ONE PENNY

Workers' Dreadnought

FOR GOING TO THE ROOT.

Vol. X. No. 51. March 8th, 1924. WEEKLY.

SEX AND PARENTAGE,

By Sylvia Pankhurst.

Last week we discussed some aspects of the vast expansion in material resources, which the early future will unfold, and which are likely to develop much more rapidly than those who anticipate them have predicted.

We pointed out that so long as the private property economic system remains, such developments will progressively entail greater unemployment and greater poverty for the working class. On the other hand, if production for use be substituted for production for profit, abundant plenty and great stores of security and enjoyment will be assured to all. The romantic future, which the growth of knowledge is presenting to the race, would arouse in the people of to-day a great and general enthusiasm, were it not that, under our capitalist system, scarcity is the companion of increased production, and vested interests in old methods always resist displacement by new methods. But for this, to-day's quest for new wealth, new worlds of power from the elements about us in every land, would far outshine the adventurous epoch of the Spanish conquistadors and the Elizabethan gallants who went forth to discover gold and territory in the New World of the West.

We shall now turn to the predictions respecting the reproduction of the race, made by J. B. S. Haldane, in his book, *" Daedalus, or Science and the Future," which we discussed in its other aspects last week. In discussing these special predictions we shall consider the questions of sex, and parentage also in larger and more general aspects.

Professor Haldane asserts the early possibility of a large scale artificial reproduction of the human race. That he is on probable ground in making this prediction is evidenced by the successful grafting of glands, skin and other parts of the body, which has been carried on to an increasing extent for many years past, as well as by certain experiments quoted by him.

J. B. S. Haldane wraps up his prophecy in the form of an essay, supposed to be written by a student 150 years hence. Here are the salient passages:—

> "When we consider that in 1912 Morgan located several Mendelian factors in the nucleus Drosophila, and modified its sex-ratio, while Marmorek had taught a harmless bacillus to kill guinea-pigs, and finally, in 1913, Brachet had grown rabbit embryos in serum for some days, it is remarkable how little the scientific workers of that time, and *a fortiori* the general public, seem to have foreseen the practical bearing of such results. . . .
>
> "It was in 1951 that Dupont and Schwarz produced the first ectogenetic child. As early as 1902 Heape had transferred embryo rabbits from one female to another, in 1925 Haldane had grown embryonic rats in serum for ten days, but had failed to carry the process to its conclusion, and it was not till 1940 that Clark succeeded with the pig, using Kehlmann's solution as medium. Dupont and Schwarz obtained a fresh ovary from a woman who was the victim of an aeroplane accident, and kept it living in their medium for five years. They obtained several eggs from it, and fertilised them successfully, but the problem of the nutrition and support of the embryo was more difficult, and was only solved in the fourth year. Now that the technique is fully developed, we can take an ovary from a woman and keep it growing in a suitable fluid for as long as twenty years, producing a fresh ovum each month, of which 90 per cent. can be fertilised, and the embryos grown successfully for nine months, and then brought into the air. Schwarz never got such good results, but the news of his first success caused an unprecedented sensation throughout the entire world, for the birth-rate was already less than the death-rate in most civilised countries. France was the first country to adopt ectogenesis officially, and by 1968 was producing 60,000 children annually by this method.
>
> "As we know, ectogenesis is now universal, and in this country less than 30 per cent. of children are born of woman. The effect on human psychology and social life of the separation of sexual love and reproduction, which was begun in the 19th century and completed in the 20th, is by no means wholly satisfactory. The old family life had certainly a good deal to commend it, and although nowadays we bring on lactation in women by injection of placentin as a routine, and thus conserve much of what was best in the former instinctive cycle, we must admit that in certain respects our grandparents had the advantage of us.
>
> "On the other hand it is generally admitted that the effects of selection have more than counter-balanced these evils. The small proportion of men and women who are selected as ancestors for the next generation are so undoubtedly superior to the average that the advance in each generation in any single respect, from the increased output of first-class music, to the decreased convictions for theft, is very startling. Had it not been for ectogenesis there can be little doubt that civilisation would have collapsed within a measurable time owing to the greater fertility of the less desirable members of the population in almost all countries.
>
> "It is, perhaps, fortunate that the process of becoming an ectogenetic mother of the next generation involves an operation which is somewhat unpleasant, though now no longer disfiguring or dangerous, and never physically injurious, and is, therefore, an honour, but by no means a pleasure. Had this not been the case, it is perfectly possible that popular opposition would have proved too strong for the selectionist movement. . . ."

Mr. Haldane further states, and this time frankly in his own words:—

> "If reproduction is once completely separated from sexual love mankind will be free in an altogether new sense. . . .
>
> "In the future it may be possible, by selective breeding, to change character as quickly as institutions."

The adventurous scientist has here thrown a somewhat new light on a question around which much controversy is waged by such protagonists as the Malthusians, who view it mainly from the standpoint of immediate poverty, and such opposing propagandists as Dr. Marie Stopes and the American writer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose outlook upon it is primarily one of sentiment and morals. The main object of the Malthusian is to reduce the birth-rate, that of Dr. Marie Stopes is to secure the pleasures of sexual intercourse, without necessarily incurring conception. Dr. Stopes is one of a growing school who declare that sexual intercourse is actually beneficial in its mental and physical reactions, both to man and woman, even when contraceptive methods are used. Mrs. Perkins Gilman,* on the other hand, contends that sexual intercourse is only tolerable for the purposes of procreation. She obviously regards it as, at best, a necessary evil, and refers to sex itself in terms of striking condemnation. She says of man:—

> "During his period of supremacy he has so lavishly over-indulged this impulse that he has completely lost sight of its purpose, and now, with careful provision for birth control, he presents to the astonished mother of the world an urgent demand for a relationship wholly divorced from its reason for being, yet which he calls natural. The fact that an over-sexed female may participate in the desire is no justification."

She protests:—

> "Sex, according to Freud, dominates the sensations, even of a nursing baby, whose satisfaction, even when it is being fed at the mother's breast, he calls 'sexual'! A species of biological blasphemy, this; an idea so revolting to a healthy mind as to cause nausea."

Whether Freud be right or wrong in his theory, and the correctness or incorrectness of it is a question of the classification and naming of certain groups of characteristics, Mrs. Gilman's nausea is obviously morbid and unscientific. It arises from unreasoning emotions with a background of the giggling of ignorant people over what are called "smutty" stories, the unhappy marriages of economically dependent wives, the social ostracism of unmarried mothers, and the buying and selling of sexual intercourse, the most sordid phenomena of the system of production for profit.

Stripped of such sentimental crudities as this outburst of Mrs. Gilman, there is, however, legitimate ground for discussion whether the sexual attraction of men and women will in the future tend to dwindle towards extinction, having been artificially inflated by the private property system and consequently the economic subjection of women as the sex handicapped by maternity; or whether its extension beyond the mere purpose of reproduction is an essentially human characteristic which is destined to become strengthened and ennobled in the course of evolution, and to be enhanced and enriched with the advent of the dawn of plenty. The latter is our own view.

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* Kegan Paul, 2s. 6d., or from the Dreadnought Office.

* *His Religion and Hers*, T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 7s. 6d.

Mrs. Gilman and others, as we have seen, would restrict sexual intercourse rigidly to the purpose of procreation; Mrs. M. A. Tuker goes further, suggesting that the race is tending to the creation of a single sex capable of self-reproduction. Biological research shows us that the theory of Mrs. Tuker is directly opposed to what has actually been happening in the development of species.

Mrs. Tuker and her co-thinkers may, and do, parade the fact that the little green aphis can produce eggs without male assistance during the summer warmth and plenty and that it is only in the harder conditions of autumn that she lays male eggs and continues to reproduce with the help of her progeny. The aphis, however, is a very low form of life, and certainly there is no warrant for the belief in the early appearance of a unisexual type of human being, capable of reproducing itself unaided.

The artificial impregnation of woman is, however, already discussed as a practical matter.**

Mr. Haldane also suggests, in the quotation we have given above, the possibility, by injection, of enabling women, who are not mothers, to produce milk for feeding artificially produced children.

His proposal to produce children artificially by impregnating ovaries, which have been surgically removed from living women, and are kept alive in chemical serum, would, of course, be a more difficult process than the artificial impregnation of the woman herself.

Both the artificial methods of reproduction indicated above would obviate the need, from the reproductive standpoint, of ordinary sexual intercourse. Alternatively, this would, as Mr. Haldane observes, make possible the separation of the sexual intercourse and reproduction. On first sight, at least, such an objective will seem almost absurd to the ordinary person; but Mr. Haldane urges it on the dual ground that the birth-rate is falling, and, more especially, in order to clear the way for scientific selective breeding. As to the first ground, the reduction of the birth-rate is, we think, much more due to economic reasons, than to any failure of capacity or desire on the part of women to become mothers of, say, two, three or four children. Larger families are, quite naturally, objected to.

Dr. Marie Stopes and some others who are interested in the artificial impregnation of women, advocate it simply in order that women whose husbands are physically incapable of fatherhood, should be able to have children, without any breach of the accepted conditions of legal marriage. To make an experiment of a character so profoundly hazardous from the standpoint of the child for no more cogent reason seems to us quite unjustified. A woman should certainly pause before deciding to create what might be but a sub-human makeshift of a child. Her faith in artificial fertilisation will indeed be strong before she can find either moral justification or the courage to make such an experiment in the case of her own offspring.

The question how far the love of the parents, and their mutual impulse towards the reproductive act directly affect the offspring, and how far the condition and mental state of the mother play a part in gestation is unsolved. Apparently Mr. Haldane (if his prophecy is to be taken seriously) regards conception and gestation as purely local processes. We believe, on the other hand, that the child must be profoundly affected by the conditions under which conception and gestation are carried on. So far from detached ovaries producing a superior race, we think it only too probable that the infants grown from them would be progressively lacking in vitally important characteristics.

Our view here may be wholly wrong; but we think it highly improbable that it is not: the production of a human being is a much more complicated matter than the growth of a plant, or even than the grafting of a gland or an ear on to a human body.

One of the purposes of the suggested ectogenetic reproduction might be to free women from the pains of childbirth and discomforts of pregnancy, which have certainly increased with civilisation, and which may tend to increase still further.

"Twilight sleep" has come to the rescue of many who suffer unduly, and will be increasingly used. Moreover, a large and little explored field of research is the proper dieting of the mother, with a view to reducing such disabilities! It is many years since a suggestive book on this subject, "Tokology," by Alice B. Stockham, M.D.,* an American, was published, but the subject has attracted relatively little notice, though a substantial number of women suffer excessively in childbirth.

We do not agree with Mrs. Perkins Gilman that "excesses in physical motherhood are not common." Indeed, we think that only an American woman could have written that, since the woman exhausted by too much childbearing, especially under conditions of poverty, is so common a figure in Europe. Nevertheless, we think there are few women who will hold the pains of maternity to be so serious that some women should undergo removal of an ovary in order that many women may be spared the experience of childbirth.

Incidentally, to allow Governments to produce ectogenetic people with such characteristics as their policy may dictate, as Mr. Haldane suggests in one passage, savours decidedly of the idea behind Rossums Universal Robots. Governments with such a power in their hands might produce masses of people adapted for use as slaves, and so postpone the attainment of an equalitarian society for considerable periods. The idea is fantastic, though not beyond the bounds of possibility. Happily the practice would in any event take a very considerable time to mature.

It may be that Mr. Haldane is not wholly serious in his prophecy of "ectogenetic" children, and that what he really contemplates is the setting apart of a certain number of women for the purpose of selective breeding.

That proposal is, of course, not new. It has commended itself to many men and some women. In considering it, one must not lose sight of the fact that selective breeding of human beings by human beings is by no means so simple a process as selective breeding by human beings of animals and plants. In the latter case the breeder works to produce characteristics of value to the human exploiter without regard to the opinions of the subject on which he is experimenting or to its fitness to be a companion to others of its kind. The problem is a relatively simple one, and the plants and animals experimented with are decidedly less complex than are men and women.

To hire professional mothers, who would be maintained for life, or even only during their childbearing years, would not be difficult in a society in which everything is up for sale. There are women who would offer themselves for the purpose to obtain a living, even if not assured that they were performing a patriotic duty. We are not persuaded, however, that professional mothers would produce better offspring than mothers who mate according to their own sweet will, even could Mr. Haldane induce the finest men in the world to assist them in the task. We agree that if the professional mothers and their offspring were kept under the best possible conditions the children would probably show fewer defects than are to be found amongst those who are born and bred in poverty and overcrowding.

That brings us to an important point. Mr. Haldane, like the Malthusians and all the eugenists, deplores the multiplication of the unfit, but the unfit are being multiplied even more rapidly by post-natal than pre-natal conditions. That is to say, unfitness is being created amongst those who might be fit by the evil conditions in which they live. Even were the men and women of the slums to be mated under the instructions of the most expert eugenists, overcrowding and poverty would render their children unfit. It is often complained that the fit are restricting births, whilst the unfit are multiplying without restraint. As a matter of fact, educated people of limited means are practising contraceptive methods to a great degree, and largely because they cannot afford to maintain more children at what they consider an adequate standard of comfort. The very poor do not practise birth control to anything like the same extent, partly from lack of means to provide acceptable contraceptives, partly from lack of knowledge, still more from the hopeless despondency and indolence which arises from complete submergence in poverty.

The problem of the multiplication of the unfit is a poverty problem, and no more will be heard of it when poverty is abolished.

The question of transmitting hereditary disease is to a certain extent another matter. Of course, it is an axiom that persons afflicted with hereditary disease should not produce children. Nevertheless, any scientist who is looking so far forward as Mr. Haldane will agree that science will speedily discover the means of curing the various great scourges which may be regarded as obstacles to parenthood and that the elimination of such diseases would be exceedingly rapid if, on the one hand, the community would provide abundant facilities for research, and if, on the other, poverty, overcrowding, and lack of education amongst the people were overcome.

All this does not mean that we dismiss eugenics as unnecessary, or that we are opposed to the researches of the eugenists. Indeed, we believe that anything they can tell (and at present they can tell very little) about heredity and the result of the blending of types and races should be made known and should be considered and understood by the men and women who are parents and prospective parents.

The eugenists in their theories, and the parents in their practice, are to-day facing two great handicaps; firstly, the economic handicap of the private property system; secondly, the legal marriage, which is a result of the private property system and all the social conventions which surround it.

No one requires to be convinced that lack of means is to an overwhelming extent the cause of restriction of births, the production of unfit offspring, the failure to mate of men and women who desire each other as lovers and as the parents of their children, whilst financial considerations are a frequent cause of the marriage of unfit men and women and of unsuited couples.

The birth-rate of France is declining because the peasant proprietor does not wish to divide his property or to leave some of his children propertyless. Mr. Haldane proposes to correct the fall of population by producing so-called "ectogenetic" children, presumably to be maintained by the Government. The peasant proprietors might, however, refuse to be taxed for the maintenance of such children.

As to the legal marriage, the eugenist would discover it a handicap, were he to be given a free hand to mate the people so as to improve the race on condition that he should observe the marriage laws. Men and women who are striving, not only to produce creditable offspring, but at the same time to find domestic happiness and congenial companionship for themselves, also find the marriage laws a handicap.

We believe that with the advent of common ownership of the means of life, production for use, and the consequent provision of plenty for all, the legal marriage, even were it to be formally maintained, must soon cease to have any binding force. It would swiftly cease to keep together those who desired to be apart, or to keep apart those who desired to be together. The economic tie and the economic barrier have a far greater influence in maintaining the letter of the marriage laws than any other factor.

Observance of the legal marriage is to-day called morality, but conceptions of morality are changing quantities built up and modified in conformity with social conditions. In a more enlightened time it will be thought monstrous that legal ties should have been regarded to-day as binding upon those whose affections would lead them to break such ties and form others.

J. B. S. Haldane suggests that by selective breeding there could be produced, for instance, a larger proportion of musicians, and that physical characteristics could be changed. To-day a musician might hesitate to mate with a musician, considering it more prudent to choose a spouse possessed of a comfortable fortune, or having a severely practical character. A man and woman may believe themselves fitted to produce splendid children, but may be deterred by some paltry economic consideration, or by some legal barrier. "If we decide to become the parents of a child now, we shall either be condemned to live together for the rest of our lives, or be put beyond the social pale," is a thought which has deterred many intelligent people from making the great experiment.

When sex is freed from economic considerations, when there is no question of making money, or of losing money by its manifestations, it will no longer be the source of sorrow and suffering that it too often is at present. When the disappearance of the marriage laws and their prohibitions has followed the disappearance of the economic conditions on which they are based, then sex will cease to be regarded largely as a source of debasement. Its character having been vindicated, it will be found to live up to a good reputation at least as fully as it has often been thought to deserve a bad one.

Those who doubt this might perhaps take a course of Shelley: it will serve them better than attending the meetings of any of the societies for the preservation of public morals.

** Stopes' "Married Love," p. 86.

* "Tokology," by Alice B. Stockham, M.D. R. F. Fenno & Co., New York.

PARLIAMENT AS WE SEE IT.

Mr. W. M. Adamson (Lab.) moved the Second Reading on February 29th of a Bill to give women the Parliamentary vote on the same terms as men, which would add another 4,500,000 women to the register, to base the franchise for both sexes on residence, pure and simple, to abolish the business qualification, to remove the £5. fee for the registration of university voters, to extend the municipal franchise by making it the same as the Parliamentary, and to remove the disqualification of persons who have received Poor Law relief from sitting on Boards of Guardians. He pointed out that the Labour Party manifesto at the last election stated:—

> "Labour stands for equality between men and women; equal political and legal rights."

The Liberals also issued a manifesto:—

> "Liberals aim at securing political, legal and economic equality between men and women."

Nevertheless, the Labour Government showed itself in no haste to espouse the proposal. Mr. Rhys Davies (Under Secretary, Home Office) refused to promise that the Government would be responsible if the Bill passed the Second Reading. He declared it is unusual for Governments to accept responsibility for Bills introduced by private members, which is, of course, not true. The Labour Government itself had promised to accept responsibility for the private member's housing Bill debated only the week before, should it pass Second Reading, as it did. Mr. Davies was repeatedly questioned, but he persisted in refusing to give any promise. Members still asked for a Government promise, and later Mr. Clynes rose to answer. He said in explaining the different attitude of the Government towards the Housing Bill: "Last Friday we were dealing with a very different subject, in relation to a matter which is the first item in the Government's social programme." He would not do more than promise to try to find time, if the committee to which the Bill would be sent were as friendly to it as the House had been shown to be. He would give no pledge.

The Labour Party has got many a vote and much financial and personal support by its supposed friendship to women's enfranchisement, but, in practice, it has always treated that question like Cinderella.

Miss Jewson (Lab.), Mrs. Wintringham (Lib.), and Lady Astor (Cons.), supported the measure. The Duchess of Atholl opposed it, moving the rejection and telling against the measure, and Mrs. Phillipson voted against it. Lady Atholl was an anti-suffragist before women got the vote. It is really an impertinence that she should have presented herself as a Parliamentary candidate. She attacked the Bill on every point, declaring absurdly that to enfranchise more women would be to take advantage of the heroic sacrifices of the 740,000 men who lost their lives in the war. She particularly complained that the Bill would enfranchise the tinkers of Scotland, of whom she spoke with the utmost contempt. She was trying, she said, to get them to settle down. Mr. Foot protested that he had never known the tinker's occupation to be regarded as dishonourable, and that John Bunyan was a tinker and a crusted old Tory. Sir M. Conway added that the "noble Lady who spoke with disrespect of tinkers rather hurt me. . . . I also have met old tinkers, and among them have been some of the most interesting human beings I ever encountered." A touch of humanity is to be found even amongst Tory politicians. The proud Duchess refused, however, to be ashamed of her snobbishness.

An Echo of Heated Controversies.

Sir William Bull declared that at the time of the Speakers' Conference in 1918, a woman representing one of the women's societies had given a pledge that the leading franchise societies would not ask for a further extension of the franchise for 10 years, and would be prepared to accept the vote for women over 40. These remarks were supposed to be made by a member of a deputation of the leading franchise societies.

It would be interesting to know whether Sir William Bull spoke the truth, and whether the lady referred to was representing the National Council for Adult Suffrage, which indulged in surprising vagaries in its brief day.

Mr. Sexton's Bon Mot on the Labour Government.

Mr. James Sexton (Lab.), that cynical and often foolish old comedian, twitted the Labour Cabinet for its coldness towards the Franchise Bill. For 30 years the Tories had opposed votes for women, whereas the Labour Party had for 30 years nailed votes for women and adult suffrage to the mast. "Only the other day," he said, "a friend of mine was asked what he thought of the new Government, and he replied: 'It is one of the best Conservative Governments we have had for years.'" He added: "I have lived in the days of open voting, and my own father was a political boss. I have seen him march a number of men into the backyard and lock them up until the polling was closed, while others were allowed to go and vote."

Prejudice and Truth from Lord Hugh Cecil.

Lord Hugh Cecil (Cons.), took credit for the fact that he supported votes for women in the old days, but opposed the present measure. He added, with considerable effrontery:—

> "I am sorry we have come to include among our Members persons belonging to the opposite sex, but what we have lost in dignity, we may have gained in efficiency."

It is curious that even so hardened a Tory as Lord Hugh Cecil should have the notion that men are more dignified than women; we wonder on what it can be based!

He further observed that Lord Bryce, in his book, "Modern Democracy," says:—

> "If you have too large an electorate, and if you have too inexperienced an electorate, the result is not democracy at all—it becomes government, not by the people, but government by an oligarchy, which is often a rather shady oligarchy, for it becomes the government of an organised machine."

That, of course, is very true; the moral is not, however, Parliament with a restricted franchise, but the Soviets.

> "The various party organisations have an oligarchical organisation. They work from the point of view of their own party, and they work not as an expression of the functioning of the will of the whole people, but in order to impose on the people their particular point of view. I am not saying they are not necessary parts of a machine, but having, as we have, a very large electorate, this sort of machinery becomes unduly powerful, and the power that is given enables the heads to suggest to 50,000 or 60,000 people how to vote. These people vote in the main as they are told. They are thus told by bodies which they have no share in choosing, which are invariably unrepresentative, and which possess the oligarchic influence. I do not mean, of course, an oligarchy of rich men and influences. There is a Labour oligarchical organisation of a different type, but that organisation is oligarchic. Organisations of the kind are not democratic in the true sense of the word."

That is a very neat exposure of some of the evils of the Parliamentary system.

Ruhr Coal.

Average deliveries of Ruhr coal and Coke:

	Monthly.
1921	1,500,000 tons.
1922	1,505,000 ,,
January to December, 1923...	547,000 ,,
October, 1923, to January, 1924	996,400 ,,

Passports.

The Labour Government will retain passports because other countries desire them, and the alien immigration restrictions in this country render it desirable for British subjects to prove their nationality to immigration officers. It regards the aliens regulations as necessary.

Visas are not required for British subjects visiting France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark.

Warships.

Major Hore-Belisha asked whether the Government intends to lay down this year, according to the programme of the late Tory Government, three submarines and a submarine depot ship, two gunboats of a special shape for the Persian Gulf, an aircraft carrier and a mine-laying vessel. Mr. Ammon replied that the five cruisers and two destroyers are alone decided on yet, and that a Cabinet Committee is considering Naval requirements. The Tory programme would have increased Naval Estimates by £3,000,000 in 1924-5, and added 14,000 men to the Navy. The new cruisers decided on are 10,000 tons. They are expected to cost from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000. The "County" Class cruisers which are to be replaced cost £950,000 each. The "County" class cruisers cost £214,800 a year to maintain, the new cruisers will cost £259,000 to maintain. Naval costs are always mounting.

Four new battleships of "Hawkins" and "Emerald" classes, laid down during the war, will be completed between June of this year and July of next.

Ships Built or Building and Less than 12 years old on February 27th, 1924.

	Light Cruisers Built.	Building.	In Full Commission.
British Empire ...	46	4	34
Japan	16	6	14
France	4	3	4
U.S.A.	7	3	7

(Continued on page 6.)

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Our View.

Poplarism and the Labour Government.

The Liberal vote of censure upon the Government for rescinding the Mond Order against Poplar disappeared behind a Tory amendment against which the Liberals voted, and so saved the Labour Government from an adverse vote which might have forced the Government to resign. The Liberal motion was never put. Mr. Asquith and his most prominent followers voted in support of the Labour Government. Why did this happen? Does it mean that Poplar scored a victory?

Certainly not; the Minister of Health, Mr. Wheatley, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald have both repudiated any approval of Poplarism and have promised that the Poplar Guardians shall be surcharged on all cases in which the auditor may report that excessive relief has been given. Mr. MacDonald has gone further. In reply to Mr. Asquith's suggestion that there should be "collateral sanction" to protect the ratepayers against excessive expenditure by Guardians, Mr. MacDonald has asked Mr. Asquith to assist the Labour Government in devising such security to protect the ratepayers. The following passages from the vote of censure debate on February 26th are illuminating:—

Mr. Asquith:—

> "Could the Government consider some collateral sanctions of a more effective kind than the power of surcharge, and can these be devised and put into working order? It is not for us, it is not for any private Member to say what form such collateral sanctions should take, but it has been suggested that the hon. Gentleman should take the power indirectly, and empower a ratepayer, where an item of expenditure had been proved to be illegal, and when he was prepared to take the risk of proving it illegal, to make that reduction from the rates which he otherwise has been bound to pay. . . . At any rate, if anything more effective cannot be devised, I hope the Government will apply their minds to the consideration and adoption of it at the earliest possible moment."

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald:—

> "I would ask my right hon. Friend [Mr. Asquith] if he would not help us in trying to devise that collateral security. I should be very glad if it were possible to get collateral security that would work equitably and fairly, and would be in accordance with democratic government—collateral security which, in addition to the surcharge, would protect the ratepayer."

The result of the present manœuvres will be that not only will Poplar be forced to reduce its scale of relief and to restrict the number of cases in which it gives relief, but all the other boroughs which give an equally high or even higher scale of relief will be made to do the same. Moreover, the great ratepayers will be given the power to refuse payment of rates if they dislike the actions of the local authorities, and the arbiter of the matter will be the judges, who are almost all conservatives, who are irremovable and who are appointed in an autocratic manner.

Even should the Guardians eventually win their cases the delays will be enormous, and such sanctions might not stop at Boards of Guardians: they would probably be applied to other local bodies and to Parliament also.

Such a provision as that would place a serious check upon the powers, already limited, of progressive people who may get elected to public authorities. It would be a check similar in character to that imposed by the Supreme Court in the United States, which frequently declares progressive legislation to be illegal.

Mr. Asquith's proposal to fuse several districts under a single Poor Law body in order that such districts as Poplar may be dealt with by Guardians elected by wealthier districts as well as by local representatives, is designed, as are his other demands, to insure a stricter, harsher treatment of Poor Law cases and more economy by Boards of Guardians.

The object is not alone to save the rates and protect the pockets of the well-to-do. There is also a political motive behind these plans. It is observed that in districts like Poplar where a large proportion of families have either at some time or, at any rate, may at any time, require to apply to the Guardians for relief, the Labour Party has secured an impregnable position on elective bodies, just because the Labour Guardians are regarded as being more generous than those of other parties in giving relief. To secure a uniform scale throughout the country and to break down the local and personal contact of the Guardians and the people is naturally regarded as important by the parties which desire to secure the votes of the people without giving them the bribe of substantial poor relief.

* * *

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND INDIA.

The policy of the Government towards India has been made very clear by Lord Olivier, in the carefully prepared statement which he read in the House of Lords. He has been criticised because he read that statement on the ground, forsooth, that his reading made it a tedious affair to listen to, and because he did not indulge in vague eulogies of Indian aspirations and mirage-like prophecies of Indian self-government which the MacDonald Government has no intention to further, and to which it is actually opposed. That Lord Olivier confined himself to the actual intentions of the Government and that he wrote out his statement beforehand, in order that there should be no mistake about it, indicates, in our opinion, more honesty than is displayed by the general run of politicians and probably also a certain wariness in respect of his own colleagues.

That is all the good we are able to say about Lord Olivier's statement. It revealed the Government's clear determination to stand by Imperialism. It refused the very moderate request which has come from India for a round table conference of Indians and of British Government representatives to discuss and arrive at an agreed form of Indian self-government.

The refusal of this round table conference will certainly prove to have been one of the great mistakes of the Labour Government. The demands put forward by the Indian representatives at such a conference, held now, would be very much more moderate and conciliatory than those which will emanate in the course of the struggle which will inevitably develop in India, as it did in Ireland, but with greater cause and even greater bitterness, because of the infinitely more pronounced race subjection and exploitation imposed on the Indians.

India will certainly not stop short of complete independence: it is unthinkable that a people of 300 million should permanently submit to be subject to a Government supposed to represent 47 million people of another race living on a distant little island one-*fortieth* of its size. Moreover, it is not merely the alien Imperialist Government that must, and will, disappear from the world; all Governments will go: they will make way for the free autonomous organisation of their affairs by classless peoples in all parts of the world. By giving to the Indian Independence Movement, on an agreed basis, a substantial measure of what it is at present demanding, however, the Labour Government would have staved off, for a time, the bitterer and more acute phases of the independence struggle, and would have won a reputation for enlightenment which would have stood it in good stead.

The refusal of the round table conference was indeed a very great piece of folly, even from the standpoint of the delaying effect of a conference. The Labour Party is not usually slow to appreciate the uses of delay in bolstering up the weak position of a bureaucracy. The Labour Party has, however, bowed to the arrogant demands of the Imperialists who insist that British prestige would suffer by any pretence of a discussion with Indians on equal terms.

Mr. MacDonald, in his self-righteous letter to the Indian non-co-operators, said: "You must come nearer to us." When the invitation is accepted he and his Government reply with an arrogant repulse.

Having refused the round table conference, the Labour Government is thrown back on the use of coercion: that coercion is being used with a ruthless hand in India is shown by the recent firing on the Sikh religious procession, as well as by other incidents.

Lord Olivier made use of all the time-honoured hypocrisies of Imperialism in his House of Lords pronouncement, and certainly earned for himself and his Government the contempt at least of those Indians who keep in touch with British politics and are as well educated as he is. He declared the Non-Co-operator to be "mistaken, ill-informed and unjustified," and said:

> "*We are convinced that the establishment of full responsible self-government would be worse than perilous, would be big with disaster to the people of India . . . would be a responsibility which His Majesty's Government are not prepared to accept.*"

He asserted that the Indians cannot agree amongst themselves, because of their religious differences, and therefore the British (who, of course, do not agree amongst themselves either) must keep them from "flying asunder."

He was glad of Gandhi's release from prison, "*but the terrible practical reactions of Mr. Gandhi's philosophically innocent teachings merely illustrated the excesses into which the Indian popular temperament was prone.*"

One may evidently look for the early re-confinement of Gandhi, since this is the view of the Labour Government.

There can be no doubt that the Liberal and Tory Parties desire the Labour Party to make such administrative regulations and to introduce such legislation as will reduce the scale of relief in all districts where it is relatively high, and will, as far as possible, prevent generous treatment of poor relief applicants from being used as a political asset in winning votes. Tories and Liberals wish to make the Labour Government responsible for the measures they themselves refrained from taking lest they should prove too unpopular. In order to retain office without power the Labour Government under Mr. MacDonald's leadership seems ready to play into the hands of its opponents.

* * *

THE MACDONALD-POINCARÉ LETTERS.

The MacDonald-Poincaré letters are remarkable documents, especially the former. It is the former which offers conciliation and rather obscurely, but, nevertheless, undoubtedly insinuates an offer to make concessions. Whether that offer will take tangible shape when the powerful influences by which he is daily modifying his course are brought into action remains to be seen.

Before discussing the letters, it is not out of place to observe that if there be any truth in

the jubilant predictions of the *Daily Herald* that a victory for the more Left and more pacific French tendencies will shortly take place at the polls, it may seem to some a little strange that Mr. MacDonald should offer concessions to M. Poincaré, as though he were a permanent fixture. The explanation, of course, is that M. Poincaré does speak as a mere arrogant and bellicose individual; he speaks the mind of French capitalism, of the powerful interests which control the French Government to-day, and would continue to control it even were a Government which should be the equivalent of the British Labour Government shortly be returned.

The MacDonald letter, by the way, was not published in full in the *Daily Herald*. It was cut down on the ground that it was too long to publish in full. Curiously enough, some of the passages expunged in the *Herald* version are those which we find most significant.

Some of these expunged passages contain what we regard as a distinct, though subtly worded offer to reconsider a special British military guarantee to France, and also to discuss the pushing back of the German frontier to the Rhine. It is fortunate that capitalist newspapers have published the letters in full. We reproduce here the passages from the MacDonald letters which seem to us most significant, indenting those which did not appear in the *Herald's* expurgated version.

The Salient Points.

It is widely felt in England that, contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, France is endeavouring to create a situation which gains for it what it failed to get during the Allied peace negotiations. . . .

The Rhine Frontier.

"There were many people in France who imagined that with the complete defeat of Germany they would automatically be freed for ever from **a menace which, I fully realise, was real; some thought that, in order to attain absolute security, the frontiers of France should be extended to the Rhine.**

A Special Guarantee to France.

"They were disappointed in this expectation; they were offered instead a joint guarantee by Great Britain and the United States of America; with the abstention of America this offer itself lapsed, and the French people have since, with some justification, been seeking for other and more tangible safeguards to take its place.

"In regard to reparations also the French public have suffered disappointment; neither the virtually unlimited expectations aroused at the moment of victory nor the more specific assessment made in 1921 bear any real relation to the economic situation as it stands to-day.

"The position of this country is entirely different.

"Our security on land and sea remains unmenaced. But our economic existence has been gravely endangered, owing not to the inability of Germany to pay a certain sum in reparation, but to the acute and persistent dislocation of the markets of Europe, occasioned mainly by the uncertainty in the relations between France and Germany, the continued economic chaos in Germany, shown so clearly by the violent fluctuations in the value of the currency, and the ultimate uncertainty in the relations between France and ourselves."

"Without Consideration of Reasonable Interests."

Thus it has come about that the people in this country regard with anxiety what appears to them to be the determination of France to ruin Germany and to dominate the Continent, without consideration of our reasonable interests and future consequences to European settlement.

Here follow the passages which appeared in the *Herald* pointing out that France is maintaining large military and aerial establishments not only in the East but also in the West of France, also that France is financing the military organisation of small Central European States without attempting to pay either interest or principle of her debt to Britain.

Then come passages expunged from the *Herald*:

> "Such popular sentiments, erroneous though they may be, are factors which both you and I are bound to take into consideration.
>
> "In my judgment, it is these states of opinion which have vitiated our relations in the past, and have often induced our two Governments to indulge in altercations regarding the symptoms of the malady, without endeavouring, with clarity and good sense, to investigate the causes. . . .
>
> "I am heartily anxious that you and I together should try and give both these sections of French and British opinion some sense of confidence that the basis of their fears and resentments is being removed.
>
> "It is not, however, my present purpose to enter at any length into such questions as the Ruhr, the Rhineland occupation, or the Palatinate. . . .
>
> "I see little prospect of our being able to attain any agreement in such matters unless we are first able, by frank and courageous discussion, to achieve some unanimity in regard to the essential purposes to which these problems are merely subsidiary.
>
> "For, when I consider our relations in their wider aspect, I do not feel that our essential objects are so divergent. . . ."

Whether this can be partially achieved by processes of local demilitarisation and neutralisation, by the creation between certain States of bands of neutralised territory under mutual, or even collective, guarantee and supervision, or by some other means, is a matter for careful consideration in detail.

> "We must clearly await the reports of the two expert committees, and I do so with hope that they will draw your country and mine together.
>
> "I see no reason why this problem, if approached from its widest aspect, if considered in conjunction with the cognate problem of inter-Allied debts, should not on an early day be solved in such a manner as to give to England the hope of economic stability in Europe, and to France the assurance that her just requirements will be met.
>
> "Here, again, if France and England can but agree, the co-operation of other European countries will be assured, and it will be possible for us to approach the United States of America, not as debtors disputing the one with the other, but as a united Europe, anxious, by mutual sacrifice and arrangement, to cure the ills from which our people are now suffering. . . ."

With renewed offers of co-operation Mr. MacDonald concludes. His letter may be taken to mean at least an offer to discuss a British guarantee of military support to France, with or without the United States, an agreement that the Rhine shall be the western frontier of Germany, provided British capitalism gets a share in exploiting the Ruhr, the Rhineland and the Palatinate, Germany west of the Rhine and perhaps also a part of the border east of the Rhine being made a neutral zone and demilitarised. If the letter does not mean that we should like to know what it does mean. Such a solution would result in an iniquitous overlordship by international capitalism over an important part of Europe where the proletariat is far advanced towards desire and capacity to abolish capitalism altogether. If the price should be the retarding of proletarian development, European peace on such a basis would be dearly bought indeed. The scheme is one which certain great coal-iron-steel capitalists have been endeavouring to establish for some time. The Scottish Labour M.P.'s who visited the Ruhr some time ago reported in favour of the international capitalist exploitation of the Ruhr and Rhineland in order that the rival capitalist faction might not quarrel over this source of wealth.

Poincaré's Answer.

M. Poincaré replied not without irony:

> "Are there really Englishmen who suppose that France would be capable of making fratricidal preparations against their country? . . . Our military and aerial establishments are exclusively designed to defend us against attempted German revenge. . . . Our army and air force are no more a sign of defiance to England than the aerial and maritime fleet of Britain are, in your view, a threat to France."

He expresses agreement with Mr. MacDonald's review of the situation, and says he believes that the interests and desires of France and Britain are identical and can be satisfied by the same means. As to the Rhine he adds:

> "Apart from Alsace, we have never claimed the Rhine as a frontier. We have only asked that Germany should no longer be in a position to use the Rhine as a military base in fresh attacks against France; we have asked that, in the general interests of peace, the river should form a barrier against aggression."

As to the French policy towards the States of the Little Entente, France, says Poincaré, has been anxious to keep in touch with all States interested in applying the peace treaties "*pending the grant to us, if it be possible, of more effective guarantees for the maintenance of peace.*"

That, of course, means the revival of the pre-war guarantee of British support to France in the event of war and the pushing back of the German frontier to the Rhine.

As to the Ruhr, France, says Poincaré, will continue to occupy it till Germany has paid reparations and till the demands of France regarding peace guarantees are met.

As to the League of Nations, France would have given it from the beginning "*more powerful means of action than those with which it has been endowed.*"

Evidently France felt more confident than Britain of manœuvring a majority on the League Council, and saw means of using the League as a means of furthering her power in Europe which was not acceptable to Britain.

An agreement between the French and British Governments for the further exploitation of weaker nations which would stave off Franco-British war rather longer than would otherwise have been the case; but with all the talk of the French Government being in financial difficulties now current, M. Poincaré's letter shows that he has not departed from any of the main demands he has continuously made.

The "Henderson Affair."

Again the Labour Government has been faced with an outstanding test of its power to maintain the policy it enunciated before it took office. Again it has failed with startling lack of dignity.

During the General Election the Labour Party issued a manifesto signed by the present Prime Minister, Mr. MacDonald, as well as by Mr. Henderson, in which it was declared that the Labour Party:

> "stands for the immediate calling by the British Government of an International Conference (including Germany on terms of equality) to deal with the revision of the Versailles Treaty."

Since obtaining office Mr. MacDonald has replied to a Parliamentary question that he is opposed to calling an international conference at the present time, and his declarations of policy have made no mention of revising the Treaty of Versailles.

Mr. Henderson, however, in the Burnley by-election, in which he secured a tremendous majority, declared that "those of us who value world peace"

> "must insist, as an absolute essential, upon the revision of the Treaty of Versailles with all expedition possible."

Revision, he said, was very much overdue:

> "as regards both the territorial and economic aspects of the Treaty."
>
> "He wanted the public to understand where the Government stood. He was convinced that until we had a Government which was prepared, not only to promulgate such a policy, but to press it, and take notes, and stand by it, we could not

hope to have an enduring, staple, political and economic settlement among the nations of Europe."

Faced with that statement in the House of Commons, Mr. MacDonald repudiated it, and declared that the Government does not stand for the revision of the Treaty. He pleaded for consideration on the score that members of his Cabinet were inexperienced. Mr. Lloyd George took advantage of the situation to say that Mr. Henderson ought to have known better, because he "had been corrected before" when he was expelled from the Lloyd George Coalition Government for supporting the Stockholm Peace Conference. Mr. MacDonald expressed great indignation for the treatment of Mr. Henderson at that time. Mr. Henderson has not on this occasion disclosed his feelings.

The Labour Government has again shown that it cannot work socialist miracles with capitalist elements and by capitalist methods.

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.

(Continued from page 3.)

Ships on the Effective List.

	Battle ships.	Battle Cruisers.	Cruisers (including Light Cruisers)
British Empire ...	18	4	48
France	9	Nil	16
Italy	7	Nil	15

	Destroyers (including Flotilla leaders)	Torpedo Boats.
British Empire ...	201	Nil
France	56	11
Italy	63	71

Cruisers and Light Cruisers.

British Empire	48
U.S.A.	29
Japan	28
France	16

Apparently the Labour Government need have no immediate alarm lest the British Navy disappear through wastage.

Increase in Mediterranean Fleet.

Mr. Ayles (Lab.) asked whether the *increase* in the Mediterranean Fleet indicates a change of policy on the part of the Government. Mr. Ammon said no.

No Commercial Shipbuilding for Royal Dockyards!

Major Hore-Belisha asked whether, in view of the decreased employment in the Royal dockyards that must follow the policy of limitation of naval armaments and the consequent distress for the men in those dockyards, and in view of the waste of taxpayers' money from the progressive disuse of the dockyards, a Royal Commission will be appointed to report on the possibility of using the dockyards for commercial shipbuilding.

Such a suggestion might have been expected to be completely in line with the views of the Labour Government, which is supposed to be pledged to pacifism, disarmament and State capitalism.

Surprisingly, however, Mr. Ammon replied on behalf of the Prime Minister: "*No, sir. I have no reason for anticipating any cessation of the economical use of the principal Royal yards for necessary naval work.* The possibilities of employing the Royal yards on commercial work were fully explored by the Colwyn Committee in 1919. The Report is contained in Command Paper 587 of 1920."

German Reparations.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, replying to Mr. Pringle (Lib.), refused to give facilities for discussing a motion to suspend the German Reparation (Recovery) Act. "We have no intention of suspending the Act," he said.

Capitalist Competition.

The municipalities of Bradford, Glasgow and Manchester and the Metropolitan Water Board have given contracts to foreign firms to the value of nearly £1,000,000, because these firms tendered below British prices by 20 to 30 per cent.

Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

The Government provided part of the capital for this concern, but Mr. Snowden said the Government will leave the management of the company entirely to the free discretion of the directors.

School Meals in Scotland.

In June, 1922, 13,750 children were fed in Glasgow schools, in February, 1924, only 407. The reduction is due to the issue by the Lord Advocate of Circular 51. Mr. Adamson, Secretary for Scotland, promised to discuss the question. Mr. Nichol (Lab.) protested against school classes over 50. Mr. Adamson said there are few over 60, and in new schools classes over 50 will not be permitted. Mr. Nichol was not satisfied.

Cruisers or schools?

Experimental Farm.

Mr. Adamson could not say whether money will be found for the experimental farm desired by the Fife Education Committee.

Scientific agriculture or cruisers?

Agricultural Wages.

The Government has not decided whether the Agricultural Wages Boards shall be set up in Scotland.

Taxation, 1923-4.

In sterling, at par, per head, per annum:—

	£	s.	d.
United Kingdom ...	15	18	0
France ...	6	18	2
U.S.A. (Federal only) ...	6	14	10
Italy ...	3	6	11
Germany (Reich only) ...	4	1	4
Canada (Central only)...	7	19	8
Australia:—			
Commonwealth ...	8	1	9
States ...	8	4	2
South Africa:—			
Union ...	3	9	11
Provinces ...	0	11	9
New Zealand ...	12	5	3

Trade Facilities Act.

The Labour Government has introduced a Bill to continue the trade facilities introduced by its predecessors. It will pay threequarters of the interest on any loan raised in this country by a Dominion or Protectorate of the Empire. The goods bought with the loan must be bought in this country. The period of application and repayment of export credits already in force is extended. Only £8,500,000 of the £26,000,000 already set apart for the credits has yet been taken up. To the trade facilities guarantees already set apart for this country another £15,000,000 is added.

This is all capitalist legislation. The Tory-Liberal Coalition having originally introduced the scheme, it was naturally approved by them when the Labour Government continued it.

Farmer v. Labourer.

Mr. Buxton, the Minister for Agriculture, asked for a vote to grant loans to farmers' combinations. Mr. Royce (Lab.) protested that the labourers, many of whom are only getting an average of 15s. a week, are being overlooked.

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(Anti-Parliamentary.)

For particulars of membership apply Secretary, 152, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

COMMUNIST WORKERS' MOVEMENT, WILLESDEN.

A group of the C.W.M. has been formed in Willesden. Mr. A. Parsons, 182, Chapter Road, Willesden, is acting as Secretary pro tem. Intending members should communicate with him.

WHERE TO GET THE "DREADNOUGHT."

The following newsagents now stock the "Dreadnought":—

East Greenwich.—Johannes, 11, Blackwall Lane.

Lewisham.—"Bob's," Lewis Grove.

Bellingham.—Stephens, Station Approach.

Readers are urged to encourage these newsagents by their support.

A Tale of the Ruhr.

She gave me Löttchen as a name, and even if it was not hers, it is quite a pretty one. She was new to the dancing clubs, she said; and it seemed likely enough. She was really rather a darling, and here is her story. I admit that, after twenty, one does not readily believe the "pasts" which are revealed at such times, but I have a feeling that this one was true. . . . I wish that I could picture for you the shrug of her pretty shoulders, the childlike directness of her talk.

. . . . . .

On a winter morning, in a succession of sickening jerks, one of the suburban trains draws up in the Friedrickstrasse Station, throwing the packed standing passengers against each other. The doors lurch open on to grime and clamour, and the struggle between those leaving and entering begins. For a few moments all is confusion; then the streams separate, the worn-out but still punctual train shudders, pitches, with an immense effort, rumbles on again, and the flood of workers flows grimly towards the stairways and the street; the youngest takes the lead and my Löttchen trips first through the barrier. That will do for the opening scene; that is a convenient way to catch up her story.

She was early, she realised: there was no need to hurry; so she took the longer route to the office. It was also the more amusing, for there were shops that way, though some were still shuttered.

. . . . . .

She was passing the *bakerei* now. Already there was a long queue waiting on the chance of being able to buy bread. It was only four shops away now. She wouldn't look. Even in six months one couldn't possibly save half enough: and by then it would be sold. *Mein Gott!* It might be sold already! She turned quickly towards the window.

It was still there: and to-day in the sunlight it seemed more perfect than ever. Such beautiful fleecy stuff! Probably it was real wool. It would feel . . . just like that. And it was the very shade of grey she had always longed for. *Gott* . . . ! And how warm it would be! It would last for ever. If . . . . Supposing . . . . But one couldn't have everything one wanted! So presently she turned again on her road and towards the office.

Young Conrad would be there. He was always early, just as Bertha was always late. But, of course, Herr Fischel wouldn't say anything to her, whatever she did. Naturally—naturally. Perhaps, really, it was because of Bertha that she wanted that grey dress so much. For one could do quite well without a winter dress if one had an overcoat. In the office it was so warm that it was equal: and when one got back to one's lodgings one could go to bed, and then in a few minutes one was quite comfortable, however cold it was. But Bertha always having new dresses made one . . . . It was silly, stupid. One wouldn't care to have anything at that price. Besides, one didn't grudge Bertha what she got, for sometimes she did such kind things—like the time when she spoke to Herr Fischel and saved young Conrad from a rowing. Bertha! Löttchen wondered if Frau Fischel knew. Anyhow, Bertha never had a dress so beautiful as that grey one.

But Bertha was early for once, and came into the office soon after Löttchen arrived.

"Children," she said, "such news! Herr Fischel is in fine mood. The office is shut for six days at Christmas, and we draw full money and an extra week's pay as well!"

"Lordly! Lordly!" exclaimed Conrad, his eyes immense behind spectacles.

"I think I shall go home for Christmas," Bertha added presently, and rather defiantly, as to the clock.

Löttchen opened a big ledger, but its pages had no meaning. Home! Home for Christmas! Oh! . . . She'd . . . she'd never been away from home at Christmas. But having to earn one's own living now, and having to be in Berlin, one had put away the thought of Christmas and all that it meant! And now . . . . Oh, she didn't grudge Bertha her new green dress . . . not the rose one, nor . . . nor . . . but to be going home for Christmas! Oh! how it all came back to her.

. . . . . .

Could one ask the Herr Direktor to advance one or two extra weeks' pay? Could one? One could beg Bertha to use her influence . . . ? That would seem like. . . . But Bertha was quite a good sort, and besides she enjoyed showing her power. Still, was it fair to ask her to get favours, when one felt that what would make her able to was wrong? It wasn't quite fair. No, it wasn't. Nevertheless, when Bertha returned, Löttchen asked for her help.

. . . . . .

Presently Bertha caught her eye and nodded. She'd done it. She'd done it. Oh, wasn't that splendid? Bertha was a dear. Funny old Fischel was a dear. Everything was perfect. One felt certain that with so much money one would be able to buy the ticket. She'd be able to go home for Christmas. Hermon or Caspar would meet her with the little handcart, or perhaps with the small sleigh they drew wood on. The snow would be all crisp and frozen. They'd go through the dark forest, and quite quickly they'd be home. Home! Oh, it would be splendid!

An hour later the Austrian traveller who bought gramophones and bicycle parts came in. He winked a white-lashed eye at Lotta as he passed, and later, after he had talked with Herr Fischel behind the glass partition, he made excuses to dawdle near her desk.

"Good-day, little girl," he said. "How goes it?"

"Very well, thank you," Löttchen answered, and went on with her work.

"Only last night I arrived."

"So."

"Ninety-two gold marks on September the second when the rate was . . .

"It is colder here in Berlin than it is in Vienna: but you ladies always wear thin clothes whatever the weather is."

On September the second when the rate . . .

"Fräulein, will you come to the kino with me this evening?"

"Thank you many times. I am engaged to-night."

"Perhaps to-morrow, then, my dear Fräulein?"

"Also then am I engaged."

"So?"

The Austrian, fingering his hat, cocked an eyebrow at Bertha, who smiled in a vague way, and he passed out.

. . . . . .

And that next morning also Löttchen forgot to look at the grey dress; for she had been to the station to ask, and the ticket home would cost five hundred million marks more then she could possibly find. It wasn't to be done. It didn't exist. Like everything else one wanted, it was too dear. Five hundred milliards!

. . . . . .

But when she was in the office and was asked if she had got her ticket, Löttchen nodded and bent quickly over her ledger. She wasn't going to be pitied. No! There it was, and it couldn't be altered. With a set smile she made some entries in the big book. Yet in the lunch interval she so hated to be left alone that she thought of asking Conrad if she might accompany him on his walk, but she did not do so. Instead, she wrote Christmas letters home. Hermann would be taller. He'd be taller still before she saw him again. Would their Christmas go on just the same without her? It seemed strange that things could go on just the same when one wasn't there.

. . . . . .

In the afternoon the Austrian traveller came again. . . .

"You live a gay life, don't you, Fräulein?" he said presently.

Löttchen laughed, genuinely amused. "Whatever makes you say that?"

"You are always engaged whenever I happen to be here, my dear Fräulein: ever since that day we had tea together. You remember?"

Löttchen remembered.

"To-night, for example. What are you doing that is so important?"

She was going to have supper with another girl, she told him without conviction.

. . . . . .

He drifted away and talked with Conrad. But when he was gone she was sorry, for to hear the others chatting together made her feel more lonely than before. A kino! She'd only been to one since she came to the city. It would have made her forget.

. . . . . .

She wouldn't give in: she'd smile. And as she did so the Austrian turned, and in a flash she knew from the glint of his glasses on the windows that he had been watching her reflection against the darkened houses.

"Good. Certainly, I will wait for you at six o'clock, Fräulein," he said, and went out into the street.

Bertha looked quickly at her, as if she had seen her for the first time: and for so slight a reason Löttchen felt all at once proud.

. . . . . .

He met her at the door of the office, and while he was opening an umbrella Conrad came out and passed them with his pale lip stiff. Löttchen noticed that, and was sorry because of it, and yet in a way glad, for the thought that there were in Berlin two persons who cared whether she was alive or not made her feel less desolate.

The kino was beautiful, Löttchen told me; indeed, she described the whole programme. She had the child's eye for the irrelevant details upon which conviction depends. After that the Austrian took her to a cabaret, where they had supper, and where there were dancers and singers of comic songs. Löttchen had never seen anything like it. He gave her wine, and then that first cognac. She drank a second. They warmed her. For a moment she remembered about Christmas, and then quickly she forgot it. He took her hand, but she did not mind. He was nicer than he had been in the office: he knew the tunes and hummed them, and he told her all sorts of funny stories about the dancers. He had inside information of everything. He asked her about herself and her home. She told him little, and put a brave face on what she told. One had to earn one's living. Everyone was poorer than they used to be. Everyone had to do something nowadays. If one wanted to do any good one had to be in Berlin. It would be nicer to be nearer home. Oh yes, of course, it would: but one couldn't have everything. Hers was a good office. It was warm: it wasn't far from the station; Conrad and Bertha were nice: the Herr Direktor was kind.

There was an interval, and the audience began to fox-trot in a cleared space between the tables. Löttchen did not know that kind of step, but the Austrian led cleverly, and she gained confidence. She was sorry when the performance began again and they took their seats.

. . . . . .

"My kitten, what do you want most in the world?" the Austrian asked at her side.

What did she want most? She drew back quickly from her vision. What did she want most? Ha!

"One wants lots of things. Everyone does, I suppose."

"Of course."

But presently he returned to the same theme. For himself he would like to stay in grand hotels and gamble in kasinos: he would like to go to Italy.

"Yes," Löttchen answered vaguely.

It was good, he went on, to know just what one wanted: for it was by wanting things enough that one got them. Löttchen watched him twirl his wine-glass. That was silly, all that. As if by wanting it she could go home. As if one could want anything more.

"Now, if it were something like a hat you'd seen. . . . Well, one never knows." Didn't she take any interest in clothes and

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such things? he asked presently. "Oh yes. There wasn't one particular hat she wanted? No, not one particular one."

On the stage a comedian was pretending to hold a telephone conversation and was using his pipe as the instrument. How did people think of such funny things?

Or even a frock? Wasn't there a frock which she wanted badly. Perhaps if one wanted it enough one might get it. Life wasn't like that Löttchen knew. One wanted a thing or one didn't: one got it or one didn't. There wasn't any connection between the two. Hadn't she seen any frock that she wanted? Yes. Oh yes. There was one she passed every day on her way to work. It was grey. Beautiful! Beautiful! Was it very expensive? Oh, terrible.

. . . . . .

The Austrian had taken her hand: he was whispering again. All at once he made a definite suggestion, and Löttchen at last understood what all this talk of the grey dress had meant. There was no doubt about his intentions. Some men, the bad ones, were like that, she knew. She ought to get up and go: but getting up would make a scene, and she was too self-conscious to do that. One could pretend not to have understood. She said something evasive.

. . . . . .

"And then?"

Her consciousness returned from some remote distance.

"And then? Oh, my story is just like anyone else's I expect. Have you a home? Yes? And people you love? Yes? Then you will understand how I felt when I thought I might never see them again. But I said to myself: 'What the Austrian wants is a sin; I will never do it.' Besides, even if it had not been a sin it was horrible, for I am not . . . like that.

"And then the lady in white came on to the stage again, and she sang a very sad song, and I thought of how I was all alone in this Berlin; and presently I began to cry. I knew that I ought to get up and go, but I had not the courage to do it. And the Austrian says he will give me 450 milliards; and that is almost enough to buy the ticket. Never, I say. But though I meant it, I prayed he should not offer 500 milliards, for I thought that I might never see my home again, and I was growing afraid of what I might do. And all at once I remembered the path across the meadows that leads to the river. And when he said he would give me 500 milliards I did not answer, only I cried. And so he led me out. I had my hand to my eyes, and I did not even see where he took me. . . . That is all."

"That is all? And afterwards?"

"Afterwards I thought: 'How shall I ever look at my father again, or at my mother?' and it comes to me that I must tell them, and then that it would hurt them too much, and that I must not. Even when I went to the station to take the train I had not decided which I must do. Yet in the end it would not have mattered whichever I had determined to do —for when I went to buy the ticket I found that the price had been raised again, unexpectedly, that morning, and like that I had not money enough—and so, after all, I could not go."

. . . . . .

That was what Löttchen told me at the *nacht lokal.*

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