

# PRESERVATION OF AMENITIES

## THE SAVING OF THE LONDON SQUARES

By MARIAN BERRY.

Among the Bills that received the Royal Assent at the end of July was one for the preservation of the London squares—a measure that had the support of all political parties and which will be an immense gain to the health and well-being of Londoners. This measure, which was promoted by the London County Council, was the result of the Report of the Royal Commission on the London Squares, which was appointed by the Government at the Council's request four years previously.

The London squares date from the 17th century, when the Earl of St. Albans obtained a lease from the King of the land which is now covered by St. James's Square for the purpose of building houses "fit for the dwellings of noble men and other persons of quality." Leicester Square was another of the early squares and the first to be preserved to the community. By the end of the 17th century several other residential squares had been planned and finished: these included Charterhouse, Golden, and Kensington Squares. The fifty years between 1700 and 1750 were the most productive period of square planning, and included the laying out of Bloomsbury and Mayfair. The former area is a fine example of town planning and was followed by other builders as London spread further west. In Paddington there are about forty squares and in the whole of London there are 461. These spaces act as lungs for the huge population. They have always had a special attraction for Americans, who say: "There are nothing like the squares of London."

It is largely due to the efforts of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association that the squares have been saved for the community, as it was owing to that organisation's request that the London County Council asked the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to obtain evidence from the owners. Although some of the squares mentioned in the Bill are not included in the new Act, it is an immense gain to know that as the leases of the surrounding houses fall in, these central enclosures will be immune for building purposes.

Former Bills—promoted by the London County Council—have been before Parliament. The first was introduced into the House of Lords in 1905, but was

rejected without a Second Reading as it did not provide for compensation for the owners. Only 139 squares were scheduled for preservation in the 1905 Bill. In the following year the London Squares and Enclosures (Preservation) Bill passed into law, and this secured immunity from building for sixty-four squares, but the freeholds of thirty-eight were already controlled by local authorities.

The first legislation dealing with the London squares was adopted in 1726, and provided that the enclosures should be maintained by trustees, who were authorised to levy a rate on the householders living in the squares to cover the cost. This step was taken because in many cases the squares were neglected and unkept, and the Act was the first of a number of measures which culminated with the important one that has just been passed.

Although the squares will not be available to the general public, in course of time it will be far easier to obtain them, as the selling price will not be forced up on account of the building value as is the case to-day of the Foundling Estate. Endsleigh Gardens and Mornington Crescent were both lost to the community owing to the high price, which was more than the local authority and private donors could raise. £50,000 was paid by the Society of Friends for the two acres of Endsleigh Gardens, and Mornington Crescent was offered to St. Pancras Borough Council for £60,000. It was the loss of these two enclosures that stimulated the efforts to preserve the squares for future generations and to keep these beauty spots in our great city intact.

Readers of THE VOTE, many of whom are dwellers in Central London, will appreciate the benefits which the new legislation has gained, and under the Town and Country Planning Act, when it becomes law, many squares in provincial towns will also be saved from the builders' hands.

It is the people's, and especially the electors', duty to see that the open spaces of the land are safeguarded, and this object should have a prominent place in the programme of all candidates at the forthcoming municipal elections.

### NO "PROTECTIVE" LEGISLATION

According to *Equal Rights*, the Business and Professional Women's Club of Atlanta passed a resolution opposing the Bill before the State Legislature, which proposes to keep women from night work in Georgia mills.

The same authority states that a Philadelphia firm was recently fined for violating the Pennsylvania law prohibiting women from working more than 10 hours a day. The company had allowed them to work 10½ hours. Two girl employees who gave evidence declared they were not opposed to the working hours.

We are glad to find that women are waking up to the dangers of industrial "protection."

### SCOTTISH WOMEN FARMERS

A number of Scottish women have taken up farming professionally as the owners of herds and studs of pedigree stock; others have become recognised judges in the show-ring.

The presidency of the Ayrshire Cattle Herd Book Society has been held by Mrs. E. L. Houison-Craufurd, and Miss Turner, Kilchamaig, Argyll, is President of the Highland Cattle Society. The selection of Miss A. M'Laren as Secretary of the National Farmers' Union—a position which requires administrative ability in agricultural affairs—is the second appointment of its

kind in Scotland; the first was the choice by the Border Leicester Sheep Breeders of Miss Rose J. E. Grant, of Edinburgh, as their Secretary and Treasurer, a post which she has held for a number of years.

### ANOTHER DOOR FORCED

According to *The Times*, the Royal Aero Club, which was founded in 1901, has decided to admit women as guests when it moves to its new premises in Piccadilly next month. At present there is not even a waiting-room for women at the club, but the new premises, which were formerly those of the Cavendish Club, will include a special lounge for women guests.

Though there are nearly 1,000 women aviators, they have no club of their own, but they are admitted to air clubs up and down the country, and this doubtless influenced the Committee of the Royal Aero Club in their decision.

### SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S BAND

Miss Evelyn Hardy's band, comprised of ten women players, is attracting record audiences at Minehead.

Miss Hardy is the champion woman cornet player in England. Her band, which plays twenty-five instruments, was recently at the British Industries Fair, Birmingham. This is the third season they have played at Minehead.