

# THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST

*Organ of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, 55, Berners Street, London.*

VOL., II., No. 12.

December 15th, 1916.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Daughter of the ancient Eve,  
We know the gifts ye gave and give;  
Who knows the gifts which *you* shall give,  
Daughter of the newer Eve?

—Francis Thompson.

## THE PREVENTION OF INFANT MORTALITY.

By AGNES MOTT.

The war has directed attention to this question, which is one of vital importance to the nation—the number of fathers, potential and actual, whose lives are lost makes it certain that a further decline in the birth-rate must be faced.

We must see to it that every possible life is saved for the nation, and that every life is given the best chance of careful nurture, so that it may be physically equipped to hold its own in the world, instead of becoming a drag on the wheel. Health is strength, and as this applies to the individual, so does it apply to the nation.

The roots of the terrible amount of physical disease rampant in our midst lie, however, in spiritual and moral disorder, and therefore Catholics should not lose sight of the fact that they are called upon to help by advertising those remedies which the Catholic Church teaches should be applied “for the healing of the nations.”

Pope Leo XIII., in his encyclicals, taught Catholics to maintain social justice, and though perhaps his teaching at first sight seems unconnected with Infant Mortality, yet, if the question be scientifically examined, it is found to have an important bearing on the subject.

The three conditions which, if fulfilled, would have the effect of reducing the Infant Mortality rate are as follows:—

- (1) **ECONOMIC**—The payment of a wage sufficient to maintain the family.
- (2) **HYGIENIC**—The improvement of housing conditions and the provision of adequate accommodation for the family.

- (3) **SCIENTIFIC**—The application of scientific knowledge, particularly medical and nursing knowledge, to the care of mother and child.

Before embarking on schemes for the reduction of infant mortality, it is as well to bear the first two conditions in mind, otherwise one is tempted to put the cart before the horse, with futile results.

It is of no use “medically supervising” the mother, unless she has enough money to feed herself properly, and thus maintain her strength. And it is equally important that fresh air, light, ventilation and a sufficient number of separate rooms should be provided for every family, in order to prevent the physical and moral deterioration consequent on overcrowding. Let us therefore put these two conditions in the forefront of our programme for the improvement of the health of the nation, which includes the prevention of Infant Mortality.

In regard to the third condition, namely, the application of medical and nursing knowledge to the care of maternity and infancy, it is a condition which is at the present time most hopeful of fruitful results.

In 1861 the Infant Mortality rate was 161 per 1000 births for England and Wales, whilst in 1912 it was 95 per 1000 births, the lowest rate on record. This satisfactory decline may be mainly attributed to the combined efforts of doctors, midwives and nurses, who have applied skilled advice and assistance to the care of maternity and infancy.

Not only should attention, however, be directed to reducing the number of deaths of infants under one year of age (the technical definition of Infant Mortality), but also to ante-natal mortality, for Dr. Amand Routh

has estimated "that as many infants die during their foetal life of nine months, as during the survivors' first year of existence"; whilst the loss of potential lives to the nation due to the decline of the birth-rate since 1876 is stated to be equivalent to half a million lives per annum.

Therefore the campaign against Infant Mortality must synchronise with the campaign against ante-natal mortality, for in nearly all cases they have a common origin. What practical measures can then be taken to prevent this terrible waste of potential lives to the nation?

It has been seen that doctors, midwives and nurses have been able to help considerably in reducing Infant Mortality, and it is to their co-operation that we look for a similar reduction in Ante-natal Mortality.

The Midwives' Act of 1902, by securing control of the practice and qualifications of midwives, has been instrumental in obtaining a notable improvement in the care of maternity and infancy. The trained midwives have shown their superiority in this work by the marked reduction of the maternal and infant mortality rate in their practice, whilst a high maternal and infant mortality rate unfortunately still exists where, as in Wales, the majority of midwives are untrained. It is a regrettable fact that the majority of practising midwives in England and Wales are untrained; the poor livelihood obtainable does not attract the best type of trained, educated midwife, who is frequently employed by the wealthier classes as monthly nurse. As 80 per cent. of working-class mothers are attended by midwives, it is a matter of extreme importance to the nation that these should be well qualified to give skilled advice and assistance to the mothers under their care; therefore, in order to lower infant and maternal mortality, it is of urgent necessity to encourage trained midwives to come forward to help in this great work. This may be accomplished by giving them an honourable position and increasing their fees by some means or other, so that they may earn an independent livelihood. In view of the present serious shortage of workers in this field, it is also important to encourage women of suitable character and education to take up midwifery, either as women doctors or midwives, for it is through them, and from their

confidential and sympathetic relationship with each individual mother that the most fruitful results may be obtained. If this problem of tackling the midwifery service amongst the poor be approached in the right manner it should prove an important means of reducing infant mortality.

The notification of pregnancy has been suggested by some as a means of medically supervising expectant mothers, but Sir Francis Champneys has pointed out that this measure would have the undesirable effect of postponing the engagement of doctors and midwives until the last possible moment, with the worst possible results, both for mother and child. It would also be extremely unpopular in this country.

The Local Government Board are endeavouring through the establishment of Maternity and Infant Welfare Centres to give mothers medical advice and assistance, and it is hoped, through the agency of Health Visitors, to do something to improve the hygiene of the home. It should, however, be remembered that increased inspection of the homes of the working classes cannot accomplish much radical improvement until accompanied by the provision of suitable housing accommodation. No doubt, at the conclusion of the war, the Local Government Board will seriously undertake the solution of this problem by the demolition of insanitary dwellings and the erection of healthy workmen's cottages.

Let us hope that Catholic women may take full advantage of the unrivalled opportunities they now have of showing their religion in a practical way by coming to the aid of their poorer sisters who are so greatly in need of material and practical help in bearing the burden of maternity amongst conditions which can only be described as a disgrace to humanity.

Lastly, it should not be forgotten that it is through the love of the mother for her child that infant mortality may best be combated, and surely we Catholic women, with the example of the Mother of God before us, will not fail to make this God-given instinct the key to all our endeavours to promote maternity and infant welfare.

(The writer is not a member of any Suffrage Society).

## NOTES AND COMMENTS.

In a paragraph entitled "Rip van Winkle" the "Daily News" comments on the recent resuscitation of the anti-suffragists babbling of conciliation bills. "No one," it says, "will blame anti-suffragists for organising to defeat any proposal for extending the franchise to women, or conditional anti-suffragists for joining them. But they should surely clean their slate and restate their case. The chief of the old arguments that women cannot serve the State as soldiers has gone. It has lost all meaning in the fierce light of the war. Most of the little arguments and objections have followed it, or have at any rate been profoundly modified. If this controversy is to be re-opened it must be on quite a new plane, like all the other old controversies. The anti-suffragist, like the rest of us, must overhaul his grounds of belief. Mere negation was at all times ineffectual as a policy, and doomed inevitably to ultimate defeat. But in the new world which is opening it is worse than ineffectual, it is nonsense. It is like threatening prosecution for trespass after an earthquake." We cannot improve upon this summing up of the position.

A number of men suffragists replied to the anti-suffrage manifesto as follows:

"We have always recognised that there were serious objections to raising controversial questions during the war. At the same time, if the franchise of this country is to be re-modelled on new principles, and a large number of male voters introduced, who are not qualified under the existing laws, actually or potentially, we feel that it would be a very grave injustice to women that their case should not be considered at the same time.

There must not be a repetition of what has too frequently occurred in the past—namely, the application of a rule which enables the electoral interests of men to be considered while those of women are disregarded."

Robert Cecil, Selborne, Arthur Henderson, F. D. Acland, Lytton, A. F. London, J. Hereford, J. R. Roffen, Cowdray, C. N. Nicholson, J. R. Clynes, Leif Jones, C. Oxon, Willoughby de Broke, Farrer, James Yoxall, J. T. Agg-Gardner, T. Wing, J. Owen Jacobsen, J. H. Thomas, F.

Bennett Goldney, H. Bentinck, J. King, Philip Snowden, Ernest Craig, J. Lichfield, E. Lincoln, J. Kensington, Courtney of Penwith, L. Worthington Evans, T. G. Tickler, W. C. Anderson, J. M. Hogge, Edward Goulding, F. Leverton Harris, Francis McLaren, Norval Helme, A. H. Marshall, E. T. John, Swire Smith, Arthur Sherwell, Rowland E. Prothero, A. W. Barton, C. E. Price, J. O'Grady.

\* \* \* \*

The Executive of the Northern Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage have also written to the House of Lords expressing their view of the position, and stating that they will resist any Register Bill which does not place women on the Register on equal terms with men. Our friends state, with justice, that the question of Women's Suffrage has ceased to be controversial, except in Parliament, where it is held up by a small but powerful minority.

\* \* \* \*

Meanwhile while we patiently, or impatiently, wait for our legislators to move, we can rejoice in the progress of women in other lands. The latest good news comes from the States, where Miss Rankin has been elected to Congress as Republican representative of Montana.

\* \* \* \*

We call our readers' attention to the report of the important conference on Venereal Disease, which was recently convened by the Association for Social and Moral Hygiene, and at which the C.W.S.S. was represented by two delegates. The Conference may be regarded as an answer to the recent manifesto in which a number of ladies demanded compulsory notification. The feeling of the meeting was entirely against compulsion, and although many of the signatories to the manifesto had been invited, no one supported the opposite view.

\* \* \* \*

As we go to press a new Ministry is being formed by Mr. Lloyd George. If our politicians would practise among themselves that unity, which they so unctuously preach to others, it might be to the advantage of the nation. Suffragists, as such, have no particular reason to deplore a change of ministry.

## THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY,

Office: 55, BERNERS STREET, LONDON.

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## THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.

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Hon. Editor . . . . . MISS LEONORA de ALBERTI.  
Hon. Business Manager . . . . . MISS O'SULLIVAN.  
Hon. Treasurer . . . . . MISS BRADY.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Society.

### CHRISTMAS.

For the third time since the opening of the great European tragedy Christmas comes upon us, and it will not be surprising, perhaps, if to many the angelic song of peace is drowned in the fury of the cannon. But because the Lord of Misrule has run amok and set the world aflame, shall we find no room this year for the Christ Child? Though mankind is long in realising it the rule of force was vanquished on that night in Bethlehem, and with the Divine Child was born the reign of justice and of love, and the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man.

Tille in his "Yule and Christmas" tells us that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Christ being regarded as the little universal brother to mankind, "the occasion of his birth was taken as an opportunity for gifts similar to those which children received at the birth of a baby brother or sister."

We may hope that this doctrine in all its fulness and beauty will in time take root in the hearts of men, and that out of the horrors of these days a family of nations may arise; but if that is ever to occur we shall have indeed to remember that the angelic promise of peace was made to men of good will.

Looking then beyond the present agony to the brighter days in store we may participate in some measure in the Christmas spirit for which this our pleasant land (doubly mine by birth and adoption) has for so long been noted.

In ancient times the night of December 24th, was known as Mædrenak, or Mother Night, because, it is said, the lengthening days proved that the victorious sun had once more vanquished darkness, and from that night were born all the days and nights of the coming year (which really seems a more reasonable explanation of the term than others which are put forward). Some say that it was the occasion of obscenity and unholiness, but for us the name takes on a new meaning, and the night which saw the sanctification and glorification of motherhood, may well be called the Night of Mothers. And because of the great dignity bestowed upon a woman, and because, as I have said, the rule of force was overthrown, which man must realise in time, and for other reasons familiar to all Christians, Christmas Day may be considered as the birthday of our cause. For when the kingdom of force prevails, woman is a slave indeed, but when the kingdom of the spirit is paramount she comes into the promised land. We, of the woman's movement then, forgetting for one brief hour the darkness which has come upon the world, may in a very special manner join on Christmas morning in the Church's song of exultation: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King comes holy and the Saviour of the world."

L. DE ALBERTI.

### HARSH TREATMENT OF IRISH LAPSED GIRLS.

Parish Priest writes from Ireland: "I cannot understand how any accusation of harshness can be sustained as to the alleged harsh treatment of frail Irish girls. Irish matrons have to guard against a moral C.D. being introduced into their own families. They have to guard the morality and reputation of their own sons and male servants. Boys are not allowed to go unpunished. The rural parish priests do not wish to have any immoral boy employed in their parish. But, of course, there is no such objection to give them out-door employment. Irish girls are frequently warned by their priests and their mothers against the danger of company keeping in lonely places and at unseasonable hours. My experience—a long one—is that there are very few innocent victims amongst the lapsed. I do my best to have them married quietly, if possible. More I cannot do. They won't be employed in Ireland, not to punish them, but in self-protection."

\* \* \* \*

So far from refuting, the above letter actually substantiates the statement of which "Parish Priest" complains. The sentence occurred in the article on "Downward Paths," in our last issue, and ran: "Have not Catholic social workers told us that the harsh treatment shown to an erring girl in Ireland not infrequently brings her to the streets of our northern cities?" If a girl who is known to have lapsed from "the high ideal of sexual conduct held up to women," is refused all decent employment, what other trade but the streets is open to her? Is her partner also considered a moral leper for ever after?

I can only repeat that for the harshness shown to an erring woman in all countries there is no sanction in the example of the Master who was contemptuously called the Friend of publicans and sinners. "This man, if he were a prophet, would know, surely, who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner."

L. de A.

### LONDON NEWS.

The office, 55, Berners Street, will be closed for the Christmas vacation from Saturday, December 23rd.

Holy Mass will be offered to the intentions of society at St. Patrick's, Soho, on Sunday, January 7th, at 10-30.

We made a clear profit of over £9 at our stall at the Central Hall, and offer our thanks to buyers and sellers, and to the following who sent either money or gifts: Misses de Alberti, Anderson, Anngier, Bain, Brady, de Bulnes, Bumpstead, Charles, Connolly; Mrs. Dunn, Misses Forbes-Robertson, Jeffery, Gadsby, Mrs. Meynell, Mrs. Poundall, Miss A. Quinlan, Mrs. Roch, Miss Stafford, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Willis, Mrs. Whately, Miss Monica Whately, and our branches at Birmingham and Liverpool.

### BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE UNION.

We have received the syllabus of a course of lectures which will be delivered by Miss Margaret Hodge, of the above Society, early in the year. The lectures will be on woman's place in the history of the last two centuries, and will cover a wide field. The lecturer will deal with the Georgian era, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution; transportation and the colonisation of Australia, the political agitation in the British Empire since 1867, etc. The lectures should be of great interest, especially to suffragists.

We have also received from the above Society a verbatim report of the speeches delivered at the Imperial Conference of Women held in London last July. This may be obtained for 1/- (post free 1/3) from Miss H. C. Newcombe, International Franchise Club, 9, Grafton Street, Piccadilly.

### JUMBLE SALE.

This sale will be held shortly after Christmas, and Miss Whately appeals for more parcels to be sent in to the office. Any kind of clothing and underclothing, carpets, crockery, boots and shoes, &c.

## EMIGRATION.

BY REV. FATHER A. J. VANDEN HEUVEL.

I.

While war is in progress, and let us hope drawing to an end, it is wise to face post-war conditions and to prepare for them.

How will these new conditions affect women and girls? Painfully I fear. The generous lighthearted crowd who at munitions and in well-nigh every social activity now works so cheerfully and so efficiently, will then be scattered to seek employment as best it can. The reason is obvious. Munition works will cease, men from the front will resume their former occupations, trade and industries for a time will be slack. This cannot be avoided, cannot but affect the average girl painfully.

Emigration is suggested as one of her opportunities. The Colonies and the United States of America, so 'tis said, offer for her activities a field unlimited in extent and variety. This is true, for the reason that they are new countries, with as yet undeveloped resources, and that the male population is altogether out of proportion to the female. Still, few women or girls will succeed as colonists unless they select the stage of colonial life for which they are suited and towards which their tastes incline. Let me explain: Let us take the Western States of America, the vast plain between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains—some hundred thousands of square miles of the best agricultural land on earth. I lived there for nearly 25 years and watched its development. This development proceeded and is still proceeding by three stages. In the first stage the settler selects his homestead, 160 acres, to which after a few years' residence and the fulfilling of certain conditions (easy ones) he receives a clear title from the Government in freehold. He builds a cabin and stable, and surrounds himself with things only such as are absolutely indispensable for tilling his land and for keeping off hunger and cold from himself and stock. His bedstead he makes of rough boards and studdings, his bed is a straw sack, his blankets

wolf pelts or coats, his chairs packing boxes. Thus he lives for say five years, when having paid for horses, cattle, tools, machinery, which at start he had bought on credit, he discards the primitive furniture. Instead of the old fire pot he now has a proper cooking stove, his well has a pump. His eye is as in the first stage, no longer limited to necessary things, he looks for what is useful and secures it.

This stage also may hold him five years. Meanwhile his balance in the bank increases (an easy matter), he has found a good wife, and together they begin the third stage in colonial life, the stage of elegance and refinement. The old cabin is still there, but used for lumber-room or chicken house. They live in a neat frame building, with bath-room and parlour, and drawing-room, with electric light and telephone, and piano, and such luxuries as taste suggests and purse can afford.

This is by no means an imaginary case. I know of hundreds such. But to come back to the point. As a country develops, so, and in like proportion, does the town develop to which the country is tributary. It stands to reason. The settler markets his produce in town, and from this town draws his supplies. As these supplies or needs increase and vary according to his manner of living, so does the town attract mechanics, tradespeople, artists, doctors, ready to supply the needs.

To find out the stage of development in the different parts of the North-West, I advise writing to the Immigration Department of the various railways crossing the North-West. Their information is up-to-date and absolutely reliable. Their object is to secure, along their lines and in the country tributary to their lines, happy, prosperous, permanent settlers, with a view to traffic mostly of produce and merchandise. If I may mention one (though all are equally reliable), with whom I am for several years personally acquainted, I advise writing to L. J. Bricker, General Immigration Agent of the Northern Pacific Railway,

St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A. But I should not leave it at that. I should establish, say, at St. Paul, a hostel where women and girls, and only they, would find a home upon arrival, and whence they could enquire for whatever they are looking for. I suggest St. Paul because it is the key to the North-West, the starting point and headquarters of all Western railways. I doubt not that the various railways, if approached by an organised body of women, suggesting a working plan and prepared to furnish an efficient staff for working the plan, will supply such a hostel. Not that American railway officials are sentimental—not at all. They are fine, manly, approachable fellows, anxious to comply with the law of supply and demand because it pays Women and girls are greatly in demand in every department of social activity. Hence their readiness to encourage and facilitate emigration.

We take the following pleasing notice from the Christmas number of *The Harvest*, the organ of the Salford Catholic Protection and Rescue Society.

THE CATHOLIC SUFFRAGIST.—Twice lately we have been asked to buy *The Catholic Suffragist*. The first time was during the C.T.S. Conference in Manchester in September, the second was during the Catholic Social Guild meeting at Oxford at the end of October; and now we have received a complimentary number for November. All this is due to the perseverance and endurance of Miss Monica Whately, who went to Manchester and Oxford, and in each place secured co-operators. *The Catholic Suffragist* is the organ of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, whose offices are at 55, Berners Street, London. Miss Whately is a member of the Executive Committee. In the November number she tells of her experiences at Manchester and Oxford. If you suggest to her Votes for Women are now a foregone conclusion, and that need for agitation is unnecessary, you will get the answer that the receipt of the vote is only the beginning of the campaign, and what the campaign is you may learn from careful and unprejudiced perusal of *The Catholic Suffragist*, which can be had in Manchester at Washbourne's for

one penny monthly, or it may be ordered by post, 1s. 6d. per annum, from 55, Berners Street, London, W. It has come to stay. Think it over.

## HASTINGS AND EAST SUSSEX BRANCH.

A Ladies Debating Society having arranged a series of debates on the "Duties of Citizenship," our Hon. Sec. was invited to read a paper on December 1st, when the "Work of Women in the Church" was to be the subject, and it was to be treated from the points of view of the Catholic, Church of England, and Free Church. She accordingly read one on the work of Catholic women, describing principally the splendid things done by our Religious Orders, Contemplative and Active, and giving detailed accounts of several. The audience were very friendly and interested. After the Church of England and Free Church representatives had also read their papers an interesting discussion followed, in which Mrs. Cameron, one of our members, took part and contributed a great deal of information as to the social work done by the Catholic Women's League.

## RESOLUTION OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE.

The following resolution has been signed by the Consultative Committee of the Constitutional Women's Suffrage Societies (including the C.W.S.S.):—

"That the undersigned societies aim at securing a real equality of voting rights between men and women. They consider it urgently necessary in the interests of the whole country that women shall be enfranchised in time to take part in the election of the Parliament which will decide questions of reconstruction arising out of the war."

We hope our readers will continue their support during the coming year. In spite of war difficulties the "Catholic Suffragist" continues on its way successfully. We have received generous promises of literary help for 1917. It would facilitate work at the office if subscribers would kindly send their renewals in good time. The bound copy for 1916 will be ready early in January, price 2/6, post free 3/-.

### \*THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOME SLAVONIC COUNTRIES.

In Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia, and Istria, there is a great absence of social intimacy between the sexes,—in fact, they rarely meet on terms of equality, except during the brief term of courtship. As the Zadruga system—the family in all its generations and branches residing together under one roof upon a common and indivisible domain,—prevails there, dowries are given in marriage to the daughters, but they can claim no share of the family property. The masculine element is all-powerful. Parents consider it a calamity when a daughter is born. There is a saying: “When a male child is born, nine Zadrugas sing, but when a female child is born, nine Zadrugas weep.” A father will say, “I have a little son, and, forgive me, two daughters.” This silent (or wordy) contempt of their sex is taken as a matter of course by the women who, to show their subservience to its fullest, perpetuate some ridiculous customs, e.g., a woman is never supposed to cross the road when a man is passing; at meal time the food must be respectfully placed before the chief male of the household—the *Gospodar*,—then the woman servitor bows low before him and kisses his hands, and afterwards the hands of all the other men. Even grandmothers are expected to kiss the hands of their grandsons. When meeting on the road a woman may never greet a man; he must be the first to salute, if it pleases him, with the words, “God assist thee,” to which she may reply, “God assist thyself.” No woman may remain seated when a man addresses her. She must arise, and, if spinning, she must thrust her spindle behind her back. To a wife, her husband is simply “He.” She must on no account mention him by his name. As a mark of appreciation the women are allotted all the heaviest work; old or young, they must arise at cock-crow and stay up at night till the last of the menfolk have retired to rest. Not only is all the spinning, weaving, washing, knitting, sewing, cooking, milking, cheese-making, bread-making, sick-nursing and doctoring, given over to the long-suffering females, but also an equal share of the outdoor work on the land. They

\* The Slavs of the War Zone.” By W. F. Bailey. C. B. Chapman and Hall, Ltd.

must till, sow, reap, herd the cattle, dig out the heavy clay of which the pottery is made, pound it with axes, mix it with chopped goat's hair (which I suppose they also chop), pour boiling water upon it, shape it into vessels, and then set them in brick ovens to bake. In addition they have to cut out and sew the *opanke*—the Slav national foot-gear—and even take a hand in the erection of the houses. On the roads, their place is behind the ox-waggons, which they follow meekly, carrying on their heads all the goods which cannot fit in the carts, notwithstanding which they move like queens. When the men of a Croatian household think of going to town, they never stir until the women have laced their sandals, buttoned up their sheepskins, filled their “torbas” with necessaries and dainties, and lastly, placed the whips in their hands—the signal that carts and horses (already harnessed by the women) are ready. The women provide all the clothing for the household, including the beautiful embroideries. They shear the sheep, dress, spin, dye, and weave the wool or hemp, sow and gather the flax, steep, dry, spin, weave, and bleach the linen. There is a weaving loom in every house, at which the women are continually employed during the winter months when the weather stops outdoor labour. As the “torba” with its cards and dice contains never-failing occupation for the men, so the distaff affords endless employment to the women. They carry it with them in their girdles wherever they go, ever ready to turn the spindle and drag out the thread whenever an idle moment presents itself.

Thus the women of Croatia-Slavonia today, yesterday, and all the sad days adown the æons of time. What will their position be when the wicked guns of old Europe are silent, and a remnant of the boys—Croatian boys—come marching home from Armageddon, sadder but mayhap not a whit wiser, and the erstwhile compliant if overworked mothers and wives and sweethearts are forced to think, to question, to probe into the meaning of war and destruction, and to say not only “such things should not be,” but “such things *shall not* be in the days that are to come—God helping us.” N. F. DEGIDON.

### MOTHERS' PENSIONS IN AMERICA.

This interesting pamphlet is published by the Workers' Suffrage Federation. The title explains that it is an account of what should properly be called “child pensions as administered in 27 out of 48 states of America.” We hear in England a great deal about the sacred duties of maternity, the sanctity of home life, the child's need of a mother's care, which nothing can replace, and so on. It is all very touching, but when a respectable hard-working woman, through no fault of her own, finds herself destitute and appeals for relief, what happens? Mrs. Crawford, in her article “Women under the Poor Law,” which appeared in the “Catholic Suffragist” of last May, told us something of the hardships which women suffer under the Poor Law. “The Poor Law,” she wrote, “is no respecter of family life, it tramples on the rights of parents, it breaks up families, it ignores parental affection, and in all such cases the mother suffers far more than the father.” In America they have found a more humane method, and instead of tearing the children from their parents and bringing them up in institutions, a pension is paid to the mother. Everyone is agreed that when parents are unable to maintain their children, through no fault of their own, it is better that their income should be supplemented and parents and children should remain together. Michigan includes the children of unmarried mothers in the pension scheme, the women being described in the records as deserted mothers, in the same way as deserted wives, so that no curious eye may discover that a child is illegitimate.

Judge Neil was the pioneer in this scheme for rescuing mothers and children from poverty, and the pamphlet describes his campaign for pensions, and the extraordinary success which attended it. We are told that practical experience of mothers' pensions has proved that parental responsibility is not undermined by them, that, in fact, the more you help the mother, the more she helps.

“Mothers' Pensions—born in 1911—have made a record that no other reform has ever equalled in rapidity of growth. In accomplishment and in importance the Mothers' Pension system for abolishing child-poverty is without a precedent. Within five years of

its introduction legislation has established the system in twenty-seven States and a new principle in the laws of civilised countries.”

The pamphlet may be obtained from the Workers' Suffrage Federation, 400, Old Ford Road (price 1d.).

L. DE A.

### Mr. George Lansbury on Women in Industry.

At the International Franchise Club, on November 22nd, Mr. Lansbury delivered an interesting lecture on “Women in Industry,” with Mr. Chancellor, M.P., in the chair. Mr. Lansbury said that even before the war there were 3,200,000 women in industry and commerce, not including those in domestic service. Since the war another 500,000 more had joined the industrial army, but it was not only the vast number of women workers that gave rise to the difficult problems, but the displacement which had taken place in industry, at least 800,000 women were employed in work formerly done by men. Though many women were doing the same work as men, they were not paid the same wage, even where a promise of an equal wage was given. The Government and other employers were very clever at juggling so that some change in the process made it appear that the women were not doing exactly the same work as the men they had replaced, and therefore should not receive the same wage. Though many women were earning high wages, the great bulk were still on a bare subsistence wage. In garrison towns women were systematically underpaid, and the audience might draw their own conclusion from that. The industrial problems which would arise after the war would tax the resources of the nation, said the lecturer. He put his faith in the good will and co-operation of men and women, and urged all women to join trade unions. He wished to see a better England after the war. We must do away with slums, and give the workers full opportunity of mental, social and spiritual development.

At the conclusion of the lecture Mr. Lansbury was bombarded with questions, and a lively debate followed.

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### Important Conference on Measures Directed against Venereal Disease.

An important Conference, which was attended by over two hundred influential and representative women social workers, a number of doctors, lawyers and several Members of Parliament, met on Friday, November roth, at the Caxton Hall, to discuss the moral and constitutional bearings of certain proposals in regard to Venereal Disease. The principal Women's Organisations were represented, including the C.W.S.S.

The Conference, which was called by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, may be regarded as an answer to the recent Manifesto in which a number of ladies demanded notification and compulsory treatment. The feeling of the meeting was entirely against notification, and although a number of the signatories to the manifesto had been invited, there was not one person present who took the opportunity to support any such measure. The following questions were put to the Conference:—

1. Is there any likelihood that Notification of Venereal Disease could or would be applied impartially to the whole population?

This was answered by the meeting by a unanimous "No."

2. If Notification were enacted is it probable that it would be applied especially to women believed to be of immoral life?

The Conference recognised that this is the real object of many of those who advocate notification, and expressed strong disapproval.

3. Is there any reason why the physical health of prostitutes, as such, should be the special concern of the State more than the health of other persons?

After a particularly lively discussion, this question was answered in the negative by a large majority.

A number of other proposed measures were reviewed. There was considerable difference of opinion as to whether medical examination for venereal disease ought to be compulsorily enforced on prisoners, but the majority thought not. The Conference affirmed that when a prisoner's term of sentence has ex-

pired, he or she should not be under any special regulations as to disease differing from those which apply to the rest of the population. As to the desirability of women doctors for women prisoners, there was complete unanimity.

The difficult question of street solicitation was discussed at some length, and from very various standpoints. Several speakers pointed out that little attempt was made to protect girls from annoyance by men. Ultimately it was voted that the laws ought to be extended so as to apply equally to all persons soliciting to the annoyance of the public: the dissentient minority included some who thought the resolution went too far, and some who thought it did not go far enough. A good deal of sympathy was manifested for a proposal that it should be reckoned a crime in law for one person to transmit disease to another.

At the close of the Conference, the following resolutions were carried with practical unanimity:—

1. That this meeting records its satisfaction that arrangements are to be made by the local authorities throughout the counties, for the efficient, free and confidential treatment of venereal disease, without penal or deterrent conditions: and urges that non-compulsory principle for treatment shall be observed in all cases, no attempt being made to enforce treatment, isolation or detention on any prisoner, pauper or any other person suffering from venereal disease.

2. This meeting wishes to endorse the opinion of the Royal Commission that if venereal diseases are to be stamped out, it will be necessary not only to provide the medical means of combating them, but to raise the moral standards and practice of the community as a whole.

It further urges that in all matters relating to public morals there shall be equality of treatment for both sexes, not only on paper but in fact.

The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, 19, Tothill Street, S.W., which organized this Conference are arranging a study circle for those who wish further light on these difficult subjects.

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