

# The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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## WHITHER?

### THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK.

By Jessie MacKay.

(Written for the Canterbury Provincial  
Convention.)

The international outlook to-day. Who can write of a thing so vast, so sinister, so Protean in its lightning changes? Nowhere is there trust, cohesion, or peace, if not in the long-tried, long-sorrowing, long-striving mother-heart of the world's women. It is our duty to watch this lurid panorama, and try to understand the times in which we live. Ignorance is ever the greatest danger, and every informed thinker, thinking wisely and righteously, is a builder.

Instinctively the mind turns to a Continental picture painted during the war,—the picture of a flying female figure, driven by fears and perils, a distracted fugitive, without rest or goal. Is this war-symbol not equally descriptive of the kind of "peace" in which humanity finds itself to-day? Is this wild-eyed fugitive, however, the true woman soul, disillusioned and despairing, in the bankruptcy of civilisation and the triumph of anarchy? We who wear the world-wide badge of the White Ribbon cannot despair of God's increasing purpose throughout the ages, however assailed by evil men. We know this up-boiling of long pent fury, defying treaty and reason, and threatening a second titanic struggle, is but the retribution for the sins of the nations, a terrible vindication of long-flouted Divine Law. The newer good will come

out of this, as out of past upheavals, and recompense the peoples fit to embrace the new age.

But how will this newer good affect the institutions and supremacies we thought most paramount? Who can tell? I can but indicate tentatively a few points and possibilities in the present situation.

Most people feel that women's activities, so obvious before and during the war, have almost ceased. That is not true. Those who are wise enough to read women's papers know what constructive work feminists are still doing. But the men are making such a noise we cannot hear them. Also, so much was won during the war that many of the old slogans are no more heard. But a glance at the great international meetings of the time shows what forces are being brought to bear on vital world-problems. Inter-Imperial betterment received a strong impulse at the third Conference of the British Dominions Women's Citizenship Union in London in 1918. In 1919 the International Woman Workers met at Washington during the first Conference of the International Labour Organisation created in connection with the League of Nations. Last June the International Women's Suffrage Alliance held its eighth Conference at Geneva. Wherever these meetings are held every sign of official and national respect is shown, in token of the tangible results achieved through the deliberations of the finest female thinkers of our time. At Geneva, Miss Maude Royden, late assistant pastor of the City Temple, London, preached in Calvin's pulpit. The same high honours always attend

the meetings of the International Council of Women, delegates from affiliated National Councils. This very September the Council holds its fifth quinquennial Conference, in Parliament House, Christiania, Norway. When we remember that Allies and late enemies meet at these Congresses, their reconciling influence is seen to add peculiar force to their practical bearing on women's industrial, social, and political standing, on Child Welfare, Education, Hygiene, and all allied problems before humanity to-day. Already the accepted findings in favour of young women and child workers under the League of Nations Bureau stand to become law, as sanctioned by individual Governments. The organisation behind the National Councils has translated the resolutions of the International body into a mass of helpful achievement in the past, and women's organisation has hardened up everywhere during the last six years.

Here let the amazing victories of suffrage since 1914 be recorded. Nineteen countries, together with the Zionist community in Palestine, have given their women eligibility and the vote. The two vast confederations of Canada and the United States have also conferred the same rights by Federal Amendment—that is, Canada has not yet ratified State by State, but is certain to do so, while as I write the triumph of American ratification is at last declared. This means that the women of the North and Centre of Europe, including the new Baltic Republics and Czecho-Slovakia, start their new national life as the political equals of their men; while in the backward Bal-