

The Common Cause OF HUMANITY.

The Organ of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

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[The National Union does not hold itself responsible for opinions expressed in signed articles.]



ANNE STOCKS.



CHRISTOPHER STRACHEY.

SOME SUFFRAGE BABIES.

As this is Baby Week, we reproduce portraits of two fine specimens of babyhood. They are the two youngest babies belonging to members of the present Executive Committee of the N.U.W.S.S., and are both well under two years old.

Notes and News.

The National Baby Week.

The National Baby Week campaign that has been carried on this week throughout the country cannot fail to have roused the public conscience, as it has never been roused before, to the needs for improving the conditions in which children are born and reared. A particularly hopeful sign is the realisation shown both in the press and by numerous speakers of the part played by bad housing and sanitation in causing needless infant deaths. If the nation really wants to save these children, says *The Daily Telegraph* (July 3rd) its duty is clear. "It means a new enthusiasm for sanitation and a real crusade—such as hardly any municipality as yet has had the courage to carry out—against the owners of insanitary property."

The same note was struck at the mass meeting held on Monday in the Guildhall under the Presidency of the Lord Mayor, at which a resolution, proposed by the Duchess of Marlborough, was passed, pledging the citizens there assembled to enquire into the conditions which are responsible for the high rate of infant mortality, and undertake to use their influence to secure improved housing and sanitation, together with adequate provision for the care of maternity and infancy in their own districts. The need for both national and local effort to obtain better housing and sanitation was emphasised by Lord Rhondda, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, and Mr. Ben Tillett, and Mr. Hayes Fisher, declaring that the number of people living in single-roomed tenements was a disgrace to the nation, urged the necessity for having our housing plans ready for operation immediately after the war. Let all those present, he said, be Ministers of Health in their own districts. Let them stimulate local opinion and see that the powers already possessed by the local authorities were used.

An article by Miss Rathbone on page 163 shows the importance of the women's municipal vote in connection with housing and sanitation.

Doing Battle for the Children.

American women are determined that the withdrawal of men from the field and factory shall not be made an excuse for exploiting the children, and the National Women's Suffrage Association is rounding up its forces to do battle on this issue. "If the fight for the child labour law is to be made all over again," says *The Woman Citizen* of June 9th, "the women must help to make it. Women are being called on to do a good deal in connection with the war. They will do more than the children may do less. When every woman in the land has become a productive agent, when every old man is working to the limit of his capacity, it will be time enough to begin to think of throwing the burdens of production upon the young backs of children."

A New American Suffrage Paper.

We welcome the first number of *The Woman Citizen*, the official organ of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. It amalgamates *The Woman's Journal*, founded in 1870 as a weekly newspaper devoted to winning equal rights, and especially equal suffrage for women; *The Woman Voter*, founded in 1910 by the Woman Suffrage Party of New York City; and *The National Suffrage News*, founded in 1915 under the name of the "Headquarters News Letter." *The Woman Citizen*, explains its editor, "comes with a purpose and a challenge. It comes as a woman's political weekly to help secure votes for women under every flag that floats . . . and on beyond suffrage secured, it still sees a destiny for women, and will endeavour still to be correlated with women's progress."

Progress in U.S.A.

English Suffragists are familiar with Parliamentary delays, and the picture of Suffrage Bills which, having passed their second reading, are pressed no further. In the United States' Congress the procedure is different, but the result has too often been the same. Bills, or Amendments to the Constitution, before being introduced into the House of Representatives or the Senate, are discussed by a Special Committee appointed for this purpose. The nomination of this Committee depends on the decision of the Rules Committee, and news has come that this Committee has reported favourably on the nomination of a House Committee on women's suffrage. As such a Committee already exists in the Senate, it looks as though a distinct step towards

the passing of the Women's Suffrage Amendment to the Constitution was about to be made.

Sixty Men Wept.

Great pleasure has been given to anti-suffragists by the tears that Miss Jeannette Rankin, the only woman member of the American House of Representatives, is reported to have shed when giving her vote against America's declaration of war. Whether she really did shed tears is uncertain, but we have it on the authority of a member of Congress—Mr. Treadwell—that at least sixty men did.

There is nothing surprising in this. The British House of Commons, even with its Celtic element, is popularly supposed to be the most unemotional legislative assembly in the world. But tears are not unknown there. Macaulay bears witness to the joyful ones that were shed when the first Reform Bill passed its Second Reading. There have been sadder ones since.

The manner in which deep emotion is shown is a matter of temperament and training. Self-restraint is admirable, but it is easier to feel respect for tears shed for the wounds of the Commonwealth in moments of great stress, than for the "ironical laughter" with which Party politicians sometimes greet a plea for justice.

General Smuts and the Freedom of Women.

In an interview with Mr. Edward Marshall, published in *The Observer* on July 1st, General Smuts spoke of what America's part in the great war might mean for the freedom of the world, and said that he would like to send a message to American women.

"They should realise that one of the great truths about this struggle is that it is for the position which all womanhood will hold throughout the world in days to come. This is a war for peace and through the lack of peace the sufferings of women have been greater than the sufferings of men. It must be, and they must help to make it, the last chapter in the old book of war and horror, destruction of dear homes, rapes, massacres, and outrage. They must help to make it the great end of the oppressions of all womanhood. In Europe, speaking generally, women still are held in thrall by the old feudal system, and by helping in this war with all their strength and all their hearts and all their souls American women may do much to help to break those chains."

We hope that these words are a good omen, not only for the domestic freedom of the women of South Africa, who do not wish to be left behind when most other British women are attaining full citizenship, but for all the "women still held in thrall" in so many parts of the world.

Better Late than Never.

Rosendale Liberals were doubtless interested to learn that their former member, Viscount Harcourt, is now in favour not only of votes for women, but of votes for all women. His statement that the "potential danger" of the preponderance of women over men was one which ought to be "faced quickly" was received with cheers, and so was his confession that he had been wrong in his former estimate of what women could do for the State in war. He ended by saying that in this war women had played a part which was not only patriotic and splendid, but beyond any reasonable anticipation of their mental, moral, and physical capacity; that in the gigantic and vital problems of reconstruction after the war the country would need the voice and opinion of women "not only of those over thirty, but of all women of full and reasonable age."

Anticipations, it is clear, sometimes delude, but we hope that after this we shall not be mistaken in anticipating that in the House of Lords, Lord Harcourt will speak and vote in favour of Women's Suffrage.

Mesopotamia.

The Government Report on Mesopotamia is the kind of revelation which is calculated to produce bitter feeling in those sections of the people which are excluded from the higher administrative posts. The muddle and stupidity and inter-departmental jealousy, which has caused so much suffering and the loss of so many precious lives, is the fault of a bad system even more than of individuals. It is part of that system to refuse the help of women, or only to use it in subordinate posts. When we remember what our Scottish Women's Hospitals have actually accomplished in the places where they have been allowed to help, and still more when we reflect what an increase of efficiency we might look for throughout the public service if the chief qualifications for all posts were ability and devotion, irrespective of sex or class, it is difficult to wait patiently till future generations have gradually learned the lessons which this one is teaching them by its mistakes.

Representation of the People Bill in Committee.**CLAUSES 9-14. REGISTRATION.**

Rapid progress was made with the Representation of the People Bill last week. Clauses 9 to 14, dealing with the whole process by which those qualified to vote can get themselves registered, were rapidly passed. It was decided that (except in the Universities) the registers shall be prepared in the spring and the autumn; that there shall be a Registration Officer in each Parliamentary Borough to prepare them; that would-be voters shall be able to appeal from the Registration Officer to the County Court, and from the County Court to the Court of Appeal; that the expenses of registration shall be borne by the counties and boroughs concerned, and that there shall be special arrangements for the urban districts and for London.

The only division on any of these clauses was on an amendment to Clause 12, which would have had the effect of making the appeal from the Registration Officer be to the Revising Barrister instead of the County Court. This was rejected by 197 to 18. Government majority 179.

THE REMAINING CLAUSES AND THE REPORT STAGE.

Clause 15, dealing with Proportional Representation, is being discussed, as we go to press.

The remaining clauses have little in them which is controversial. When they have been dealt with, the Bill will have to come back from the Committee to the whole House for the report stage, and when the points that have been left to that stage have been cleared up, it will be sent on to the House of Lords.

Four of these points are of special interest to women.

The most important of these is the question of the Municipal vote. It will be remembered by those who have studied the Bill that the last section of Clause 4 as it stands provides that "A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a Local Government elector for any Local Government electoral area where she would be entitled to be so registered as if she were a man: *Provided that husband and wife shall not both be qualified as Local Government electors in respect of the same property.*" Towards the end of the debate on Clause 4 (on June 20th) MR. CHARLES ROBERTS (*Lincoln*) moved as an amendment that the words in italics above should be omitted, and that instead words should be inserted which would make Clause 4 read: "A woman shall be entitled to be registered as a Local Government elector in any electoral area where she would be entitled to be so registered if she were a man; or where she is the wife of a man entitled to be so registered."

In expressing the Government's attitude about this amendment, THE HOME SECRETARY pointed out that it was of immense importance, because its effect would be to add about 5,000,000 women Local Government electors to the present 1,000,000. He recognised, however, that it had a good deal of support in the House (where many speeches had been made in favour of it, including one from Mr. Arnold Ward); and while deprecating anything being decided at the moment, he gave an assurance that the whole matter might be reconsidered later on.

The immense importance of this question to women is set forth by Miss Rathbone in an article which follows.

The second point interesting to women which will have to be dealt with is the question of Plural Voting. In the discussion on Clause 7, the Government put into the Bill a proviso that a woman shall not vote more than once in virtue of her own qualification or in virtue of her husband's qualification. That is to say, if she votes for her house she may not also vote for her husband's business premises, even though he may have two votes for the two qualifications. This seems just, so far as married women are concerned, but it is important that it should be so amended as to allow a woman who has two genuine qualifications, one for residence and one for her own business premises to have two votes, as she would have if she were a man.

With regard to the University qualification, a question may arise as to the right to vote of women who have done the degree course at Oxford or Cambridge, and, if they were men, would have degrees, and therefore votes. As things are now they are excluded from degrees because they are women, and unless their rights are made clear in the final discussions on the Bill, it seems likely that they may also be excluded from the University vote.

The fourth point is the question of the pauper disqualifica-

tion for voting. The Government have promised so to arrange matters that only people who have actually been inmates of workhouses, State lunatic asylums, and other State institutions for the destitute shall be disqualified, and that those who have received out-door relief, or whose dependents have received it, shall not therefore be excluded from voting. Suffragists will watch anxiously to see that this promise is carried out, as otherwise the widowed mothers for whom the State does not yet provide pensions, and who are, therefore, often forced to seek out-relief, will find themselves deprived of the vote which they need even more than most other women.

Municipal Votes for the Married Women.

So far as any measure can be secure until it is actually on the Statute Book, the Parliamentary vote for women is now secure. At least we are certain that if Clause 4 perishes, the whole Bill will perish with it, and that its downfall will be brought about by causes which have nothing to do with the merits of women's suffrage, or even with the opinion of the representatives of the male voters upon those merits. Until this result was achieved, women suffragists were inevitably timid about speaking their mind about the other parts of the Representation of the People Bill, lest they might be jeopardising the safety of the Clause. Now we may speak freely.

There is one defect in the Bill, which to those who care for women's suffrage not merely as a symbol, but as a practical instrument for effecting reforms, goes far to destroy their satisfaction in all that has been gained. Like the fly in the ointment it spoils for us the whole precious boxful. This is the failure of the Bill to extend the Local Government Franchise to married women. Though the suffrage societies were acutely conscious of this defect, they refrained from pressing for its removal, for fear of being accused of tampering with the compromise. One member, however, Mr. Charles Roberts, disregarding this fear, put down an amendment to set the matter right, and his courage was rewarded, as courage so often is, by finding the sense of the House almost unanimously in favour of the proposal. The amendment was not then accepted by the Government, but hopes were held out that it would be reconsidered on the report stage. It is therefore worth while for women to consider what will be gained if this improvement can be effected, and what we shall lose if it is withheld.

First; it must be admitted by everyone that the failure to include the Municipal Franchise in the concession to married women will make their political status extraordinarily lopsided and anomalous. We have for years been told by opponents of women's suffrage that their opposition was directed solely against the participation of women in imperial and national affairs: that their right to take a fuller part in all the purely domestic affairs of the nation which are administered by local authorities was almost universally conceded. Those who have supported women suffrage have in their writings and speeches based their support mainly, though not entirely, upon the need for social reforms affecting especially the lives of women and children, and upon the value of the specialised experience which women can bring to bear upon these reforms. Yet now that the long delayed boon has at length been granted, just that part of it is withheld which is needed to make effective the influence of women upon these domestic questions. Where imperial and national questions are concerned, women, so far as they hold the Parliamentary vote, will have the same right as male voters of controlling the executive as well as the legislative authority, since the central government is held in power by the Parliamentary majority behind it. But in domestic matters where Parliament legislates, but local authorities administer, women are to be given control over legislation, but denied it over administration. Could there be anything more irrational and absurd? It is as though Parliament, anxious to make some concession to Mr. Arnold Ward and his little handful of followers had copied the judgment of Solomon, and cutting the body politic into half, had offered to women the superior part—the head to plan with, but not the arms and legs to execute their plans. Yet, to make the anomaly more complete, Mr. Arnold Ward, in 1913, himself introduced a Bill for enabling a married woman to vote upon her husband's qualification! Suffragists at the time suspected him of doing it merely to draw a herring across the trail of the Parliamentary Franchise. He will shortly have an opportunity of proving his sincerity by disclaiming the proposed partition, and crying dramatically to Sir George Cave: "Give her the living child."

This should be the more probable, since anti-suffragists may be expected to hold that as Parliament has in its un-wisdom

determined to give women political privileges, they should at least be trained to exercise them as little disastrously as possible. As a Conservative statesman said on an analogous occasion, "We must educate our new masters." But the natural training ground for national politics is clearly municipal politics. The human mind proceeds naturally from the nearer to the more remote, from the individual to the general, from the concrete to the abstract. Granted, (as suffragists may quite frankly grant) that to-day a smaller proportion of women than of men are keenly interested in public affairs, because, as we believe, they have not yet been given the responsibility which quickens interest, surely the last way to remedy their alleged indifference is to take away all the natural stepping-stones across which the minds of the new citizens should pick their way, from the sanitation of the home to the sanitation of the city, and thence to the great Public Health Acts which affect the whole community. Make the hardest driven working housewife realise that there is a direct connection between her use of the municipal vote and the punctual emptying of her own ashbin; next rouse in her a sense of her responsibility for the ashbins of her neighbours, and you will have taken the first step towards making her an intelligent citizen and keen politician.

But, of course, the most serious consequence of the withholding of the Local Government franchise is not its effect upon women voters but its effect upon local government. To gauge the full extent of the calamity it is necessary to remember that by far the greater part of social legislation is permissive. It does not compel the local authorities to carry out certain improvements; it permits them to do so. The more progressive authorities exercise their powers, though rarely to the fullest possible extent, and frequently anticipate general legislation by private bills. The less progressive do nothing, or as little as possible—just enough to look well on paper. In each authority the degree and rate of progress depend largely upon its individual permanent officials and leading councillors, but it also depends largely upon the forces in the community which are pressing for progress or are retarding it. In those forms of social effort which affect vested interests, such as Housing and Town Planning, the forces which retard are always strong and well organised. The matter is one that affects the great body of working-class inhabitants so vitally, that one might expect that the forces that press for progress would also be strong and much more numerous. But, as a matter of fact, it does not seem to be so. One hears of very little active agitation of any kind among men's organisations on the subject of housing, probably because working men (those who live in the kind of house that needs sweeping away) spend about only a third of their hours in their houses, and those are spent mostly in sleep. Bad housing conditions affect mostly the women and children. That is probably why legislation on the matter of housing is so far ahead of achievement. There are, and have been, for the last quarter of a century enough laws on the Statute Book to sweep away all slums and replace them by sanitary dwellings. Since the Town Planning Act of 1909, there has been enough legislation to prevent the creation of any fresh slums. Yet even in those cities which are supposed to have the most progressive housing policies, the rate of demolition is deplorably slow, and, meanwhile, fresh rows of congested, jerry-built houses are springing up, destined in their time to become slums only one degree less insanitary than those of to-day.

In other matters, such for example as child welfare, where there are no vested interests to conciliate, the chief retarding influence is simply indifference and desire for economy. Progress, therefore, may be rapid if there happens to be an energetic Medical Officer of Health or a few influential councillors who have made it their special study. Otherwise, scarcely anything may be done, and the chances are that no one except a few women's societies, which will not be listened to because they do not represent voters, will even ask for action.

At the moment, child welfare schemes are the "fashion," and rapid progress has been made since 1914. Yet, according to the latest report, there are still ten county councils which have as yet adopted no scheme and ten that have adopted one only for part of their area. Even in the best provided municipalities, to those who are in contact with the life of the slums, the extent of the provision seems almost as inadequate to meet the real need as the efforts of the "seven maids with seven mops" to sweep the seaside clear of sand.

To supply the driving power that is lacking in these matters of social reform, I can think of no one change that would be a quarter so effective as the conferring of the municipal vote upon married women.

Of course, we suffragists are always accused of exagger-

ating the importance of votes. But let anyone who doubts the extent and kind of the influence which the married woman is likely to bring to bear on domestic administration in matters such as health and housing, try the experiment of talking on the subject to audiences of working women, not in general terms, but in detail. Talk to them about ashbins and street-sweeping, about boilers and baths and sanitary conveniences, about play-grounds and continuation classes. On these topics, the most slumbrous and apathetic audience can be roused to voiciferous interest, and, with a little organisation, could easily be led to take such vigorous action that no councillor who desired re-election would venture to flout them.

The majority of suffragists, though admitting these things, have so long been almost wholly obsessed by the Parliamentary vote, and are so profoundly relieved at seeing the goal at last in sight, that they almost resent being reminded of this great blot on the Bill, which they regard as the Charter of their freedom. "When once we get the Parliamentary vote, all the rest is only a matter of time." Just so; only a matter of time. But one would like to compel each one of these complacent people to take a walk through a really bad town area, so that she might remind herself what the conditions of life are like which she is content to remedy "in time," as if a year or two sooner or later did not much matter.

The best sort of street to select as a specimen would be one of those which have courts opening out of them every few yards, so that one sees congregated in the street as the common playground the children from the courts as well as from the houses of the street. Edward Denison, in one of his letters, says that the children in such a street "resemble nothing so much as the quivering mass of maggots on a lump of carrion." Most of them are ragged, dirty, white-faced, vermin-scarred; many have the clotted red eyelids, which as clearly as the scarlet A on the adulterer's breast, point to the sins of their fathers.

Let her turn from the street to one of the wretchedly narrow courts, with six houses on each side, a standpipe for water in the middle and one or two offices, overflowing with filth. By assuming an official air and bluffing a little, she can easily get access to the houses and examine their amenities. These are not likely to include any place for storing coal or food, except a small cupboard wedged between the fireplace and the wall. (This, indeed, as the hottest place in the house, is the favourite position for food cupboards even in the most up-to-date municipal houses.) According to the character of the family, the house may be crowded with furniture and dust-collecting knicknacks, or it may be almost as bare as a horse box. However well kept, it is bound to be stuffy, since it is back to back with a house in the next court, and, even if the present tenants are decent people, it will almost certainly be infested with fleas, possibly with bugs, sub-tenants handed on by the last family. A respectable old woman inhabitant of such a house, once gave me a graphic description of the horrors of her nights, when she did not dare to sleep because she had the habit of sleeping with her mouth open, and was afraid that the vermin crawling on the ceiling would drop into it. The bedroom, like the living room, will reflect the character of the inhabitants. At the worst, its furniture will consist of one double bed for the parents and the younger children, a flock mattress on the floor shared by the elder boys and girls, and two pails filled with excrement.

Into such homes, thousands of children in every big town are born every year. A good many of them, if left to themselves and their parents, will, after a short experience of life, apparently decide that they have had enough of it, and slip quietly away into their little graves. But public opinion, with an eye to the possibilities of another great war, has been aroused to the danger of allowing these desertions from the ranks of its future citizens, and the word has gone forth that they must be stopped. Hence, in progressive municipalities, enough is being done to keep the babies alive, though never enough to keep them healthy, and housing committees prepare schemes, at a pace infinitely leisurely, and with the tenderest care lest the interests of property owners should suffer, to sweep away the worst sort of slums.

If suffragists hold that the granting of the Municipal vote to married women would do anything at all to accelerate the pace and to make the measures taken more effective, they are surely incurring the gravest kind of responsibility if, either from apathy or from an excess of timidity, or from a doctrinaire objection to the form of amendment which seems most practicable, they refrain from taking every step which is possible and expedient to secure the removal on the report stage of this great blot upon the Representation of the People Bill, 1917.

ELEANOR RATHBONE.

Reviews.

FROM CAMBRIDGE TO CARMELIERS UNDER THE RED CROSS. E. M. Spearing. (W. Heffer & Sons. 2s. net.)

It has been rather a misfortune that so many of the men and women the interest of whose war experiences moves them to write books, seem unable to tell their tale simply, as they would write to their friends at home, but fall into that pitfall of the inexperienced author, the "booky" style. From this failing Miss Spearing's record of her life in hospital is refreshingly free, so that one is not surprised to learn from her preface that she was engaged in literary work, though of a very different kind, at the outbreak of war. Now she has given us a vivid picture of the life of a nurse in the more or less extemporised home hospitals of the beginning of the war, and in camp and base hospitals abroad.

To those themselves familiar with this life the book will appeal particularly because of its freedom from exaggeration and over-sentimentality, and its appreciation of the British soldier as he reveals himself in hospital. Of his fine and lovable qualities Miss Spearing has much to say. "I have not met many of the so-called 'gentlemen rankers' but I have come to the conclusion that the ranks of the B.E.F. are filled with gentlemen in the best sense of the word. A nurse of the B.E.F. is sure of the gentlest, most considerate treatment from the men she tends. . . . There is no loose talking so long as she is in the ward, and though the British Army is said to 'swear terribly in Flanders' she will hardly ever hear an oath unless the patient is delirious. The self-restraint of the men is marvellous. The modern Tommy is often a highly-strung individual, very sensitive to pain, and it is all the more to his credit that he should so seldom give vent to strong language in hospital, and should be ready to stuff the pillow into his mouth, as I have seen him do, lest he should utter a cry which would wake a sleeping 'pal.' But this is only a negative virtue. The positive side is seen in his readiness to help, his cheerfulness, his generosity in sharing whatever good things fall to his lot."

There are passages in the book which give the true atmosphere of the wards, and tales which reveal the whimsical unexpectedness which flavours their peculiar brand of humour. There is the tale of the old Scotsman who could not learn to make his bed properly. "When he was scolded for its untidy appearance, he pleaded that he was not used to sleeping in a bed, and added: 'Our Lord waurna used to it neither. Ye ken He had not where to lay His head.' Fortunately, the V.A.D. who reproved him was also Scotch. 'And if He had, He would have made it better than that,' she retorted quickly, pointing to the dishevelled blankets."

Also there is the yarn, told by an old regular sergeant of how "at one village his regiment took the enemy unawares, all drunk, dancing the tango, and practising the goose-step. Some R.A.M.C. men, no fighters, of course, unarmed, captured thirteen Germans with full equipment. They brought 'em along, and the officer 'e looked at 'em, and—'Wot d'yer call these?' says 'e. 'Well, sir,' says one of the R.A.M.C., 'I s'pose they'd call 'emselves Germans!'"

Miss Spearing tells us something of the vicissitudes of a nurse's life in France—of the rigors of a camp hospital in winter when tents blow down, or leak, or get snowed up—of the sudden shifting to the comparative luxury of a big town, and of the inclination of the transplanted nurses to look askance at first at the luxuries of white sheets and bedroom fires, and to pine for the freedom of their outdoor life in camp.

She has a good deal to say about the soldier as a letter writer, and about his music, *à propos* of which she observes: "My whole time in hospital seems to have been spent to the accompaniment of different tunes, changing as the war went on from 'Tipperary' in the early days to 'Keep the home fires burning,' that suited so well with the winter nights and the darkness pierced by the flames from the charcoal braziers of my first camp hospital, on through 'When Irish eyes are smiling,' which haunted the Base, to the 'Sunshine of your smile' and 'The long trail winding,' heralding the Somme."

The final chapter has some frank comments on the illusions she found prevalent at home when she returned from France, as, for example, "That a turn in the trenches makes bad men into good, and wasters into strong, silent heroes; that wounded soldiers like having nothing to do all day, and going out to tea with duchesses," and that "no one ever gets drunk in France," her own opinion being that "the members of the B.E.F., when invalided home, would rather be regarded as responsible human beings than as children to be amused with toys, or lions to be fêted at society functions"; that they would "rather have justice from the Government than charity from outsiders, and their bugbear is, as many of them have told me, that when the war is over and the cheering has died away, they will find themselves maimed and broken, selling matches or boot laces in the streets." A bitter thought, but only too well founded in the history of our former wars.

THE ENGLISHWOMAN.—Lady Selborne, writing on The Suffrage Commission, points out that the Representation of the People Bill will enable the great mass of the mothers of the nation to vote. . . . "the women who have most reason to be interested in the health and welfare of children, and as such should form a valuable element in the electorate." Under "Problems of the Day," the continued need is discussed of a paper, or papers, in which women can expound their point of view "unpolarised by masculine spectacles." Miss Lowndes contributes a charming story, entitled "The Venetian Jars"; Mrs. Walters writes on "Rescue Homes," and there is an interesting article on piano-tuning as a profession for women.

THE SHIELD contains an article on the Illegal Medical Examination of Women Prisoners, showing the very unsatisfactory attitude taken by the Home Office with regard to this question, and the importance of asking Members of Parliament to take the matter up. Other articles deal with the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Age of Protection in Europe and Elsewhere, Some Vital Principles of Moral Education, the Moral Value of the Boy Scout Movement, the New "Preventive" Methods for Dealing with Venereal Disease, and Prostitution and the American Army in Mexico.

THE FORTNIGHTLY has an article by Dr. Mary Scharlieb on National Baby Week in which she discusses the question of our falling birth-rate, and the bad housing, and other conditions, that are largely responsible for infant mortality.

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Non-Party

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Current Work

Local Advisory Committees have been formed in the following Metropolitan areas: Marylebone, Holborn, and Hampstead.

July Meetings

- July 10th. Women's Municipal Party Study Circle. Subject: Registration and Qualification.
- July 12th. Islington and St. Pancras Committees. Garden Meeting at Lady Crosfield's, West Hill, Highgate. Speakers: The Viscountess Howick, Lady Islington, Lady Myer, Mrs. Turner, The Mayors of Islington and St. Pancras. Chairman: Lady Crosfield.
- July 18th. Hackney Committee. Meeting at Mrs. Paget's, 26, Clapton Common. Speakers: Councillor Miss N. Adler, L.C.C., The Urgent Need of More Women on the L.C.C., Dr. Sloane-Chesser; The Mother in the Labour Market. Chair: Mrs. Paget, Women's Duty to her Borough.
- July 20th. Quarterly Conference at Sunderland House between Executive Committee and Local Representatives.
- July 28th. Hammersmith Committee. Garden Meeting at Mrs. MacGregor's, Stamford Brook House. Mrs. Stocks and Sir William Bull, M.P. will speak on Electoral Reform. Miss Elsie Hall on "The Necessity of Educated Women Practising as Midwives."

Women's Municipal Party Citizen Associations' Monthly Meetings

- July 4th. Somers Town: "National Baby Week." Speaker: Woman Health Visitor.
- July 5th. Upper Norwood: "National Baby Week." Speaker: Miss Frodsham.
- July 9th. South St. Pancras: "National Baby Week." Speaker: Woman Health Visitor.
- July 11th. South Islington: "National Baby Week." Speaker: Miss Cox.
- July 16th. North St. Pancras: Visit by members to St. Pancras Electric Light Station, Disinfecting Station, and Family Shelter.
- July 25th. Finsbury: Speaker: Mrs. Sidgwick. Subject: Food.
- July 26th. North Lambeth: Meeting at Lady Margaret Hall Settlement.

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The Future.

In the fortnight since the triumphant division on the Representation of the People Bill, Suffragists all over the country have naturally been thinking a good deal about the future.

It is true that the long struggle of the N.U.W.S.S. for the political enfranchisement of women is not yet over, and will not be over when the Representation of the People Bill is placed on the Statute Book. But the admission of women to the complete equality of voting rights which is our object is now only a question of time. The length or shortness of the time depends on how long the male electorate, still in a large majority, take to find out that women are not, after all, so very different from themselves, and that if there are more women than men in the country, there can be no possible danger or evil in having more female voters than male. The fear of woman as a political creature, which still lingers in the minds of some men, will dissolve when they see how useful the women voters are to the State. The best argument for the extension of the Suffrage to more women will be a wise use of their votes by those who are about to be enfranchised.

In the course of their long struggle for freedom, a strong corporate feeling has grown up among women. This commonly happens to any part of humanity which had been denied the opportunity of making its full contribution to the whole. (It explains the peculiar intensity with which patriotism often burns in subject races.) At the present time women undoubtedly feel that they have some special experience, some special aptitudes, some special interests, which have not been sufficiently taken into account in the past, and which need to be more considered, not only for their own sake, but for the well-being of the whole. In the future we believe that the Commonwealth will develop more fully and in truer proportions, but in order that it should do so, it is essential that women should first bring their special experience to the service of the State. The questions that up to now have been looked on as in a special sense women's questions—maternity, child welfare, domestic hygiene, education of girls, employment of women—will perhaps not always be women's questions only, but at the present moment it does, we believe, depend mainly on women that they should have their full weight.

If we are right, it is obviously of vital importance that women should remain organised as women, at any rate, for the present. Whether the actual organisations of women now existing are to go on as they are at present, or what processes of fusion, or division, or reconstruction we may look for among them is, of course, another question. It is one about which every member of these organisations should think hard. Many members of National Union Societies are, we know, already thinking about it. Our own great organisation, built up in fifty years of toil and thought, has shown its marvellous vitality and flexibility through all the tests of the war. It is probable that not many political associations that have ever been formed could have come through three years in which they had to abstain almost entirely from political action, and remained as alive and as strong as the N.U.W.S.S. is at the present time. Perhaps this shows that it is something more than a political association. We can hardly doubt that it has a future. What that future is to be we cannot yet know for certain. If all goes well with the Bill, our Council will meet in the autumn to decide. In the meantime we must all think. We may have many different ideas as to what will be the best course of action after our immediate object is attained. We shall all be agreed about our ultimate aim. We all want to make our citizenship as useful as possible to the community in which we live, and to the common cause of humanity. For that we must strive. I. B. O'M.

What Next?

Among the first results of the advent of the vote will be a great quickening and stirring up of thought among women. It is one of the advantages that we have always insisted upon as a result of acquiring the franchise, that the political sense of half of our citizens, hitherto starved and atrophied, is bound to start into fresh and vigorous growth by the mere impulse of being permitted to function.

In practice we shall find, I think, that of all the good results we hope for, this will be the first to show itself. The new voters will be an object of immediate solicitude to party agents and prospective candidates. They will be approached with arguments and with promises; on all sides they will be respectfully begged to form an opinion on political matters, where they were previously discouraged from attending to such subjects at all.

All this will lead to a ferment of new thought, and we may be certain that all over the country there will be springing very soon into being fresh groups of women newly alive to their claims and to their chances, drawn together as much by a freshly awakened interest in affairs as by the thousand and one particular aims they may respectively support.

At present the women's organisations are for the most part national organisations, each with a specific object like our own. The value of these organisations to their members as an education in political thought and habit of mind is enormous, and certainly need not be laboured with those who attend our annual councils. What we may look forward to, I hope, is a great increase of vitality in local political organisations. It is, after all, only a minority of women whose turn of mind best suits them to belong to these big national unions with a single object. It is the politics of the parish or the district which most vividly appeal to the majority, and it will be an excellent thing if up and down the country small organisations of the nature of women's interests committees are formed. It will be excellent for their members and excellent for the nation.

Everywhere it is beginning to be realised that we must be prepared to deal with this development, and that it is high time to begin to think how we should best act to prevent a waste and an unnecessary dispersal of this new energy. Some are in favour of forming organisations to capture the new vote for feminist objects, and this can mean nothing but the creation of a feminist party in the House of Commons. Others are for sending out a body of missionaries to teach and exhort the new voters, and inculcate good feminism in their minds. For my part, I am for none of this. Women must learn, and will learn, to take their own independent position as individuals in the State. They can only do so by their own efforts. They must think and discuss, discuss and think. In the process they are bound to adopt with zeal a mass of contradictory and often self-contradictory opinions, and all this is to the good. What is needed is not a feminist programme or a spoon-feeding propaganda, but an elastic and simple organisation to enable small local societies such as I have described to consult and combine with their neighbours, and to provide a machinery, not for making all women think or act alike, but for helping them to acquire readily the different views that are current and to facilitate combination among those who share the same opinions.

During the next few months, while opinion is still fluid, we shall have time to work out an organisation on these lines, making use, where possible, of existing organisations, insisting throughout on autonomy and the democratic methods that have given such powers of adaptability and endurance to our own great Union.

OLIVER STRACHEY.

"Robbery."

BY MRS. JOHN MENZIES.

"Look!"

The voice sounded clearly at my elbow, but glancing round hurriedly I could see no one. "Imagination," I said to myself, and turned my attention again to the lovely bit of country before me. The walk of exploration had been a hot and dusty one, but it had been well worth while, for here, just out of the beaten track, I had discovered a divine mossy dell, and a shining ribbon of a brook. With a gasp of thankfulness I had dropped upon the grass, and just then I heard that unaccountable voice.

"Look!"

There was nothing to be seen as I glanced to right and left; then, suddenly, coming down the hillside I saw a wonderful sight—a moving throng of babies, tiny tots with laughing faces and unsteady feet came tumbling towards the river. In amazement I saw that the stream of children seemed unending; they were making straight for the brook, and just beyond my reach, taking no notice of my shouts, they paddled right into the water, crowing and laughing as they came, for they were the merest babies. Three had crossed, and were clambering up the opposite bank when a fourth, a tiny girl with glossy curls, fell, and instantly vanished down stream.

With a scream I tried to reach her, but to my horror I could not move. Wildly I looked round for help, but no one was in sight except that unending throng of babies, and no one answered my cries. Then, helpless and petrified, I watched a fearful sight. The laughing crowd came on, straight into the river with their tiny, dancing feet; but one in every four was sucked under the water and disappeared.

Sickened, but helpless, I watched, realising that after three children had passed, the fourth was, in every case, swept away—sometimes with a flutter of chubby hands and an appealing cry, sometimes in silence.

Still they came, still the ghastly tragedy went on, till I looked with loathing at the stream, the murderer of so much life and loveliness, and the voice beside me spoke again.

"One in four," it said, repeating the words from time to time, like a dirge. At last I could bear it no longer, and covered my eyes to shut out the sight.

"Look!" said the same voice a moment later, and I looked up. Quite a different scene met my eyes. I was standing in an enormous school—a building so vast that I could not see its limits. As far as the eye could reach stretched row after row, class after class of children, with their teachers; they were all hard at work, and the sound of thousands of voices rose in the air like a confused drone of bees.

As I watched, I was struck by one curious thing. Everywhere, as far as I could see, one child in every six was wearing bandages. But were they bandages? Those near me looked more like thick cords. Some were tightly bound round the arms, impeding the free use of the hands, others round the chests, others, again, had bands round the head, closing eyes and ears. One small boy near me was constantly trying to lift the strap, or whatever it was, which as constantly slipped back over his eyes, and I saw the little lips quiver as the wretched thing fell again and again, obstructing his sight. Just then his teacher, leaning forward, tried to take it off, but seemed unable, and returned to her blackboard with a sorrowful face.

"What does it mean?" I asked, instinctively questioning the voice which had spoken before.

"One in every six is handicapped as you see," was the reply, "they cannot benefit by the teaching because of the way they are bound."

"But who can do such a dastardly thing?" I exclaimed, almost beside myself with anger and sorrow as I watched a small child tightly bound about the chest, trying to repeat a lesson, and literally fighting for breath.

"I will show you," said the voice.

For a moment a mist gathered before my eyes like a cloud, and then suddenly I was aware of four gigantic figures moving about among the children. One of them, turning, came towards me, and I shivered involuntarily as I looked. For this Thing had vacant eyes and a leering mouth, and as it approached it brought with it a chill, paralysing atmosphere.

"Who is it?" I whispered.

There was no reply, and just then another figure passed, whose lean hands, carrying the cords and tying such merciless knots, were almost fleshless, while its hollow face was lighted with a feverish glow. This emaciated figure was very active, binding up more victims than the others.

"Look again," said the voice at my elbow, and as the third figure came near I instinctively stepped aside, for its proximity was almost more than I could bear. A nauseous odour emanated from its filthy garments, it seemed an incarnation of grime and disease, and the face it turned on mine wore a singularly hopeless yet baleful expression.

"Courage," said the voice beside me, "here is another."

The fourth figure now advanced, and I saw that he was quite different from the others, who seemed to act more or less as his subordinates. In the distance this figure looked well fed and prosperous, while there was a ghastly gaiety in his walk and manner which only emphasised the fearful cruelty of his work. For he carried the heaviest cords of all, and on looking closely I saw that they were plaited with thorns, which lacerated the soft flesh of his small victims.

As this figure approached I found that the plump, well-favoured appearance was an illusion, and through the transparent semblance of flesh I could plainly see the hideous skeleton.

It did not touch me, however, but fell upon a tiny girl near, and with incredible swiftness bound its fearful cords round the fair neck and chest of the helpless mite.

Breathless, and sick at heart, I turned to my invisible conductor.

"Who—or what—is that?" I gasped. "Wait," was the only reply.

Again for an instant a mist blotted out the scene. When it cleared I was looking down from a height on to a vast stretch of country. Feverish activities were going on, many fields were being tilled, and in the cities labyrinths of streets were filled with very busy folk.

"These men and women have never reached their full stature, mentally, physically, or spiritually," said the clear voice beside me.

"Who is to blame?" I cried, passionately, "who allows it?"

There was no answer, but the scene below us changed. Again almost imperceptibly. In the country I began to see many pleasant sights. Here and there a happy motoring party spinning down green lanes, an occasional "tea and tennis" in some of the suburban gardens, and on one or two large plains races were in progress.

Then I was given a glimpse of the inner life of one household, which seemed symbolic of many. Two parents and a grown up son and daughter were just finishing breakfast—a quite comfortable breakfast in spite of the war.

"What!" I exclaimed in horror, "these kind, nice people—that gentle faced mother!"

"Yes," came the reply, "the great General Public which considers itself (and is) 'mostly decent,' is at the root of these evils because of its apathy—because it will not think.

"But—God's in His Heaven," I quoted feebly.

"God's in His Heaven," the voice replied, "and we cannot

guess the destiny of these little ones; but it is for us to see they have room to grow.

The voice ceased, and something brushed across my face. With the movement some sense, or inward eye, was closed, and looking round I saw that I was alone, still resting in the pleasant valley. I looked at my watch—I had been there an hour. Had I slept, and dreamt it all?

Correspondence.

MOTHERS' PENSIONS.

MADAM,—As so much interest is now being evoked by Judge Neil's lectures on Mothers' Pensions, I should like to point out how extremely easy it would be to bring in such a measure in England, using an existing machinery.

Already in most country districts outdoor relief is given to a widow left with children, if she is a woman of good character. There is no attempt made to force her into the workhouse.

Now these drawbacks could both be eliminated by a short Act of Parliament, declaring that widows left with children under fourteen years of age had a statutory right to an allowance of so much per child, which should be paid by the Guardians, half of which should be repaid them by the Exchequer.

I know some people will object to what they call the "taint of the poor law." Why should there be any "taint" in the poor law? Why should we not endeavour to remove it?

Someone in the position of the relieving officer you must have, as if State money is given to support these children there must be some inspection to see that it is spent for the purpose for which it was granted.

Mothers' Pensions could be introduced in this manner with practically no expense of administration, and put into operation without any delay.

SAVE THE BABIES.

MADAM,—Do the good people who write and talk so much about saving the babies ever think what cruel mockery their words are to the thousands of unmarried girls who are, or are to become, mothers?

WOMEN AS CLERK TO THE SESSIONS.

MADAM,—I have been ill, or I would sooner have written in regard to Miss Frost's case as Clerk to the Sessions, that "the Office of Clerk of the Crown in the King's Bench was granted to a woman."

REVIEWS IN BRIEF.

ASSETS OF EMPIRE. R. A. Balbirney. (W. Westall & Co. 5s.) We are told in the preface that "this little book was finished in happier days before the war," and in a peaceful and leisurely fashion certainly

Notes from Headquarters.

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. President: MRS. HENRY FAWCETT, LL.D. Hon. Secretaries: Miss VIOLET EUSTACE, Mrs. OLIVER STRACHEY (Parliamentary), Miss EVELYN ATKINSON (Literature).

In days that were less hopeful for Suffrage than these, we got used to feeling that every disappointment must be swiftly followed by a fresh effort. Now we are realising that a great success must not be followed by a pause, but by hard thinking about the future.

National Union Committees are meeting oftener than ever, and work at the office is full of expectations and hope. There is much to be done, and the members of the Executive Committee who are already working here are very glad indeed to have the help of Miss Deneke, who, now that the Oxford term is over, has come to London to spend her vacation in working for the N.U.

The Executive Committee and THE COMMON CAUSE have special reason to be grateful to Mrs. Heitland, who has come up from Cambridge whenever the need was greatest, and has given invaluable help.

1917 Franchise Fund.

Table with 2 columns: Donor Name and Amount. Includes entries like 'Already acknowledged', 'Mrs. Hartland', 'Mrs. Marguerite M. McArthur', etc.

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MORE GREETINGS FROM OVERSEAS.

Last week we published messages of congratulation from the West Australian National Council of Women and from the Dutch Women's Suffrage Society.

Mrs. Fawcett has since received a letter of warm congratulation from Mademoiselle Gourd on behalf of the Swiss Association for Women's Suffrage. Her Society, she writes, hold this triumph of their ideas in England to be of high value, because they know that it will be reflected throughout the entire world, and that for the Swiss Suffragists specially the example will be a great encouragement in their work.

One of the most interesting messages of congratulation sent to Mrs. Fawcett was from the Birmingham Society's Committee. It was moved, seconded, and supported by the members of the Committee who had served longest on it. The combined years of service of these three ladies amounted between them to 136 years.

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Continued from page 171

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