

Annotations.

THE CIVIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

We hope that all who are interested in obtaining the political enfranchisement of women will make a point of attending the Convention in defence of the Civic Rights of Women in the Concert Hall of the Holborn Town Hall, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C., on October 16th, which is convened by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. At the morning session, opening at ten o'clock, when Mrs. Eva McLaren will be in the chair, the subject under discussion will be "Women in Local Government and the Need of the Parliamentary Franchise." At the afternoon session, opening at 2.30, the Rev. S. A. Steinthal presiding, the discussion will be upon "The Parliamentary Franchise and its Bearing on the Industrial and Legal Position of Women."

THE DRUG HABIT.

An alarming feature of modern life is the increase of the drug habit in civilised countries, whether by indulgence in stimulants or in opium, chloral, chloroform, sulphonal, cocaine, and kindred drugs, whatever the agent may be is a point of secondary importance. The vital thing is that the victims of the habit either die an early death or live on in degradation. In either case domestic unhappiness—and, if the victim be a parent, the blighting of the lives of children also—is inevitable. The result both to the individual and to the community is, in brief, disastrous, and merits more attention from our legislators than it has so far received. One thing which is at the root of the prevalence of the drug habit is the ease with which powerful drugs can be obtained, and, without doubt, the laws regulating their sale should be far more strict than they are at present. In the case of licences for the sale of intoxicating drinks these should be restricted to the legitimate needs of the people, while surely poisonous drugs should be obtainable only on a medical prescription. It is noteworthy that the expenditure in America on drink is only half that of Great Britain, and the greater sobriety of our Transatlantic cousins is no doubt in part responsible for their business success. A brain sodden with drink is not a brain which can deal effectively with business problems. The man whose hand is rendered unsteady by the same agent is of little use to the employer of mechanical or technical labour. In these days of increasing

international commercial competition, the most sober nation is the one which will win the prizes all along the line.

THE INCREASE OF PAUPERISM.

A disquieting feature in the national life is the increase of pauperism brought out in a recently-issued Local Government Board return respecting the amount expended by Boards of Guardians in England and Wales for in-maintenance and outdoor relief. In London this expenditure has risen from 2s. 8½d. per head of the population in 1894 to 3s. 2¾d. per head in 1903. The total number of paupers in receipt of relief has also risen by 2·6 per cent. Is it not time that our Poor Law system was revised? At present the law is that a person must prove destitution to be eligible for relief, whereas a timely grant or loan in a crisis might stave off destitution and the loss of self-respect, with the consequent tendency to remain a burden on the rates, which our present system engenders. Again, greater classification is needed. The aged and infirm poor should be liberally and sympathetically cared for, while the idle, able-bodied and vicious members of the community might well be relegated to the care of the police.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A NUISANCE?

The point of view of a person suffering an annoyance naturally differs somewhat from that of a dispassionate judge, but we must say that in connection with a recent summons adjudicated upon and dismissed by a Marylebone magistrate our sympathies are entirely with the complainants, a lady and two gentlemen, who said that the "rough, hoarse, and violent" barking of a neighbour's dog disturbed their nightly rest. The magistrate was "by no means prepared to say that barking, naturally and reasonably, made a dog a 'noisy' animal within the meaning of the L.C.C. by-law. One could not stop the ordinary and natural noises of animals. The world would come to an end if every natural noise was to be regarded as a nuisance. People must put up with that sort of thing; it was part of the ordinary experiences of life."

We should imagine that this gentleman lives in the country, in a house surrounded by its own grounds. Barking "reasonably and naturally" may then be held to be one of the ordinary experiences of life, as the animal is living under ordinary conditions. But, to keep a dog confined in the centre of London and then to regard his barking as a "natural noise" may be law, but it is not common sense.

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