

MONTHLY NEWS
of the
CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST
WOMEN'S FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION.

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IMPERIALISM AND MOTHERHOOD.

At a Conference which was held in London to consider in what manner the health of Great Britain and the Dominions might be improved, the discussion turned mainly on the health of children, for childhood is the period of life where mishandling and mistakes produce their most grievous results. At the present time this question is of vital importance. "The most potent influence in the prevention of infant mortality is the mother," says Sir Benjamin Broadbent. "The mother is a mighty influence for good or for evil," says Dr. David Forsyth. "It is to the mother, her well-being, care and education we must look, if her children are to be kept healthy. While there is some difference of opinion as to the relative importance of the various factors militating against the child, nowadays I think we must all agree that unpreparedness for motherhood and want of reliable knowledge and clear simple guidance as to what is best for mother and child, is before everything else," says Dr. Truby King, the great New Zealand physician.

It follows from this doctrine that it is of great importance to a State to have the best possible mothers, and that it is worth enquiring where the best mothers are, and, if possible, to find out what system produces them. Statistics prove that the possession of political power makes the best mothers of infants. Not only does the influence of the women's vote at once show itself in legislation for the greater care of infants and provision for their health and safety, but the individual mothers seem braced to their duties by the sense of responsibility; they take more trouble themselves to learn what is necessary for them to know.

Let us first take Canada—the richest and most populous of our Dominions. Dr. McCullough, the chief officer of the Provincial Board of Health in Ontario, says: "There are (in Ontario) an absence of the excessive poverty, the indulgence in drink, and the great factory and industrial population of the older lands. In spite of these facts, however, the infant mortality rates are excessively high." No other province in Canada even takes the trouble to ascertain how many children die in the first year after they are born; but, judging from the death rate of the cities, infant mortality in Montreal and Quebec is considerably higher than it is in Toronto.

Now let us take Australia—the Dominion containing the next largest population. In sharp

contrast to the statistical apathy of Canada, the infant mortality in every State in Australia is carefully registered and published, and information on the subject is therefore within the reach of every citizen. Sir C. Mackellar, President of the State Children Relief Board, N.S.W., says: "It will be seen that the authorities here are keenly alive to the national importance of saving the maximum number of young lives . . . and there is another outstanding powerful factor—the women of Australia—with their political rights and organizations, are an ever-gathering force to be exercised ultimately in the solution of social problems in general, and in particular of those relating to their own sex."

The best results of all have been obtained in New Zealand. In the words of Dr. Barrett, quoted by Dr. Truby King, "The examination of the various tables show not only that New Zealand and Dunedin hold the record of the world, but that the infant mortality in Dunedin has fallen to a rate which no one ever hoped to reach. What, then, is the explanation of this phenomenon? The answer is special and practical education. In 1907 the Society for the Health of Women and Children was founded. Its object was the care of the infant before birth, and during the period of infancy. It was really an attempt to rear a strong and healthy race by constructive nor restrictive means—for the sake of the women and children, for the advancement of the Dominion, for the honour of the Empire." No doubt this society gave a great impetus to the work, but already in 1907 New Zealand was in the forefront of the nations with regard to infant mortality; the Society in question, under the able guidance of Dr. Truby King, has taken in hand the practical education of all mothers who wish to improve their knowledge of mothercraft. It is subsidized by the Government, and is evidently a thoroughly practical means of saving babies' lives.

In the search for efficient mothers, let us now turn to Europe. We have not many countries—and those only small ones—where women have the Parliamentary vote. But there are others—notably our own—where women, although they do not vote, take an active interest in politics, and sensibly influence the decision of Parliament on questions about which they feel keenly. These women's organizations have a real influence on elections, and on social and moral questions. In the way the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912 was passed, and in the transfer-

ence of the Maternity Benefit from the man to the woman, the influence of the women was very clearly discernible. This is also the case in Scandinavia, and to a less degree, in the Low Countries. In the rest of Europe, though an increasing interest in public questions is taken by women, they have not yet obtained much organised influence on legislation.

Taking the figures for 1909, we have three groups. In the first, women have the Parliamentary vote; in the second they have not got the vote, but take an active part in political organizations; in the third, they hold aloof from politics altogether. The figures that are placed before the name of each country is the number of babies out of every 1,000 born who die before they have reached the age of one year:—

Group 1.	Group 2.	Group 3.
62. New Zealand.	109. United King.	170. Germany.
72. Australia.	72. Sweden.	120. France.
72. Norway.	98. Denmark.	131. Ontario.
	99. Holland.	205. Austria.

It is difficult to account for the difference in this table, except on the theory I have put forward.

The proportion of the population living in cities and under industrial conditions in Great Britain, is far larger than in Germany. In education, sanitary science, good government, Germany enjoys a reputation second to none: yet the English mother is nearly twice as good as the German in the matter of keeping her babies alive, and the voting New Zealand and Australian mothers far better than either.

We would ask any candid man if the consideration of these testimonies and figures would lead him to the conviction that politics were bad for women; if they would not, on the contrary, make him think that a sense of responsibility is as good for women as it is for men, and that the feeling of partnership in the Empire, instead of destroying their womanliness, shows them in what way they can most effectively serve the State.

Women's Work for the Troops.

It is impossible to give figures of the increase in output which has been achieved, but we know, on the evidence of every competent observer at the Front, that our armies in the field are abundantly and magnificently supplied. What Germany has done after forty-four years of ceaseless organization, this country has done in less than a quarter as many months.

The achievement has only been made possible by the fact that the Ministry has been able to bring in the munitions industries 195,000 women workers and a great number of other unskilled labourers. There is a sense in which it is true to say that our Armies in the field have been saved by the efforts of the women in the munition factories. I have myself seen girls fresh from school engaged in producing difficult parts of a shell. In some of these occupations women have proved themselves more adaptable than men. On one particular type of machine, where a man's record was thirty per hour, a woman who

had left dressmaking for engineering, actually turned out and kept a record of seventy-five per hour. The women are intensely keen on the work. One of our inspectors in a Lancashire engineering shop spoke recently to one of the women workers. He learnt that a few months ago she was a typist; but having had five brothers in the Army—one killed at Gallipoli and one having lost his arm at Ypres—she decided to give up typing for shell-turning. This girl was so keen that she had to be watched, as she was found working at the bench during lunch time and after hours. In this particular work, although operations were only commenced about four months ago, an output of 6,000 per week of one kind of shell was being reached. They were also making over 25,000 fuses per week, and vast quantities of other materials.—*Times*, April 7th, 1916.

Women Bank Clerks.

In open examination, following the Gilbert Lectures on Banking, a woman—Miss Kingston, of the Head Office of the London and South-Western Bank—has headed the list, and among the certificates of honour and distinction women have taken a very high place.

Mr. Randall, of the managerial staff of the London and South-Western Bank, when interviewed, said that "If anyone had told us twelve months ago that young women would have so distinguished themselves, we should have smiled. To-day we have upwards of 700 young women. We find increasingly that they are business-like, conscientious and enthusiastic. They give no trouble. All of the young women at the top obtained over 80 per cent. of the marks. I do not think the war has brought a more remarkable development—in fact, it is a miracle—than the revelation of the capacity of women in banking."

Our Marylebone Branch held a very successful drawing-room meeting for the United Workers Thrift Campaign on April 14th, at 102, Lancaster Gate, by kind permission of the Hon. Mrs. Claud Lambton. The subject was "How Non-Combatants can help to win the War," and the speakers were the Hon. Mrs. Stuart Wortley and Mr. Charles Stewart, the Public Trustee. The Countess of Ancaster took the chair. There was a very appreciative audience, and the subject proved most interesting.

The British Women-Workers Exhibition, which is being held at Prince's Skating Club for three weeks from May 1st, should be of particular interest at the present time. The aim of the Exhibition is to furnish women with new ideas for gaining a living, and the exhibits include such widely different professions as Lace Making, Copper and Silversmith, Glass Blowers, Wood Carving, Leather Workers, Dog Fanciers, Bird Tamers, Nursing, Baby Incubators, etc., etc.

SUFFRAGE VICTORIES IN CANADA.

Another Milestone Passed.

Three great Provinces of Canada have granted the provincial vote to women this year—Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. They are the three prairie provinces which are the granary of the British Empire, and they have a combined population of 1,312,709.

No sooner was the equal Suffrage Bill safely passed by the Alberta Legislature, than the women of the Canadian province took up their new duties. In a letter of appreciation to the Legislature, the new women voters assured the Premier and the members that "it shall be our aim and constant endeavour to make such use of these privileges as shall best forward and conserve the interests of the public as a whole, rather than those which pertain either to party or sex."

The meeting decided to form a Special Laws Committee, and urged the desirability of their proceeding without delay to consider the amendment of existing laws, or the framing of new laws to be respectfully submitted to the Government, dealing with the matters of a woman's interest in her husband's estate, equal parental rights, red light abatement and proportional representation.

An organized agitation for equal suffrage has been carried on in Saskatchewan for only about five years. In his "speech from the throne," proroguing the Saskatchewan Legislature, Lieut.-Governor Lake, said:—

"In future years the one outstanding feature of your legislative programme will be the enfranchisement of women. For this reason the year 1916 will always stand as one of the milestones in our history. Hereafter, the men and women of these broad prairies, with equal rights as citizens, will join in a common endeavour to secure at all times for the people of Saskatchewan the highest and best type of government based upon democratic principles. I am confident that the women of our land fully appreciate the responsibilities that go with the ballot, and that they will always earnestly strive by their voices and votes to strengthen and improve not only our legislative institutions, but all the laws governing our people as well."

The *Woman's Journal* points out that "It is a great thing to have these enormous provinces range themselves on the right side early, while their institutions are still plastic. As a pebble near the source of a stream may change the whole course of a great river, so action taken while a commonwealth is still in the making may have a powerful effect on its future well-being. These vast provinces, though sparsely peopled as yet, are destined some day to have an immense population; and all their future millions of men, women and children will share the benefits of having mothers as well as fathers represented in the Government. Three cheers for the great Canadian North-west!"

A detailed account of the victory in Manitoba appears in the current issue of the *Review*.

A Great Citizen.

The Life of Julia Ward Howe, which has just been published, will interest our members. Her many-sided interests are ably described in letters by her graphic and brilliant pen. Mrs. Howe was a tower of strength to the Women's Movement, and her powerful arguments on the Suffrage question have won many advocates to our cause. Of the military argument against votes for women, she writes:—

"One aspect of this would make the protection which men are supposed to give to women in time of war the equivalent for the political rights denied them. But, gentlemen, let me ask what protection can you give us which shall compare with the protection we give you when you are born, little helpless creatures, into the world, without feet to stand upon, or hands to help yourselves? Without this tender, this unceasing protection, no man of you would live to grow up. It may easily happen that no man of a whole generation shall ever be called upon to defend the women of his country in the field. But it cannot happen that the women of any generation shall fail to give their unwearied and energetic protection to the infant men born of it. Some of us know how full of labour and detail this protection is; what anxious days, what sleepless nights it involves. The mothers are busy at home, not only building up the bodies of the little men, but building up their minds, too; teaching them to be gentle, pure and honest, cultivating the elements of the human will, that great moralizing power on which the State and the Church depend. A man is very happy if he can ever repay to his mother the protection she gave him in his infancy.

God forbid that in this country chivalry and legislation should be set one against the other! I ask you, gentlemen, to put your chivalry into your legislation."

New Books and Pamphlets.

The following interesting publications have recently been received:—

In a College Garden. By Viscountess Wolseley. (John Murray, 6/- net).

The Trade Union Woman. By Alice Henry. (Appleton & Co., 6/- net).

Women in Industry. ("Round Table," March).

Notes on the Employment of Women on Munitions of War. (Stationery Office, 1/-).

Health of Munition Workers, Memorandum No. 4.

Employment of Women. (Stationery Office, 1½d.).

Wage-Earning Women and their Dependents. By Ellen Smith. (Fabian Women's Group, 1/-).

How to Save Money in War Time; Handbook for Housewives (revised and enlarged); *Housekeeping on 25/- a Week* (new edition). National Food Economy League, 3, Woodstock Street, W.

The Women's Industrial Council has published a valuable pamphlet on "Women in Distributive Trades." Of special interest is an article by Miss Rosamund Smith on "Women and Municipal Work."

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