

T. S. ORDER OF SERVICE

I. T. S. ORDER OF SERVICE

THE inspiration for the Order of Service was derived from an article written by one of the Masters, and printed by H. P. B. in an early number of *Lucifer*, the key-note of which is given in the following quotations. "The problem of true Theosophy and its great mission are: first the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethics, ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in man; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness." "Theosophy must be made practical."

To help to carry out the second part of Theosophy's great mission, the Order of Service was founded in February, 1908, by Mrs. Besant, to organise a number of members for various lines of practical service, and to permeate the outside world with the Theosophical ideals underlying the different departments of work. The double aim is clearly shown in the first tentative constitution of the Order, which provided for a Central Council and National Councils composed of F. T. S. only, and Provincial and Local Councils with two-thirds of their members F. T. S. and one-third non-members, if so desired.

The first Leagues of the Order were formed in India for such objects as Social Brotherhood, National Education, and the Abolition of Child Parentage, but in 1919 many of these had become dormant, as the members had joined other societies working for the same object, and the chief activities of the Order were for some time thereafter found in England, Australia and America. In these early years a large number of Leagues were formed which touched almost every kind of social and humanitarian work then in existence. To mention only a few, in Australia we find Leagues for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, extension of the Co-operative Movements, and hospital visiting. In America, as might be expected, work for Prison Reform played an important part, and in England such objects as Child Welfare, work among the Blind, Social Brotherhood, Anti-Vivisection, Healing, and opposition to the White Slave Traffic, were keenly supported. Two Organising Secretaries were appointed in England, Dr. Louise Appel and Miss Elizabeth Severs, and as a result of their hard work 1912 saw the Order firmly established, and a National Federation formed, with Mr. Herbert Whyte as Organising Secretary.

During the time of the Great War, the Order, in common with many other departments of Theosophical work, suffered from the loss by death of some workers, and from the energies of many being diverted into other channels. But in 1919 a much greater activity was noticeable. Several dormant Leagues now showed signs of awakening, and the following year under the energetic guidance of Mr. Arthur Burgess as Secretary the Order of Service in England took on a new lease of life and a much more international character. An International Correspondence League was started, with Mr. E. Campbell, Sydney, as Secretary, who was succeeded by Miss Esther Nicolau of Spain. Its object was to enable Lodges or F. T. S. all over the world to obtain more intimate news of each others activities than was provided by the sectional magazines, and it also undertook to provide visitors to various countries with reliable information regarding hospitality and facilities for study. The magazine *Service*, hitherto the organ of the League, now became the official organ of the Order.

In 1921 a great impetus was given by the first meeting of the European Federation being held in Paris during the World Congress, when applications were made to form new Sections in seven European countries (Belgium, Spain, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Holland). A new development in England was the appointment of a publicity committee, which arranged for propaganda lectures and issued pamphlets on such subjects as the work of the Order, Anti-Vivisection, and Healing. The following year saw the establishment of the Russian Relief Department, which kept alive hundreds of starving F. T. S. by regular gifts of money and food. Another new department was the Information Bureau to provide information on humanitarian and social subjects.

Every kind of Animal Welfare work has always had the whole-hearted support of the Order, which has done much to awaken public opinion in the matter. Another prominent feature has been work among the blind, and the knowledge of Theosophy has been brought to hundreds of blind people by the publication of Theosophical pamphlets and books in Braille and the Braille monthly magazine *The Light Bearer*; while social entertainments of various kinds have brightened lives that are often dull and grey. In 1923 Dame Ellen Terry became President of the Braille and Servers of the Blind League, and a home bearing her name has since been opened for defective blind children at Reigate in Surrey.

As well as working on social lines the Order of Service renders great service in the co-ordination and development of international Art. The International Fellowship in Arts and Crafts, founded in England in 1920, was accepted as a League of the Order in 1922, and in 1923, when Mr. Jinarājadāsa became President, it was decided to extend the activities of the League in every country where there was a Branch of the Order, so that there might be a link between artists in sympathy with its ideals in many countries. The Fellowship has members in most European countries, in Australia and in India, and its chief features are an International Exchange Library, an Entertainments Section, and original work in connection with the drama and music, including experiments in the psychic effects of music.

II. WOMEN'S INDIAN ASSOCIATION

The Women's Indian Association was started by Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajadasa at Adyar, Madras, with Dr. Annie Besant as President, on May 8th, 1917, for the purpose of advancing the interests and furthering the progress of women in India. Its Objects were :



Fig. 216

Mrs. D. JINARAJADASA

Mrs. MARGARET E. COUSINS

To present to Women their responsibility as daughters of India.

To help them to realise that the future of India lies largely in their hands : for as wives and mothers they have the task of training and guiding and forming the character of the future rulers of India.

To band Women into groups for the purpose of self-development, education, and for the definite service of others.

That the moment was ripe for the foundation of such an organisation was evident from the fact that within the first year of its existence 33 Branches were formed in as many towns. The women of India had been touched by the spirit of new life which has awakened women all over the world, and they were glad to co-operate with an organised scheme which gave them the opportunity to meet together in their free afternoon hours for mutual helpfulness, recreation, and study on various special lines, including social reform, child welfare, religion

and politics, and for continuing their education ; for most girls, owing to the custom of child marriage at the age of twelve or thirteen, cease their studies and remain at home.

At first the Association worked entirely on lines of educational development ; and early in 1918 a magazine was started which was published periodically, in English, Tamil and Telugu, called *Stri Dharma*. Then very soon it was realised that in working for the progress of women all lines must be included, and that freedom and equality, political as well as social, must be striven after. India at this time was in the midst of the fight for Home Rule, and the thinking women in the country realised that there could be no real freedom for India while her women suffered from any inferiority of status in any department

of life. So the two following Objects were added to the aims of the Association :

To secure for Women the vote for Municipal and Legislative Councils as it is or may be granted to men.

To secure for Women the right to be elected as members on all Municipal and Legislative Councils.

Since then the scope of the work has grown and expanded with very great rapidity. There has been much activity in the propaganda for gaining the vote. The Association being the only suffrage society in India, it has been the centre in almost every Province, for the organisations of meetings, deputations, educational campaigns, and for awakening the women to a sense of their national responsibilities. The fruits of this labour is shown in the fact that to-day in 1925 there is equality of franchise in the six most important Provinces of India, for women and men, and in a number of Indian States, and efforts are continually being made to get the sex barrier removed for women to be elected as members of the various Legislative Councils, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State.

Several Branches affiliated to the National Convention, which supported the Commonwealth of India Bill, and in many ways have worked for Home Rule for India. In Municipal activities also the Association has worked not only to get the franchise, but to have women representatives in the Councils, and now over thirty women are serving as Councillors, most of whom are members of the Women's Indian Association, as are also most of the Women Magistrates.

The organisation has also associated itself very earnestly with the great movements for social reform, such as, raising the age for the marriage for girls; raising the age of consent, for married and unmarried girls; reform in laws and customs relating to property and inheritance for Hindu women; higher education for girls as well as boys; improvement in the conditions of working and factory women, such as Maternity Benefits for factory workers, improved conditions in mines for women, and the abolition of Child Labour.

In 1923 the Women's Home of Service, Madras, was started by the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Cousins, to provide opportunities through which women can be taught various vocational arts, such as weaving rattan, embroidery, etc. After a two years' course of training in the Home, the resident girls are to go out and earn their own living. There is also at the Home a class for teaching poor girls lace making, needlework, etc., attended daily by an average number of about 50 girls and women. The members of the Women's Indian Association have also actively taken up Child Welfare work, and Baby Welcome Centres have been opened by the Association, three in Madras and the neighbourhood, and in the Mofussal the members have in various places started, or are helping in, this work. Each centre is in charge of a qualified nurse, and thousands of Mothers before and after childbirth, and children, are cared for, and treated for ordinary ailments, in the Centres.

Such is a brief outline of the work that has been done by the Women's Indian Association in the eight years of its existence. It has shown that women in India can accomplish useful and efficient service through organisation. There are now sixty-one Branches and twenty Centres in all parts of India, and over three thousand members. The journal, *Stri Dharma*, was made a monthly magazine four years ago. Practically all the Branches of the Association are in the entire charge of Hindu or Parsi women, and all Branches are self-governing, doing the kind of work most suited to the needs of the members.

The Association is affiliated to various International Women's organizations, thus linking up the women in India with their sisters all over the world.