

THE VOTE,
MAY 26, 1916.
ONE PENNY.

THE PRIME MINISTER AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

THE VOTE

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FRIDAY, MAY 26, 1916.

Edited by C. DESPARD.

OBJECTS: To secure for Women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

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OFFICES WHICH CAN BE FILLED BY A WOMAN.

In these days, when so many new occupations and posts are daily opening up to women, it is interesting to note what posts the law has always allowed women to fill. From the pages of an old law book I take the following: "A woman may be queen regnant, marshal, great chamberlain, and champion of England, returning officer for members of Parliament, governor of a workhouse, gaoler, sexton, common constable, and public executioner; for all these being only ministerial offices, may be executed by her by deputy, agent, or minister. A woman cannot fill a judicial situation which depends solely upon the judgment of the person executing the office, and which must be executed in person." On studying the list one is struck by the variety of occupations. Whether or not any woman in England was ever an executioner I cannot say, but evidently in France women executioners were not unknown. In Kenneth Graham's little book called "The Headsman," he draws a pleasing picture of the charms of Jeanne, the public executioner. She claimed the position of headswoman in her native town, an hereditary office. "The late lamented official left only a daughter—she who now stands before you. . . . She has formally applied for the family post with all its—er—duties, privileges, and emoluments, and her application appears to be—er—quite in order. There is nothing left for us, therefore, but to declare the said applicant duly elected." So spoke the mayor. In this country, at any rate, I do not think many women would compete for the position. It is a sex equality which has never been put into use, even in the Dark Ages, and now, in our so-called enlightened days, it is still less likely to commend itself to public opinion,

Queens and Regents are familiar to us all. Queen Victoria, judging by the last book written about her, "The Widowhood of Queen Victoria," seems to have entertained the poorest opinion of the capacity of her own sex, except with regard to Florence Nightingale, whom she wished could have been at the War Office, and would have taken every post away rather than have opened new ones to them. An amusing story is told how Lord Granville proposed, on the death of the Poet Laureate, that a woman should fill the position. The Queen was duly shocked; the idea of a woman writing an ode about a woman seemed to her entirely unsuitable. Lord Granville had not the courage to explain that, in his opinion, if a woman could reign and govern a country and an empire, another woman might set her achievements forth in verse. It is pathetic that the great Queen's dictum was: "Women require men to guide them."

It seems odd that women can act as returning officers for members of Parliament, yet cannot do that simple thing themselves—"make a cross against a name." A few years ago Miss Chrystal Macmillan claimed the right of acting as returning officer at a by-election in Glasgow. Although not effusively welcomed by the powers that be, they knew she had the right to be there, so being powerless to reject her, there she stayed. If we search our memory we may recall the names of women in bygone days who have occupied the various posts mentioned in this ancient law-book. To-day, however, we rejoice that the Victorian leaning, propping age is a thing of the past, and with pride and joy we watch women coming forward to fill many new positions—and to work beside men.

[EUNICE G. MURRAY.]

THE VOTE.

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To the Advertising Manager—on advertising.
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EDITORIAL.

The Editor is responsible for unsigned articles only. Articles, paragraphs, or cuttings dealing with matters of interest to women generally will be welcomed. Every effort will be made to return unsuitable MSS. if a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed, but the Editor cannot be responsible in case of loss.

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WAKE UP, SUFFRAGISTS!

"You cannot see the wood for the trees" is a well-known German proverb, and the truth of it is aptly illustrated by the attitude of the majority to-day. While we are all fixing our eyes on the gigantic tree of Prussian militarism, the rest of the forest is neglected; seeds are sown by the winds and watered by the rains, and strange forms of life are growing up and developing, while other products of mother earth, essential to the welfare of the community, are being strangled by pernicious weeds. Why do wars loom so large on our horizon? They are temporary paroxysms, not permanent conditions of human life. War is the apotheosis of a male creature. He is, metaphorically, spreading out his tail, like the peacock, from the beginning to the end of the strife, and the chronicler of his age and country helps him in his efforts to overshadow all other interests.

The orthodox historian puts

In the front rank the soldier thus,
The "Prussian" bully in his boots,
Who hides the march of men from us.

This is, indeed, the greatest evil of war, that it provides for the sensation-loving public an exciting panorama, which obscures and even actually hides all that is of really vital importance and permanent interest to the human race.

Before the great catastrophe of this war overwhelmed us, we were all watching with interest and enthusiasm signs of wondrous portent, the forerunners of a new renaissance. In all the countries of Europe and in the newer lands of the Southern and Western hemispheres, labour was lifting its head, workers were demanding better conditions, a higher standard of living, in the interests of the race. Education was beginning to be understood to mean something better than a superficial knowledge of the so-called "Three R's." A social conscience was awakening, and some among the rich were beginning to see, vaguely and dimly, it is true, that a prosperous nation ought not to number among its inhabitants millions of half-starved, sweated workers. Above all, women were demanding a voice in the national housekeeping and the national nurseries so deplorably mismanaged by a male cabal. In pre-war days the toll of infant life in our great Metropolis was felt to be a scandal in a civilised and scientific age, yet the enormous increase in infant mortality during the last eighteen months has raised only a few protests in letters, tucked away in the unread corners of the newspapers. The sweating of workers was a subject of great agitation in the first decade of this century,

yet women and children are being disgracefully sweated to-day and no one raises a protest, because we are all absorbed in the doings of our forces, and those of our Allies, and our business is "to win the war." If that consummation devoutly to be wished is reached, what then? With a diminished birth-rate, an enormously increased infant mortality, a maimed and nerve-racked generation to produce the inhabitants of the islands, nay, of Europe itself, a drained exchequer, and a heavy load of debt, making all reforms impossible, what a labour of Sisyphus will reconstruction be?

Let us see to the really vital things while there is time. If the Empire is to be worth saving, the women, who are as yet impotent as citizens, must bestir themselves and claim their share in the responsibilities of Government to save the race from destruction. The British Dominions Woman's Suffrage Union, which struggled to birth in the midst of the great militant agitation so utterly misrepresented in the Press Overseas, held its first Conference in July, 1914, just before the world war broke out, and has not only survived this cataclysm, but has been extended and strengthened by the very characteristics which this war has brought out. The immense enthusiasm for the deeds of the heroic Anzacs in Gallipoli, for the courage of the Canadians in France and Flanders, and for the South Africans, who have quelled rebellion without bloodshed, and conquered the German Colonies and the German influence in their midst, have drawn ever closer the ties which bind the Motherland to her daughter countries—ties light as air, but which have proved stronger than links of iron. The women of these Dominions have shown their kinship with and their insight into the needs of the people in the Homeland by generous gifts of clothing and money through the channel of the Suffrage Union. The touching and loving messages sent with the carefully-stitched garments, and the eager interest in the poor or sick children who benefit by the fund, show that these Oversea Britons have never lost touch with the race from which they have sprung. In two of these Dominions the women have already the power to co-operate in the moulding of a nation, and Canada, even at the height of the War fever, has enfranchised two of her provinces. In the purer atmosphere of the newer lands the need for the woman's help is more keenly felt.

It is to bring together all women suffragists that the Overseas Union is this year holding a Conference to discuss questions of vital interest to the race. The question of the loss of nationality through marriage has been brought very prominently forward by the cruel sufferings this war has brought upon many women of British and German birth. It was a question that excited very little attention among the general public before this time, because it appeared to the uninitiated to imply no particular grievance when Europe was at peace. Even then, however, the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, following the work of many enlightened people, who were fully alive to the dangerous potentialities of the law involving loss of nationality through marriage with an alien, sent a deputation to interview the Colonial Secretary upon this subject in July, 1914. The foresight of the goddess Frigga has, indeed, descended to the daughters of her worshippers, for, although the Colonial Secretary waived their objections then, he can hardly fail to realise their practical value now. Sex morality and sex education will be another subject for instruction and discussion. Perhaps of all our war problems the darkest and most terrible is the undue prominence that is given at this period to the sex relation and the awful degradation of the sacred sex function.

"Cairo has been more fatal to our soldiers than Gallipoli," said an Australian political leader, and, in these words we have the strongest incentive to bestir ourselves to insist upon the urgent necessity of an adequate training in self-control for the sake of the future of the race. The economic condition of women and children is intimately connected with the preceding subject, for women and children are often driven on to the streets by starvation wages. Australia and New Zealand, where women have enjoyed political power for fourteen and twenty-two years respectively, compare very favourably with all other countries in their legislation for the payment of fair wages and the insuring of the comfort of the workers. Child labour has ceased to be remunerative to the employer at the minimum wage he is required to pay—an appeal to his pocket, which is much more effective than a faith in his philanthropy.

Meetings for the discussion of all these questions, of such vital importance to the race of whom women are the natural guardians, should appeal to all suffragists, and a number of suffrage societies have already intimated their intention of taking part in the Conference. Discussions and resolutions, however, are futile, unless women are armed with political power so as to enforce their wishes, and, therefore, a suffrage meeting will form a most essential part of the programme. Through the medium of THE VOTE we make an urgent appeal to all those who are interested in the well-being of their race and in the welfare of humanity to prove that interest in a practical way by helping to make these meetings productive of definite and permanent results.

"You cannot see the wood for the trees." Look at the wood. Gaze on the ruin that has been wrought, then turn your eyes to the weed-grown or the barren soil, where the good seed needs your nurture if it is to prosper and bring forth fruit. "When the oak is felled the whole forest re-echoes with the fall, but a thousand acorns are sown in silence by an unnoticed breeze." Help these in their struggle for life, O ye world mothers, and remember that you are the daughters of Frigga, the goddess, who always had her steadfast gaze fixed on the future, that future whose secrets she alone of all the gods was permitted to know.

MARGARET HODGE.

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

Tender Care.

Another body of citizens has been giving proof of the solidarity of the nation—and of masculinity. The Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers at Sheffield on Monday declared its undying opposition to the employment of women as tram-drivers. These high-spirited Britons based their objection on two fine points—the danger to the public, and the danger to the race and its future generations. The danger to the public, if one may judge from the amazing accident statistics, is not confined to women drivers (who have not yet killed anybody, and may possibly never do so), while as to the other danger, if these Pharisees would really consider the welfare of future generations they would deal first with the far greater danger—the immoral habits of their own sex, the gravest of all menaces to future generations. In the very small number of women likely to be injured as tram-drivers, no great menace can be found that is not already provided by scrubbing and various other "womanly" occupations, such as the carrying of heavy babies by little girls of eight and ten. In all matters related to their industrial monopoly men workers persistently adhere to this

paltry pretence of caring for the physical welfare of women. The very men whose homes bear the burden of a new baby every year, without privacy, decency, proper food, or proper nursing for the over-burdened mother, will solemnly put forward arguments such as those advanced at Sheffield and expect to be treated seriously. The menace to future generations comes, not from the employment of women, but from the habits and prejudice of men, and so long as they persist in straining at gnats—which are all too frequently merely the product of mental "jim-jams"—and swallowing camels, so long we must hold them unfit to give opinions relating to our welfare.

Beauty First.

We remember the time when women were informed that their judgment could not be trusted in the matter of choosing representatives, as the lot would always fall on the best-looking man. What are we to think of the outpourings of *The Daily Mail*, *The Weekly Dispatch*, and other organs, which, with the utmost degree of bad-breeding as well as silliness, give us to understand that important Government departments choose their women clerks on a basis of beauty, not capacity? One would have thought the need of these women's services might have saved them from such impertinences, but among certain men there are no limits to bad breeding where women are concerned.

A Word to Mr. Wells.

Of equal futility and impudence are the articles recently furnished by Mr. H. G. Wells to *The Daily News* and *The Evening News* on the subject of women. This profound thinker has made two or three startling discoveries. He has found out, for instance, that there are two or three, or several, different kinds of women; that these different kinds of women do not all think or act alike; and that there is possibly some reason or point in the various fashions of expressing themselves. We hope there is a public that appreciates Mr. Wells's discoveries and admires him for making them, but, for us, the impertinence of this persistence in explaining, or apologising, for women is more offensive than amusing. If these superior persons, with a mania for explanations that explain nothing about things that do not require explanation, would only leave them alone, or, if they cannot refrain from explaining and apologising, would do so about things of which they may presumably know something—i.e., their own very extraordinary doings and sayings and thinkings—it might be less irritating. We offer Mr. Wells a profound thought for his study and improvement. Men do not act in the lump like a flock of sheep, nor do women, because, like men, they happen to be human beings, of varying degrees of intelligence. If he will give this time to soak into his mind, he may glean an idea or two, but we hope it will not make him write another article!

Dr. Nélanie Lipinska.

Mrs. Cunningham writes: Owing to absence from home, the proof of my interview with Dr. Lipinska did not reach me, and I wish to make it clear that the remark attributed to the Polish doctor: "Societies in my country discourage research, . . . especially women's part in it," was in reality a statement of mine. "My country" is Britain, not Poland. Readers may be interested to know that Dr. Lipinska has been visiting physician to various hospitals in Paris and consulting physician for several seasons at different thermal stations in the Vosges mountains. She is now teaching massage in London.

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ONE
PENNY
WEEKLY.

Organ of the Women's Freedom League.

BRANCH NOTES.

Bournemouth.

We urge all members and friends in this neighbourhood to attend our meeting, which will be held (by kind permission of Mrs. Hume) at Freedom Hall, Loughtonhurst, West Cliff-gardens, to-day (Friday), at 4 p.m., when Mrs. Mustard will speak on "Women and War Economy," and the chair will be taken by Mrs. Whetton. Admission is free, but there will be a collection in aid of the funds of our Bournemouth Branch.

Chester. Suffrage Shop, 45, St. Werburgh-street,

Our Whist Drive in aid of the 50,000 Shilling Fund took place on May 17, and proved to be most enjoyable. Many thanks are due to the Committee, and all our friends, who helped to make it such a success by assisting in various ways and by giving some of the refreshments. We are particularly grateful to Mrs. Harry Brown, who paid for the hall; to Mrs. Young, who made such delicious tea and coffee; and to Mrs. Laybourne, who acted as M.C. Miss Taylor presented the prizes, and afterwards Miss Neal, who kindly came over to see us from Manchester, gave a short address on the attitude of the League during the war and how much has been done by its various War Funds; after a little dancing we dispersed. We hope to realise over £4, but cannot give the exact amount until a meeting is held this week. Miss Woodall, on her way to West Kirby on business, paid us a flying visit, and just arrived in time for Wednesday evening. The Committee organising the taking out of the barrel organ have arranged to go out again on Saturday next if the weather permits. Also we are shortly holding a members' meeting, to be announced probably by letter.

East London.

There will be a VERY special meeting at 37, Wellington Buildings, Bow, on Monday, May 29, 1916, at 6.15 p.m. All members, who have the welfare of the Branch at heart, will cut all other engagements and make a point of being present.

Middlesbrough. Suffrage Centre, 231a, The Arcade, Linthorpe-road.

On May 15 a lecture was given by Miss Beatrice Kent on her recent journey through the United States and Canada, taken in order to attend the Conferences of Nurses at the Panama Exhibition, San Francisco. She awakened much in-

terest by her description of the various States in which women are enfranchised, and showed how beneficial has been the influence of the women's vote on the social conditions of those States. Mrs. Schofield Coates presided. Goods are still wanted for the Jumble Sale; will members kindly let us have their contributions before May 29? Members and friends are earnestly requested to help at the Tipperary Rooms the week commencing June 12. If not able to give personal service, the secretary will be very grateful for articles suitable for prizes for the Tipperary whist drive.

Portsmouth.

We are pleased to announce that Mrs. Mustard will speak on "Women and War Economy" on Tuesday, May 30, at 3 p.m., at The Suffrage Rooms, 2, Kent-road. Members are urged to come and bring many friends. On Wednesday, June 7, by kind permission of Mrs. Speck, there will be a Garden Whist Drive in aid of the Birthday Fund, at 17, Duncan-road, Southsea, at 3 p.m. Tickets 1s. each. Fortnightly work parties are held at 17, Lombard-street for the Green, White and Gold Fair. For dates, see Forthcoming Events.

Swansea.

On May 17 a committee meeting was held at Mrs. Hutton's. The treasurer reported on the result of the Entertainment and Jumble Sale held at the end of March. It was decided to send £7, the proceeds of the Jumble Sale, to Headquarters, and £3 10s. 5d., realised by the Entertainment, to the local Prisoners-of-War Fund. One guinea was also voted towards the expenses of the Suffrage Campaign at Buxton during the week of the Teachers' Conference. Members are asked to make an effort to attend a Branch meeting, to be held on June 22, at Miss Kirkland's, 105, Walter-road, to discuss work for the November Fair.

THE NEGLECT OF SCIENCE.—"A Woman Engineer" writes to say that Col. Crompton, who blamed women nurses and their objection to chemicals being spilled on carpets for the neglect of science teaching, entirely approves of women being taught science if they are so inclined and capable, and is generous and open-minded in his assistance to both sexes. We are glad to hear it, but at the meeting his only reference to women was to blame nurses.

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