

THE VOTE  
MAY 11, 1917.  
ONE PENNY.

# Our Lost Armies!

C. DESPARD.

# THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

VOL. XVI. No. 394.

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FRIDAY, MAY 11, 1917

Edited by C. DESPARD.

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

## CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

## "DROP THE BILL" CAMPAIGN.

### GREAT MASS MEETING,

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER,

On Tuesday, May 15, 1917, at 8 p.m.,

To demand the Withdrawal of the Bill and the Postponement of all Attempts to deal with Prostitution by Legislation until Women are Enfranchised.

Speakers:—

Miss LIND-AF-HAGEBY  
Miss EVA GORE BOOTH

Lady EMILY LUTYENS  
Mr. JOHN SCURR

Chair:—Mrs. DESPARD.

RESERVED SEATS, 2s. 6d. and 1s. (Tickets from Women's Freedom League, 144, High Holborn, W.C.)  
ADMISSION FREE. COLLECTION FOR CAMPAIGN EXPENSES.

**Come and Crowd the Hall next Tuesday Evening!**

In addition to the Central Hall, Westminster Meeting, Special Local Meetings are being held in St. Pancras, the constituency of Mr. W. H. Dickinson, M.P., who is pressing for the scandalous Clause III., and in Kingston, the constituency of Sir George Cave, the Home Secretary, the parent of the Bill.

### PROTEST MEETING.

British Schools, Kentish Town Road, N.W.  
FRIDAY, MAY 11th, 1917, 8 p.m.

Miss ESTHER ROPER

Miss TALBOT

Miss JORDAN

Mr. MAURICE GREGORY

Chair: Miss F. A. UNDERWOOD.

### PROTEST MEETING.

Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames.  
MONDAY, MAY 14th, 1917, 8 p.m.

Mrs. DESPARD

Miss RICKARDS

Mr. MAURICE GREGORY

Chair: Miss F. A. UNDERWOOD.

**The Campaign will continue until the Bill is Dead.**



## THE VOTE.

Proprietors:—THE MINERVA PUBLISHING Co., Ltd.  
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FRIDAY, May 11th, 1917.

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To the Advertising Manager—on advertising.  
To the Secretary—on all other business, including Votes  
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Telegrams: "DESPARD, Museum 1429, London."

### 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.

### SUBSCRIPTION RATE.

At Home and Abroad ... post free, 6/6 per annum.

### AGENTS.

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## OUR LOST ARMIES.

We use the word "armies" in its largest meaning, which is not that either of the recruiting sergeant or the conscriptionist. Not food for cannon, on the one hand, nor the organising and administrative faculty that can use it most profitably for destruction, is the loss we deplore when we see in the figures and maps of towns and rural districts that appear in Local Government Board reports what havoc is going on amongst our children.

For we know that there are other than military armies. Industry, art, life, creation and maintenance, teaching, organising, legislating—all these might have been found in the armies that, year by year, are vanishing. Amongst them, perhaps, some specially gifted as pioneers, inventors, discoverers. None, indeed, can tell how the new-born child will develop. Ruskin has said finely: "As the son of a king, lying in the cradle, holds within itself all the awful potentialities of royalty, so is every child born into the world." He goes on to say that the question of what the child is to be—its station in life—is unimportant; ploughboy or king, born in slum or palace, its royalty is inherent. If this, or anything like this, is the truth, we must surely look back with shame and contrition on our "rake's progress" as a nation.

Here, in black and white, are a few of the statistics on infant mortality, from birth to the age of five years, during the period 1911-14. They are prefaced by some strong words from the Medical Officer of the Board. He says—and this should make us think: "The one outstanding fact is that the centres of excessive child mortality are those in which the chief industries of the country are being carried on."

Looking over the report we find the districts given over to coal-mining, glass and chemical manufactures and iron foundries peculiarly inimical to infants' lives. In some of the cotton towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire the percentage is very high. It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance to the country of coal-mining, iron foundries and the textile trades; and yet in the centres where these industries are being carried on conditions are so bad that mothers, in many cases, cannot rear their children. The Board's Medical Officer asserts that the association between these trades and infant mortality is not inevitable. Indeed, in some of these

centres a great reduction in the death-rate has been already secured. Had the number of child-deaths in 1911-14 been as high as in 1901-10 there would have been 144,000 more deaths than the 575,078 which actually occurred. The latter figure is quite appalling enough.

Let it be understood that the report deals only with the deaths of children up to five years of age. There is an interesting figure, showing the "total deaths at age periods from infancy to old age" during the years with which the report deals. The lowest death-rate is from 10 to 15. Then the scale rises gradually to 70 and over, when there is a great leap up. The rate, however, is not much higher than that given for the first year of life. Therefore, when we speak generally of the deaths of children and young people, there is an even greater loss and leakage than the figures we have quoted represent. Add to these the enormous number of men and women who for their whole lives have to battle against disease, or who are born with defective organs, and we may gain some faint conception of the loss sustained by the nation long before she was called upon to sacrifice her sons and daughters at the altar of the war-fiend.

What are the causes of this life-destruction? We have all heard the careless superficial answer. The mother, especially the working-class mother, is the worst sinner. Of course, her surroundings are not all that one would wish them to be; but if she was a little wiser, and more careful and thrifty, she would not lose so many children. That is the way in which one set or one class excuses itself for its shortcomings and throws the blame upon others. We are glad to find that the Medical Officer of Health is not so futile. "The working-class mother," he says in his preface, "is too often accused of ignorance, which it is furthermore assumed is much less prevalent among well-to-do mothers. This is a facile and unbalanced explanation." And he refers to one of the sections of his report in which are set out the "circumstances of environment favouring excessive child mortality."

With regard to the mothers it is shown that the mother in comfortable circumstances is able to secure for her infant advantages which the infant of the poorest mother cannot obtain. The latter is single-handed; if she is able to get milk—which is, for the most part, impossible now—it is often stale and impoverished, and she has no appliances for the wholesome keeping and cleanly preparation of her children's food. If she is ill, the child suffers with her. If her child is ill she cannot always get near at hand the necessary assistance and advice; for, although maternity centres and school and baby clinics have increased since the war, they are not nearly sufficient in number to meet the necessities of great industrial towns. Further, "infants and nursing mothers are rapidly influenced by their surroundings. If the mother is overworked and suffering from chronic fatigue her infant must suffer."

The suggested remedy is what we of the Women's Movement have been preaching for years, "that the environment of the infant of the poor should be levelled up towards that of the infant of the well-to-do, and that medical advice and nursing assistance should be made available for the child of the worker, as promptly as for that of persons of higher social status." Here in principle we come back to Ruskin. Reverence for every human infant, religious perception of the truth that it is "a child of the Divine World-Father, an inheritor of the ages."

Much more valuable information is given in this remarkable report. It deals, we must remember, with that which existed before the war. Since the autumn of 1914 far-reaching changes have taken place; and much of the energy and enthusiasm which were thrown then into combating disease, bettering life conditions for the workers and saving child-life have been absorbed by war activities. All the greater

the reason that we should be watchful and vigilant now. Hour after hour, day after day, life is being poured out upon the battle fields of Europe. What woman can read without shuddering the story of the recent advance? "Battle of two million men," we quote from the Daily News of Friday last. "Through binoculars we could see ant-like figures swarming slowly across open patches of ground, and when a shrapnel puff that temporarily obscured them had settled away some of the poor figures would move no more." More silently but none the less disastrously the lives of our children are passing. They go by their ones and twos, no one caring but the poor mother who has not been able, with her helpless arms, to hold them back from the grave. Only when in statistics their numbers are given does any one realise how momentous the loss is.

One of the facts set before us by the report is that the case is not hopeless. Our armies at the front we cannot recall; however keenly we women may feel, we have no voice that can be heard; we have no power to stop the butchery. In the past we have had practically as little power over the armies of young lives that conditions cruel as machine-guns are destroying. But—we feel, we know—the day of our

powerlessness is passing. The difficulty encountered by the Government in forcing forward the "Criminal Law Amendment Act" against the will of large numbers of organised women is an indication of the fact that the hour of our enfranchisement is near. For that hour we must prepare ourselves. Even now we can educate public opinion by forcing attention upon the plague-spots of our civilisation. Then, when the nations awake from their nightmare of agony, we, standing side by side with our brothers, must give ourselves neither rest nor pause until we have brought about such a state of society as will enable us to keep for love and service the vast armies of children that are perpetually passing through our hands.

Open air, sanitation, wholesome and plentiful food, above all healthy and comfortable homes, all these are needed if we are to preserve the lives of our infants. To carry through measures which will make these great changes possible we must have laws of release and not restrictions. This, too frequently, our male legislators forget. It will be our part to remind them. Then, the great forces of earth and labour set free, we shall have no more lost armies.

C. DESPARD.

## POLITICAL NOTES.

### The Grille.

"The Grille is there," said Mr. Charles Roberts in the House of Commons last week. "We do not know why it persists, except by force of its own inertia." "A very discreditable anachronism, an indignity unworthy of the democracy of the present day," was Mr. E. Harvey's verdict, and he proceeded to relate that the origin of the "Grille" was due to a scandal in the eighteenth century when a well-known beauty of the time insisted on keeping her place on the floor of the House to which she had been admitted! He did not think there was any danger of the incident being repeated. Mr. Watt took the view that the Grille was a relic of the past and ought at once to be removed. Mr. Llewellyn Williams referred to what he called "the unfortunate incident in 1906 when a suffragette chained herself to the Grille." Personally he could not understand why women were so anxious to come down to hear speeches in the House of Commons, but paraphrasing Mr. Robert Lowe's dictum of "Let us now educate our masters (after the extension of the franchise to men in 1867), declared his suggestion now to be "Let us see our rulers!" as they were told that they would soon be ruled by women. Mr. W. H. Dickinson said he was convinced the Grille could be removed by nothing short of an earthquake or a war, and proceeded to give the following history of the Grille:—

For many years the House of Commons was visited by ladies. During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they used to come down to the Debates of the House of Commons, and places were assigned to them. On great occasions, we read in the records of the House that they came down in such numbers that they poured outside their own seats allotted to them into the seats allotted to Members of Parliament. On February 2, 1778, there was a great political debate which so attracted the ladies that they came down and actually took the seats of the Members of Parliament. That offended the equanimity of a certain naval captain, who drew attention to the fact that there were strangers in the House. An Order was made for the exclusion of all strangers. The officials had great difficulty in executing that Order. The ladies in question refused to move, and for two hours, I believe, the House had to suspend its deliberations whilst the ladies protested that they were entitled to be there. The result of that was that they were excluded absolutely, and for about fifty years no woman was allowed to come and listen to the Debates in the House. I believe that Mrs. Sheridan had to appear dressed in man's clothes in order to come down and hear the great speech by her husband.

That exclusion went on for about fifty years, until about the beginning of the nineteenth century an arrangement was made whereby certain ladies were allowed to come in and take places on the roof of the House and peer down through two ventilating shafts. That particular arrangement, which

has been described by Miss Edgeworth, was very uncomfortable for the ladies. They could only see the tops of the hats of Members who sat below, and hear very little of what was going on. Fortunately for them, the fire took place, and in 1835 the Houses of Parliament were burnt down, and by that fire they were relieved from their purgatory.

After the fire a Select Committee arranged with the architect for the present ladies' quarters, and Mr. Dickinson could only surmise that the Grille was constructed to prevent conversation between the ladies in the gallery and the Members of Parliament seated on the side galleries. Yet another instance of the authorities penalising women to secure the good conduct of men! Mr. Dickinson went on to say:

I cannot help thinking that when, if we do, we have to solicit the votes of the ladies themselves, we shall have a very great difficulty in justifying a system which seems to treat them either as wild beasts or as ladies of the harem.

Mr. Butcher was rather nervous lest "impulsiveness for reform" should lead to any rash action in this matter. He pointed out that it was not merely a question of structural alteration—it implied something more. Just so, and apparently Mr. Butcher's nervousness was shared by other members of the House, for the proposal is that in some way "a ballot of the opinion of the House" is to be taken on this matter, the Speaker declaring that he would be very sorry to take the responsibility upon himself!

### The New Budget.

Mr. Bonar Law proposes to increase the entertainments tax, including a tax upon complimentary tickets, to put an extra tax on tobacco, and to increase the Excess Profits Duty, the daily expenditure of the Government now being just over six and a quarter millions, 26 per cent. of which was payable by taxation. Mr. Bryce was very concerned about the extravagance of working women. He told the House that one woman "living in a £30 house, had paid in cash just before Christmas sixty guineas for a fur coat." Cheap jewellery was being largely purchased by "young ladies who are earning money in munition works," and as this often consumed a fair amount of gold, he thought "it would be a good thing if the Chancellor could manage to get it into the Bank of England instead of going on the persons of these young ladies." Since women have to help to contribute towards the salaries of Members of Parliament who do not represent them, we think that it scarcely behoves a Member of Parliament to criticise the way in which women spend their earnings.

F. A. U.



FRIDAY,  
MAY 11,  
1917.

# THE VOTE

ONE  
PENNY  
WEEKLY.

Organ of the Women's Freedom League.

## FOR SALE.

The articles enumerated below can be seen at "The Vote" Office, 10 to 5 daily, 10 to 12 Saturdays.

**ERMINE NECKLET**; latest fashion; £1 2s. 6d.

**OLD GOLD SELF COLOURED BROCADED DRESS LENGTH** of 5 yards; cost 5s. per yard; 14s. 6d. the piece.

**PAIR SOROSIS TAN LACE BOOTS**, size 4½; 9s. 6d., cost 18s.

**LIBERTY ART PEWTER TEA and COFFEE SET**, with tray; £5 15s., or would be sold separately. **VASES** to match, 25s. each, or £2 2s. the pair.—Mrs. S., c/o "THE VOTE" Office.

**BLACK SPANISH LACE SCARF**; very cheap.

**NAVY SERGE COSTUME**, full skirt, short sacque coat, double-breasted; good condition; very cheap, 8s. 6d.

**BEAUTIFULLY HANDEMBROIDERED BEDSPREAD**; 22s. 6d.; wash perfectly.

**INDIAN DELHI-CARVED SOLID IVORY BULLOCK-CART**, with drivers and attendants; 12in. long, 7in. high; exquisite and perfect; £15 or offers.

**FOUR YARDS MAUVE** (in two pieces) superior quality **CASHMERE DE SOIR**; 7s. 11d. per yard, cost 12s. 11d.

**ORIENTAL DESIGN PINK and YELLOW VELVET PORTIERE** or **SOFA COVER**, 2½ by 1½ yards; £2 2s.

**PAISLEY SILK TAFFETA COAT**; new; 30s.; very cheap.

**SUPERIOR QUALITY NEW TAILOR-MADE COAT FROCK**, stock size; £2 18s. 6d.

**NAVY BLUE SERGE COSTUME DRESS LENGTH**; 7s. 11d. yard.

**SHOT TAFFETA**, wine colour and black; width 20in.; 10 yards for 10s. 6d.; very cheap.

**BLUE and WHITE STRIPED SILK SCARF**; 26in. wide, 2½ yards long; new, 8s. 6d.

**SEVERAL SEMI-EVENING or DINNER FROCKS**; new; cheap.

**ELECTRIC SEAL COAT**, three-quarter; £3.

**COSTUME LENGTH, DARK HELIOTROPE GABARDINE**, 5 yards; 56in. wide; 7s. 11d. yard.

**USEFUL Hair-stuffed COUCH**; 47s. 6d.

**MOLE-COLOURED GABARDINE**, 7 yards; 7s. 6d. yard.

## FOR SALE—cont.

**IRISH LACE BLOUSE**; 15s., cost 37s.

**GREY VELOUR VELVETEEN**, 7½ yards; 14s. 6d.

**BLUE SILK DAY DRESS**; £4 4s. Mourning.

**BLACK WATCH KILT SKIRT**; 30s., cost 79s. 6d. Mourning.

**GREY SATIN DAY DRESS**; £5 5s. Mourning.

**LARGE SIZE LACE and NET BLOUSE**; 30s. Mourning.

**A FIRST-CLASS VIOLIN**. Price £16. Seen by appointment only.—Mrs. F., c/o "THE VOTE" Office.

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**SALMON PINK EVENING COAT**, lined cream satin, deep cape, edged swansdown; new; £1; very cheap.

**BLACK SILK CREPE** (9 yards); 46in. wide; 9s. 11d. per yard; would be cut.

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**FOR SALE**, an excellent undeveloped Business in Ladies' Hairdressing and Babies' Hand-made Frocks and Garments; suit one or two ladies. Hairdressing may be closed, worked separately, or terms include tuition. Connection established well. Owner can show good reasons for selling at once. Price about £250.—Apply Box 55, "THE VOTE" Office.

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## MISCELLANEOUS—cont.

**64-PAGE BOOK ABOUT HERBS AND HOW TO USE THEM**, free. Send for one.—TRIMMELL, The Herbalist, 144, Richmond-rd., Cardiff. Est. 1879.

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**SUFI SOCIETY**, 86, Ladbroke-road, W.—Lecture, Sunday, May 13, at 8 p.m., Mrs. Despard on "Love and Death"; Tuesday, May 15, Mrs. F. E. Smith on "Astrological Symbolism of the British Union Jack." Admission free.—Full particulars of other lectures from Secretary, as above.

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