

MONTHLY NEWS  
of the  
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WOMEN'S FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION.

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*Central Office* : 48, Dover Street, Piccadilly, W. *Telegraphic Address* : "Cufranchis London." *Telephone* : 886 Mayfair.

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JUNE, 1916.

**WOMEN AND FARM WORK.**

BY MISS MAYNARD.

*(Late Principal of Westfield College, University of London).*

England depends to-day on her women and girls as she never has done before. Nothing like the position with which we are now confronted has been possible in the whole of "our rough Island-story." We are told that five million men are potentially in the field, and this before the organised conscription begins. Five million volunteers there are who love their country enough to die for her. Now turn to the "women of military age," and see whether we can count five million who are working as hard; no bloodshed, no wounds, no death, but the same courage, the same perseverance, the same mutual help and corporate feeling, the same disciplined control of self and of desire. It will take some strenuous work before we can be as proud of our women as we are of our men, but we might be. It is indeed possible, even though at present the ideal is far ahead.

I have been making a list of all the skilled occupations we might well take up, and hold the places open for our men. It is a long list, and it ends with "grinding optician's lenses," so it will easily be seen it is too varied and also far too long to quote. My special topic is Farm work; and though I know very little on the subject, that little is from first-hand practical labour, and so it perhaps may be useful as showing by my experience what girls can do, and what they very decidedly cannot do. There is a poise, or adjustment, or recurrence about our health that must not be interfered with; for to keep health is beyond price, and to lose it is to lose the capital with which we start in life; and it should be remembered that one single effort, such as lifting a very heavy weight, may possibly inflict an injury that will be felt for years or for life. There are still men of forty-two and over on the farm-lands, and to them must be entrusted the greater exertions.

Turn first to theory, to the admirable bit of work offered by the Agricultural and Horticultural Colleges, such as Swanley and Studley. Girls are trained in the following departments:—

- (1) Dairy; testing milk, butter and cheese making, tending cows in winter.
- (2) Stock-rearing; calves, goats, pigs, foals,—care of health.
- (3) Poultry-breeding and artificial hatching and rearing—care alive, and trussing dead. The state of the markets.

(4) Bee-keeping; diseases, swarms, sale of honey; increasingly profitable.

(5) Fruit-culture; root pruning, etc., preserving and bottling fruit.

(6) The whole of Market Gardening; intensive cultivation.

(7) Herb-growing for Medicine (great demand, but I am not certain whether it is as yet organised). Preparation of the herbs.

(8) Small house-repairs, carpentry, painting, glazing, plumbing, tinkering

(9) Mechanics; electric light and bells, motor driving, testing and overhauling.

Is this not an inspiring list, even without mentioning our beloved flowers, nor greenhouses nor grapes? This is all out-of-doors simple work, suited to a head that thinks and hands that are busy, so that we can wisely direct the work of others, and do all the lighter or more skilled parts ourselves.

But now for my own experience. The farm was a really fine one in East Anglia; over a thousand acres, everything going on at once, and I was most kindly allowed to try my hand at anything I wished. It should be borne in mind that an entirely sedentary life such as mine was no good preparation for a burst of agriculture; and, moreover, I have been twenty years a Principal and so was not young, and therefore what I could do I should think every ordinary woman could do, and a strong girl might get through half as much again with ease. Some things could not be done at all, and one of them was ploughing. We were in a field where a heavy crop of maize had been cut down, and so long as the great flat blade was wrenching and crunching its way through the stiff roots, and the muscles of my splendid horses were at full strain, I got on well; but when we turned, and the great wave of soft earth heaved and turned off the share, the pace was far too quick. I had to run between the stilts, and the attempt ended in panting and laughter. Also I could not go near to lift a sack of corn, or pile the great waggon with sheaves, nor could I build the straw-stack. Charming work it looked with the glittering cataract of strong yellow straw showering down to all appearance from the blue sky overhead; you had only to catch it on your fork, turn it this way and that way alternately, and so keep your corners even; but to an unpractised hand it proved hot and tiring to a degree overwhelming.

But now for what could be done. Thining turnips could be managed for two hours at a time, but not for longer. Cleaning mangolds is the same kind of work; also for two hours. Building traves—(i.e., stocks or shocks) from the bundles



left by the Reaper and Binder—is sweet, clean and desirable work, but I doubt if it could go on more than three hours at a time. To sit in the perched up iron chair of that same reaper and guide two massive and gentle horses round and round an ever-decreasing harvest field was delightful for a few minutes, and then the lines grew so heavy that my hands ached till they could ache no more, and I became so weak from the strain, that after an hour and a half I was nearly jerked from my seat each time we went over a water furrow. The busy little Threshing and Stacking machine, with its surges of humming sound, could always supply pleasant work, and I learned how to affix the new sacks under the spout of golden corn always spatioing in the sunshine, and how to watch the windy orifice from which the chaff came blowing out, and to rake out the light loose mattress and keep it all clear. Also the weighing the sacks in the great twilight barn; the men must lift them, but it was I who got the weight right to the very ounce, by dexterous management of my little scoop, taking out or adding as was needed. Market gardening went on all through the harvest, and one day there was the cutting of five hundred lettuces at once, and always pulling up radishes and making neat bundles of cress. And there was milking at 5.15 every morning, of course, and cooling the milk and seeing it driven off for the town supply, and there was mixing food for calves of all ages. I could not easily work more than six hours altogether, thought doubtless with practice and with cooler weather the time might have been extended; as it was I came in at 1 o'clock to dinner well tired out, and went out no more except to ride round the farm with the master, when, had I had enough knowledge. I might be considered to be earning what in Political Economy is called "the wages of Superintendence."

I could go on longer, but it would be always the same story. The whole work could be freed from the immense strain brought in by monotony by a wise and kindly supervision that changed the work every two hours. If the fields were at a distance, a few minutes would be lost at each change; but this loss would be more than compensated by fresh, intelligent work, filled with interest. Nothing is worth the diminution of health; and even a day off, sitting at needlework, might advantageously be taken now and then; but for the most part the farm radiates out nothing but good, so beneficently has our Creator arranged things, that health, strength and nervous energy are all renewed by contact with our dear old Mother, the Earth.

#### How French Women "Carry On."

A Frenchwoman, formerly in service in England, writes to one of our members that it is astonishing what her countrywomen are now doing. In her own village, for instance, the butcher's place is taken by his young wife, who kills two pigs every week in order to keep up the villagers' supply of galantine. Except for occasional assistance from another woman, she does all her work single-handed.

#### The Star and Garter Fund.

##### DONATION FROM OUR WOKING BRANCH.

Lady Betty Balfour, on behalf of the Woking Branch of the C.U.W.F.A., has just forwarded the splendid donation of £63 12s. to the British Women's Hospital Star and Garter Fund. This sum has been collected from members of our Association in Woking. All must appreciate the spirit of service and sacrifice shown, and we offer our heartiest congratulations.

#### Edinburgh Sale of Work.

The splendid relief work undertaken by the Edinburgh Branch of this Association since the outbreak of war is still enthusiastically carried on. A most successful sale of work was held recently to raise money for the training of educated women who have been affected by the War.

Among the guests present were a number of wounded soldiers. Tea was provided and each soldier was the recipient of cigarettes and a pair of socks, the latter knitted by those who had received help from our Branch. Miss Lena Ashwell opened the sale and Lady Stormonth Darling presided. The votes of thanks were proposed by Miss Rosaline Masson, Hon. Secretary.

#### Our Cot at Netley.

Those who contributed to the C.U.W.F.A. Bed in the British Red Cross Hospital at Netley, will be interested to know that our first guest—Private Read, Royal Fusiliers—has now recovered the use of his arm, and has been discharged from hospital. The present occupant is Private W. C. McLeod, 23rd Royal Fusiliers, who was suffering from deranged action of the heart and "trench feet," but is progressing most favourably. Sir Warren Crooke-Lawless has very kindly promised to send regular reports as to the inmate of the bed, and the patient will naturally always be very grateful if any members will take an interest in him.

EDITH M. S. KENYON-SLANEY

#### British Columbia and Referendum on Women's Suffrage.

British Columbia is to have an opportunity to follow the example of Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and of the States south of it in putting women on a level of full equality with men. A referendum on Woman Suffrage will be taken at the coming general election in the Province; and, if the electors approve, women may vote after January 1st, 1917. Premier Bowser stated in Victoria, April 14th, that the same legislation which would amend the elections act to extend the vote to soldiers, would also provide votes for women. "We felt that the proper course would be to submit the question to the people," he continued. "If the majority of those voting decide in favour of granting the Franchise, then we will have the amendment in the Act enforced."

#### THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

We wish to draw the attention of our readers to the correspondence between Mrs. Fawcett and the Prime Minister with reference to electoral legislation, which has already appeared in the *Times* and elsewhere. As Mrs. Fawcett points out, Mr. Asquith's reply by itself "may mean anything or nothing," but coupled with the letters of Sir Edward Grey and of Mr. Henderson, the representative of labour in the Cabinet, it seems to show that Mr. Asquith has moved forward. And indeed this must be so, if the head of our Government means to keep in touch with his Country. The national service rendered by women, in both its extent and its quality, has made a deep impression and profoundly modified general opinion as regards their status. This new feeling in the country is our best guarantee of justice in the future.

The following resolution was passed by the Women's Council and the Executive Committee of our Association at their meetings on Tuesday, May 23rd and Thursday, May 25th, respectively and copies were sent to the Unionist Whips:—

"That if any new qualification be proposed in the Registration Bill for voters, it is desirable that an amendment enfranchising women be moved."

#### The Letter sent to Mr. Asquith.

May 4th, 1916.

DEAR MR ASQUITH,—I am venturing once more to address you on the subject of the Enfranchisement of Women.

A very general rumour has prevailed since last autumn, supported by statements made by responsible persons, and by its own inherent reasonableness, that the Government will, before the General Election following the end of the war, find it necessary to deal with the Franchise question in order to prevent the hardship and injustice which would arise if men who have been serving their country abroad, or in munition areas in parts of this country other than those where they usually reside, should in consequence of their patriotic service be penalised by losing their votes.

This has caused a certain amount of restlessness and anxiety among the 500 or 600 societies forming the N. U. W. S. S., as well as among other Suffrage organisations. Not, of course, that any of us are in any degree hostile to the enfranchisement of men who have been suffering and working for our country; but it is feared that the Suffrage may be dealt with in a manner prejudicial to the future prospects of the Enfranchisement of Women. To allay this feeling of restlessness and anxiety, we desire to bring certain considerations before you, and to ask you for an expression of your opinion upon them.

When the Government deals with the Franchise, an opportunity will present itself of dealing with it on wider lines than by the simple removal of what may be called the accidental disqualification of a large body of the best men in the country, and we trust that you may include in your Bill clauses which would remove the disabilities under which women now labour. An Agreed Bill on these lines would, we are confident, receive a very wide measure of support throughout the country. Our movement has received very great accessions of strength during recent months, former opponents now declaring themselves on our side, or, at any rate, withdrawing their opposition. The change of tone in the Press is most marked.

These changes are mainly consequent on the changed industrial and professional status of women, and the view has been widely expressed in a great variety of organs of public opinion that the continued exclusion of women from representation will, on these grounds, be an impossibility after the war.

If I refer to what the N. U. W. S. S. has done in the way of service to the country since the war began, it is not that

I claim for it any greater degree of patriotism than has been shown practically by all women. I only mention it because I can speak with personal knowledge of it. Within two days of the declaration of war, the N. U. W. S. S. determined to suspend its ordinary political activities, and to devote its organisation and money-raising powers to alleviate distress arising out of the war, and to other work calculated to sustain, as far as might be, the vital energies of the nation during the great struggle which lay before it.

In this work we have had a considerable measure of success, but I will not trouble you with any detailed recital of it. We know from our own experiences, and we trust that you also realise, that women of all classes are eager to bear their full share of the work and the suffering demanded from the country, and that wherever opportunity has been given them they have devoted themselves with whole-hearted eagerness to the national work they have found to do. The record of our own Scottish Women's Hospitals bears proof of this fact, which is now widely recognised throughout the country.

We believe that it is the recognition of the active, self-sacrificing and efficient national service of women which has caused the recent access of strength to the movement we represent.

We should greatly value an expression of your views upon the subject of the possibility of the Government dealing with the Franchise question in the direction indicated above.

Believe me, dear Mr. Asquith,  
Yours very faithfully,

MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT.

On behalf of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

#### Mr. Asquith's Reply.

May 7th, 1916.

DEAR MRS. FAWCETT,—I have received your letter of the 4th. I need not assure you how deeply my colleagues and I recognise and appreciate the magnificent contribution which the women of the United Kingdom have made to the maintenance of our country's cause.

No such legislation as you refer to is at present in contemplation; but if, and when, it should become necessary to undertake it, you may be certain that the considerations set out in your letter will be fully and impartially weighed without any prejudice from the controversies of the past.

#### Reply from Sir Edward Grey.

May 9th, 1916.

DEAR MADAM,—I am desired by Sir Edward Grey to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant.

Sir Edward understands that the Prime Minister has now replied to the letter which you sent to him, and he feels that the terms of the answer will prove satisfactory to you and the Union of which you are the President.

#### Reply from Mr. Arthur Henderson.

May 5th, 1916.

DEAR MRS. FAWCETT,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your favour of the 4th, with copy of letter to the Prime Minister. My position with regard to Women's Enfranchisement is not different to what it was before. In fact, I think the case has been strengthened by the magnificent devotion of the majority of our women during this great war crisis. I may say that the Labour Party has requested me to submit certain aspects of the electoral problem by way of memoranda. When I do so, you can rely upon it that the question in which you are so much interested will not only not be overlooked, but will form a leading part of the claim we hope to put forward.

#### The Hostel.

We wish to draw the special attention of our readers to the list on page 4 of positions required by guests now in the Hostel. The Committee would be most grateful for any help that can be given in finding posts for these ladies.



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Extract from COURT JOURNAL, May 19th, 1916.

Everyone knows that nearly all the drugs in the pharmacopœia have leapt up to almost impossible prices since the war, but few people realise that almost all the plants from which they are extracted grow in Great Britain, and that it only wants organisation and knowledge to make us self-supporting in most of the drugs we have hitherto got from Germany. Most excellent work towards this end is being done by Mrs. Grieve, the organiser of the Association of the Whins, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks. She is herself producing many medicinal herbs for which there is a crying need at the moment, and she is doing most valuable propaganda work in supplying information to those who are anxious to take up the work and training pupils.

#### HOSTEL EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

We have opened a Bureau in connection with the Hostel at the Office, and we shall be glad to receive information regarding vacant posts. A list of positions required will be found below, and we ask our friends to help us to place these ladies as soon as possible.

W.G.—Lady seeks temporary employment—clerical, teaching, daily companion, needlework.

S.M.—Seeks post as Useful-Companion. Not afraid of work, any position of trust. Housekeeping, etc. Town or Country.

E.L.J.M.—Requires re-engagement as boys' governess. Several years' experience. Good references.

G.M.P.—Seeks post as confidential or secretary-companion. Has had a University education and is a trained nurse. Capable and experienced. Content with small salary. Has excellent testimonial and references.

G.G.—Gentlewoman desires post as companion. Cheerful, musical, good reader, good walker. Willing to do light household work.

L.D.—Lady desires post as Secretary. Some knowledge of filing and typewriting. French (9 years coaching for exams. in Paris). Usual certificates for English, music and drawing.

P.M.E.—Wants clerical or secretarial work. Is capable, methodical and accurate and has some business experience, also some knowledge of typewriting. Excellent references.

F.A.R.—Experienced governess seeks re-engagement. Prepares boys for school and coaches for local examinations.

H.C.L.T.—Useful-companion, housekeeper in small family or secretarial work. Domesticated, capable, adaptable. Excellent testimonials and references.

E.M.D.—Assistant Manageress in private boarding house, residential hotel, or tearooms, in or near London. Experienced. Good references. Bright and energetic, good needlewoman.

S.L.C.H.—Canteen or club work amongst girls and women. Would undertake management of small hostel or under-matronship.

R.A.F.—Experienced social worker would like a post as superintendent of a hostel, girls' club or munition factory.

M.G.—As governess to children under twelve. Lady desires post with moderate salary. Good music and French.

All applications to be addressed to the Initials stated above, c/o The Superintendent, 9, Roland Gardens, South Kensington.

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Wed., June 7, 8 p.m.—The Hon. Mrs. PEMBER REEVES. "War and the Poorer Wage-Earners." Chair: Mr. R. F. Cholmeley.  
Wed., June 21, 8 p.m.—The COUNTESS OF WARWICK. "Hodge in Petticoats." Chair: Mrs. Gilbert Samuel.  
Wed., June 28, 8 p.m.—The Hon. EVELINA HAVERFIELD. "Ten Months in Serbia with the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit." Chair: Mr. Cecil Chapman, J.P.  
Note.—The Club Lecture hours will be according to the Official time.

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