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OUR ENGLISH SISTERS.

SEEN THROUGH COLONIAL EYES.

Miss Ruth Atkinson, late Vice-President of our Dominion Union, is at present in the Mother Country, and as a fraternal delegate attended the Annual Convention of the B.W.T.A. The following extracts from a letter received from Miss Atkinson gives her impression of that Convention.

Through Miss Henry, I received a message from Miss Agnes Slack (the World's Corresponding Secretary) asking me to attend the B.W.T.A. meetings in London as a fraternal delegate. This, I am glad to say, I was able to do, and was given a seat on the platform. I introduced myself to Miss Slack, by whom I was most kindly received, and in turn was presented to the President, the Countess of Carlisle. I regret that the introductions were not carried further, as I should have liked to talk to the officers of whom one has heard and thought so much in W.R. circles; but in spite of the war, which has done much to break down many formal barriers, there still lingers the feeling that English women do not speak to each other without being introduced. The effect on a colonial from the Antipodes is somewhat chilling, but if the war lasts much longer, this superficial reserve will no doubt disappear, with other artificialities, leaving the women, with quickened sympathies, freer to act, freer to speak, and less tramelled by conventionalities. With many of the delegates I had many interesting talks. The President, like some others of us, is not so young as she once was; her hair is white, but she has a commanding figure and voice. Her opening speech was full of fire, and rang as a clarion call to all delegates to do their utmost to help our nation in her hour of greatest need.

As you will get full reports of the meetings, resolutions, etc., I shall not

take up your space by repeating what you will probably have already received in the Convention number of the English "White Ribbon," but I will just mention one or two points of special interest. What struck me as being the most hopeful sign for the future success of our work was the eager desire shown in tackling the problem of the "Y's." They here, as we overseas, feel the imperative need of getting hold of the girls and training them to take the places of us older ones in the coming years. They have the same difficulty as we have in finding a suitable time for the girls to meet. Practically all are engaged in work all day, and many attend classes, meetings, etc., in the evening. War work occupies the time and energies of the patriotic girlhood, as well as the manhood, of the nation. They are now experimenting by abolishing the "Y's" as a separate branch, and combining it with the Mother Union, more as a department than a separate society. It will be interesting to hear the results at next Convention. The Superintendent of the "Y's" is a charming woman, enthusiastic in her work, fully fitted to occupy the important position she holds. She will, I am sure, make the Y. Department a success if any one can in the present difficult times and circumstances.

The resolution which aroused some controversy and considerable feeling was the one which pledged the delegates to refrain from voting at the next general election for any man who would not support all their demands on the Temperance question. I have not the resolution with me, but you will see it is practically the pledge used in New Zealand for the Pledge-taking Campaign. Those who signed or voted for it were under promise not to vote at all if they could not get a candidate to promise them all that the party had decided to ask for. Having a very lively remembrance of our own experiences in this campaign, I was deeply interested to see how the

members would discuss and vote on the resolution. Democratic institutions like the B.W.T.A. and W.C.T.U. invite rather than fear criticism on their actions, so I need hardly apologise for making a few critical remarks in an entirely friendly spirit. This resolution certainly was one of the most, if not the most, important brought before Convention. The fact that it was not on the agenda sheet led to the presumption that it had not come before the B.W.T.A. branches in the United Kingdom. Presumably the National Committee or Resolution Committee must have drawn it up after full consideration, but it is undoubtedly a pity that a question affecting the fundamental principles of the Association should not have been fully and freely discussed in the local Branches before being brought up at Convention. The resolution was carried by a very large majority, the immediate result being the withdrawal from re-nomination of Mrs Runciman and Mrs C. C. Reed, two of the leading members of the Executive, who have so ably filled the posts of V.P. and Recording Secretary. It was quite evident, from the remarks made afterwards that a considerable number of those who voted for the resolution did not realise what they had pledged themselves to, and it would not be a surprising fact if a considerable number of unions, after mature consideration, found they were unable to support the vote of their delegates on the vote-abstaining resolution. If a majority of them turn it down, the B.W.T.A. will not stand for a non-voting policy in spite of the decision of Convention. In which case the sacrifice of two such valuable officers as Mrs Runciman and Mrs Reed was unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the majority of the Branches decide on following the lead of Convention, the thoroughness of their organisation will be tested to the utmost for a strenuous campaign is before them. Every worker that can be secured, every force that can be used, will be