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EDITORIAL.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES.

One of the factors which has, in the past, prevented women in villages from participating fully in the national life, and becoming acquainted with national movements, has been the lack of sufficient centres where they can meet and discuss questions of mutual interest. The men of all ranks have had their clubs and public-houses, but it is only comparatively recently that women's clubs for professional and social purposes have been founded, while for working women, mothers' meetings and kindred gatherings organized for their instruction rather than for the development of their social life, have constituted the chief effort for bringing them in touch with one another.

Those who have lived in rural England, and we specially allude to rural England thirty years ago, when we knew it intimately, are well aware of the fund of shrewd sense which inspired many of the women resident there. Mrs. Poyser is no isolated type, and the rising generation of all sections of the community, if they had eyes to see and ears to hear, could enlarge their vision, and increase their knowledge by intercourse with these mothers in Israel.

A movement is now spreading through rural England which, if wisely organized, should do much to remove the isolation of women, and to bring them in contact with vital questions which mutually affect them, through the formation of Women's Institutes. The organization of such Institutes does not, as the name somewhat implies indicate an expenditure in bricks and mortar, but regular monthly meetings for which a varied programme is arranged, one of the features being the study of various subjects such as child welfare, labour saving

in the home, poultry keeping, war savings associations, both through lectures, practical demonstrations, competitions, and suggestions by the members. The afternoon ends with tea, that great bond of union, and leveller of class distinctions, and a social gathering.

Another side of the work of Women's Institutes is the communal life they make possible. Such things as seeds, coal, and other necessities are bought on the co-operative system. When an allotment is worked, or other duties undertaken in common the members share the profits.

The Institutes which are modelled on the lines of similar organizations in Canada are self-governing bodies, which elect their own representatives to the Central Committee of the Federation of Women's Institutes, and further information can be obtained on application to the offices of the Federation at 72, Victoria Street, S.W.

If the Institutes are kept free from party politics, they have, we believe, a very useful future before them, and they will supply a need which has hitherto been lacking, but any attempt to utilize them as a political machine in the interests of a party, of which there has been a rumour, would be the death-blow to their usefulness.

Women in villages are, we believe, ready for a greater degree of communal life. It is the tendency of the age, and, moreover, they realize that "unity is strength." In professions, in industry, they are learning, as public school boys learn early in life, to subject the personal to the communal interest. But to do this effectively they must know and trust one another. The Women's Institutes should afford the opportunity of acquiring that knowledge, and should help to inspire the mutual trust which is the basis of effective co-operation.

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