been in existence."

Tribute to the Land Army.

Lord Ernle's article in the *Nineteenth Century* is much more than a vote of thanks to the women who, under every circumstance of hardship and discouragement, fitted themselves for arduous, skilled, and unaccustomed tasks under the threat of famine. The Land Army's achievements in food production and conservation were a great national asset, but it is evident that as an insurance against a growing peril their value was much greater. The women who, in 1915 and 1916, were eager, inexperienced helpers in a heavy task, were in 1918 hardened and skilled, trusted by their employers and fellow workers, and able to train new recruits. Another year of war might have left upon them the greater part of our staple industry, and the possession of this nucleus and a visible reserve of similar whole-time and part-time workers must have meant very much to a Government continually pressed for men for the trenches and continually facing a decrease of imported foodstuffs. What women will value in this article is not so much the acknowledgment of their willingness to help and gratitude for the comparatively small amount of service actually required of them, as the tacit conviction of a responsible statesman that will and skill would have been equal to a much more strenuous test.

Permanent Achievements of Land Workers.

The Land Army is disbanded, but its influence on rural life may well be permanent, for it has broken down the taboo which in the South of England marked off the woman field worker as a class apart. "The traditional feeling of degradation," says Lord Ernle, "was weakened, if not destroyed." We look with confidence to the large numbers of capable, educated women who are remaining on English farms to make an end of a sentiment which had its bitter root in the barbarous gang system of land work for women and children in the beginning of last century. The restoration of village life is largely a woman's affair, but countrywomen were not strong enough unaided to revive the rural arts which made their pleasure and their profit in earlier times. The influx of young, well-educated women from towns has stimulated this revival and laid to rest the suspicion which often lay at the bottom of the cottager's mind, that no one would live in the country who could afford to get out of it. Lord Ernle acutely attributes some of the landswoman's success in encouraging recruits to the work to her workmanlike uniform, which at the beginning shocked the village housewife even more than the town Mrs. Grundy. It is, he says, "very Greek"—a new notion to the conventional person who thinks a classical garb is always of that trailing nature which implies idleness.

Women and the League of Nations.

A large number of women experienced in public work and eminent in literature and the professions, have issued an appeal to women to join the League of Nations Union. It points out that women were, equally with men, moved by the tragedy of the war, that the problems it has left in its wake are the concern alike of both sexes, and that the League of Nations furnishes the means by which women can exercise pressure upon their Governments to promote a permanent peace between all the nations adhering to the League. The support of a strong public opinion is necessary to the Governments of democratic countries, and men and women alike must help to create a new force which shall make the League not merely a paper agreement, but a living power able to put an end to war. Among the signatories to the manifesto are Mrs. Fawcett, Lady Selborne, Lady Rhondda, Lady Astor, M.P., Mrs. Creighton, Miss Maude Royden, Mrs. Rackham, Miss Mary Macarthur, Miss Margaret Bondfield, and many other distinguished women.

Woman Magistrate as Chairman of the Bench.

Last week we commented on the appointment of the first seven women Justices of the Peace; this week we have to record the fact that the first woman magistrate has taken her seat as Chairman of the Bench. Councillor Mrs. Ada Summers, Mayor of Stalybridge, last week took the oath and presided over the Borough Bench at the Police court. There was a full Bench of Magistrates, and she was warmly welcomed. The recent Act enables Mrs. Summers to become a magistrate by virtue of her office as Mayor, and she is stated to be the first woman magistrate to sit on the Bench. Mrs. Summers told a representative of the Press that she intended to take her seat regularly on the Bench. She was keenly interested in the work, and she was quite in favour of women taking their part in magisterial work, because there were so many cases of women and children coming before the courts which could be more easily understood by women than by men. She was against children being punished for such offences as playing football in the street, or even stealing, because she believed that the parents were to blame for not bringing them up properly. In bad cases of children she would recommend their being sent to an industrial home. Mrs. Summers is the first and only woman member of the Stalybridge Town Council, having been elected in 1912.

Women Teachers' Indignation.

The National Federation of Women Teachers has just held a Special Conference to consider the findings of the Burnham Committee on Teachers' Salaries. By an overwhelming majority the proposals were rejected as inadequate, and the Conference pledged itself to take action when and where it is deemed advisable, and to oppose in every possible way the imposition of unjust scales of salaries on women teachers. In the opinion of the women's Conference, the Report not only fails to offer a satisfactory solution to any of the causes of present discontent—namely, sex differentiation in salary, general inadequacy of payment of all teachers, and the often avoidable difficulties which harass the teacher in her work—but it introduces proposals of a distinctly provocative nature. The purpose of the Standing Joint Committee's deliberations was firstly, to secure a contented teaching service, and, secondly, to attract large numbers of new entrants to the profession. The women teachers maintain that the Report defeats these ends and intensifies rather than alleviates the existing unrest. This is largely due to the fact that the salary scale is inadequate. "It is not commensurate with increased prices, or the improved standard of life demanded by the teachers. It fails to take into account the outlay in time and money necessary to the long preparation for the profession of teaching, and also the skilled nature of the work. The low commencing salary will not attract to the profession suitable entrants in sufficient numbers. Consequently, the progress of education will be hindered." So states the Report drawn up by the women's Conference.

Equal Pay in the Teaching Profession.

The teaching profession is one in which the differentiation between the salaries paid to men and women appears to be particularly unjust. Their work is exactly the same, and no amount of extra physical strength on the part of the man will make him the better teacher. In regard to family responsibility, it is never contended that an assistant master with a wife and family should be paid higher than an unmarried headmaster, so it is evident that the unequal payment of men and women teachers is nothing but an assertion of sex superiority. It should be noted too, that as pensions are based on the average salary for the last five years of service, lower salaries mean lower pensions for women teachers. The women's Conference attributed the unsatisfactory nature of the Report very largely to the inadequate representation of women teachers on the Committee. The women teachers' organisation was repeatedly refused representation on the Committee, and was not allowed to give evidence (in spite of the Whitley Councils Report), and though women teachers form about 67 per cent. of the profession, only five out of forty-four members were women. The findings of the Burnham Committee are incidentally in direct opposition to the result of the recent referendum of the National Union of Teachers, which gave a large majority in favour of equal pay.

Scottish Housing.

The Conference of the Scottish Labour Housing Association, which met at Glasgow with an attendance of four hundred delegates passed a resolution asking the authorities to establish a Scottish National Bank to finance the housing schemes. The chairman was of opinion that if the Glasgow Corporation were

allowed to issue on its own credit it could now finance fourteen thousand houses. At present four thousand families are on the city waiting list for houses, and most of these are now virtually homeless. The Scottish housing problem, measured by the extent of overcrowding, has long been more formidable than that of England. In 1916 it was estimated that more than 121,000 houses were needed, and that if the definition of an overcrowded house were to be the same as in England, the number must be raised to 240,000. As the law at present stands, a house is overcrowded only if it contains more than three persons to a room. Children under ten count only as half a person, and, consequently, a two room tenement of bedroom and kitchen may legally house father, mother, and four children under ten. The low standard was fixed because cottage rooms in Scotland are customarily, rather larger than in the south, but it is, of course, the legal standard even when the rooms are small, and such as it is, it was, even before the war, as much honoured in the breach as in the observance.

Scottish Town Planning.

Not only is the number of persons living in a single tenement dangerously high in many Scottish towns, but the number of one room dwellings is large, both in town and country. In Lanark, as many as twelve persons were in 1916 found to be living in one apartment houses. In congested districts in Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow, the number of inhabitants per acre, which should not exceed sixty if health conditions are to be reasonably good, ranges from six hundred and sixty to seven hundred. The "Black Houses" of the Hebrides, which have neither fireplace nor chimney, often no windows, and sometimes house family and cattle in the same building, separated only by a low partition, are even worse than the tenement dwellings of the towns. If all these unfit habitations are to be swept away and the fit houses cleared of their superfluous population, the number of buildings required will reach a formidable number.

New Publications.

A sign of the restless striving spirit of the times is shown by the sudden influx of new publications of all kinds. Though some of them one feels the world would be better off without, others are of special interest to our readers. We welcome *The Woman Clerk*, the organ of that energetic body, the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, which made its first monthly appearance in December. "The membership of the Association," states the editorial, "is now sufficiently numerous and solid to support its own paper, and that means that it is sufficiently numerous and solid to impress its needs and aims upon the clerical world, and so upon the wider world beyond." It is hoped to publish in future issues a series of articles dealing with openings available for clerical workers in other professions. *The Woman Engineer*, the organ of the Women's Engineering Society, has also just made its first appearance, and is to be issued quarterly. It hopes to "encourage and stimulate all women who are interested in engineering, and . . . be a means towards removing the prejudices and artificial restrictions which now prevent women from taking up engineering as a trade or profession." While speaking of recent publications we should like to refer again to that excellent little paper *The Woman Teacher*, the organ of the National Federation of Women teachers, which was issued last October under the editorship of Miss E. Phipps, and appears weekly. It is now in a very flourishing condition and is looked on as a pioneer paper for the teaching profession. Another new publication which will be of interest to our readers is *Britain and India*, a monthly magazine devoted to the mutual interests of Britain and India, and edited by Mrs. Josephine Ransom. The first issue contains many interesting articles and messages from Mrs. Despard and Miss Maude Royden.

War Memorial to Women.

It is proposed that the Memorial to women's services during the war should take the form of a National Hall in London to house every association and interest connected with women's work. It is further suggested that there should be a courtyard with a statue or monument to women who have given their lives on active service. Lady Markham, at a recent meeting, said that if the scheme went forward it would be something big, permanent, and dignified. She said that the need of a central meeting place for women's organisations was keenly felt, especially by women coming from the colonies. It was also stated at the meeting that the offer of a site on the Embankment, two hundred yards from the Houses of Parliament, had already been made.

America and Austrian Famine.

The delay of the United States in arranging credits which would enable Great Britain, France, and Italy to supply Austria with food enough to tide her over till next harvest is very unfortunate. The food must be bought in North or South America, and must be paid for in dollars; we are not asking the United States to pay the bill, but to accept deferred payment from us and to make some allowance for the prohibitive rate of exchange. America does not refuse, but she procrastinates. Europe again seems to her to be a great way off, and she is accustomed to discount newspaper reports of emergencies and disasters now that few of her own countrymen are in Europe and able to assure her over their own signatures that Austria's case is desperate and that even the best fed countries in Europe have almost empty cupboards, though they may to-day have a well-furnished table. We blame this spirit, as we must, but we are conscious of no small share of it ourselves. Until America remembers that she is her brother's keeper, though he live in a different hemisphere, we must make shift to do her share and ours also. In the meantime, we must hope that every inducement will be held out to citizens of the United States to come to Europe in the Spring for business and holiday making. They have an odd national pride in disbelieving what they do not see, which is balanced by a determination that what they do see their countrymen shall believe.

Helping Polish Babies.

Terrible particulars of the effect of the famine on children continue to arrive from Central and Eastern Europe. The *Manchester Guardian* has a special correspondent at Zawiercie in Poland, whose articles, published from day to day in our contemporary's columns, are almost too heartbreaking to read calmly. In one, there is a description of an orphanage where thirty children are gently treated by a good nun, "yet all her care and prayers for them have not kept at least three-quarters of these children from being hopelessly diseased as a result of under-feeding. Not one of them is healthy or normal; some are such ghastly caricatures of childhood that I do not think I can bear to describe them. One or two were lying quite still under coverlets, and I tiptoed up to them, thinking they were asleep. But they were awake, gazing with shadowy, sunken eyes into space, indifferent to me or to anything round them. They will spend the rest of their lives like that, these babies, for starvation has left them so deformed that they can neither walk, nor sit, nor stand." In another article, the correspondent writes: "I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that among the scores of children I saw at the clinic, there was not one which would not have been an object of intense commiseration and horror in England. I have had experience of infant welfare work in Manchester, and the worst of the rickety, wasted babies there was not as ill as the best of the patients brought to this clinic here in Zawiercie. Towards the end of my visit one peaky-faced baby smiled at us. We laughed at it and poked it to make it smile again. Somehow it seemed a very remarkable baby, and we stopped work for a few minutes in our excitement over it. I realised later that its strangeness lay in the fact that it was the only one that had smiled. No other child did so, and not one spoke at all or showed any sign of animation. At least two-thirds of those over two years old could not walk. In many cases they had walked once, but when their mothers had weaned them, and their diet became only potatoes, they had become hopelessly crippled with rickets. Their bodies, except for the horribly distended stomachs were just bones covered with yellow wrinkled skin: One baby was a raw mass of sores as the result of malnutrition: several were consumptive. A little girl of ten, trembling all over with weakness, was brought by a sobbing woman, who said that on the previous day her other child had died of starvation. Could the Mission save this one?"

What People can do.

Manchester people, like London people, are thinking a great deal of these children, and are sending not only money for food, but also clothes. They are much needed, since in some districts we are told that nobody, whether grown-up or a child, has more than one ragged garment, and there are no bed-clothes or coverings of any sort, so that new babies come into the world on straw, and their mothers have no garments to put on them. One can imagine, then, the joy of the expectant mothers when they receive from the Manchester Friends' Mission a little bundle of baby clothes, and sometimes, too, a "maternity bag." "This is a cretonne bag containing a cake of soap, safety pins, reels of cotton, a washing glove, talcum powder, and scissors—all of them articles which are absolutely unobtainable in Poland. "I wish," writes the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent, "that

the people at home in England, who made and filled these bags, could see the rapture with which the Zawiercie women receive them."

Feminist Organisation Still Necessary.

The Annual Council of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship is to take place in London from March 10th to March 12th. The need for the work of a national organisation, standing for equal rights and opportunities for women, is more evident every day. Strong as is the support given to this principle by the best men of all parties, and great as is the reinforcement brought to it by the fact that women are now voters, no political group can be said to be sound through and through from the feminist point of view. Women are in all the parties and are working for them, but on some vital questions the most thoughtful women tend to remain non-party, and are determined to preserve their independence of old demarcations. In order to secure this, feminist organisation is most necessary, and seems likely to remain necessary for some time to come.

The Parliamentary Work of the N.U.S.E.C.

The Parliamentary Department of the N.U.S.E.C. will be engaged for the next few months on a long and important programme of reforms. A Bill to give pensions to civilian widows with dependent children has already been drafted in Parliamentary form, and several Members of Parliament have undertaken to ballot for it at the beginning of the session. A Bill for the Equal Guardianship of Children is also on the stocks, and a place among the Private Members Bill will be sought for it at the same time. A conference on this Bill has already been held at the House of Commons, with Colonel Greig, M.P., in the Chair. Lady Astor, Sir J. T. Agg-Gardner, and other friends in Parliament attended, in addition to representatives of important women's societies. It is expected that this last Bill will be practically non-contentious, and as it involves no financial question, there is every hope, if time is given for its introduction, that it will be passed into law without any very great delay. A series of conferences is also being organised in conjunction with the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, to consider the best way of approaching the Churches on the very important question of an Equal Moral Standard. The special committee to deal with this side of the work is, moreover, considering the possibilities of introducing legislation relating to the Abolition of the Solicitation Laws, and is doing what it can to assist in a campaign against Tolerated Brothels in the British Empire. Arrangements are already in train for holding a large public meeting in London next month, in co-operation with the National Council of Women, in support of Women Members of Parliament. Further particulars as to this meeting will be published very shortly, but it can safely be said that a very strong list of speakers will be secured. The Summer School for 1920 is already being considered, and announcements will shortly be made as to where it will be held. It is expected that by being well in advance with arrangements for the school, a large attendance of students will be facilitated. A further course of classes on Election Work is being contemplated, and will probably be held later on in the session.

The Spen Valley Election.

The Spen Valley election resulted in the return of the Labour candidate, Mr. Tom Myers, who polled 11,962 votes. Sir John Simon had 10,244 votes, and Colonel Fairfax, the Coalition Liberal, 8,134. The Proportional Representation Society points out that over sixty per cent. of the votes were given against the successful candidate.

Buyers and Sellers.

Writing in "The Shop Assistant" last week, Miss Maude Royden deplores the fact that buyers and sellers cannot meet sometimes without the barrier. She refers to the recent strike at "a certain big store," when the shareholders, on hearing of the facts, were horrified, and declared that whatever the cost to themselves, the conditions must be immediately altered for the better. "Yet," says Miss Royden, "I do not doubt that many of them had stopped at that particular store hundreds of times, and inwardly (and even outwardly) cursed the shop assistants for their apathy. It did not occur to them to ask whether apathy is not often a sign of fatigue. It did not strike them that tired people find it difficult not to rise up and murder customers who have not the foggiest idea what they want—or have an idea which they suddenly exchange for another, quite different, without a moment's warning."

THE OLD AGE OF THE "NEW AGE."

YEARS ago we knew and loved our fearless contemporary, the *New Age*. In those days it cost a penny, and we read it faithfully week by week. But in later times its price rose, and we met it more rarely—in the houses of our friends or on the table of our club. To-day it costs sevenpence. So much we learned from its issue of January 1st, 1920, which we had the good fortune to meet one day last week. We learned, too, with regret, that its editor was ill, and that consequently an article by Miss Frances Low had been substituted for the usual "Notes of the Week." That article concerns us, for it is all about women in industry, and feminism in general. True, it is incoherent and inconsistent (we are frank with our contemporary!), but, nevertheless, it is worth powder and shot because we have been able to disentangle from it certain misconceptions which are held by quite a large number of people who, like Miss Low, have not taken the trouble to find out what feminism means.

The author opens with a complaint that as a result of modern feminism men now, "rightly or wrongly, remain seated in 'bus or tram while women stand"—because, forsooth, women now do men's work and demand equal pay. This, of course, is not a misconception. It may be true, though we do not believe that it is. Meanwhile, even if it is true, it is possible that the benefits of better wages may outweigh the inconvenience of standing in an overcrowded 'bus. It is not—we repeat—a misconception. It is the revelation of a point of view; that old point of view with which we were all so familiar in the old days of Mrs. Humphry Ward's anti-suffrage activities. We mention it in order that old friends of the *New Age* may know the worst. And yet, we fear, it is not the worst. Miss Low goes on to explain that this new disability does not affect the wealthy woman, because "in the highest social circles there is a kind of etiquette in which a man always yields to a lady." Are we to believe, then, that it is only the working man whose "etiquette" has been undermined by the spread of feminism? We refuse to do so. But enough of such small matters; let us pass to the misconceptions.

The first of these misconceptions is the confusion in Miss Low's mind between the kind of work which women as a whole are best fitted by nature to do, and the kind of work which in actual practice they have done during the nineteenth century. She tells us, for instance, that "the Feminist leaders . . . encourage women to forsake Arts and Industries which relate to the home and are a discipline and fine specific training, for what . . . is the soulless mechanical work of the human machine." If by this accusation Miss Low means that the "Feminist leaders" deliberately encourage women to leave their homes and enter industry when there is no economic necessity for so doing, then we must ask her to apologise immediately for having made a stupid mistake. As a matter of fact, a number of "Feminist leaders" at the present time are advocating the national endowment of motherhood in the hope that economic necessity may no longer play a part in driving women from the home.

The difficulty is that Miss Low does not tell us what she means by the "Arts and Industries which relate to the home." Does she mean only the occupations of married life, or does she include domestic service? Does she go further, and include such traditional womanly occupations as laundry work, charring in offices, theatres and county council schools, waiting and washing-up in restaurants? If she refers only to the occupations of married life, we would ask her what she is going to do with the surplus of women who must perforce remain unmarried, and with the large body of women who have to support themselves until marriage comes their way? If she includes domestic service alone among wage-earning occupations, we would point out that by cutting off other outlets for wage-earning and by confining all wage-earning women to one over-crowded occupation, she is going to condemn them to a state of virtual economic slavery. If, on the other hand, she includes all the other occupations mentioned above, we would ask her whether she seriously believes that these constitute "a discipline and a fine specific training" as compared with the skilled grades of, let us say, the engineering industry, which women are at present desirous of entering?

A second important misconception under which Miss Low appears to labour is the belief that by opening new branches of industry to women, you somehow increase the pressure of competition from which women suffer. She speaks of "limiting industry to the women who must work," of "restricting women . . . to those branches which will do them least injury physically and morally," of "diminishing the competition as much as possible to make the lives of such women as easy and endurable as possible," as alternatives to "throwing all and sundry into overcrowded forms of industry." But surely everybody knows that the more narrowly you circumscribe the field of women's employment, the more cut-throat is the competition to which women are subjected? Incidentally, Miss Low does not so much as mention the bearing of "equal pay" or the standard rate on the problem of industrial competition. At one point she rails against women for undercutting men; at another she suggests that an unreasonable demand for "equal pay" has adversely affected the social amenities of trams and 'buses. At a third she accuses the "Feminist leaders" of being "utterly careless as to issues so long as women are earning big wages." So much for the vast question of wage adjustment as between men and women!

Finally, the whole article is permeated by an extraordinary misconception regarding the causes of unemployment. Whatever does Miss Low mean by saying that unemployment is going to be increased by "throwing" or "hurling" thousands of women into the "struggle for bread arena"? Who is going to "throw" or "hurl" these thousands (in one place Miss Low speaks of "millions") of women? Where are they going to be "thrown" from? The fact of the matter is, no "throwing" or "hurling" is necessary. They are there already, poor things. Miss Low has entirely failed to visualise the problem with which she is dealing. It is not a question of suddenly conjuring up "thousands" or "millions" of women from nowhere, and "hurling" them into a sort of circumscribed arena in order that they may compete with men for a limited number of jobs, whose total remuneration is determined by a wage fund. (Miss Low believes in a wage fund.) It is a question of readjusting the economic relations of those persons who are at present engaged in producing our national income, in order that one section of them may no longer be penned up in the least desirable branches of industry where they are denied the opportunity of giving to society the best that is in them. The whole problem of women in industry is the problem of how to adjust wages and working hours in such a way that the opportunities of women may be widened without the economic position of men (on whom other women are dependent) being undermined. As Feminists, we think that this problem must be solved, and if Miss Low and the *New Age* would like to know why we think so, we will recite for their enlightenment some of the main points in our Feminist creed:—

We believe in the fundamental equality of mankind. That is to say, we believe that human beings are born with an equal right to invest freely whatever talents they have been given. We believe that every uninvested talent, and every badly invested talent, is an incalculable spiritual and material loss to humanity. We believe that in the world of to-day such spiritual and material loss is increased by the economic, political, and social disabilities of women. We, therefore, pledge ourselves to seek out such disabilities wherever they exist, and attack them with all the force of expert knowledge, political power, and human sympathy that we can muster.

Every point in that creed we are prepared to argue up and down, and in and out, except the first; we believe in the fundamental equality of mankind. On that first point we are frankly prejudiced. It is possible, however, that Miss Low and the *New Age* do not share our prejudice, and that they will continue, now that they know what Feminism is, to regard it as "an evil and a curse."

QUEEN MARY'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS. A Retrospect.

By M. E. ROACH.

As the bells rang out the passing of the Old Year the W.A.A.C. ceased to exist.

Evolved in March, 1917, under almost impossibly difficult and chaotic conditions, the little Corps grew to be almost 50,000 strong. Enrolled at first for service overseas, the Corps was afterwards used in all Home Commands as well. Mrs. Chalmers Watson, a medical woman of some distinction, was appointed to Headquarters at Home, and Mrs. Gwynne Vaughan, a lecturer of London University, was given the post of Chief Controller Overseas.

In an incredibly short time depôts were opened, recruiting was begun, a uniform had been designed and contracts put in hand. Rates of pay were decided, and the basis of substitution of women for men in seventy categories was approved. Unfortunately no one had had time to think out the number of clerks that would be required to run a W.A.A.C. depôt adequately. Consequently the wretched Administrators—all new to Army routine—were faced with an almost hopeless task; they worked all day and most of the night. Gradually things took shape, and a scheme of establishment was laid down—and lived up to when attainable.

To those who have never been able to solve the intricacy of W.A.A.C. rank the following table may be helpful:—

Controllers equal Senior Officers.
Administrators equal Officers under Field Rank.
Forewoman equals N.C.O.
Worker equals Private.

In April, 1917, the first Waacs began to arrive in France to the consternation of Commanding Officers, to whom they were attached for duty. We may admit it now! C.O.'s were not thirsting to give up their trained men to the trenches and replace them by a lot of women who were utterly ignorant of Army Forms, and who would probably have hysterics whenever a bomb dropped within half a mile of them. Surely never was Army discipline so strained! Pukka military colonels, with generations of military tradition in their blood, being told to take women into their offices, women officers into their orderly rooms, doing it, though they hated it, because it was orders, and doing it—all honour to them!—with perfect courtesy. Cooks and waitresses were sometimes hailed with rapture, but at the beginning clerks, storewomen, telephonists, etc., had to prove their worth and earn their welcome.

The first few raids showed that one fear at least was unfounded. Indeed, it was the pride of the Corps in every Area that members were never late on duty in the morning, no matter how many hours' sleep might have gone west the night before.

And so the demand for Waacs and yet more Waacs grew. It took a long time for C.O.'s to realise that when they wanted Waacs something more was necessary than just to mention it to the nearest Administrator. I doubt whether there was a Waac Orderly Room in France or England that did not get bombarded with requests for, "Twenty cooks and seven clerks if you can manage it by the end of the week, please," and with surprised and hurt ejaculations when the answer was given, "You must requisition through the Usual Channels."

During the early spring of 1918 most of us were working harder than we had ever worked in our lives before. Troops were being passed up the line in thousands; cook-houses at reinforcement camps that normally fed 800 men a day were now feeding 4,000 to 6,000 men who halted for a meal on their way up. Cooks and waitresses were at work by 3.30 in the mornings (sometimes even earlier); clerks and motor-drivers, who normally began work at 9 o'clock, volunteered for two or three hours heavy work preparing meals for troops arriving by train who had to be fed as rapidly as possible. Harassed Administrators strove to see that their women got regular meals themselves, and as much sleep as could be compressed into their spare time. Life was made no easier by the intermittent necessity of spending an hour or two of the night in a damp, clayey trench, or lying on one's tummy in the wet grass while the Boche bombs hurtled through the air.

It was during this stress that civilians at home suddenly discovered that we were all living a life of vice and wanted us to be recalled! Frantic mothers wrote to their daughters imploring them to leave the Army; Administrators had to curtail their rest to write reassuring letters to the mothers. As one Fore-

woman remarked, showing a letter from home to her Administrator, "If I ever get time to think I shall be furious about this!" However, after we had served our turn at the tea-tables of the "indispensables" as a refreshing change from the usual Spy or Cabinet Minister story, a Commission of Enquiry was sent out to look into the matter. Our character was finely vindicated. But the people at home who had talked the most never took the trouble to read the Report of the Commission. Perhaps they were ashamed to.

The worst of the rush went by, and as things became easier we certainly had a good time—dances, theatricals, concerts, lectures.

Men who came down from the line for a few hours' rest, polished their buttons, decorated a Y.M.C.A. hut, and invited the Waacs to a dance. In most Areas Controllers had to make a rule that the women should only go to dances on Saturdays, as they needed all the rest they could get. This seemed terribly cruel to disappointed men who were returning up the line before the end of the week. Complications were many and various: did we dance with New Zealanders more often than with Australians, or with Canadians more than with our own lads; affairs assumed a grave aspect!

More and more women were called for and more Waac camps grew. A few yards of chintz bought in the market made curtains, screens and cushion covers. A bucketful of creosol supplied by a fatherly Sanitary Officer (for far other purposes), stained floors, tables and chairs, and huts became really charming sitting-rooms. Administrators returned from leave with china teacups and afternoon tea-cloths. Officers of the Brother Service suddenly remembered something they wanted to ask the Waac O.C. at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Camps vied with each other over decorations, messing, and the unskillful conduct sheets of their members. New ways of cooking bully, rice, and cheese were discovered and hotly debated. Hockey and cricket teams sprang into being, and fierce matches were played on Sunday afternoons.

Enemy bombs claimed their toll of life and limb; influenza and pneumonia had their victims. Hospitals and sick bays were sometimes full.

Religious services were held in camps and billets, several women were Baptised and many were Confirmed.

On looking back to the early days one thought always comes to one's mind: the extraordinary pluck of the little, uneducated, general-servant type of girl, who when her country called her, came forward to take up any work that was required of her in conditions that were utterly strange, and in a country that she could not even visualise. Of the women whose lives were laid down the larger number were of this class. Another thing which stands out very vividly is the genuine affection felt by the women for the majority of their Forewomen and Officers, no small tribute to all ranks concerned.

The most irritating point about the corps was its inability to leave its uniform alone! Pleats were unpicked and gathers set up; necks were turned in; woollen Army stockings were discarded in favour of transparent silk horrors; hats were soaked all night in water and then bent to such shapes as owners fancied. The best boy's regimental badge was pinned in a conspicuous position on chest or coat sleeve. At a time when undesirable women were imitating the Waac uniform as nearly as possible in order to gain admittance to forbidden ground it was of paramount importance that members of the corps should adhere to uniform most strictly, and officials had their work cut out for them. Kit inspections, parades before and after work, etc., etc., but in spite of it all, a woman could be seen half a mile from camp with a tasty pink bow adorning a neck that had been as guiltless of ornament when she left her quarters, as it was when she returned!

It would be impossible to write of the Waacs in France without paying a passing tribute to the wonderful leadership of Mrs. Gwynne Vaughan, now a Dame of the British Empire. Possessed of a mighty brain and wonderful health, she worked unceasingly at a pressure that few could have endured. No woman in France lived more simply or more hardily than she. As head of the Women's Army there were many alleviations and pleasures that she might have taken had she not always kept before her the ideal she held up to those under her, "To remember in all circumstances that we were out to help the

fighting forces and to be as little of an encumbrance as possible." To this end she refused, over and over again, little comforts which were offered to us though forbidden to the troops. Her foresightedness was justified when it became necessary to evacuate Waac camps on the advance of the enemy, and it was found that the women could remain on duty feeding the last of the retiring troops, calmly collect their impedimenta and retire in good order.

We have received an absurd amount of praise which we did not ask for, and more blame than we have ever deserved.

Why we did not all go home the day after Armistice was signed, no civilian can understand. At that time we had been overseas one year and eight months, there were men who had been out there four years and four months, and it was obviously right that their demobilisation should precede ours. But this will never penetrate the thick heads of the public. It is impossible to demobilise even one man without a certain amount of clerical work, and by this time women clerks had become exceedingly valuable. Men have to be paid on demobilisation, and many hundreds of Waacs were employed in Army Pay Departments. But this again will never be grasped by the public.

If we sometimes hear more of the work of the Corps overseas than at home, it is not because the work at home is not fully appreciated; in France there were more discomforts to contend with, more air-raids, and always the risk of a sudden advance of the enemy, but to counteract this there was the thrill of being on active service. Even stewed mule shed a glamour

at one time; the glamour didn't last, though the mule did—for three weeks.

At home there was often deadly monotony, much hard work, and less of the romance.

Taken as a whole, the Waacs did not wish to remain on a Peace footing; we enrolled for the purpose of setting men free from work behind the lines, and we felt that our job ended with the war.

Should another war arise we shall be ready.

Mistakes in the past? Hundreds! Dissatisfaction within? Heaps of it! But ours is not the only Service with these little troubles. One has heard of mistakes being made even by the War Office. It is rumoured that private soldiers sometimes think a certain sergeant is not very sweet-tempered. One knows that subalterns sometimes feel that their merits are not fully appreciated by their Colonel. It may even be that Colonels are sometimes disappointed in the judgment of their General.

It is an imperfect world.

In spite of really hard work, differences of opinion, occasional grievances, there are no regrets at having joined the Corps, only a horrible tearing of the heart-strings and a childish inclination to cry at its breaking-up.

We have had our last gathering at Connaught Club, where so many of us were enrolled. Dame Florence Burrell Leach, Controller-in-Chief since early in 1918, whose tact and charming manner have smoothed over many difficulties and enabled us to wind up the Corps without ever having had a serious ruction, met us for the last time as we watched the Old Year out and the New Year in.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

WHAT WOMEN MUST DO NEXT.

A Practical Programme for the Practical Work of a Committee on Housing.

By ETHEL DRED BROWNING.

When passing from place to place lecturing on various aspects of the Housing Problem to local Women's Organisations I constantly have the question put to me: "What can we as an organised body of women do to help solve the housing problem? We have held a public meeting, we have passed resolutions—What must we do next?"

It is most urgent that this question should be answered, and that the first fine enthusiasm with which women faced the housing problem should not be allowed to fade out for want of a direct line of action.

Moreover, the necessity for the active co-operation of women in the carrying out of the national housing schemes, and the real value of the opinion and influence of women, have been greatly emphasised by the recent circular issued by the Ministry of Health to the authorities responsible for the erection of new houses. From this circular it appears that the Minister of Health appointed quite recently a Sub-Committee of the Housing Advisory Council to "consider and advise on the subjects with regard to which women may most usefully give advice to local authorities in connection with their housing schemes, and the machinery by which the local authority can best obtain such advice."

In agreement with the findings of the Committee Dr. Addison expresses the hope that all local authorities will take steps to obtain the views of women regarding the lay-out of the proposed houses and the provision to be made for open spaces, gardens, playgrounds; also their views on the house plans and arrangements for internal fittings, lighting, and heating. Dr. Addison, further, recommends:—

1. *Public Exhibition of Plans* at the earliest stage practical, "in order that the local authority and their architect may have an opportunity of considering any suggestions made to them by women as a result of their inspection of the plans."

2. *Co-opting of Women on Housing Committees*, more especially the working woman.

3. *Women's Advisory Committees*, with the suggestion that the local authority should "summon representatives of women's organisations or social workers in their area and invite them to form the Committee."

Amongst the organisations specially named in the circular as being suitable for consideration in this connection are the Women's Co-operative Guilds, National Councils of Women, Women's Citizen's Associations, Women's Institutes, &c.

Here is a very definite and encouraging recognition of the usefulness and importance of organised bodies of women, and on their part these women must now be prepared to respond intelligently and whole-heartedly to the demand of the Minister

of Health for their co-operation in the national housing schemes.

In order, however, that this tide of opportunity may be taken at its flood and lead on to fortune a definite programme will need to be adopted, and also a definite course of preparation; this preparation, however, should run concurrently with a definite course of action; the pursuit of knowledge must go hand-in-hand with the achievement of practical results.

The Housing Problem divides itself into three parts:—

(a) *The Provision of New Houses* (England stands in urgent need of half a million houses to-day).

(b) *The Treatment of Unfit Houses* (large numbers of houses suffering from bad roofs, bad sanitation, inadequate water supply, rats, vermin, etc., can be made "fit").

(c) *The Treatment of Slum Areas* (the clearance of these, which are a disgrace and a danger to the locality, must be delayed owing to the present house shortage, but should be the subject of special consideration and study).

The problem is indeed stupendous, and in its solution great qualities will be necessary:

First, *A burning desire for improved conditions*, which no discouragement can extinguish.

Secondly, *An intimate knowledge of existing needs* and evils and of the Housing Act which provides a remedy.

Thirdly, *Work and the Courage to be a Nuisance*, and to continue to be a nuisance until success is achieved.

The first step which any organisation anxious to attack the local housing problem will naturally take will be the formation of a Joint Committee on Housing, composed either of delegates from all local organisations (such as Women Citizen Associations, National Councils of Women, Women Institutes, Village Councils, Women's Co-operative Guilds, Temperance and Child Welfare Associations, etc.), or from amongst its own members; and the following programme outlines a course of study and a line of action which cannot fail to be productive of great results:—

Programme for the work of a Joint Committee on Housing.

1. (a) A study of the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 and of such literature (a list is given) whereby a thorough and exact knowledge will be gained of the intentions of the Government, and of the means necessary for the carrying into effect of these intentions. (One member of the Committee might be asked to watch for all Government debates and all future Government action regarding housing, so as to keep the Committee informed up to date.)

(b) The gradual purchase of books dealing with the subject and the consequent forming of a small library would be of immense value, as it would lead not only to increased know-

ledge regarding housing but would inevitably lead to the study of "town planning" and "garden cities," subjects which are rapidly demanding the attention of all intelligent citizens.

(c) The taking in of the periodicals *Housing* and the *Garden City and Town Planning Magazine* would be almost essential.

(d) List of books:—

"The Housing and Town Planning Act, 1919." Price 4d.
 "Local Government Board Manual on the Preparation of State Aided Housing Schemes." Price 2s. 6d.
 "Interim and Final Report of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee." Price 4d.
 "Ministry of Health Manual on the Conversion of Houses into Flats for the Working Classes." Price 1s.
 "Ministry of Health Manual on Unfit Homes and Unhealthy Areas." Price 1s.
 "Housing: Powers and Duties of Local Authorities." Price 2d.
 "Housing (Additional Powers) Bill." Price 2d.
 "Report of Medical Research Committee: 'The Mortalities of Birth, Infancy and Childhood.'" Price 1s. 6d.
 "The House I Want." (Second Edition.) By Richard Reiss. Price 2s. 6d.
 "The Nation's New Houses." Pictures and Plans. Price 6d.
 "New Towns after the War: A Plea for Garden Cities." Price 1s.
 "Housing." Fortnightly publication issued by the Ministry of Health Housing Department. Price 3d.
 "Garden Cities and Town Planning Magazine." Published monthly. Price 6d.

2. A report to be drawn up giving definite and detailed information regarding local shortage of houses. For this purpose it will be necessary to become familiar with the housing conditions of the working classes—the condition of existing houses, the prevalence of over-crowding, and the extent of the demand for more and better accommodation. Details of houses needing urgent repair should be forwarded to the local authority and any subsequent action looked for.

3. A report to be prepared as to existing empty houses, furnished or unfurnished, with proposals regarding same as to their possible adaption for the accommodation of homeless people of all classes. (An appeal could then be made to the owners of houses not in use to let same to persons, not necessarily manual workers only, genuinely suffering from house famine.)

4. A register to be kept of homeless people, of people whose houses are being sold, of people whose houses are condemned, of young married couples needing houses.

5. A deputation to wait on the local authority asking that, where this has not already been done, some women's committee should be recognised as advisory to their official Housing Committee, as laid down in Circular 40, or, failing that, that one or more of their members should be co-opted on to this latter Committee. (See Powers and Duties of Local Authorities, p. 17 (2) and Circular 40, Ministry of Health.)

6. Meetings of all kinds to be held with the object of educating public opinion; big public meetings, in the holding of which several organisations should co-operate together—drawing-room meetings, mother's meetings, club meetings, guild meetings, school meetings—in fact meetings which will seek to interest every class and every individual of every class in the community, young and old, by laying before them the local conditions discovered by the Committee's investigations and the right remedy as laid down by the Housing Acts, and also as put forward by housing experts or as suggested by the Joint Committee themselves.

7. Deputations to be arranged with Councillors from their own Wards, to acquaint Councillors with the fact that the public are prepared to support every effort that can be made to hasten the erection of houses. All women Councillors to be specially waited on.

8. To study and enquire into: (a) New methods of construction; (b) labour-saving fittings; (c) the desirability of central heating and central supply of hot water and public laundries, etc., and to press for the adoption of the best modern methods wherever possible.

9. To ensure the right provision of open spaces, playgrounds, gardens, allotments. The need for gardens, piggeries, and fowl-runs in rural areas is very urgent; it is astonishing how many cottagers are without the facilities for pursuing country occupations.

10. To ensure that open spaces will be properly laid out and made beautiful, that trees will be planted and institutes or club-rooms erected. Such activities could be made part of a war memorial scheme.

11. To encourage the appointment of women property managers and make provision for the training of same.

12. To form public Utility Societies for the erection of houses, or for the conversion of large houses into flats; or for

the improvement of existing houses and cottages. Though women are largely concerned with and interested in housing, it should be noted that the forming of Utility Societies to build State-aided houses has so far been almost entirely left in the hands of men.

13. To make a study of the financial side of the problem, and to promote the issue and sale of local Housing Bonds.

14. To publish and distribute leaflets concerning local housing conditions and proposed local housing undertakings.

15. Where it is found that the women of a neighbourhood—especially those who are well off—are not taking active interest in the local Housing Problem and do not attend meetings, a method of house to house visiting should be adopted, leaflets distributed and subscriptions asked for, and the situation should be explained, so that interest may be assured.

* * * * *

The following three typical examples of to-day's housing conditions in a dignified English cathedral town are given as they are taken from a report drawn up by the Housing Committee of the local Women's Citizen Association, a report which has aroused much interest and proved most useful:—

House No. 1.—Kitchen living-room recently papered by occupants; leaking sink in one corner, necessitating the continual emptying into the street of a basin which catches the leaking water; the landlord refuses to have the sink attended to. Upstairs two bedrooms and an attic, which is uninhabitable owing to a bad roof; in wet weather the rain streams downstairs into the bedroom. There is no w.c. in the house; the occupants must go down the street and round into a back court, where they share a w.c. with other people. The occupants are an ex-soldier, his wife, and two children. The discomfort caused by the so-called sanitary arrangements can be better imagined than described.

House No. 2.—Inhabited by widow with six children. One living-room and three bedrooms, two of which unfit for use, and in the third the paper is peeling off the damp wall. The chimney in the living-room smokes unbearably every time the fire is lit. The landlord offers to have it seen to, but there are fears that the chimney would fall down and possibly the house also. W.C. in the house, but water supply has gone wrong; there is a crack in the pan and the water trickles down the wall. One wall on the stairs was streaming with water (though it was a fine day), and in wet weather water runs down the stairs. Husband died of tuberculosis; one child very delicate. Rent 5s. 6d.

House No. 3.—Roof so bad that on wet nights the rain comes through in the bedroom and falls on the bed. Occupants are sometimes up the greater part of the night emptying pans which they keep on the bed to catch the water. Rats in the kitchen living-room are so fierce that food is supplied for them so that they may not feed on the children. Rent 5s. 6d. (In this neighbourhood a doctor told the investigator he was constantly called out to attend children bitten by rats.)

* * * * *

Similar cases to these exist in large numbers in practically every town and village throughout the kingdom, and it is well known that many of the worst housing conditions are concealed by the tenants for fear they should be turned out and the work-house should prove the only available shelter for them. There is no doubt that one half of the world is very ignorant of how the other half lives, but the presentation of concrete examples, personally investigated and vouched for, either through public meetings, the Press, or special leaflets, will do much to stir the sympathies and the imaginations, and to enlist the active co-operation of those fellow-citizens who are fortunate enough to possess large and comfortable houses themselves.

It will probably be found necessary that the Joint Committee or the Organisation should affiliate with some such society as the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, 3, Gray's Inn Place, London, W.C. 1. This Association admits bodies to affiliation for a minimum annual subscription of 7s. 6d., (which covers the cost of the Magazine,) and is prepared to offer women's organisations and committees throughout the country very special help in the way of expert advice and information.

Women gathered themselves together and astonished the world with their war work; they must gather themselves together and do equally fine and astonishing peace work; throughout the length and breadth of their country they must join hands and proudly use their newly acquired municipal and political power to wipe out the black and shameful record of how the working people live, and to emblazon a new page in history which may justly be entitled the Happy Homes of England.

Reviews.

Full Circle. By Mary Agnes Hamilton. (Collins. 7s.)

"Full Circle" is a very good title in itself, but not particularly appropriate to Mrs. Hamilton's elaborate study of an unhappy love-affair. The story has a little the air of a moral tale, with the colours of the Victorian palette replaced by their complementaries. Bridget attains to self-knowledge, self-respect, self-control, not by resisting the passionate advances of Wilfred Elstree, but by yielding to them. Everything is a trifle too symmetrically opposite to the received pattern, and Elstree succeeds in attracting one woman after another despite his awkward plainness, his bad manners, his fickleness, cruelty, and all the rest of it, until we suspect him of being a distant relative of dear Jane Eyre's Mr. Rochester, another hero built up on the principle of contradicting what too many novelists have said already. Unfortunately Wilfred, unlike Rochester, dominates the book; we do not meet Bridget until his reign has begun, and we leave her at the end of it preparing to love him for ever, if only she does not meet him too often—"her love was threatened only by what seeing and hearing him might take away." This is to be regretted, for Bridget is well and carefully drawn, and her relations with her brother Roger and her exploits as partner in a publishing firm are pleasantly told. Iris, a kind of Rosamond Vincy, but with less breeding and more malice, is a truly detestable young woman; the reader is cheered by the hope that she will marry Wilfred and be unhappy ever after, but the author does not allow cheerfulness to keep breaking in, and Roger is the bridegroom. It is a crooked world that the Quhamptons find in London, and, one must hope, a small and sparsely inhabited one. Its history is depressing without the dignity of tragedy, and told with such evident sincerity that one must believe in its existence somewhere within the London area. We meet one politician, Sacheverell, who is a humbug; one middle-aged woman, Mrs. Mauldeth, Iris's mother and worthy of that position; one honest publisher, who is willing to sacrifice his friend's happiness to fill a gap in his spring list; one daughter of the people, who attains to being a snob. This is more than is necessary to make a foil to Bridget, and the general effect of the juxtaposition of all these unpleasant types is oddly artificial. The author has assembled them that we may see Wilfred through their eyes, and Wilfred manages to reflect himself or project his character into all of them. The book cannot escape from his shadow, and all the delicate and careful work expended on the landscape setting of the story, and the skill shown in the record of Bridget's alternations of mood and gradual recovery of equilibrium after emotional crisis is dimmed by the shadow of a not very credible super-man.

The Englishwoman. January. 1s.

The New Year number of the *Englishwoman* opens with an article from Mrs. Fawcett on the changes that have been brought about by Woman Suffrage. She points a scornful finger at these anti-Suffragists who, like Lord Bryce, constantly averred that Votes for Women would make no difference, and says: "We, however, knew that even before a single woman had voted the certainty that some millions of women would presently become voters made a great instantaneous difference in the outlook on nearly every woman's question." Mrs. Fawcett then compares the legislation on these questions from 1900 to 1914 with that between February, 1918, and November, 1919, and it then becomes manifest to any remaining sceptics that in the fifteen years when Women's Suffrage was not yet an accomplished fact two Acts having special reference to the welfare, status or opportunities of women were passed, in comparison with six Acts in the first twenty-three months after women were voters.

There follows an extremely interesting article by Miss Beatrice Harraden (which is to be continued) entitled "In Devastated France." Miss Harraden made one of a party of twenty Englishwomen who visited the devastated regions of Northern France, and she paints in all its tragic reality the picture of that stricken and desolate country. "On and on we sped over miles and miles of devastation, and our eyes could scarcely take in all we saw, unending trenches, countless dug-

outs, shell-holes, barkless, bleached tree-trunks twisted like writhing ghosts, masses of rusted barbed wire ramping like dead bracken on the ground, innumerable separate, lonely little graves, ever-recurring cemeteries, wrecked homes, ruined churches." Do those who spend their time pitying our conquered foe realise that their country is untouched, that they never had the enemy on their soil or endured the agonies suffered by our Allies? Miss Harraden saw Estaires—"once a great wheat centre and now a great devastation, for the Germans burned it before they left"; she went over one or two of the deliberately wrecked factories of Lille and saw the 1,000 kilo block of cast-iron used by means of pulleys to smash up the machinery. "A fiendish spectacle."

Other interesting articles and the usual excellent reviews of drama, music, books, and politics are included in a number which augurs well for the *Englishwoman's* success in 1920.

A New Competition.

THE COMMON CAUSE Story Competition has proved so successful that the same contributor has offered three more prizes for a **Set of Model Rules of not more than 850 words, regulating the conditions of Domestic Service.**

Contributions must be typed or written legibly on one side of the paper. They must be signed by a pseudonym and accompanied by the name and address of the writer, enclosed in a closed envelope which will not be opened until after the award has been made. They must reach the Competition Editor, THE COMMON CAUSE, 62 Oxford-street, London, W. 1, at latest by first post on Monday, January 19th, 1920.

First Prize.—A free Studentship (value three guineas in board, lodging, and tuition) to the N.U.S.E.C. Summer School, probably to be held at Oxford or Cambridge next August; or, if preferred, two guineas in cash.

Second Prize.—£1 ordinary share in THE COMMON CAUSE Publishing Company Limited, or, if preferred, 15s. in cash.

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"IT DO SEEM ONREASONABLE."

BY CAROL RING.

A woman sat, patiently waiting her turn in the big room attached to the out-patients' department of a large hospital, with a sleeping child on her lap.

At last the porter called out "Mrs. Gatley," and the wan little woman lifted the quiet child, and rising from her four hours' wait on the wooden bench, passed within the green baize door of the doctor's room.

"E ain't been very well," she murmured to the pleasant-faced nurse, as she unfolded the shabby shawl wrapped round the baby.

For a moment no one answered her, and in the ominous silence the mother began unaccountably to tremble. Then the doctor took the child from her, and the nurse pushed her gently into a chair.

"How long has this child been like this," some one seemed to say from very far off; and then she heard her own voice answer faintly, "E cried as I was a-carrying 'im here, and then 'e went asleep; 'e ain't slep all night till then, sir."

"Where is your husband?" It was still the doctor speaking, but she could not hear clearly.

"He'm dead, nigh a year gone," she answered with difficulty, "me baby was born six months arter."

"Pension? No, I ain't 'ad any," she replied to the next question; "'e weren't a soldier, 'e made steel cables, an' all the war they 'ad to work overtime somethink fearful. 'E died of influenza; the doctor said 'e was reglar wore out, and 'ad no chanst from the first it took 'im."

Already the truth had smitten into her consciousness; she knew her baby was dead. She began to cry weakly.

"Lallie," she sobbed, "she'm in the fever 'ospital; and the babby were always delicut. I works at Martin & Corder's on a press."

"Well," said the doctor, not ungently, "until you women learn to stay at home and look after your babies properly and feed them yourselves, you will always run this risk. This child has died of improper feeding, and—"

"But," interrupted the mother distractedly, "what cud I do? Theer was the rent, and coal that dear; and me nothin' but a few shillings club money, which 'as stopped three months gone; and I couldn't earn but seven shillings a week machinin' at 'ome, an' me milk went off me. I paid a lady to mind 'im an' 'all—and I've saved a few shillin' against Lallie comes out—" she broke down into helpless sobbing, and the nurse put an arm round her and led her, carrying the little dead body, into another room.

It was the day of the baby's funeral, and Mrs. Gatley sat in the cheery kitchen of a neighbour's house with a cup of untouched tea before her.

"Try and drink it, there's a good soul," said Mrs. Spence kindly, "it'll do you a world of good."

Just then the door opened and another neighbour came in, looking pleased and triumphant.

"I've got it all, Mrs. Spence," the newcomer said, rather breathlessly; "they giv' it willing, I knew they would. It 'ud be a disgrace to the street, I sez to 'em if Gatley's baby 'ad to be buried by the Parish; 'e weren't no soldier, sez I, but 'e did 'is bit if ever a man did. The times I've seen 'im comin' 'ome at eight of a mornin', 'is clothes wringing wet with sweat, arter working all night in the heat, and 'im gettin' no more'n bread and jam fer 'is dinner, when meat was rationed, an' 'all."

Mrs. Taylor laid some silver and two dirty notes on the table, and sat down heavily opposite the wan little mother in her sordid black.

"There, my dear," she said, stroking her plump knee complacently, "you drink your tea content like, I told the undertaker I'd get the money, an' I got it, an' your baby ain't in no pauper grave."

"Lallie's due to come out of 'ospital in a week," said Mrs. Spence significantly.

Mrs. Gatley began to cry, "They've took me work off me," she said to Mrs. Taylor.

"It was this way," explained Mrs. Spence, "I went to the factory and told 'em as the baby was dead, and she'd come back to-morrow when the funeral were over, but the foreman, 'e sez, 'She's no call to come back 'ere,' 'e sez, 'the Boss 'e don't

* This story was awarded the Third Prize in THE COMMON CAUSE Prize Competition for a story showing the need of pensions for civilian widows with dependent children.

want any more married women as stays away when the children's ill. 'I ain't patriotic, 'e sez, to hemploy married women on men's work, with demobbed men waitin' fer jobs."

"They ain't give 'er work to a man fer all that," she added, "fer Bowerman's boy 'as got it, 'e told me 'isself."

"And now," sobbed Mrs. Gatley, "I'll 'ave to go on the Parish after all, and they'll take the twelve shillings off me, as I've saved against Lallie coming 'ome, as the Sister sez to me, 'She must 'ave peticular care and good food when you gets 'er back,' she sez, 'or maybe she'll go in a decline,' she sez, 'fer she ain't over strong."

Tears of sympathy ran down Mrs. Taylor's fat cheeks. "They won't take it off you," she said, "but they'll make you spend it first. 'Don't you come 'ere till your destitoot,' that's what they sez. Then you'll 'ave to come to bein' paupers, after all! Eh, but I'm sorry, rememberin' Gatley, and 'ow 'e did 'is bit."

Presently Mrs. Spence's four lusty boys came in from school, and the bereaved mother, with a few broken thanks to her neighbours went out to her own empty poverty-stricken home.

"It do seem onreasonable," said Mrs. Taylor, as she also got up to go; "'ere's you and me, doin' nicely with our pension, and all; not that it's a fat lot with prices that 'igh, but still we gets along; and 'ere's Gatley's widdar and children left destitoot, whereas if 'e'd 'listed as 'e wanted to along of Taylor, only they wouldn't let 'im leave 'is work, she'd be pretty comfortable, considerin'."

A group of women stood solemnly in Mrs. Spence's kitchen five days after Mrs. Gatley's baby had been laid in its tiny grave.

On the table lay a pencilled letter, and one and another took it up and read it.

"I daresn't bring Lallie 'ome to this," ran the pitiful little note. "I've pledged nigh everythink since she were took to 'ospital, and 'er father's picture and all; more, she don't know as the baby is dead. I've kep the twelve shillings, as its on the mantelshelf, fer to get a cab to fetch 'er 'ome, and some good food, and I know you'll be kind to 'er and tell 'er as mother's gone along of 'er daddy."

"It'll be a crowner's inquest," said one. "Yes; but I want to know who's goin' to 'ave Lallie, which she's to come out to-morrer?" said another.

"I could do with 'er," said a thin untidy-looking little woman with a weak, gentle face.

"No, Mrs. Baker, you ain't strong enough fer to look after a invild child, which 'ave more'n enough to do now," said Mrs. Taylor; "I can do with Lallie, fine."

"Anyhows she mustn't never go in theer," said Mrs. Baker. Everyone thought of the white convulsed face under the one poor sheet on the bare mattress in that darkened house.

"She'd much better come 'ere," said Mrs. Spence quietly; "Mrs. Taylor's got a gel, and my pension's bigger nor hers, me 'avin' four. More'n that, the boys can sleep in the top and I can 'ave Lallie along of me and see to 'er nights as well as days, which none of you can't as 'ave 'usbands, and bein' as the boys 'ave no sister it seems purposed as I should 'ave 'er."

To this sound reasoning the others gave way with regret mingled with relief. Of course, *someone* would take the child, the whole street would have been shamed if they had let her go to the workhouse; but in the overcrowded homes, and with prices so high and work uncertain, each woman present felt a little glad that she was not called upon to add this delicate little girl to her household.

After all, Mrs. Spence was sure of her pension, while their husbands were not always sure of their continued employment.

As they turned to go home Mrs. Taylor spoke.

"What I sez is," she declared emphatically, "that every widdar as has lost her husband honest, and 'im doin' 'is best, oughter 'ave a pension while the children ain't able to go to work to keep theirselves."

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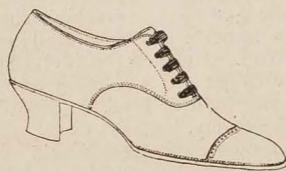
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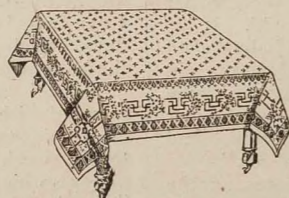
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Annual Council Meeting, 1920.

The Annual Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 10th, Thursday, March 11th, and Friday, March 12th, at King George's Hall, London Central Y.M.C.A., Tottenham Court Road, W. 1.

DELEGATES' FEES AND TICKETS.

A delegate's fee of 2s. is due for each delegate's ticket applied for. All applications for delegates' tickets and visitors' tickets (price 1s. for each day) should be made to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, Evelyn House, 62, Oxford Street, London, W. 1.

Secretaries of Societies are asked to observe the following dates:—
January 24th.—Last date for posting to the National Union Office:—
(a) Resolutions for the Preliminary Agenda. (b) The names of those you may wish to nominate for election as Honorary Officers of the Union, or as members of the Executive Committee.

February 8th.—The Preliminary Agenda and list of nominations will be posted to you.

February 16th.—Last date for posting to the National Union Office amendments to be printed on the Final Agenda and applications for Delegates' Tickets.

March 2nd.—The Final Agenda and Delegates' Tickets will be posted to you.

HOSPITALITY.

It is hoped to find some hospitality for those requiring it. Delegates are asked to apply to the Secretary, N.U.S.E.C., at the earliest possible date.

Anyone in London who can offer hospitality is asked to communicate with the Secretary as soon as possible. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining accommodation in London at the present time, any such offers would be especially appreciated.

PROXY DELEGATES.

The Secretary of the N.U.S.E.C. will endeavour to find proxies for Societies unable to send the full number of delegates; but no one may attend the Council as sole representative of a Society to which they do not belong without written guidance from the Society they represent. Societies should apply for proxies as soon as possible to the Secretary, National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, 62, Oxford Street, W. 1, and they must be responsible for sending tickets and full instructions to the proxies assigned to them. Societies are urged to send at least one delegate from amongst their own members, who should be asked to act in consultation with their proxy delegates.

Any members of an affiliated Society of the N.U.S.E.C. who are willing to act as such proxies are asked to communicate with the Secretary. It would very greatly facilitate arrangements for the Council if an adequate number of members could offer to take on this work.

Widows' Pensions.

Secretaries are reminded that as their Members of Parliament are now in their own constituencies, no effort should be spared to approach them, urging them to press for legislation for Pensions for Civilian Widows with Dependent Children.

Only by getting Members of Parliament to realise the urgent need for this reform and the force of public opinion which lies behind it, can pressure be brought to bear on the Government to take action in this direction. Mr. Churchill tells us that already the revenue has exceeded the estimates to 187 million. Cannot the Government be induced to spare a small portion of this for the widows?

Members of Parliament should also be asked to support any Private

Members' Bill in which may be incorporated the N.U.S.E.C. scheme for such pensions. (See below.)

You are urged, therefore, to organise a deputation to your local Members of Parliament, consisting, if possible, of all Societies interested in the welfare of women and children in your neighbourhood, or, if it is not possible to obtain their co-operation, in any case, of your society. Do not delay, as your Members will be returning to their Parliamentary duties in London on February 10th.

The Parliamentary Secretary will be glad to hear what action you can take in the matter. Literature and information can be obtained from Headquarters.

Pensions to Civilian Widows and their Dependent Children: Suggested Scheme.

1. PERSONS ENTITLED TO PENSIONS.

(a) A pension shall be payable out of State funds to every widow, except such as are included under Clause 4, who has dependent upon her and in her care, one or more legitimate children under school age or in compulsory full-time school attendance.

N.B.—In the event of her re-marriage her proportion of the pension shall be forfeited, but that of the children shall continue.

(b) For the purpose of the Act, the term "widow" shall be held to include every married woman whose husband is certified as insane or who, by reason of physical infirmity, is and has been for a period of not less than twenty-six weeks wholly unable to contribute to her support.

N.B. The term "child" shall signify a legitimate child.

2. AMOUNT OF PENSIONS.

The rates of pensions under this Bill shall be those payable at a flat rate to the widows of the fallen under the Naval and Military War Pensions Act. (Note: It is recommended that these pensions should depend on and vary with the cost of living.)

3. ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY.

The authority for administering pensions under this Act shall be the Ministry of Health, acting through committees appointed by the Local Health Authorities. Provision shall be made for an adequate number of women, of which a proportion shall be representatives of organised women's societies, upon these local committees, and for the employment of women officials to carry out such enquiries and supervision as may be necessary under the Act.

4. CONDITIONS OF RECEIVING PENSIONS.

If the administering authority has reason to believe that the children in receipt of pensions are being brought up in surroundings dangerous to their physical or moral well-being, or are being habitually ill-treated or neglected, the administering authority may require the widow to appear before the committee of persons delegated by the authority for this purpose, to show cause why her pension should not be forfeited and that of the children be paid to a suitable guardian. Should the committee then determine that her pension should be forfeited, and that of the children be administered elsewhere, the widow shall have the right to appeal against such a decision to a Court of Summary Jurisdiction.

Coming Events.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FRANCHISE CLUB.

JANUARY 11.
9, Grafton Street, Piccadilly.
Subject: "An Equal Moral Standard and the Empire."

8.15 p.m.

THE EFFICIENCY CLUB.

JANUARY 15.
Central Hall, Westminster.
A Cinematograph Lecture. Subject: "Anthracite Coal Mining and Coal Dredging," showing all processes of coal mining and shipments.
Lecturer: E. Hodges, M.A.

7 p.m.

Forthcoming Meetings.

JANUARY 11.
Birmingham—Handsworth Labour Church. Speaker: Mrs. Ring. 6.30 p.m.

JANUARY 12.
Birmingham—Bearwood Co-operative Guild. Speaker: Mrs. Ring. 7.30 p.m.

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