

WOMEN'S WORK.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, associated with Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, and, others have requested a small committee of ladies convened by Mrs. Creighton, in consultation with the National Union of Women Workers, to investigate the nature and extent of the alleged probability that during the war there will be an increase in the number of illegitimate births.

They propose to invite a larger body to consider the report made by the investigators and the special steps which, in conjunction with official bodies, should be taken if it is shown that the problem is of serious dimensions.

The proposal that the bachelor Archbishop of York shall be chairman of the larger body does not commend itself to us. A woman and a mother should preside over such a council, and the question be approached with great circumspection, and delicacy of feeling.

We warmly agree with the General Secretary of the Women's Labour League, that the Poor Law must not be the resource of these girl-mothers, especially as it is possible, without any fresh legislation, for the Public Health machinery to be developed to meet the need. The initiation and development of schemes for the better care of maternity and infancy have lately been urged upon Public Health authorities by the Local Government Board itself, which is prepared to make grants up to 50 per cent. of their approved expenditure upon these objects.

The War Babies and Mothers' League, 60, South Molton Street, W., is concerned partly with the welfare of children whose fathers are on active service, and whose mothers are not receiving the separation allowance. When the father of an illegitimate child is killed on active service the separation allowance immediately ceases and a number of the cases on the League's books are of this description. The League has been very successful in bringing together unmarried mothers and the fathers of their children, and has so far been the means of over 150 of these couples being married.

An exhibition known as "Women and their Work," organised by the *Daily Express*, and under the patronage of Queen Alexandra, is to be opened by Princess Arthur of Connaught at the Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster, on May 1st.

Amongst the attractions will be an exhibit showing one of the wards of the Middlesex Hospital, lectures by Dr. Sloan Chesser, addresses on Hygiene, and an exhibition of Invalid Kitchens by Lady Muriel Paget.

The Women's Peace Congress at the Hague is in session; its objects are excellent, but the meeting ill-timed.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"LONELINESS."*

This posthumous work of Robert Hugh Benson is one of the most appealing that he has produced for some time. Apart from the controversial bias—which marks all his writings, and from which this latest is by no means an exception—"Loneliness" is a charming and pathetic story. It tells of a youthful opera singer, who, at her début, made her fame as Elsa and Isolde. Max, the only son of Lord Merival, seeks her in marriage, though he is aware that the union will be strongly opposed by his father, on two grounds—the social inequality of position, and the difference of religion—the girl, Marion, being a Roman Catholic, and old Lord Merival of the bigoted Protestant type. She, in her first intoxication of success, had flung open the doors of her soul, and had driven out that which had been within; and now the doors still stood wide clamouring for all the world to come in—and then she loved Max.

The family of Lord Merival is represented as living the pleasant pleasure and ease-loving life of people of their class, with their half contemptuous outlook on less distinguished people that is bred by such circumstances. For instance, Marion was welcomed, nay, eagerly sought, as a prima donna, but socially—no! She was, notwithstanding, a charming girl, full of soul and brimming over with love of her art.

Maggie Brent, the middle-aged and entirely devoted-to-Marion lady with whom she lived, is quite one of Mr. Benson's specialties.

The tragedy of the story lies in the collapse of Marion's career when she has had but six months of her triumph. It is due to Max's selfishness that she agrees to sing once more as Elsa after the throat specialist had forbidden her to use her voice for some months. After weary weeks of suspense and anxiety the great specialist comes at Maggie's request to their country cottage to give his verdict.

"Maggie, you'll explain our plans to him. He's to examine my throat upstairs and he's not to say a single word. Then—you'll be waiting for me in your room, won't you?—and go straight into mine as soon as you hear me go downstairs, and then we'll all have tea together, and he shall go back with blessings on his bald head."

Alas! for poor Marion, when Maggie "her face distorted with crying, burst into the room, and, with a cry like a wounded beast, rushed across the floor and seized her sobbing.

"Ah-h-h," cried Maggie.

Her next difficulty is the religious one. If she marries Max she has practically to give up her faith. He is just the ordinary person without real understanding, and he fails her. By Maggie's tragic death she is left bereft of friend, lover and

* By Robert Hugh Benson. Hutchinson & Co., London.

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