

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.]

Notes and News.

The Lords and Electoral Reform.

In moving, in the House of Lords, the second reading of the Parliament and Local Elections Bill, which prolongs the life of the present Parliament, Lord Curzon spoke of the impossibility of having a general election at the present time. He added that if the Bill had been accompanied by one making special provision for a new register, it would have been impossible to avoid dealing with many other questions. The Government had had to choose between the alternatives of framing a register themselves and an attempt to pass a Bill framed on the lines of the Speaker's Conference. He had seen the draft of this Bill, which contained in effect the whole of the resolutions of the Conference; but a distinction would be drawn—and he thought rightly so—between certain of those proposals and the bulk of the findings of that Committee. It was thought that proportional representation and Women's Suffrage stood on a somewhat different footing from other findings of the Committee. Both questions were likely to lead to so much controversy that it would be unfair for the Government to put pressure on members of either House in regard to them. Therefore, though the Government would take charge of the Bill in both Houses, members would be at liberty to vote as they pleased on both these proposals.

With regard to a register, he imagined that in the next two or three months the House of Commons would record its opinion on the Bill to which he had referred. They would then know if there was any inclination in another place to pass it into law. Supposing it passed the Commons, and came to their Lordships' House, let it be remembered that it contained proposals relating to the register, and as soon as it passed into law, steps must be taken to call that register into being. It might be impossible to complete that operation during the seven months, but if the Bill were thrown out in either House and the proposals for dealing with the register fell to the ground, it would obviously be the duty of the Government to do what they attempted to do last year—to set up a special register on which it would be their duty to take the opinion of Parliament.

Clause 3 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

Clause 3 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill is, states *The Manchester Guardian*, "to be altered almost out of existence by the Government." "The clause was introduced rather as a surprise while the Bill was in Grand Committee, and it provides

that any girl under eighteen may be committed to a home until she is nineteen if she is convicted before any court, which means in practice by a police magistrate, of loitering or importuning for the purposes of prostitution or solicitation, or of any offence under the Vagrancy Act, of wandering in the public street or public highway, and behaving in a riotous or indecent manner, or generally of any offence under the Criminal Law Amendment Bill." We publish on page 24 a protest by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene against this clause, and a letter signed by Mrs. Fawcett on behalf of the Women's Interests Committee of the N.U.W.S.S., and by Mrs. C. M. Wilson on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Fabian Women's Group appeared in our last issue. Other women's organisations have also protested.

The Need for a Commission of Enquiry.

The discussions on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill having shown that, though the existing laws are not satisfactory, there is no general agreement as to what amendments are required, the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene has passed a resolution calling for the appointment of a Commission to enquire:—

1. How far the present methods of prisons, courts, and police help or hinder such restoration;
2. How the laws and their administration can be improved;
3. Whether the co-operation of voluntary, educational, and reformative agencies can be more largely utilised.

National Education.

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's long-expected statement on the Education Estimates was made on April 19th and was received with warm approval in the House. His speech not only contained a clear pronouncement upon the state of our present national system of education—"if it can be called national, and if it can be called a system"—but suggested schemes for the future which would mean at least some progress towards real educational reform. Mr. Fisher pointed out that one of the most immediate and significant results of the increased prosperity of the working classes during the war has been the increase in the number of pupils entering our secondary schools, and the length of their stay in those schools. "The secondary schools," he added, "are the key of the situation." At present a very small proportion of the population enter secondary schools at all, and of these very few are able to stay the full period. The fees are low, and there are a great number of free places for children from the elementary schools; but even so, it has been impossible hitherto to keep the majority of the children in the school up to the age of sixteen. "How," Mr. Fisher asked, "can there be any suitable corporate life, any completely effective scheme of education, under conditions so prejudicial as those?"

The Status of Teachers.

Another serious defect of our system is the position of the teacher. Both in elementary and secondary schools, teachers are paid at rates which are far too low. "The first condition of educational advance is that we should learn to pay our teachers better, and the only certain way of securing that any extra money available for elementary and secondary education should go into the pockets of the teacher is for the State to pay the teachers direct." But, if the control of teaching and its payment were

entirely withdrawn from the local authorities, there would be danger of an abrupt decline in the local interest in education, and Mr. Fisher therefore asked for an additional grant of £3,420,000 for elementary education, "framed upon a principle which will give a direct interest to the local authorities to enact a liberal salary scale."

Social Fusion in Secondary Schools.

With regard to secondary schools, the two chief needs were summed up in one sentence. "Somehow or other we must attract able men into this branch of the profession and provide them with a sufficient number of pupils able to receive a full secondary education." The first reform in the scheme of finance for secondary education is to be a better system of maintenance allowances. This obviously will be an important advance if it really secures that greater degree of "social fusion" in secondary schools for which Mr. Fisher hopes. "After all," he said, "it is important that in our secondary schools, the son" (and, we might add, the daughter) "of the manufacturer, the son of the foreman, and the son of the workman should be educated side by side."

The Waste of Human Capital.

In outlining his plans for the future, Mr. Fisher spoke of the importance of developing country schools and of establishing nursery schools for children under five, and of the present inadequate provision for the intellectual, moral, and physical discipline of boys and girls during the period of adolescence. "The country," he pointed out, "does not get the full value out of its elementary system of education, because so much of the training and instruction is subsequently lost; and it does not get the full value out of its higher technical colleges because those who attend their courses have learned little and forgotten much." Schemes for continued education are full of difficulties; but some such scheme must be established if the full advantage is to be reaped from our system of education. "We are told," Mr. Fisher added, "to economise in our expenditure and food-stuffs. I suggest that we should economise in the human capital of the country, which we have too long allowed to run to waste."

Where Women Vote.—II.

In the recent Presidential election the woman voter exploded numerous theories about herself and established a few facts. To the query would she vote if she had the ballot, the West emphatically replied, YES! To the query, would she vote as her husband voted, the West emphatically replied NO! Political parties complain bitterly of the irresponsibility of the woman voter, meaning that women cannot be corralled, moulded into party form, and made to voice their opinions as a unit. They show a maddening independence in scratching a ballot. Republican women have been openly accused of voting for a Democratic President, and Democratic women of deserting to a Republican candidate. And the women do not deny it, they blandly explain that they vote for the best man, irrespective of party.

The Western woman is, perhaps, as busy a person as any woman of the country. Her domestic interests form a bee-hive of industry. The West is a place of homes and intimate family life; so acute is the servant problem, that even wealthy women are often compelled to be their own cooks and bottle-washers. They can handle a vacuum-cleaner with all the skill of an experienced hand. They have children, not in ones and twos, but in the good old-fashioned way of sixes and sevens. There is not the acute line-up between riches and poverty that the East has developed in its millionaires and factory hands. The majority of families are in comfortable circumstances; they live a sane, out-door, busy, healthy existence. The women take their politics as an adjunct of their homes.

The women seem inclined to leave the machinery of government in the hands of the men; what they want is results. They are keen about good schools, well paved streets, sanitary homes, moral and social conditions. Every legislature finds some women at the various capitols, looking after a Bill the women are behind; but the Bill usually deals with a social issue. While the Western women are becoming more keenly interested in, as they grow more familiar with, their municipal and national problems, they are not, according to politicians, showing any great eagerness for political jobs.

Sometimes the women turn a trick on the men in a spirit

The Venereal Diseases Bill.

In the House of Commons on Monday, Mr. Hayes Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary Local Government Board) moved the second reading of the Venereal Diseases Bill, which had come down from the House of Lords. The Bill, he said, was the outcome of a very important Royal Commission, and had the support of the Association of County Councils, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the London County Council, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, and the National Council which was formed to combat these diseases. The bill was desirable especially to deal with the aftermath of the war, but he asked the House not to jump to the conclusion that there had been any increase in the formidable disease dealt with. So far as figures could be obtained, there was nothing to show that the ratio per thousand in the Army and Navy had in any way increased. There was evidence that the percentage of disease amongst recruits in Germany was five times greater than it was in this country, and that the percentage amongst the German civil population was also very much higher than here. He referred to the importance of setting up local clinics where free treatment should be given on a confidential basis, and also of preventing the supply of quack remedies.

The prohibitive provisions of the bill would apply in local areas by order of the Local Government Board, which would be issued when they were satisfied that proper provision for treatment had been provided. Practice by unqualified persons who professed to be able to cure the disease was most injurious, and should be prevented. This was a matter in which the liberty of the subject should give way to the safety of the State. If the bill were read a second time he would propose to refer it to the same Grand Committee as dealt with the Criminal Law Amendment Bill.

Captain Guest, in supporting the Bill, said he would have liked to hear more about the free institutions which were being set on foot to deal with the disease. The ravages of this disease in the Army were such, as regards men in this country, as to represent the equivalent of a division permanently out of action. This did not take into account the large number that passed through the hospitals in France and the Colonial troops.

of good-natured raillery, as in the case of Umatilla, Oregon, where the women plotted over their tea-cups to replace the town councilmen with women. The mayor, Mr. E. E. Starcher, was defeated for re-election by his wife, Mrs. E. E. Starcher, and he didn't seem to mind. He just proceeded to get his desk into shape for the in-coming incumbent, and it isn't even recorded that he gave her any advice. Four councilmen, including the recorder and treasurer, lost their jobs to women. The women were not entirely satisfied with Umatilla; they wanted to try their hand at improvements, and the men were willing.

The spirit of comradeship between men and women of the West is inspiring to an Easterner who has been frightened by the bogey that Suffrage would destroy all those womanly qualities which attract men. In no part of the country do men and women seem so nearly to complement each other as in those sections where they are working out their civic problems together. One finds the Western man even more aggressive in his endorsement of Woman Suffrage than the Western woman.

Becoming weary of aspersions cast upon the fair name of Colorado by anti-Suffragists anxious to prove the failure of Woman Suffrage at any cost, leading men of Denver have issued a statement in which they set forth the truth with regard to the economic condition of the State and credit Woman Suffrage with a big share in conducing to Colorado's health and prosperity. The statement is signed by eighteen of the leading bankers of Denver, and by the heads of the fifteen leading retail establishments, while lawyers, clergymen, the superintendent of public schools, other educators and doctors at the top of their respective professions, are also among the signatories.

President Wilson has become keenly interested in the cause of Woman Suffrage, and seldom lets pass occasion to manifest that interest. When North Dakota passed her Presidential Suffrage Bill, he sent a telegram of congratulation to Mrs. Catt and the National American Woman Suffrage Association, of which she is President.

Work for Our Sick and Wounded.

In view of the appeal which appeared in the daily Press last week for a very large number of new workers for hospitals, and for General Service under the Red Cross, it seems opportune to discuss certain stumbling blocks which are acting as a check to enthusiasm in a splendid cause, the existence of which is shown by the very fact that it should be necessary to make such an appeal, and that it specially includes "those who have already worked for the sick and wounded at any time during the war, and have given it up for other work."

To the majority of women the idea of helping to nurse our soldiers makes a tremendous appeal. Surely, unless some of them were being held back by what they have learnt of the experience of others, there would be a constant stream of recruits to meet the ever-growing needs of our hospitals.

At the beginning of the war hospital work was almost the only form of strenuous whole-time war-work open to women, and the supply of would-be nurses far exceeded the demand. Perhaps a more far-seeing policy, looking to future needs, might have said to the apparently superfluous, "The time will surely come when your services will be needed"; but that was hardly the official policy in those days, and many went away discouraged, and were gradually absorbed by the other forms of war-work which sprang into existence in all directions. By the summer of 1916 the supply of nurses was insufficient to meet the needs of our hugely enlarged Army, and an appeal was made for recruits, with the result that the ranks of the V.A.D. were once more filled. Now, with the beginning of our great offensive in France, the appeal is once more sent out, under conditions which have altered very rapidly even since 1916. Nursing is now only one of many forms of war-work open to women. Munitions and skilled trades have absorbed an enormous number. The land is calling urgently for the young and healthy woman to come and take her part in raising the nation's food-supply. The abilities of well-educated women are finding new outlets in many directions in organisation and secretarial work. Cooking and domestic economy have attained an importance never before accorded to them, and the woman who, unwilling to leave home, devotes her time to catering and cooking for a family of any size on "war-economy" lines, may argue that she is doing the most useful work of which she is capable.

Still, nursing appeals to a side of many women's nature not moved to enthusiasm by farming or office-work, and I believe that the necessary thousands will come forward if they realise how much they are needed—particularly if certain matters which have been acting as deterrents can be put right. The first difficulty which occurs to me is a financial one. In the early stages of the war many women came forward whose means allowed of their giving their services free, and even incurring a good deal of expense besides; but their number was limited, and as the requirements of the Nursing Service grew, it was found necessary to institute the payment of living expenses and a salary of £20 per annum. The pay now offered is slightly higher than it was at first, but it is still very small—£20 per annum for the first seven months, rising by amounts of £2 10s. half-yearly up to £30 for those who agree to serve for as long as required. There is an allowance of £5 per annum for upkeep of uniform, but nothing is said about a preliminary grant towards the cost of uniform and outfit. Such a grant should certainly be made. An outfit containing all the things mentioned in the list with which every V.A.D. selected for foreign service is supplied, would cost considerably more than her first year's salary—a serious matter to many women in these days of reduced incomes and rising prices.

A woman whose financial position does not compel her to take the rate of pay into consideration, may be guided in her choice of work by the experiences of friends who have already taken up war-work in some form, and here another difficulty is apt to arise. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of hospital and Army ways will be already aware that from the day she begins her life in hospital she will be working under the most rigid discipline, and if she is sensible she will understand the necessity for it. Should she chance to begin her work under a kindly disposed Sister, she may be agreeably surprised by the pleasant and human relationship between herself and her official superior. What she is less likely to have realised is the fact that her doings when "off duty" are regulated by rules of almost Oriental severity. In some commands (for the rules do not seem to be universal) a nurse is liable to be dismissed in disgrace if she is seen walking in the street with an officer, though he may be an old friend, or even a relative. I can hardly suppose that any matron would exact the full penalty in such

a case, but that is the letter of the law; and the least frivolously inclined may reasonably resent the imputation conveyed. Where these rules have become known to outsiders, they have undoubtedly lowered the status of nurses. "No smoke without fire," says the knowing person; "those nurses are a funny lot, I fancy."

There is another reason why the relations of some girls are reluctant to see them join the V.A.D., and why some who have already served are urged not to go back. We all realise that in such times as these the sacrifice of health, even of life, may be a necessity for a woman, just as for a man, but we feel entitled to protest against causeless waste in either case. When a hospital is short-staffed, or working at unusually high pressure, no nurse worth her salt will "report sick" unless she is absolutely obliged to do so—her going off duty simply piles her work upon her already over-worked comrades. On the other hand, a hospital should, when not abnormally busy, pay more attention to the health of its nurses than has sometimes been the case. Too many nurses have been left on duty when obviously unfit, until they broke down completely, and what, if taken in time, should only have meant a short spell in the sick-room, followed by a return to duty, has ended in a severe illness, and perhaps the loss to the Service of a keen and capable nurse. It is only fair to add that there are many hospitals, both at home and abroad, where the staff are well looked after in every way, and that in most the care and medical attention are excellent when once a nurse has been pronounced unfit for duty.

Another discouraging feature of hospital life from the V.A.D.'s point of view is that of all the varied kinds of work now open to women, it probably offers the least chance of promotion. The girl who has been nursing almost from the beginning of the war, though she may have gained excellent reports from every sister and matron under whom she has worked, is practically on the same footing as the girl who joined up yesterday. It is true that V.A.D.s with more than one year's continuous service in a military hospital are now entitled to wear a white stripe on the sleeve, but so far as I can judge, recognition of the stripe as entitling its wearer to more responsible duties is merely optional on the part of hospital authorities. At any rate, the "striped" V.A.D. is not exempt from all the work of scrubbing lockers and cupboards, washing-up, &c., which could be done just as well by entirely untrained labour.

I should like to emphasise that these criticisms of things as they are at present are not intended to deter women from taking up this most necessary work, but merely to point to some weak spots in the system the removal of which would, I think, help recruiting, retain useful workers for the Service, and increase efficiency. It is not to be thought of that our sick and wounded soldiers should suffer for want of any service that we can render them. If in the stress and hurry of a great campaign these alterations in nursing conditions cannot be carried out, it will still be the duty of every woman who can afford it, and is physically and mentally fitted for it, and not engaged in other work of real national importance, to undertake the work. She will find in it many compensations which it would be beyond the scope of this article to speak of.

W. E.

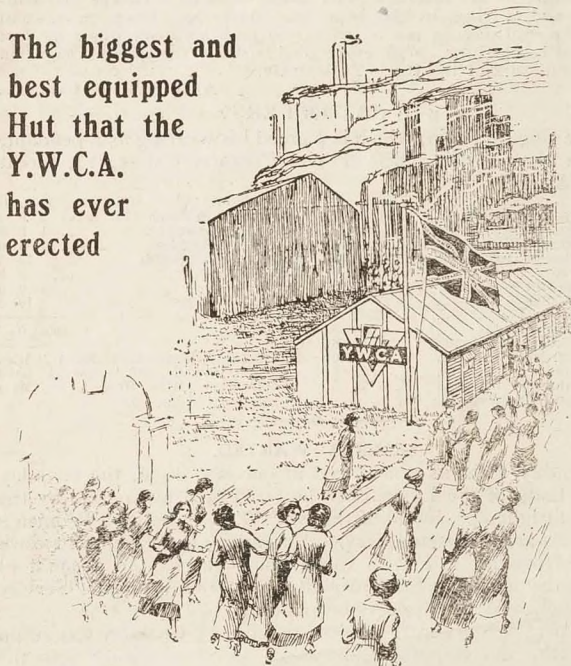
THE HEROISM OF BRITISH NURSES.

The Daily Telegraph of April 20th contains a most thrilling account of the heroism of British nurses in time of danger.

"The silence of the great nursing service which this war has mobilised and developed is at last being broken by the casualty lists," says the writer. "In trains under Zeppelin attacks, on hospital ships, and in open boats, the work that British nurses have done constitutes a chapter that will stand in the proudest annals of the Empire." . . . "Reading several letters from nurses who have been under shell-fire, one is struck by the fact that there is always much more about the expedients to which they had to resort, not only for the safety of their patients, but in the makeshift contrivances they managed when hospital equipment had suffered, than about their personal feelings." In comparing notes, after rescue from a torpedoed ship, continues the writer, the nurses' theme is always the courage the patients had shown in the pain of cramped positions and crowded boats. Their own endurance is simply taken as a matter of course.

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The Master Key.

Innumerable books dealing with the subjection of women have been written in this country during the fifty years since John Stuart Mill moved his famous amendment in the House of Commons to the 1867 Reform Bill. A glance inside the cover of any such volume which may be available will renew our recollection of the fact that all writers on the subject, in their various methods, fasten upon the economic position of women as vital to their social status. In the fighting countries of the world this position has been altering rapidly since August, 1914, and consequently almost in every one of the belligerent lands questions with regard to the political status of women are agitating the community. When we read that Herr Harden is demanding votes for women in the *Zukunft*, we may take it that even Germany, little as she has loved liberty, may be on the eve of discovering that it is no longer discreet or advisable to sit too heavily upon a safety valve.

The war, with all its woe and suffering pressing upon us, has yet brought to women of these islands an opportunity which they might have vainly sought through decades of peace; they have established in the face of the world an economic position and capacity which have astonished our statesmen, while providing opportunities of gain for the large employer, which must have been as supremely gratifying as it was wholly unexpected. Thus, with an irresistible force born of emergency, women have burst the *tabus* of the centuries as Samson burst the withies which were supposed to hold him defenceless, and enter practically unchallenged upon the political and economic arena.

Their efficiency in that arena is for the future to determine; but we may take it that the position of women in industry is henceforth indissolubly bound up, as indeed it should be, with the position of men, and conditions which are unfavourable to one sex will immediately react disadvantageously upon the other.

There was a little story current in children's literature of mid-Victorian days, which has its bearing upon the present situation. The tale was of a cobbler, who had his stall close to a spot passed by all the children of the neighbourhood on their way to school. This instructive cobbler, hoping to influence for good the young ones who, in succeeding generations, passed his door, wrote above the stall the following legend, which shortly became current in the district:—

"Learn something,
Then you can do something,
Then you can get something,
Then you will possess something."

To the casual reader the conclusion may come as somewhat of an anti-climax; but every line of the distich contains, nevertheless, a precept, or considerations of sound import for the younger women of to-day.

Learn something.—If there is one thing more than another that the great emergency of the war has stamped upon the consciousness of women dealing with questions of employment, it is the conviction that lack of training has been the bitterest handicap of our sex. Upon parents and guardians, upon girls themselves, and young women, the cobbler's precept alike urges the universal importance of training.

Then you can do something.—You cease to be a negligible factor. Life opens out; you should be useful, efficient, needed; not a person vaguely waiting for a chance of possibly becoming of some value. The phrase "superfluous women" was probably invented by a man, who believed himself to be enunciating the idea that women were needed for marriage, or for nothing; but, subconsciously, he was affected by the knowledge that for the most part they have remained (in bulk) untrained and ineffective.

Then you can get something.—The implication is clear. You may become independent. You are nobody's chattel, but commanding for yourself the great issues of life. You may give yourself, if love demands it; or withhold what money never should have the power to buy. What innumerable unfortunate marriages have not women been forced into for maintenance? How often would a penniless girl have been able to marry the man of her choice had she been possessed of small resources of her own?

Then you will possess something.—In the shop of a little second-hand dealer, a customer noticed last year four well-made Victorian chairs, newly polished. On demanding the price, the man said they were sold, and added, confidentially: "Those chairs were bought by two sisters working in the shell factory. They are proud of 'em. The eldest said to me, 'We never had

a chance before to have anything nice.' They get good money, you see, and they mean to get a home together."

Incontrovertibly, possessions give a person a certain status. Those wholly without means are not a power in the State. Everywhere hitherto women of all classes have been largely dependent, and the poorest members of their little community; consequently of small public importance.

As Suffragists approach the goal of their hopes with regard to the enfranchisement they have striven for, their attention is everywhere becoming more and more engrossed by the complicated questions relating to the position of women in industry after peace is signed. We cannot give these matters too close an attention, for upon their right solution will depend not only the welfare of the industrial worker, but the social happiness and progress of our race.

MARY LOWNDES.

The Society of Women Welders.

I.—THE MAKING OF A TRADE UNION.

Welding is an old trade, as old as the knowledge of working metals; but oxy-acetylene welding is a new trade, and one not very widely used in this country before the war. It is, however, rapidly extending, and the process is being used in many workshops and for many diverse functions. The type of work with which the Society of Women Welders is chiefly concerned is that used in aeroplane construction; namely, the welding of sockets and joints, struts, levers, and the parts of the framework of flying-machines. For this work there was, even before the war, a shortage of trained welders. The demand for aeroplanes increased enormously when war broke out, and the shortage became much greater, while the enlistment of numbers of the men who formerly did that work added to the difficulty. Into the breach thus created, women stepped—as they have done in so many other more conspicuous instances—and the story of their fortune in the new trade is one worth the telling.

In July, 1915, Mr. Lloyd George appealed to women to take up munition work. Through August and September thousands upon thousands of women looked in vain for the munition work they were to do. Through October and November the first women found their jobs, but by that time much bitter disappointment had been endured.

The Women's Service Bureau of the London Society for Women's Suffrage bore its share of that disappointment: the long waiting, the eager volunteers, the hopeless confusion that surrounded women's work at that, as at every subsequent, moment, and the very black prospects that so clearly lay ahead of it for the future, aroused much anxiety. Among the women who were promptly responding to the call to work, there were many of exceptional ability. There were women whose hands and brains were those of the natural mechanic; there were women whose love for machines had survived all the discouragement of being females; there were middle-aged women, whose dream of being an engineer was finding fulfilment only through their sons; there was one who confessed, half shamefacedly, that once when her son was away, she had taken his motor-bicycle to pieces and put it together again secretly, and because she loved it. There were all these women; there was much skilled work for them to learn; but there was little prospect that they would ever be given the chance to learn it. There were young, eager women, too, with a living to earn—women who knew that they must have something to last them after the war, and yet who came forward eagerly to do their bit, any temporary bit they could get, regardless of the danger of unemployment ahead of them. All these, on the one hand, and on the other the great munition factories slowly building, and the skilled and semi-skilled and the unskilled men leaving day after day to join the colours. Everyone began to talk of dilution and female labour; women began to be tried, now and then, with hesitation. Could women do this? Could they do that? Would the men let them learn the other? Was their strength equal to it? And their nerves? And what were they to be paid?

To all these questions the last year has given plain answers. In August, 1915, however, the London Society acted without evidence, but in the faith that causes Suffrage Societies to live. Women, they argued, are good, sensible citizens of the State. They are capable of being skilled mechanics, if they get the chance; they are capable of doing hard and responsible work, and they are capable of receiving a man's pay. Fortified by these beliefs, the London Society sought to find a skilled engineering process which women should learn. They sought for one which had a good chance of continuance after the war, and one which

was also urgently wanted. They sought for one that women had no opportunity to learn, one that was carried on unquestionably by skilled men, paid at a skilled man's rate, and governed by the clauses of the Munitions Act, and they found all those conditions admirably fulfilled in the process of oxy-acetylene welding.

Having found their trade and their women, and aided by the generous help of some manufacturers of plant, and others, they started a school for women welders at Notting Hill Gate. Miss E. C. Woodward, silversmith and metal worker, was the first to learn the trade in order to become its teacher, and beginning with a stiff text-book, picturesque experiments in her workshop, and a number of lessons from friendly workmen and technical advisers, picking up scraps of information here and there, and working it out for herself, she rapidly became a capable welder and welding instructor.

The school opened in the middle of September, 1915, with twelve pupils, and in December, 1915, the first girls were placed at work with one of the firms that had given help in starting the school. The experiment seemed greatly daring to employers and employed alike, and no one knew quite how it would develop. The girls started work at short hours, and at seven-pence an hour, on the supposition that, though they were well trained, they were not "commercially quick," and on the written statement of the firm that: "Briefly our attitude in the matter is, that for equal work we are at all times prepared to allow equal pay, and that we do not propose to discriminate in any way as between women and men."

It did not take the girls long to show they could attain commercial speed and do reliable work; they received their added penny an hour and were put to work in the same shop as the men, doing the same work and working for the same hours.

During the next two months girls were placed from the school with several firms in the London district, and the fame of the women welders began to spread. Those firms that had them soon saw that it was a suitable women's trade. Their quickness, their deftness, their conscientiousness, and their enthusiasm, were valuable to their employers, and the idea began to take shape that the thing might become, and might remain, a woman's trade. Fortunately, this idea grew simultaneously in the minds of the employed as well as of the employers, so that in the discussions that ensued neither party had a false start. The first matter to come into dispute was, of course, the rate of pay. The girls, after they had been at work for a month or two, claimed a rise above eightpence to ninepence an hour. The new girls, coming in, claimed to start at eightpence. The London Society made no secret of the fact that it expected the firms employing the girls to raise them by fairly quick steps to the tenpence or a shilling an hour that the men were receiving, as they had all originally promised, and the men welders in the shops began to tell the girls they ought to get it.

For the employers it was a very important matter: if it was to be a women's trade in the future, it was all important to them that it should start on a woman's scale—that is to say, with low wages. A rise of twopence an hour, with overtime payments, means over £26 a year extra for each girl, and that means many thousands of pounds to the aeroplane manufacturers. It is little wonder that employers hoped to cut down expenses by employing girls. In every workshop in the land women are doing good work for bad pay, and the employment

Continued from page 31

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