

# Topics of the Day.

By Our London Correspondent.

## THE "VOTES FOR WOMEN" BILL.

LONDON, February 10.

**W**HAT is the outlook for Women's Suffrage in the coming session? The Suffragettes have their bill ready—the new Conciliation Bill—and Mr E. A. Goulding, M.P. for Worcester, has secured the second place in the ballot on behalf of their bill. But by an exercise of its autocratic power the Cabinet has appropriated to its own use all the usual private members' days up to Easter. The result is that no opportunity will be available before Easter for the second reading of the Woman Suffrage Bill, nor for the discussion of a motion asking that time shall be given during the present session for all stages of a Woman Suffrage measure. After Easter—unless the Government make a fresh onslaught on private members' days—there will be certain Fridays available for bills introduced by private members, and also certain other days for motions. Mr Goulding has given notice to take one of these Fridays, either April 28th or May 5th, for the second reading of the bill.

Several important alterations have been made in the bill since it was before the House last year. Its title will be general—"A Bill to confer the Parliamentary Franchise on Women," so that amendments may be freely moved. The inability to accept amendments ruined the bill's chances last year. The amendments which Mr Shackleton put down to the second clause last session will be incorporated this year in its text. One further change the suffragettes have decided to make. They will omit the £10 occupation qualification, leaving the household qualification only. The change is quite insignificant from the Suffragist standpoint, but it is important to the politicians. It will render impossible the manufacture of faggot votes. It will give a vote to every woman, rich or poor, who is the head of her house and the mistress of her own affairs—to every woman who is the tenant and inhabitant even of one room over which she can prove that she has full control.

The Suffragettes consider that the new House is slightly more favourable to them than the last, and they seem optimistic about their bill. "The outlook," says Mr H. N. Brailford in "Votes for Women," "has never been so bright nor the rate of progress so rapid."

## REBUILDING ENGLAND.

One of the best signs that the Old Country is not decadent, as cock-sure critics have been too ready to declare, is the growth of the town-planning movement. The increasing demand for health, beauty, spaciousness and dignity in corporate life is an indication that the nation is awakening to a sense of its possibilities. The Town Planning Conference and Exhibition opened in Chelsea this week is, indeed, a most hopeful sign of the times.

Prominent among the leaders of this great movement is the Right Hon. John Burns. His address to the conference was a most inspiring performance, full of hope for the future. He pointed out the dangers of delay in his own vivid way. "If we go on as we have been doing," he said, "in fifty years' time there will be nothing but an elongated slum from Lancaster to Rugby." The danger of this calamity will be better realised when I tell you that every fifteen years 500,000 acres of land is converted from agricultural and rural land into factories, workshops and similar buildings. It might be described as the march of Ugliness over a fair country. Town planning cannot resist the advance of industry, but it can direct its progress and beautify its aspect.

Though England is awakening late in the day—Germany and other places are years ahead in this matter—the town-planning movement is now a vigorous and healthy infant. Mr. Burns, as President of the Local Government Board, has just approved the promotion of one large scheme, and is holding public inquiries on two other schemes, involving a total area of no less than 10,000 acres. Moreover, thirty or forty urban authorities are considering the promotion of town-planning schemes. Even the Back Country, which Ugliness has hitherto,

claimed for its own, shows signs of wanting to use the Town Planning Act. Birmingham, the unluckily has also received sanction for a scheme to house 180,000 people in 2,000 acres of garden city. Ruislip and Northwood, to the North of London, are setting aside 6,000 acres for a like purpose.

In London itself we have evidence of the town-planning spirit in the proposal to move Charing Cross station to the south side of the river, and build in its place a grand approach to Trafalgar Square, and a new bridge over the Thames. Greater still is the scheme recommended to-day by the London Traffic branch of the Board of Trade to spend £20,000,000 in constructing 100 miles of new roads into and through London, to cope with the enormous growth of the traffic. "Every million spent at the present time would be a good investment," they declare.

The main feature of this London scheme is the creation of four great avenues, each 100 ft. wide, viz.,

Eastern Avenue, 13 miles, from Hackney to Romford.  
Western Avenue, 13 miles, from Paddington via Hanwell to Uxbridge.

"You know," he continued, "it was some half-dozen deaths in Suffolk that wakened us up to the danger. Yet, in the 10 years, 1898 to 1907, the plague killed upwards of five million persons in our Indian dependency."

Sir James laid all this to the discredit of the rat, and declared that the plague pest which the rodent is the means of disseminating could be identified as certainly and as thoroughly as a human criminal by his finger-prints.

"I plead," he said, "for the entire extermination of the rat. Some say he may be a blessing in disguise, and that it may be dangerous to interfere with or disturb the balance of nature. But I know of no useful work of any kind that the rat does. He is a dangerous criminal. Show him no mercy! Exterminate him as fast as possible!"

Besides disseminating typhoid fever, diphtheria, and other maladies, he is a wholesale depredator, causing loss to all classes of the community."

The famous physician then proceeded to give a few particulars of ascertained losses to poultry farmers, millers, scap-makers, leather merchants, and others through rat brigandage, and wound up by declaring that he considered that the calculations made that rats did £15,000,000 worth of damage every year in the United Kingdom well within the mark. That estimate was based upon the assumption that there was only one rat for every acre, and that for maintenance and damage each rat repre-

on the fortunes of the Unionist party. "It has been the chief factor in every Radical success since tariff reform has been the political issue." Its effectiveness has been unmistakable and universal. Everywhere it has filled the minds of the poor. "It has exacerbated English politics enormously, has set the classes in opposition to one another, has embittered all the old hostilities of master and man, of landowner and cottager, of farmer and labourer, of church and chapel, and has infuriated the womenkind of the working classes to a degree unremembered in political history. It has caused stones to be thrown, insults and execrations to be flung, violence of deed and word to be employed as they have not been since the fierce old days of the fight for popular liberties."

This election expert declares that the food-tax question has been responsible for most of the bitterness shown in the large towns over the House of Lords controversy. "The Lords want to tax our food; down with the House of Lords," has been the cry. The supremacy of the navy, he says, would hardly be in debate if it were not that the people are told their food is to be taxed to pay for it. In almost every poor working-class household there has been one politician whose attention no argument could turn from the consideration of the cost of the loaf—the wife and mother. Women have been an immense factor in resisting the taxation of food.

All this from a tariff reform paper is remarkably frank confession. Naturally, the freetraders welcome it with delight. The more protectionist journals do not follow the lead of the "Mail," but it is plain that disension is rending the ranks of the tariff reform party, and they are beginning to speak with many voices, mostly agitated. The result of the proposed reciprocity agreement upon the party has been confusion and dismay.

## "GRENFELL OF LABRADOR."

Sir Ernest Shackleton took the chair at a very interesting lecture given at Queen's Hall this week by "Grenfell of Labrador." Dr. Grenfell, C.M.G., is the medical missionary who looks after the welfare of the 30,000 deep-sea fishermen and the 4000 inhabitants of desolate Labrador. For twenty years he has been to them preacher, teacher, physician, surgeon, magistrate, policeman, navigator, pilot, charity commissioner, orphan's guardian, grand almoner for the whole seaboard, wreck investigator, cartographer, rescuer of imperilled seamen, and salvager of stranded craft. He has been, in fact, to quote the words of a critical observer of his works and days, "a perambulating Providence to every man whose livelihood is secured on that lonely desolate seaboard."

It will be inferred from this summary of his activities that Dr. Grenfell is a remarkable man, and so indeed he is. "Give a man a block of stone," said Ruskin, "and let him carve his whole soul into it." That is what Grenfell has done with Labrador. To-day, thanks chiefly to him, there are four hospitals along the coast, and a hospital ship which is also a floating church and a sea-going court-house. He has equipped his hospitals with wireless telegraphy, so that he can always be in touch with the work when cruising along the coast. At his own risk he has started co-operative stores in order to lessen the cost of living in that poverty-stricken region, thus providing a remedy against the extortionate demands of the private traders in food and clothing. Against liquor, the curse of the coast, he has waged unrelenting warfare, and thanks to his efforts there is to-day no place in Labrador where liquor can be sold lawfully, and the grog-shop has been virtually abolished. By encouraging the visits of American tourists, he has added considerably to the income of the residents. He has solved the transportation problem by introducing a herd of 300 Lapland reindeer which are intended to take the place of the dogs—the only beasts of burden in the Peninsula. Dr. Grenfell says there is room for at least three million reindeer, and that they would create for the natives several branches of industry.

Dr. Grenfell's theology is summed up in his own saying that "God seeks, nay needs, our co-operation and our help in the deadly struggle with the forces of evil." For the rest, he is much in love with his many-sided life of innumerable hardships, and the fascination of the wilderness holds him as it holds so many of the Labrador fishermen, who invariably return to their huts in this or that "hole in the wall" (a granite sea-wall 1500 miles in length facing Newfoundland land), after working for big wages in Canada or the United States.



THE SIRENS OF THE SKY.

Chertsey-road, 10 miles, from Knightsbridge to Chertsey.

North Circular Road, 18½ miles, from Brentford, via Hendon and Hornsey, to Tottenham.

To maintain and light the new roads would add to the rates a sum of £70,000 a year, but against this must be set the millions lost every year by traffic delays. Large as the expense must be, the cost of inaction is also very heavy. Besides, the work will have to be done sooner or later, and the experts say that if the scheme is put off for eight years the cost will probably be doubled.

## DEATH TO THE RAT.

The first real step in the oft-proposed campaign of extermination against the harmful and unnecessary rat in the Old Country was taken in the Council Chamber of the Guildhall yesterday.

There, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor, was gathered a council of death. There were scientists, health experts, doctors, farmers, millers, silk merchants, furriers, and all manner of business men, and they all clamoured for the blood of every rat in the land. Not a single voice was raised in the rodent's favour. All condemned him for a rapacious brigand, and an alien undesirable of the worst type; said he cost the country fifteen million pounds per annum, and declared him to be the most prolific purveyor of disease.

Chief counsel for the prosecution was Sir James Crichton Browne, whose terrible indictment of the rat contained many counts, which he enumerated one by one. "So long as there is a rat among us there is sure to be incalculable damage to property and grave risk to health," he said, by way of introduction.

sented only one farthing per day. This seems a very modest estimate, seeing that in one week rats in a silk merchant's warehouse did damage to the extent of £80, and that a furrier present at the meeting declared that he thought himself lucky to escape at £1 a week, for damage done by rats to skins, whilst the manager of a soap factory put down his firm's loss through rats at £500 a year, and a millowner reckoned his sack damage alone at over £100 a year.

After hearing the evidence against the rat, the Court unanimously pronounced sentence of death, and decided to make urgent representations to the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to find out the best way to get rid of all the rats in the country. It was also decided to make a public appeal for friends to carry on a national war of extermination against rats.

## FOOD TAXES OVERBOARD.

"It is not too much to say, therefore, that the so-called 'bread tax' is extinguished definitely and finally." —Daily Mail.

The "Daily Mail" is at the head of a stampede of tariff reformers on the question of Imperial preference. That journal sees in the proposed American-Canadian reciprocity agreement the death-blow to Imperial preference, of which Canada, with its wheat supplies, was the cornerstone. With dramatic suddenness the "Mail" has thrown overboard the proposal to tax food supplies, and it now makes no secret of its relief at getting rid of this unpopular doctrine.

The "election correspondent" of the "Daily Mail" analyses in an interesting article the effect of the "dear loaf" cry,