

English Servant Girl Would Emulate Lady Astor

Jessie Stephens Has Announced Her Candidacy for a Seat in the House of Commons

By Ralph Courtney

London.

"NOW I'm all out for politics, and I'm hoping for a seat at Westminster before very long on the labor vote."

Thus the British servant girl politician Jessie Stephens announces her plans for the future. Four short years brought Jessie from the obscurity of the back parlor into the limelight of world politics. Now, she moves among the great ones of the earth. Lloyd George has winced under her stinging words at labor meetings, and the great Albert Hall, holding ten thousand persons has been filled by popular demonstrations in which Miss Stephens played the leading part.

A tall, slight girl, her face alive with intelligence and framed with thick dark hair, Miss Jessie Stephens is a personality not easily forgotten. When she speaks her deep voice, her earnest manner lighted by flashes of humor, make it a pleasure to listen to what she has to say.

Twelve years ago Jessie Stephens entered upon her domestic career at the age of fifteen.

"Father was out of work," she says, "and the wages I could earn in service were needed to keep the home together."

For seven years she worked as a servant. She began in the kitchen and passed through all the stages of domestic employment. She was "house parlormaid," then "general," then "cook general," and, finally graduated into "odd staff maid" in hotels.

When the war broke out she began to think of new possibilities. She became for a time a porter in a chemical warehouse and drove a three-ton lorry in Glasgow, her native city.

During most of this time she was endeavoring to organize her fellow workers. The idea occurred to her early in her career that a trade union was necessary for the protection of domestic servants. Conditions were not the same before the war as now, and domestic servants were not the independent individuals they are to-day.

Knows by Experience

Miss Stephens, herself, suffered no less than others.

"The first bedroom in which I slept in service," she says, "had a tar-macadam floor like the pavement, paper peeling off from damp, paint going mouldy, and hardly any light.

"In another place the bed was in a cupboard off the kitchen where there was no ventilation and no room for anything but the bed.

"I had a friend in the house of a tuberculosis specialist. He had four maids who all slept in one room downstairs, under the level of the pavement. The room was also infested with rats."

Miss Stephens's departure from her profession, however, was not entirely voluntary. Domestic service finally became too hot for her. Her employers got wind of her activities and at first treated them with amused leniency until they discovered that the young woman

really meant business, and then they discharged her. But she had meanwhile come in contact with the Domestic Servants' Trade Union, and, after the war, she entered it as a full fledged "professional agitator." She is now their organizing secretary, in addition to which she is the local organizing secretary of the National Federation of Women Workers in Bermondsey. So successful was she in her reform work in Bermondsey that she was made a poor law guardian last April. Last month her popularity carried her into the Borough Council where she was elected third on a list of six. Now that her political career is turning so favorably there is every likelihood that she will climb to Parliament at the next opportunity.

Is Getting Ready

"When I have had some more administrative experience on the Borough Council," she tells her friends, "I shall be ready for Westminster."

Asked her views on the servant question, Miss Stephens said:

"I consider that the condition of domestic service in England needs to be altered. Putting aside those which prevail in exceptional situations, the hours are too long and not enough free time is allowed. Many girls may not crave for time to study, but they do desire free time to enable them to have some life outside their work. It is right that they should have it, and wise from the employer's point of view that they should.

"I have met mistresses who encouraged their maids to read, draw, paint, learn some musical instrument; who regarded the girl first as a human being and secondly as a servant. But there are many who, often unconsciously, can see nothing in the servant but a servant—a kind of flesh and blood vacuum cleaner. Often mistresses are merely thoughtless, not intentionally unkind, but the result is the same.

Train the Mistress, Too

"I feel very deeply that the domestic worker should be trained for her profession and that the employer should also be trained for hers.

"A girl marries; she is young and has led the sheltered life of a well-to-do young woman. She has no real knowledge of life; she does not know



age. I was nearly sixteen myself when I went to service, but I was very lonely."

Miss Stephens looks forward to the time when she will have secured state aid for schools to train young girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.

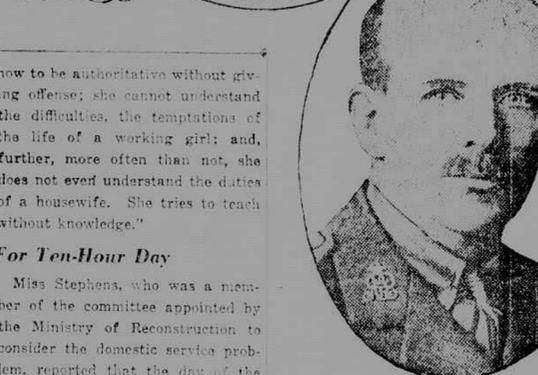
Would Train Girls

"If a girl leaves school at fourteen, she is too young to go into service. She is taken away from her mother's care just when she needs it most. Such a girl, if trained for two years, would at sixteen enter service stronger mentally and physically, and with a good working knowledge of the duties she will be expected to perform. Under present conditions working parents cannot afford to keep their girls so long financially unproductive. Such

nation, and later on when that servant married her training would be invaluable to her as housewife and mother. I consider, too, that during the training period unsuitable girls, whose conduct appears likely to bring discredit on the profession, should be refused further instruction, and thereby the status of the service would be improved."

Miss Stephens is full of ideas which she is now on the way to accomplish. As a specialist on one of the most baffling national problems she has already gone far toward fame, and when from further contact with political life her outlook broadens, she may develop into one of the political forces of the country. If her meteoric career continues as fast as it has begun she will not have to wait long for wide recognition and may develop into

Left, Miss Jessie Stephens, the English servant who has announced her candidacy for the House of Commons; below, Viscountess Rhondda, who has been denied admission to the House of Lords, and her husband, Sir Humphrey Mackworth



how to be authoritative without giving offense; she cannot understand the difficulties, the temptations of the life of a working girl; and, further, more often than not, she does not even understand the duties of a housewife. She tries to teach without knowledge."

For Ten-Hour Day

Miss Stephens, who was a member of the committee appointed by the Ministry of Reconstruction to consider the domestic service problem, reported that the day of the domestic should consist of ten hours' work and two hours for meals. She should also have two hours for recreation, and during those two hours she should be really free. She believes, nevertheless, that domestic employment cannot be organized in the same way as industrial work. There cannot be hard and fast rules, although there must be "a definite groundwork on which employer and employee can build."

She is in favor of a fixed scale of minimum wages regulated according to the length of training and skill of the worker; she also considers that there should be some central organization with branch organizations for the benefit of the domestic worker, and that these institutions

would also prove a benefit to the employers.

"At the root of the servant problem," explains Miss Stephens, "there lies a distorted idea in the minds of the employer as to the value of various services to the community. If it were true that we prized our homes so highly, we should not feel that untrained and ill-paid women were fit to work in them."

One of the servant reforms that Miss Stephens is agitating most strongly is a rule that girls are not to go out to work before sixteen years of age. She says:

"However good a mistress is, a girl needs her mother before that



training would in the end prove a national economy. The work of a good servant is of value to the

first lady minister if a labor government comes into power in England.

THE BIRD OF PASSAGE—A French War Story

Translated by William L. McPherson

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Here is a war story written with distinction of style and a fine imaginative restraint.

WHEN the ocean rages against the cliffs the great bird of the sea appears. The spread of his wings seems doubled in the teeth of the hurricane which sustains them. All admire this vanquisher of the tempest, this herald of the sailors. So these honest people admired Lieutenant Lebrun, a Legionary who had retired from the Legion to become commander of the 1st Company of the 10th Infantry Regiment. That was the company in which the son of the family fought.

Lebrun had no relatives and on each leave he came to see his little Breton soldier's father, mother and sister. With a smile on his bronzed face he said to them:

"Don't worry. I have been through many dangers. Twenty-five years of service, six campaigns, four wounds—but am I not still here?"

He tapped his chest, on which his many medals were strung, and Marie, the peasant girl, who wept each night when she thought of the war, opened wide her little Breton eyes. She poured out cider so that the hero would go on talking. So long as he talked she had no fears for her brother.

"I will bring him back to you. On the faith of Lebrun, he will march under the Arc de Triomphe."

But the little brother didn't march under the Arc de Triomphe. His first wound was fatal. "Don't cry, little girl. When he

was about to die he said to me: 'Lieutenant, you must care for my little sister, who is waiting for me down there. I loved him like a child. And I love you, mademoiselle.'

The armistice was signed. The battles were ended. The great sea bird had folded his wings.

"Monsieur Lebrun—"

"Don't call me Lebrun. At Biskra my legionaries said: 'Old Philibert is in a good humor to-day. Don't you want me to be in a good humor to-day?' In six months I shall have my pension. With my cross that is something to go on. And I don't talk at work."

They were on the beach, and Marie held on with both hands to her cap, buffeted by the wind.

"Little maiden, say yes. Your mamma and papa treat me like a son and your grandmamma spoils me. They will be happy if you put that little hand in this big paw of mine."

She couldn't put her little hand in his big paw because she was holding on to her cap.

"I don't say no. You must ask them this evening, Monsieur Lebrun."

fulnes of the little houses grouped in the shadow of the rocks.

"End up here!" he said to himself. "It is high time, my good fellow! You have saved your skin so far. Make sure of the rest of your days!"

He smoothed out his coat, straightened his cap and twisted his moustache. Correct, impeccable, he entered the hall where the grandmother, the mother and the father awaited him.

"Here I am, Lebrun, lieutenant, twenty-five years in the service, twenty years in the Legion, six campaigns, four wounds; the military medal in 1912, the Legion of Honor in 1917, the Croix de Guerre, with seven palms and three stars. Such as I am, I ask you for the hand of your daughter."

But the grandmother, the mother and the father all shrugged their shoulders.

"Does that mean that you say no? The boy died in my arms, remember."

There was a heavy silence. "You can ask my chiefs. If I am sometimes stubborn and wilful, my heart is there. It is a good heart. Do you want to see my papers? Not a single punishment for which a brave man should blush. You have nothing to say? Listen, papa. I haven't had a happy life. I haven't saved up thousands or hundreds. But you can search my record. There is but one word written in

the pages of that book: 'Duty.' Doesn't that satisfy you?"

"I don't say no," murmured the old man.

"But you don't say yes. Listen, grandmamma. I have traveled the world. Wherever there was fighting I was there. When the little girl will be left alone I shall be here."

"I don't say no," the mother answered.

"But you don't say yes. Listen, grandmamma. I wasn't born when your husband went away to fight. But since 1870, while you were talking against the Germans, I was working for the country. Isn't that worth considering?"

"I don't say no," murmured the old woman.

"But you don't say yes."

Thumping on his chest, he continued:

"You don't care to have me settle down with you! That worries you. It's true that I haven't a cent."

"It isn't that," said the grandmother.

"I understand that I am a good-for-nothing—that I am only fit to die."

"We don't say that," murmured the mother. "We are afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Here one must take things as they are."

"Take things as they are? I'm not accustomed to that."

here every day. You haven't the habit of working."

Lebrun bent his head.

"So, it's no? But I have on my side her brother, who trusted her to me."

The old man stiffened up.

"You mustn't speak of the dead. What one says at moments like that and what he really thinks are two different things. You aren't of our sort, lieutenant. You would be bored here—you who have spent your life in Africa. And the little one would be unhappy."

"It is true that she likes you," said the grandmother. "But she is afraid—she, too."

"I don't say no," murmured the old woman.

Lebrun seized the back of his chair. Was he going to smash it? He put it down again. Then, sitting on it, with his elbows on his knees, he exclaimed:

"It's hard on me."

The old people looked at him furtively, almost tenderly. They remembered that their boy had died in his arms.

"That's why we don't like war," said the old man.

"I have made it all my life," growled Lebrun. "I shall continue to make it. There are still countries where they are fighting."

"People oughtn't to be made un-

In the Mean Time, Viscountess Rhondda Is Hammering at the Door of the House of Lords

London.

VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, a peeress in her own right, has been prevented by her fellow barons from sitting with them in the British House of Lords. She is entitled to do so under every heading except for the fact that she is a woman. Smarting under her rejection, she is determined to have her revenge. When the Lords refused to admit her among their number she declared to The Tribune correspondent:

"I now regard it as my mission in life to get into the House of Lords."

The Lords took their decision to keep their august assembly petti-coatless on the eve of Lady Astor's election to the House of Commons. Those in the know were already predicting a 5,000 majority for Lady Astor. The Lords refused to take this lead, and now it is to be a fight to a finish between them and Lady Rhondda.

The British House of Commons is less conservative on the woman question. A bill dealing with the disability of women was passed through their body with comparative ease. Many positions in the legal profession and the civil service were thereby thrown open to women, and a clause was inserted enabling a woman to sit in the upper house.

Venerable peers held up their hands in horror at such a revolutionary prospect and took immediate action when the bill came to them in due course.

"Women may hold any posts they like," said the Lords, in substance, "so long as they do not invade our sanctum."

So the Lords assented to the whole of the bill with the exception of the one offending clause. Viscountess Rhondda thus lost the first round of her fight for a position in the most deeply entrenched stronghold of British conservatism.

But they are not likely to succeed in keeping women out for long. England's super-woman seldom threatens what she cannot perform. But she will have an uphill struggle. Little help will come from the Commons at present, for they have decided not to fight the Lords on the question of the rejected provision. Their excuse was that the long projected "reform" of the House of Lords might materialize at any time now and that the question could wait until then.

Lady Rhondda places little faith in the "Lords' reform" and is resigned to fighting her own battle.

"About ten years ago," she told The Tribune, "during the great controversy between the two Houses when the powers of the Lords were curtailed, there was a strong feeling that the upper house could not continue as constituted at present. I have the impression, however, that this question is no longer the burning one that it was and that

the proposed reforms may take some time. I do not propose to wait so long if I can help it.

"I have been convinced by bitter experience that it is imperative to have ladies in the House of Lords. The woman's point of view must be put by a woman. Nothing short of this can be satisfactory. It is all very well to say that men can deal equally well with questions affecting women. They can't. The present methods of getting anything done in Parliament for women are slow and cumbersome.

The Present Process

"For instance, if I want to bring before Parliament a question in which women are interested I have, first of all, to find a peer or member who is sufficiently amiable to undertake to do it. This takes time. Then the next five weeks or more are taken up in coaching him on a question in which perhaps he is not specially interested. Even so, during the whole period of the debates you are in a continual state of anxiety for fear the whole question may be prejudiced through some slip due to lack of knowledge. With women in the national legislature all this trouble can be avoided."

Asked for her opinion concerning Lady Astor's election, Lady Rhondda said:

"She will be a great help. I am delighted to see her in. No one would have been more welcome to the Commons than she; she is a great favorite with every one."

Not far from the House of Lords, which she has vowed to enter, Lady Rhondda has her suite of offices. She has chosen the top floor of a building overlooking one of London's busiest thoroughfares, and her own room, more like a studio than an office, possessing top light as well as windows on several sides, probably is the lightest office in London. Dressed in a simple black office dress, Lady Rhondda sits in the far corner of her large room before a desk of modest dimensions while a large open fire burns in the grate. From here she directs the many pies into which she has been invited to place her finger. She has just completed arrangements to enter the board of directors of "Lysaghts," one of Britain's century-old iron companies.

Asked whether many other English women were following her example and taking to finance in a large way, Lady Rhondda said:

"Yes, there are a great many. You don't hear much of them, but I can assure you that a number of women have entered upon very large undertakings."

Lady Rhondda says she has returned from America with many pleasant recollections. She declined to state her views on the Senate's rejection of the peace treaty, but believes that the league of nations is the greatest ideal of the present day.

"It is probably the greatest ideal that this generation will see."

While in America Lady Rhondda studied the labor question there and came away with the opinion that on the whole, the labor troubles were greater in America than in England. "But we take ours more seriously, I think, than you do yours," she commented. "In my opinion, broadly speaking, the remedy for all labor as well as of all international differences lies in the two sides becoming better acquainted."

Reverting to politics, Lady Rhondda declared in answer to a further question that if offered the opportunity of contesting a seat in the House of Commons at the next general election, she would probably refuse.

"I prefer to stick to my mission of entering the House of Lords."

happy," muttered the grandmother. "It's better to keep apart when you aren't of the same sort."

"All the same, we'll drink a glass of cider," said the old man.

"All the same, certainly," answered Lebrun.

When they were grouped around the table Marie entered, bringing the cider pitcher.

"Mademoiselle Marie, I'm going away. I'm going to take service in Russia."

She turned pale.

"It isn't my fault."

"To your health, Mademoiselle Marie. Your parents are right. Every one must go his own way. To your happiness, Mademoiselle Marie."

She left the room. The door slammed. The wind roared about the house.

"May God keep you!" said Lebrun.

He departed, struggling against the gale. As he reached the beach Marie joined him.

"I ask your pardon."

He drew her toward him.

"Come along with me."

"I dare not."

"In spite of all," he said, "my life is beautiful."

She cried out, "Let me go," and fled.

He shrugged his shoulders. Again he faced the tempest. But suddenly the little village appeared humdrum to him. He smelt the battle afar. So he went toward his room, whistling, as was his wont

Animals Pretending

IN MILITARY stables horses are known to have pretended to be lame in order to avoid going to a military exercise. A chimpanzee had been fed on cake when sick. After his recovery he often feigned coughing in order to procure dainties.

The cuckoo, as is well known, lays its eggs in another bird's nest, and, to make the deception surer, it takes away one of the other bird's eggs. Animals are conscious of their deceit, as is shown by the fact that they try to act secretly and noiselessly; they show a sense of guilt if detected; they take precautions in advance to avoid discovery; in some cases they manifest regret and repentance. Thus, bees which steal hesitate often before and after their exploits, as if they feared punishment.