

Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.

THE NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN WORKERS.



THE Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers, which was held last week in Manchester, was an unqualified success in every way, and we returned, after a week's intercourse with many of these leaders in the great movements of beneficent work for women and the State, feeling greatly rejoiced in spirit at the extraordinary vitality exhibited by the majority of those who attended this Women's Parliament, either in the position of teachers or pupils. The exact punctuality with which the organisation of the business arrangements was carried out was in itself ample proof of the ability of the Executive and Secretarial departments; and the vast amount of work presented in the Annual Report, and reports of conveners of sub-committees, was indeed surprising, when one learnt that but two ladies are employed as Secretary, and Assistant Secretary, and that something under £500 a year had been expended.

The spirit, also, which animated the meetings was altogether admirable, being business-like and harmonious, and the fact that six Sessions were held, in which some five hundred women, on an average, took part, and that there was not one discordant note throughout, speaks volumes for the management of the Chair and the discretion of the speakers.

Those amongst us who have attended these Conferences for some years past also felt reason for congratulation in the evidence of expansion which the Union exhibited this year. The Society has increased in number and influence, and evidence was given of a true desire upon the part of the Executive to go forward in a wise and liberal spirit—the only spirit which can inspire a really national union of women, and which we feel sure will inspire confidence and respect in return. The welcome accorded to the delegates by the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Manchester, at the magnificent reception at the Town Hall, made it a most delightful gathering. Mrs. Meek is a very handsome and charming woman, and was ably supported by Mrs. Creighton, wife of the new Bishop of London, re-elected President of the National Union, by acclamation, for the third term of office, Lady Laura Ridding, the Honble. Mrs. A. J. Lyttleton, and the Organising Secretary, Miss Janes, who were all becomingly gowned, and full of kind consideration for members and friends.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The Lady Mayoress in welcoming the Members to Manchester said it was fitting that the Conference should be held in Manchester, which was pre-eminently the centre of a practical and hard-working population. The President, Mrs. Creighton (wife of the new Bishop of London) took the Chair, and delivered a most encouraging address. As was fitting,

the first subject which came up for consideration was "The Duties of Citizenship."

Miss G. Morgan (Brecon) opened with a paper on "The Proper Understanding and Use of the Municipal and other Franchises for Women." Miss Morgan took as a motto for her paper a sentence of the late Miss Lydia Becker:—"Political Freedom begins for Women, as it begins for Men, with Freedom in Local Government." Miss Morgan pointed out that the elections at which women might now vote were those of Parish and District Councils, Poor-Law Guardians, County Councils, Town Councils, and School Boards. It was a subject for rejoicing to know that every year women were awakening more and more to a sense of their responsibility as citizens, and that the result which was anticipated by some—namely, that women would not take the trouble to vote, being utterly indifferent to the issues at stake—had not been realised.

Miss E. T. E. Yeatman (London) read a paper on "The Proper Way of Conducting and Working upon Philanthropic Committees." She believed the days were luckily past when ladies thought it feminine and nice not to understand business, but she feared there were still some left, who, though they did not exactly glory in their ignorance, still did not take much pains to know how public business should be conducted.

A very suggestive paper was read by Miss Mackarness on "The Provision for, and Maintenance of, Destitute Gentlewomen." She suggested some of the causes of the increase of poverty among the higher classes. The determination of employers to have only young people to fill the situations at their disposal was the most common cause of the evil. In advertisements for Governesses, Nurses, Companions, Secretaries, &c., it was constantly stated that "No one over thirty need apply"; thirty-five was the highest age ever mentioned, and that only very seldom. No one would advocate having a dull teacher for young girls, but she did not hesitate to say there were many women of forty-five or even fifty, who, though they might not be able to play tennis and to cycle, were still quite as bright in mind and quite as able to join in quieter amusements as many young people, and who would give a far more thorough education in English literature and music and all the ordinary branches of a sound education than the young girls who had scarcely finished their own education.

Perhaps the best paper of the whole Conference was that by Miss Bateson on "The Vacant Places of Trade." In asking them to turn their thoughts to trade she was asking them, Miss Bateson said, to consider a portion of the world's work which had been of all others, until quite recent years, most shamefully neglected by educated women. The women to whom she addressed her accusation were not far away. They were women who lived upon trade; were dressed and fed and amused by trade; whose carriages were driven by trade; whose stalls at theatres and concerts were bought by trade. But they knew nothing of trade; they were not on bowing terms with it. They lived in splendid houses in the suburbs of London, Manchester, Liverpool, and other great manufacturing cities, and their husbands, fathers, and brothers went into town every morning. And they? They spent

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