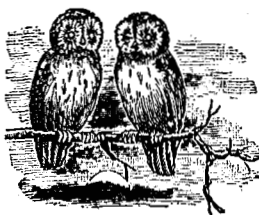


The Matrons' Council.

THE BRITISH WOMEN'S PRODUCE LEAGUE.



ON Thursday, April 30th, a meeting of the Matrons' Council was held at the Medical Society's Rooms, Chandos Street, at 8.30, when Mrs. Alec Tweedie gave an address on the objects of the British Women's Produce League, of which society she is the Hon. Secretary.

The chair was taken by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, who, in introducing Mrs. Tweedie, spoke of the interest she herself felt in the subject before them, having been accustomed to country life, and having had the advantage of the natural education such a life offered. The British Produce League has been promoted with the object of extending the industrial pursuits of women, not only in the direction of dairy produce, bee-keeping, and poultry farming, but also in supporting home manufactories of other kinds. At present England is dependent on foreigners for bread and raiment, much of which could be produced in our own country. The whole question with which the League is concerned is one that appeals to the patriotism of women, and she (Mrs. Fenwick) believed that English women were patriotic and capable of feeling great enthusiasm for causes apart from personal feeling. The subject specially affected Matrons of the smaller Hospitals, as they purchased the food for Nurses or patients, and one might hope for improvement in the existing system of contracts and the drastic rules in force with regard to the catering for Hospitals when British produce could be procured.

Mrs. Tweedie, in opening the address, spoke of the national importance of the Women's Produce League in tending to restore branches of agriculture in the present depressed condition of things, and also of the great benefit to result to women in the revival of industrial pursuits, which would give them remunerative employment. Her attention was called to the matter at a public dinner she attended in Copenhagen, where the health of the English people was drunk in an enthusiastic toast, on the ground that England is the country that maintains Danish prosperity by importing the dairy produce of the country. On inquiry, it was shown to her that some fifty years ago agricultural depression was as great in Denmark as it is to-day in England, and in order to overcome this depression the Danes co-operated, and combined to form factories for the production of butter, and it has been found that under the system employed butter of uniform excellence can be produced, in place of the more or less hap-hazard results obtained when the butter is made after the methods of the individual farmer. In Great Britain £38,000 is paid out of the country every day for butter which could be made at home. Moreover, some of the milk trade is being lost by the introduction of frozen milk from Holland. Each day half a million of eggs is imported here, in the face of the fact that English eggs must be fresher than eggs sent over from Russia, or as is now done from Italy, where

they are removed from the shells and packed in large jars for consignment to hotels and for confectionery purposes. Bacon is also largely imported from Holland, where pig-farming is carried on in connection with the milk factories, the pigs being fed on butter-milk. A curious feature is that the original stock of pigs now forming Dutch bacon were procured, and are still replenished, from England, English pigs being the finest to be bought. The butter factories, of which there are about 1,200, are scattered all over Denmark. The largest of them receives milk from more than 1,000 cows daily. There are considerably above a million cows in the country, and yet there are only two millions of people. At most of the butter factories the cream only is delivered to the company, the farmer keeping the milk for his household and animals; but when the farmer cannot afford to have a separator, all the milk is sent to the factory, and as much skimmed milk and butter as may be required by the farmer is returned and debited to his account. When the milk arrives, every can is sampled by a woman, whose sole duty it is to taste milk (just as men taste tea or wine), and in a moment she is able to detect if anything be amiss, in which case the can has to be put aside for analysis. The milk is then filtered through a fine gravel filter, and then exposed to a temperature of 302° F., which is sufficient to kill all bacteria. While milk is delivered in London in cans with half-closed lids, the Copenhagen milk is bottled and securely sealed. Women are employed to make the butter, and they do a large share of the work in the factories. The same work should be done by English women. It rests with women to help agricultural England: to revive these womanly industries and produce her own milk, butter, bacon, eggs, vegetables, flowers, and fruit. The splendid pasture lands of England offer more promise than those in Holland and Denmark, where the pasture is poorer and the climate more unfavourable than with us. The Women's Produce League does not propose to confine its efforts to agricultural produce alone, but intends to encourage other industries that are waning or dying out. The weaving of homespun by the Highland Crofters is an industry that threatens to disappear, in spite of the economy of buying material that it is impossible to mix with shoddy, and that is almost everlasting. Spitalfields silks could replace those brought from Lyons, and in many ways women could thus keep money in the country. It was often asked what guarantee one could have that goods were of English manufacture. With the exception of margarine, it was thought that the law of marking foreign goods was evaded by the middle man. The British Supply Association, founded by Lord Winchilsea, and opened in Long Acre, would now give people an opportunity of buying produce guaranteed to be English and to be good of its kind. The scheme proposed by Lord Winchilsea was to bring the producer and the consumer together to the advantage of both, and to the furtherance of agricultural prosperity, and the undertaking deserved all support.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, having invited discussion on Mrs. Tweedie's admirable and patriotic address,

Miss Isla Stewart observed that it did not come within her official work to cater for the Hospital, but individually each Matron could do much to encourage home trades. Personally, she herself never wittingly purchased foreign made things—not even a

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