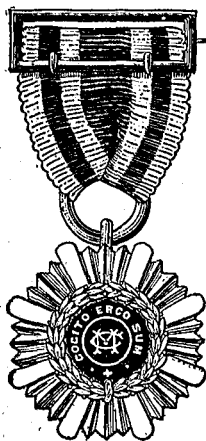


The Matrons' Council.

(Continued from page 458.)



Miss Hay Forbes, Delegate to the National Council of Women, presented the following Report, which, in her unavoidable absence, was read by the Hon. Secretary.

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

The Annual meeting of the National Union of Women Workers, held in the Morley Hall, George Street, Hanover Square, on Tuesday, October 29th, was attended by an influential company of ladies who appeared thoroughly alive to their responsibilities as members of a body of earnest, active women, united in the intention of raising themselves and their fellow-women to that position in the body politic to which they are entitled by their endowments and talents. Questions of the deepest interest were discussed under the able presidency of the Hon. Mrs. Arthur Lyttelton, and among those present were the Lady Laura Ridding, Lady Battersea, Mrs. Creighton, Mrs. Percy Bunting, Mrs. Heywood Johnstone, Miss Childers, Mrs. George Cadbury, Treasurer of the Union, Miss Janes, Organising and Conference Secretary, and Miss Anna L. Soltau, Secretary.

The President opened the meeting with an excellent speech emphasising the work of the Union, and pointing out three ways in which the Union could be of real use to society.—

- Firstly—The Union could take action;
- Secondly—It could express opinion; and
- Thirdly—It could take action.

The Government Committee on Secondary Education owed its existence to the Union; and the question of wage-earning children has been raised through the Women's Industrial Council, so that in both these directions good work is being done. A Conference on the Housing Question had also been arranged, which promised to be very interesting, and productive of good results.

The Union educated people by stimulating and encouraging philanthropic work, and preventing overlapping.

The policy of the Union was to form new branches; and on the prosperity of these branches the success of the Union would largely depend.

A Resolution offering the respectful sympathy of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland to His Majesty the King, and to Her Majesty Queen Alexandra in the loss of their sister the Empress Frederick of Germany and recording their appreciation of her noble character and great talents was next proposed by Mrs. Percy Bunting, and having been duly seconded, was unanimously adopted by the Meeting. So great was the amount of business to be transacted,

that the Resolutions put down for proposal during the Morning Session could not all be discussed and carried; the afternoon meeting was therefore taken up almost entirely with the discussions aroused by several resolutions relating to matters of urgent importance, not only to women, but to the English nation as a whole. First amongst these must be mentioned the comprehensive resolution on the Temperance Question, proposed by Mrs. Pearsall Smith on behalf of the National British Women's Temperance Association, urging women to do their utmost to remove the causes of this terrible evil. The resolution further embodied the opinion that the Inebriate Act as it at present stands is not strong enough to detain and control habitual drunkards with a view to their entire cure.

This resolution elicited much interesting discussion, in which Lady Battersea, Miss Lidgett, Mrs. Creighton, and other ladies took part. Ultimately the resolution was referred to the Legislation Committee of the Union to be drafted in such language as should appeal to Parliament to bring about stronger legislation to detain for a sufficiently long period those cases of habitual drunkenness which cannot be efficiently cured without long continued supervision.

Following upon this resolution came that proposed by Mrs. Percy Bunting embodying the pleasure felt by the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland that the Bill known as the Children's Bill has become an Act of Parliament, but expressing profound regret "that the age proposed has been lowered from sixteen to fourteen years, and also that the force of the restriction has been seriously weakened by the addition of a clause whereby children may still fetch alcoholic liquor from the public-house, provided the bottle is corked and sealed." This resolution was carried unanimously, after several ladies had spoken to it, one of whom raised the question as to whether it would not be a worse evil for the children to wait in the public-house while the liquor they came to fetch was duly corked and sealed, in reply to which query it was stated that at present there was no law to prevent the publican giving drink to the children while they waited if he wished to do so, clearly showing that the law as it stands is of very little practical value in checking the terrible evils of drink.

Mrs. Heywood Johnstone next brought forward a Resolution with reference to the urgent need for legislation to control the practice of Midwives, but, owing to the pressure of business, it was felt that this important Resolution could not be adequately dealt with in the short space of time allotted to it, and it was decided to refer it to an additional meeting to be held at the close of the afternoon session. But before this was agreed upon one or two ladies spoke on the question, and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick drew attention to the fact that the proposed Midwives' Bill was not yet published, and that it was therefore ill advised to pass a Resolution urging members of Parliament to support a Bill; the provisions of which were as yet unknown to those who proposed to support it. In the interests of the Nursing Profession, as well as of Midwives, it was very important that the contents of this Bill should be fully understood before being supported as the last Bill provided for the annual licensing, in limited districts, and not for general State Registration of Midwives, and it is to be feared that unless a careful watch is exercised the new Bill

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)