

THE VOTE,
AUGUST 18, 1916.
ONE PENNY.

The King's Thanks to Women.

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

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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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MR. ASQUITH ADMITS WOMEN'S CLAIM.

The moment you begin a general enfranchisement on lines of State service you are brought face to face with another most formidable proposition. **What are you to do with the women?** (Cheers and laughter.) I do not think I shall be suspected—my record in the matter is clear—of having any special desire or predisposition to bring women within the pale of the franchise, but I have received a great many representations from those who are authorised to speak for them, and I am bound to say that they presented to me not only a reasonable, but I think, from their point of view, **an unanswerable case.** They say they are perfectly content if we do not change the qualification of the franchise to abide by the existing state of things, but that if you are going to bring in a new class of electors, on whatever ground of State service, they must point out—

AND NONE OF US CAN POSSIBLY DENY THEIR CLAIM

—that during this war **the women of this country have rendered as effective service in the prosecution of the war as any other class of the community.** (Cheers.) It is true they cannot fight in the gross material sense of going out with rifles and so forth, but in armament factories they are doing the work which the men who are fighting had to perform before; **they have taken the places of those men, they are the servants of the State,** and they are aiding in the most effective way in the prosecution of the war. (Cheers.) What is more, and this is a point which makes a special appeal to me, they say when the war comes to an end, and when these abnormal and, of course, to a large extent transient conditions have to be revised, and when the process of industrial reconstruction has to be set on foot, **have not the women a special claim to be heard** on the many questions which will arise directly affecting their interests, and possibly meaning for them large displacements of labour? I say to the House quite candidly, as a lifelong opponent of Woman Suffrage,

I CANNOT DENY THAT CLAIM.

From the Prime Minister's Speech in the House of Commons, August 14, 1916.

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DARE TO BE FREE.

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Friday, September 22.—CAXTON HALL. Mrs. Despard's Return Party, from 7 to 9.30 p.m. Invitation cards from W.F.L. Office. Speakers: Mrs. Despard, Miss Eunice G. Murray and Miss Evelyn Sharp.
Sunday, October 1.—HASLUCK'S ACADEMY, 3, Bedford-street, Strand, Miss Clara Reed, Recital "Becket," 4 p.m.
Wednesday, October 4.—CAXTON HALL. Speakers: Mr. Laurence Housman and Mrs. Despard. Chair: Mrs. E. M. Moore. 3.30 p.m.
Wednesday, October 11.—CAXTON HALL. Speaker: Mrs. Aldridge. Chair: Miss A. A. Smith. 3.30 p.m.
Wednesday, October 18.—CAXTON HALL. Speaker: Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., on "The Soldiers' Rights." 3.30 p.m. Chair: Mrs. Corner.
Friday, October 20.—CAXTON HALL, Political Meeting.
Wednesday, October 25.—CAXTON HALL. Speaker: Mrs. Nevinson, on "The Future of Women." 3.30 p.m.

PROVINCIAL.

ABERYSTWYTH CAMPAIGN.—Meetings on the North and South Beach each day at 11.30 a.m. and 8 p.m. Speakers: Miss Anna Munro and Miss Alix M. Clark.

WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE SETTLEMENT, 1, Everett-street, Nine Elms, S.W. Closed until August 28. Children's Guest House and Milk Depot for Nursing Mothers.

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THE PROMISED GOAL.

The "softening" process which the Prime Minister is supposed to have undergone in regard to votes for women has moved him to utter some remarkable phrases in setting forth his registration proposals. It is a matter of common knowledge that it was his stubborn personal resistance to this form of progress which has caused women to remain unenfranchised. In this he followed in the steps of his great patron Gladstone, and it will always be a blot on the memory of these two statesmen, whose claim to greatness lies in their expressed belief in "democracy."

We do not desire that suffragists should be too much uplifted by the pronouncements of the Prime Minister. There is still good ground for doubt, much need for united effort. But with the acquiescence, amid "cheers," of the House of Commons in the principle laid down that the fighting forces cannot be included in a wider franchise without injustice to women, whose claim the Prime Minister no longer denies, there can be little doubt that the goal is in sight, although the struggle is not yet over.

The "softening" process is not confined alone to the Premier. It has also acted on the Press. There is no paper so prejudiced and so bitter as not to come round a little now, when it is so apparent—so glaringly apparent—that the welfare, the

safety, the triumph of the nation and the men of the nation rest in the last resort on the women. War—the "man's job"—cannot be carried to success without women. Industry cannot keep from dislocation without women. Profits cannot be piled up without women. The reconstruction cannot be carried out without women. The case is complete, the object-lesson unassailable.

The *Edinburgh Evening Despatch* has a querulous note, and so has *The Morning Post*. The former wants women, in "their own interests and the welfare of the country," to "make a still further exercise of patience and self-control, even of self-sacrifice." *The Morning Post* declines to believe that women "would make their claims a bar to the enfranchisement of men who have been risking life and enduring privation and suffering for them." It is strange that these appeals for self-sacrifice should never be addressed to men! Why are the fighting forces not asked to sacrifice their votes, temporarily, to save the country embarrassment? It is only women who are expected to strike this silly attitude. There is no man alive whose birth has not cost a woman risk to life and suffering and privation; but when are men asked to sacrifice anything to reward the women who brought them into the world? And what are we to think of *The Morning Post's* sneer at Mr. Asquith "taking refuge behind the skirts of the suffragists" as an excuse for not undertaking a task for which he had no mind? We seem to remember, not so long ago, that the Conservative party did not mind taking refuge behind the skirts of the suffragists when they saved the City of London franchise by wrecking the measure on which women had pinned their hopes. The plea that if an election takes place the voice of the nation "will be only partial in volume" leaves us unmoved. That is what is at the bottom of our claim; it has never before seemed to *The Morning Post* to matter!

The proposals of the Government will require careful study to see that nowhere is a loophole left open for fresh and unregistered voters to find their way on to the roll under the new residential qualifications. If no new door be opened, we will not say that we of the Freedom League will cease from our demand for enfranchisement, for that we never do. But we would make no formal protest beyond that which we already have made—i.e., the abnormal sensitiveness of Parliament to franchise injustices to men, and the corresponding callousness in the case of women. It is all summed up in Sir Edward Carson's naive and enlightened explanation: "Because men are enfranchised and women are not." We are glad for once to be able to agree with Sir Edward. We have always said this was the reason. He doubtless learnt his lesson from our teaching! C. NINA BOYLE.

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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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LINKING OR BREAKING?

Much has been said and written lately about the political effect of the entrance of women into the numerous forms of skilled labour which, until recently, have been closed to them. There is another aspect of this movement, not, we think, sufficiently considered, which, affecting as it does the ordinary, everyday life of practically the whole community, is far more important. We are told, almost *ad nauseam*, that women by their adaptability, their skill, and their intelligent and ready patriotism have proved themselves worthy of those citizen rights from which formerly they were excluded "for their own sakes."

We know what value is to be attached to such statements, especially when they are put forward by party politicians. When foolish people want to make children good they promise them plenty of jam. Sometimes the promises are kept; sometimes they are not.

That is the political side. There is also the other—the social and economic side—which is of paramount importance. There never was a time in our national history when clearer thinking and more enlightened patriotism were needed to deal with the complicated problems that are constantly arising within the nation.

For instance. As the war prolongs itself the thoughts of the multitude turn ever more longingly to peace; but what peace? Hosts of men and women, some vaguely, others with knowledge and definite purpose, are forecasting that future. Certain employers, hampered in the past by Trade Union restrictions and Government regulations—such as Factory and Minimum Wage Acts—are openly declaring their intention to maintain and make permanent the comparative freedom which the patriotic surrender of Trade Unions and the relaxation of Government orders have given them. They are pious—those who are striving their uttermost to make the best of both worlds for themselves are always pious—they will consider their workers; but it shall be their consideration, not that of Government, or of any other combination. The factories are their property; they will manage them in their own way. The magnificently effective discipline of Army life shall be brought into industrial life. They will proclaim a complete autocracy.

The Trade Unions, on the other hand, fortified by repeated pledges from Government which cannot be disregarded, they feel, without danger when the day of reckoning comes, are determined to retain the

power over their own labour gained through a century of struggle, and, if possible, to increase it.

This is how the case stands; but both sides have failed clearly to recognise the fact that a new element has come in. Formerly when industrial battles were waged, women, with their children, suffered. Now, with their proved capacity for work of every description, they have become independent; they will act. It is impossible to watch the uniformed women, quietly and steadily pursuing their work in our cities, without feeling that through this great change a new and hopeful force has entered into industrial life. If, because of their sex, skilled or unskilled men are to be allotted a higher standard of pay than skilled or unskilled women, there will be imminent danger of dragging the standard down for all, and thus making it easier for an autocracy to establish itself. The same argument applies to hours and other conditions of labour. Unless man and woman act together, the employer, by playing one against the other, will gain strength. It is an old story, too frequently, alas! forgotten. The greatest of empires have been built up on the simple axiom, "Divide and govern."

We think this is beginning to be understood. Looked at from this point of view a peculiar significance underlies the demands made for women by men, some of which were quoted in our last issue. Again, the same demand is stated very clearly in an article by A. P. Nicholson in last Friday's *Daily News*. The writer says:—

After we have called for women's work on the road, in the field, in the workshop, men cannot turn to them and say: "Now we ask you to help the nation again, this time by giving up your work, this time, perhaps, by suffering privation, this time to help us to restore society, but we claim the entire management of the affair." It is impossible.

Amongst those who claim citizen rights for women, some are members of the Government. On the other hand, that great Trade Union, of extraordinary importance now that the life of the nation hangs upon keeping the roadways of commerce open, the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers, have sent in to the Government their straight demand that women shall be included in the Registration Act. Surely such signs of national feeling will not be disregarded by those who are responsible for the nation's guidance.

But meanwhile, and, we may say, in order to this, we must not forget the economic situation.

There has been some controversy lately about whether or no women are to take part in the Church of England National Mission as "Messengers." Women have their own spheres of action. Many pulpits and many platforms, some of these under the clear heaven and upon the green earth, are open to them. Should bishops and their clergy refuse to give women standing-room in pulpits and lecterns it will not affect them much. But if, as now seems likely, associations including employers and employed are to be convened to debate upon and to decide how the future of industry is to be regulated, we must demand with insistence that women as well as men shall be represented.

We seem to be nearing an era of "linking-up." Is it too much to ask that there shall be amongst those representatives women with knowledge and experience in the most momentous and far-reaching of all arts—that which concerns itself with the care, the training, the protection, the education, and the entry into industry of the children of our nation?

It is in view of all these efforts at reconstruction we maintain that nothing more important has ever happened in this country than the coming together of men and women in industry. Women have

vindicated their right to adjudicate on questions whose interest for themselves and their children can never again be disputed.

For our own part, we believe we are near breaking-point. The waves that have been travelling for ages over life's ocean—womanhood; labour—can no longer bear the burden of oppression that has weighed them down. They are bound to break. The question is—How? Quietly, naturally, in the peaceful fulfilling of Nature's process, or in the tumult and menace of the thwarted, bringing down into ruins the world-order they might have made beautiful and strong? C. DESPARD.

WOMEN IN WAR TIME.

The King's Thanks to Women.

For the first time His Majesty's message to the troops includes recognition and appreciation of the work of women. He says:—

I have realised, not only the splendid work which has been done in immediate touch with the enemy—in the air, underground, as well as on the ground—but also the vast organisations behind the fighting line, honourable alike to the genius of the initiators and to the heart and hand of the workers. Everywhere there is proof that all, men and women, are playing their part, and I rejoice to think their noble efforts are being heartily seconded by all classes at home.

Tribute from the Minister of Munitions.

Mr. E. S. Montagu, Minister of Munitions, giving in the House of Commons last Tuesday evening a remarkable record of the output of munitions, said:—

I want to say a word about women. Women of every station, with or without previous experience of the difficulties, the strain and monotony of munition work, have proved themselves able to undertake work which before the war was regarded as solely the province of men, and often of skilled men alone. Indeed, it is not too much to say that our Armies have been saved and victory assured largely by the women in the munition factories. There are, I believe, some 500 different munition processes upon which women are now engaged, two-thirds of which had never been performed by a woman previous to twelve months ago. When I ask the House to consider this, together with the work done by women in hospitals, in agriculture, in transport trades, and in every type of clerical occupation, I would respectfully submit that when time and opportunity offer it will be opportune to ask: *Where is the man now who would deny to woman the civil rights which she has earned by hard work?* (Cheers.)

First Woman to Visit Verdun Lines.

Miss Kathleen Burke, of the Scottish Women's Hospital, has returned to London after the unique experience of having received permission to make a tour of the French front, including the lines at Verdun. The permission was given as a mark of their appreciation of the splendid work accomplished by the Scottish Women's Hospitals and the British Hospitals for the French Army. Miss Burke is the first woman allowed to enter Verdun since the evacuation of the civil population.

"Entirely Justified."

Mr. Wilson, Principal of the East Anglian School of Agriculture, states that "The step of introducing women on to the land has been thoroughly justified."

At a meeting of the Middlesex Women's War Agricultural Committee on August 11, Miss La Motte, of the Employment Department of the Board of Trade, spoke of the good work done by educated women on the land. Between 1,000 and 2,000 had done fruit picking, with excellent results. Farmers have been impressed by the rapidity with which they learn their work, and the efficiency with which they do it.

Her Story.

Before leaving again for the Front to rejoin her regiment, Miss Flora Sandes has found time to write a book of her experiences, which Messrs Hodder and Stoughton are publishing, under the title of "An Englishwoman Sergeant in the Serbian Army." This record of Miss Sandes's experiences as a hospital nurse, and later, as a Serbian soldier, will be illustrated, and issued at 2s. 6d. net.

THE PRESS, PRIME MINISTER AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

Mr. A. P. Nicholson, commenting in *The Daily News* on August 16 on the Prime Minister's statement, said:—

I hear on very good authority that the Prime Minister's speech indicates a personal change of opinion, and that he has now told the Cabinet that when the franchise is changed, as it must be, the women must be given votes.

Distinctly the most interesting, and in many ways the most intrinsically important, passage in the Prime Minister's speech yesterday was that devoted to the relation of his registration proposals to the question of women's suffrage.—*Daily News*.

Thinking nobly of the women of this country—as, after the experience of the last two years, they have deserved more than ever to be thought of—we decline altogether to believe that they would make their claims to the vote a bar to the enfranchisement of the men who have been risking life and enduring privation and suffering for them. To believe that would be to ignore all the sacrifices that the women have already so cheerfully and splendidly made. To see Mr. Asquith taking refuge behind the skirts of the suffragists is not an inspiring spectacle.—*Morning Post*.

So far as votes for women are concerned, it may be taken as a hopeful sign from the women's standpoint that a Prime Minister who has been a lifelong opponent of their cause should admit the justice of their claim, although circumstances prevent its present fulfilment.—*Daily Express*.

The Prime Minister admits that the claim of women to be considered, if their basis is altered for the male voter, is not only "reasonable" but "unanswerable." It would be premature to take this as an announcement of Mr. Asquith's personal conversion, but undoubtedly he uses language upon the war services of women which suggests that he and large numbers of those who think with him will approach this question with a new mind when the war is over. Herein, we think, he expresses the prevailing sentiment.—*Westminster Gazette*.

Mr. Asquith handsomely acknowledges the splendid services rendered by the women of this country during the war. In pre-war days he was the most influential opponent of women's suffrage. His convictions or his prejudices, call them what we will, have yielded to the resistless logic of events. He frankly admitted to-day that in the great problems of social and industrial reconstruction after the war, many of them directly affecting their interests, women will have special claims to be consulted. "I cannot deny that claim." This is very like a confession of conversion to belief in women's suffrage.—Parliamentary correspondent, *Daily Chronicle*.

Mr. Asquith's declaration that the women have a special claim to be heard is a most momentous change in his point of view. We believe that other old opponents of woman suffrage in the Cabinet have been converted by the war work of women.—*Star*.

The Government's Proposals.

1. The Government propose that there should be no alteration in the franchise.

2. Provision is to be made for a new register to be brought into force on the existing basis of qualification from May 31 next. The period of qualification is to be postponed from July 19 to November 1 to make the register as fresh as it can be.

3. Persons engaged on war work who are on the existing register and have since lost their qualification are to be placed on the new register. For this purpose war workers will include:—(a) Soldiers and sailors. (b) Persons engaged in work such as mine-sweeping and the laying of cables under the direction of the naval and military authorities. (c) Ambulance workers. (d) Prisoners of war and interned civilians. (e) Persons who have been compelled to change their abode owing to the destruction of their houses by hostile bombardment or to works carried on for home defence. (f) Persons who have left their homes in order to engage in munition work elsewhere.

4. Persons who were in course of qualification for a vote, however early in the stage, will be entitled to be registered, as if that process had not been interrupted by the war.

MEN DEMAND VOTES FOR WOMEN.

The following letter was sent by Sir Francis Blake to Mr. R. H. Gaul, Hon. Sec. Berwick-on-Tweed Branch of Northern Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage:—

August 8th, 1916. Tillmouth Park,
Cornhill-on-Tweed.

DEAR MR. GAUL,—I have your letter of 7th inst., in which you call attention to the fact that I am now, as I have been for some years, a member of the Northern Men's Federation of Women's Suffrage, and this of itself is a guarantee of the fact that the question of Woman's Suffrage is no new one to me, and should reassure my fellow members that I shall not lose sight of it if I become member for the Berwick-on-Tweed Division of Northumberland.

If, before the war, I was in favour of a measure enabling women to take a direct share in the choice of Members of Parliament and the government of their country, thereby putting it on a true national basis, your members may be sure that the events of the last two years have thoroughly confirmed my views on this vital question.

With regard to the last paragraph in your letter, the probability is that the House of Commons will have risen before I can take my seat, and in any event I should probably have to leave home for a further change North in order to complete my convalescence. Generally speaking, you may rely upon my active support in favour of any measure dealing with Registration containing also a generous provision for the admission of women to the Parliamentary franchise.

There are obvious difficulties of detail, but these will be settled, I have no doubt, in consultation with Mrs. Fawcett and other leaders of the Women's Movement, and the position is now so favourable, and the goodwill of all parties so thoroughly assured, that I have no doubt of a happy fulfilment of our most ardent aspirations in this direction.

You are at liberty to make this letter public in any way you think right.

I am, dear Mr. Gaul,
Yours faithfully,
(Signed) F. D. BLAKE.

R. K. Gaul, Esq.,
23, Hide-hill,
Berwick-on-Tweed.

Sir Francis Blake is the Coalition candidate for Berwick, the seat left vacant through the peerage conferred upon Sir Edward Grey.

The Observer, Aug. 13.

This well-known Sunday paper declares its conversion to woman suffrage. After saying that the giving of votes to soldiers and sailors is a passing issue, though one of the gravest importance, it states emphatically that—

Of greater permanent importance is the question of the right of women to vote. They have earned it. We say so frankly. In the past we have opposed the claim on one ground, and one ground alone—namely, that women, by the fact of their sex, were debarred from bearing a share in national defence. We were wrong. Women have borne, and are bearing, their full share, in the hospitals, in the munition factories, in all the departments of life in which they have taken men's burdens upon their shoulders in order to release men for the war. And more yet in the deep, uncomplaining heroism with which they are bearing their sorrows and giving their all. Then can we any longer deny to the women who have wrought and suffered, and who have worked well even if they have not suffered, the right to share in the future of the nation whose fate is entwined with their very heart-strings? We cannot. The State needs their aid, and they have proved their capacity to give it. The time has come to give a new meaning to Democracy; to make it a real thing, the true voice of the nation, and not of a part, more or less arbitrarily and often foolishly selected. Once for all let us simplify the thing. Let the right to vote be given to every man and woman who has attained years of responsibility: let us say, five-and-twenty, for then they have arrived at an age to put away childish things. The nation, by its bearing in two years of war, has earned this right to be trusted with its own destinies.

A. P. Nicholson (Daily News, Aug. 11).

When the war is over many men who have opposed Women's Suffrage in the past will certainly not be ready to enter on a bitter quarrel with women over their civic rights. Our women have worked and suffered for the nation in its hours of trial with the men. . . . The woman's question has not been overlaid by the war, as some of our statesmen are too prone now to think. On the contrary, I hold that the war is making it an issue vital to the nation. . . . The loyal co-operation of many

SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS.

women cannot be expected if after all that has now taken place they are flouted. A grudging spirit will be useless on either side. The women must have votes, and enter our political and administrative life.

Daily News, Aug. 14.

There remain the claims of the women. That factor in itself provides a valid reason for postponing any final conclusions on the register till after the war, unless, indeed, so happy a solution can be contemplated as a general recognition of the title women have earned by the share they have borne of national service and national sacrifice. Even if that is too much to hope, there is no contesting the logic of the protest against a franchise reform which by adding some millions of men, and of men only, to the register would accentuate the grave sense of injustice under which women are already labouring.

Daily Chronicle, Aug. 14.

The friends of women's suffrage are clearly right in contending that to adopt any course making an enormous addition to the male electorate in a Bill from which women's suffrage was excluded, would in effect be an anti-suffragist policy, which Suffragists would be bound to fight.

ABERYSTWYTH CAMPAIGN.

The above campaign is in full swing. During the past week Miss Dorothy Evans has addressed twelve meetings in Borth and Aberystwyth. The eloquent and masterly way in which she dealt with the various aspects of the Woman's Movement elicited the greatest approval from the crowds that came night after night to hear her. Miss Anna Munro very ably presided at the evening meetings, and the chair at the morning meetings was taken by Alix M. Clark. The announcements of the meetings were chalked on the promenade, and the campaign is going ahead in the true Women's Freedom League spirit, and coming in close contact with the public. It is particularly striking how widely it is now assumed that women will be enfranchised in the near future—certainly at the close of the war. There is no sort of opposition to the idea of the inclusion of women in the new register foreshadowed for next session to avoid the expense and disorganisation of another franchise change after the hoped-for speedy close of the war. Suffragists never believed that the public of late years offered any obstruction to the enfranchisement of women, but this educational campaign, reaching as it does so many different sections of the people, has proved that the country is more than ready for the reform.

Over 800 copies of THE VOTE have been sold during the past fortnight, and I very gratefully acknowledge the following donations:—Mrs. and Granville Giles, 3s.; Miss Dorothy Evans, 12s. 6d.; Anon., per Mrs. Giles, 10s.; Mrs. I. James, 26, North Parade, Aberystwyth, £5.

I earnestly appeal to all fellow-members and friends to do their best to support this campaign as generously as possible. It has still another five weeks to run. Aberystwyth is crowded with people, and no better field of propaganda could possibly be found.

ALIX M. CLARK (Hon. Organiser),
Granville, North Parade, Aberystwyth.

As we go to press the Register Bill and the Parliament Extension Bill are being debated; it is not certain that they will have a smooth passage to the Statute Book. It has been pointed out that if women are to have a voice in the reconstruction after the war they must have votes at the next general election.

THEY SUPPORT US!

RAISE THE FLAG HIGH.

Some months ago, foreseeing the need for instant activity which has now arisen, the Women's Freedom League started a special fund of 50,000 shillings to maintain our organisation in health and vigour.

We are thus to-day in a position to insist that there shall be

No additional votes for men whilst every woman in the land is passed over.

The last list shows that so far 11,875 shillings have come into the fund.

New friends and helpers are rising up all around us as they see the necessity for woman's co-operation in the State. To all these new friends, as well as to our old and tried supporters, we earnestly appeal to

Send the rest of the 50,000 shillings.

Every reader can send a shilling on seeing this; many can send twenty, a hundred or more.

Do not delay, but do it now.

All contributions, big and little, will be gratefully received and acknowledged by the Hon. Treasurer, Women's Freedom League, 144, High Holborn, London, W.C.

"Wait and see," poor Asquith groans,
In every kind of trouble;
But Freedom Leaguers hate such moans:
"Be up and doing," is what we say,
"Collecting 50,000 shillings by the way."

"LET THE WOMEN HELP!"

"Not if we can help it!"

We have heard much of the general recognition of women's services, and of the ready welcome extended to them in every department of activity. We have heard, too, of the great change wrought by the war in the general attitude towards women, and how impossible it will be for ever after to refuse them that share in the privileges of citizenship which they have so fully merited. An incident which recently occurred in Belfast throws light on this matter.

A vacancy occurred in the representation of a ward in the city. The ward committee met, and unanimously selected a woman as their candidate for co-option. She has held the position of Lady Mayoress for four years, is a freeman of the city, and a member of a Corporation committee. Later on, a mass meeting of electors in the ward was held, unanimously endorsed the action of the ward committee, and sent a deputation to the Corporation to represent their views. The Corporation met on August 1, but postponed consideration of the co-option, a special meeting being summoned to deal with the matter on August 9. In the interval a gentleman was induced to come forward as candidate, being nominated by two representatives of wards at the other end of the city from that in which the vacancy occurred. No elector of the vacant ward came forward in support of this gentleman's candidature, and yet he was co-opted at the adjourned meeting of the Council by 23 votes to 17.

The reasons given for this extraordinary proceeding were two. First, no woman has ever been elected to the City Council, and to admit one by co-option would be a grave departure from "constitutional usage." The point raised both at the Council and in the Press of the more grave departure from "constitutional usage" involved in the flagrant disregard of the electors' wishes was not dealt with. So

deep is the attachment of the City Fathers of Belfast to the ancient ways and the established order that they preferred to put a public slight on a well-known and universally respected woman, to flout the ratepayers of an important ward, and to set at naught the provisions of the Municipal Franchise Acts, rather than to depart by one hair's breadth from "constitutional usage."

But they had another reason, equally creditable to their intelligence and high sense of public duty. The admission of this most competent woman to the Council would open the door "to an avalanche of women who would ask to be admitted." Strangely enough, it does not seem to have occurred to any of these gentlemen that even these undesirable females could not enter the Council without a vote in their favour. Surely the wisdom and insight of the Corporation, so clearly displayed in this meeting, would be sufficient to guard the City Hall from this avalanche of undesirables. Surely the Council does not mean to suggest that undesirable men ever gain access through the door of co-option or otherwise to these sacred precincts.

It is impossible to deal with either objection seriously. They are too manifestly trumped up for this occasion only. To quote the *Belfast Newsletter*:—"The majority of the City Council rejected Mrs. — on account of her sex; a vote of the Council which we hold to be a breach of the trust under which it acts." The same newspaper also points out that "according to the constitution, women on the local government franchise have the same powers and rights to vote, and to election with men . . . that is all which need be said to show the absurdity of the constitutional argument."

So a city, with an infant death-rate of 137 per thousand, with a huge textile industry dependent on female labour, with the most inadequate provision of school buildings, must lose the services of an experienced and public spirited woman because, to quote the same paper, "the majority of the Corporation are animated by the spirit of caucus mongering."

The moral is clear. We have been told again and again that we should use the privileges we already possess, and thereby show our fitness for wider spheres. The Belfast incident proves once more of how little use are these privileges until we have our status made clear, and defined once and for all, by the grant of the Parliamentary vote on the same terms as men. Until that is done, women will always be regarded as in some way differently situated from men, and it will always be considered that treatment, impossible where men are concerned, is quite permissible in the case of women. A man correspondent in the local press speaks of the effect this business will have in strengthening the hands of the suffragists. In the hope that this most desirable effect may not be limited to Belfast I ask for space in THE VOTE for this report of an enlightening episode.

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SEE OUR SALE AND EXCHANGE, PAGE 1148.

FRIDAY,
AUGUST 18,
1916.

THE VOTE

ONE
PENNY
WEEKLY.

Organ of the Women's Freedom League.

The Despard Arms. 123, Hampstead-road, N.W.

Some rainy days have driven the children from the Green Bower indoors this week, but the visit to the Despard Arms is a great joy to them. We shall hold a Jumble Sale in September, and shall be most grateful for clothing and articles of any kind, which may be sent at once, addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Despard Arms, 123, Hampstead Road. We are still awaiting the gift of a ton of coal from sympathisers, and gifts of tea, coffee, sugar, jam, also vegetables

and fruit, will be warmly welcomed. Our grateful thanks to Mrs. Giles for the Rambler roses which made us beautiful for days! Who will volunteer to give service in the afternoon in demonstrating in the window a gas-saving device in cooking? This is an urgent need.

OWING to the important declaration in Parliament by Mr. Asquith on woman suffrage, and other statements which have to be chronicled, we are compelled this week to hold over some interesting articles and a serious letter in answer to Dr. Patch.—ED.

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