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WOMEN - NOTES

The London Naval Conference and its relation to the Peace of the World continues to be the most important thing going on in Christendom - perhaps I better say <u>apparently</u> the most important. Who knows what is most important? It may be that somewhere on the globe a woman has given birth to a child this month, who twenty-five, thirty, forty years from now, will turn out to be the super-man, we need for leadership in solving this intricate and perplexing matter of finding substitutes for war, which will really work. If that should happen would not the future historian say, that the birth of that child was the most important thing that happened in February of the year 1930?

The Conference goes slowly - so slowly that the only striking output of the journalists has been jeers at its failure to produce, what they call, news. Would it have gone more rapidly if there had been women among the delegates? There are those who think so. But is moving rapidly desirable? Might it not be that an attempt to hurry the settlement would produce

complications that would make of the Conference a failure, or at best a half-success? In matters of this kind it is of supreme importance that you leave no loopholes, irritations, half finished problems, when you put your name to the final settlement. One of the troubles about the Versailles Treaty of 1919 was that it left behind so many irritations and a chief reason that these were left was that on every hand the delegates were met by the cry, from press and public, "Hurry, hurry, hurry."

It would be false to our hopes to hurry in London. If the Conference should end at this writing - the middle of February - instead of resulting in Naval Limitations downward, we would have Naval Limitations upward - all of the five nations coming out with bigger, instead of smaller navies!

The chief reason for such an alarming result, would be that which ever since the close of the Great War has interfered with more complete disarmament - France insisting that she will not cut armies or navies beyond a certain point, unless her safety is guaranteed. She is afraid. She wants England and America to

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assure her that they will protect her in case she is unjustifiably attacked by any outside power.

Perhaps we would all be afraid - insist on the same guarantees if we had her historical backgroud. For ages Central Europe has been trying to reach the ocean across her territory. Suppose we had such an experience back of us and on top of that the hideous nightmare that she suffered from 1914-1918? Would we cut our defenses if our friends did not say, "Count on us if you are wantonly attacked - but if you pick a quarrel fight your own battles." For my part I believe we <u>should</u> say just that - in Diplomatic language, of course!

Women have not received from the London Conference the official recognition its forerunner - the Washington Conference of 1921 gave them. At that gathering an entirely new group was introduced - twenty-one persons sitting together on the floor of the Conference chamber. They were representatives of the public chosen to tell the American delegates in the Conference what the public was thinking - to send back to the public as much of the inside as it was discreet to tell. This mystified the Foreign Delegations. Nothing like it had ever

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been seen in Diplomatic Gatherings. What puzzled them as much as anything was that four of the delegates were women - very well chosen women. They did their work thoroughly and were discreet. If anybody expected that they would upset the apple cart at times, that they would be excited over delays - over the defeat of their chosen wishes, he was disappointed. They worked hard - talked little and backed the American delegation in all the positions, but preparing for the London Conference the Americans took along no similar body to act as its liaison offices with the public. The Washington experiment probably did not turn out to be of sufficient importance to justify repetition.

While there are no women delegates at the London Conference - there is a host of useful expert or semi-expert women assistants in all the delegations. The body of American secretaries have furnished excellent copy to the newspaper men in the dull period while they have been waiting for something exciting to turn up. Their furs - their cosmetics - their general alertness and self-reliance have been universally commented on - not always with entire good will to be sure.

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It is said that the women secretaries of other nations - those of France and England - I know, from personal contact to be a particularly efficient and steady going type - say in undertones while they may not have as good looking furs, they certainly know their business, quite as well, if not better and attend to it more strictly. But this may be jealousy. There is nothing that makes young and attractive women and most of these secretaries, are reported to be young and attractive whatever their nationality - nothing that makes them a tiny bit malicious quicker than having rivals wear better furs!

One of the most interesting women at the Conference belongs to the Italian delegation - Mme. Olivia Rossetti Agrosti, an Englishwoman, a member of the fascinating Rossetti family - married many years ago to an Italian and became since then a thorough going Roman. Mme. Agrosti is one of the most accomplished translators in the International field. She has been from the start a familiar figure at the League of Nations, wher e she acts annually at the Assembly for the Italian Delegation.

Translating at an International Conference is delicate and difficult work. The translator must grasp and put into

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another tongue on the instant something of which he knows nothing in advance. He must catch the inner-meaning of the speaker. No diplomatic evasion, cunning deception, concealed meaning must escape. Mme. Agrosti has been able to do this difficult job satisfactorily for the Italians.

Mme. Agrosti is one of the best informed women in the world on Italian affairs. She lived through the days of discord and crash immediately following the War, when it looked as if Italy was going Soviet. She welcomed a strong hand and certainly the hand of Mussolini is that. I do not know where an English speaking person can get as good an idea of the way financial and business matters are going in Italy as through the monthly survey of Trade and Industry, which she edits for the Association of Italian Corporations.

You will always find her in her office in an old Roman palace, not far from the grandiose monument of Victor Emanuel, surrounded by reports and government statistics, compiling figures to show how things are really going. Hard as life is for the Italian people in these days of discipline and labor - heavy as

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the taxes are - certain fundamental things have been accomplished - one finds from Mme. Agrosti's sheet - things which mean that with a few more years of restraint Italy may be on its feet - free again to take over its government. Who knows?

The reconstruction has been amazing when we think of the situation at the end of the War, and in the immediate months following. Of course, the great achievement has been giving a fixed value to the lira. The people pay heavily for this fixed value but it gives the country a standing and a stability, which are necessary if it is to work out its business salvation.

The rival dictator in Spain - Primo de Rivera - fell, largely because he was not able, to stabilize the Spanish peseta. It fell and fell and his stock fell with it. He was less understanding of the situation - less determined than his Italian contemporary. So you have one country getting on its feet, the other still struggling.

It is when one studies such reports, as Mme. Agrosti turns out, on conditions in Italy, that the heavy hand the War laid upon the world, is better understood. If Italy, for instance, could have for her electrification - for her redemption of swamp lands - for her development of fertilizers - all of the fine undertakings, she is pushing, the money which she must turn over for war debts, think what it would do for her people.

The most appalling recent statement of what the war

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has done to the countries, which fought as, that by Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Ex-checquer of Great Britain. He declares that today, ten years after the armistice, England must raise for interest on her war debt five million dollars a day, two hundred thousand an hour, three thousand a minute - that it takes the whole labor time, year in and year out, of two million men to pay the cost of this awful war debt.

But this is not all the story. England spends nearly six hundred million dollars a year, on what she calls war services. She spends two hundred and eighty million on pensions. Mr. Snowden adds this to the yearly interest rate and computes today that Great Britain has to put up five thousand dollars a minute to take care of war obligations.

If women have done little at the London Conference so far to distinguish themselves, we have had in the last month, here in the United States, several note-worthy exhibits in women's activities. Mr. Ford, says in this number that he sees no place in the future for women in industry or in business, thinks they would not be there now if it were not for bad management. Thinks they should be free for things outside of business and

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industry, which they can do better than men can. Mr. Ford seems to me too sweeping - there are women who are admirably adapted to serve in business and industry. As a matter of fact what is running a home but a combination of industry and business? Transplant a woman, skilled in housekeeping, to the management of a factory and many of them do extremely well. See what Mrs. Knox has made of her plant up in Gloversville, N. Y. - one of the finest in the country. And as for business there is Mary Dillon, the head of the twelve million dollar Brooklyn Gas Company.

I do not know where you could find a sounder business development than hers. Mary Dillon started out at sixteen as a $10.00 a week clerk. She thought the business so very badly managed, she decided someday she would run it herself and do it properly - step by step she went up. To the amazed men who watched her advancement from clerkship to presidency, she was like an inexorable fate - nothing could stop her!

This month Mary Dillon and Mrs. Genevieve Earle were made directors of a big Brooklyn Trust Company. Not made directors out of compliment to their sex but because of proved financial ability.

If one studies the way things are going in the financial district of New York City he will find out the chances are that

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within the next twenty years, there will be a number of women sitting on the Boards of Corporations. It isn't at all a question whether or no justice demands that they should go on there - it is a question of whether they have proved their ability, judgment and reliability, to be such that they are needed.

Is there a woman anywhere that is not glad Mrs. Chief Justice Stone caught a bigger fish than the President down in the Florida waters? Not only bigger than the sizeable catch of Mr. Hoover but one so big that it won the gold key awarded by the Fishing Club of the neighborhood! The news so elated one mid-west newspaper that it proposed Mrs. Stone for the Presidnecy against Mr. Hoover in 1932 - on a piscatory platform.

Another touch of the kind of thing which makes the whole world kin - like Mrs. Stone's fish - occurred in a Governmental High Place recently. Miss Paulina Longworth, whose father is the speaker of the United States Senate, was taken on her fifth birthday to the Senate Gallery - as a reward, we will suppose. And the Senate, learning who was there and what a great day it was for her, rose in salute, cheering her lustily. Not since Lindbergh visited them has such a pleasant thing happened in that stately - supposed to be stately - body.

Space

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Another and unexpected exhibit by women came in the Senate recently, when that body hopelessly at sea over the mysteries of artificial silk, called in two young women experts to instruct the members. The rules of the Senate forbid women the floor, but the gentlemen were glad enough to have them there, to help them out of their quandry.

Women are really needed when there own particular wares are under consideration - to save the Senators from making themselves ridiculous, if nothing else. I do not remember anything funnier than the sight of Henry Cabot Lodge, back in 1909, loaded up with samples, trying to explain to the Senate the difference between this and that kind of cotton cloth, mercerized stuff and others - a kind of explanation that the informed woman shopper would have been able to have given in understandable terms, in a few minutes of straight talk. If there is anything needed more than straight talk, when a tariff schedule, dealing with wools and cotton, with hosiery and gloves then I have never come across it. It is the people who wear these things and know about them, because they are the purchasers, that should be at least consulted. More women on the floors of Congress, when a tariff bill raising prices was under consideration would save this country a lot of money.

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We have a new Chief Justice of the United States - Charles Evans Hughes. Where could you put your finger on another man in the country who has had so great a variety of important experience in public matters? He has in his earlier years been one of the most efficient investigators of sinning Corporations that has been seen in our time. His investigation of the Insurance Companies in New York State, back in 1905, was a model of what such a piece of work should be. Since then he has gone through a long course of political and legal work. He has been on the Supreme Court bench - he has run for the Presidency - he has been Secretary of State. As Secretary of State he did a fine piece of work in the interests of peace, running with unparalleled efficiency the International Conference for the Limitation of Armaments, to which I referred above - the body that gave to women an official recognition, a little tenuous to be sure, but still a recognition.

Mr. Hughes started out in life as a paragon - the kind of child so bewildering to most parents. When he was five years old he presented to his astonished father and mother a document entitled, "Charles Evans Hughes - His Plan of Study." If your five year old boy or girl should place such a paper before you - what would you do - what would you feel? Startled no doubt.

But the paragons are not so uncommon in the world. If you like to read old and good books, look sometime at the diary of

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John Evelyn. And read there the story of the death in 1658 of his "deare son Richard," five years and three days old, who could read perfectly "English, Latine, French or Gothic letters" - could decline the nouns, conjugate the verbs, regular and irregular - could turn English into Latin - could write legibly - knew a prodigious number of verses well enough to recite them. The average father and mother would certainly be sobered by finding themselves in the possession of such a son.

But aren't we all wrong about the intelligence of children? Are they not really much more capable of learning and understanding than we give them credit for? I suspect that John Evelyn let his "deare son Richard" go his own way and that the boy took to this learning of his own accord, was not pressed into it, just as Charles Evans Hughes at five years made out a plan of study of his own accord. Let the child find his way, putting the implements for him to use in a convenient place and frequently he will produce results, which we call far beyond his years, but which as a matter of fact, is not that at all. They are merely the natural operation of a serious and impressionable mind allowed to follow its own.

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