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**THE MARRIED  
WORKING WOMAN**

**A STUDY**

**By ANNA MARTIN**

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# The Married Working Woman

A STUDY

By

ANNA MARTIN

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## THE MARRIED WORKING WOMAN.

### A STUDY.

The leaders of the Anti-Suffrage League base their appeals largely on that dread of universal enfranchisement which undoubtedly exists among large sections of English society. In this they are probably well advised. When suffragists demand of the man in the street why he refuses a reform which, by his own democratic principles, is long overdue, the harassed citizen takes refuge in the vain repetition of arguments which have been a hundred times confuted, and of which he secretly recognises the futility. The women to be enfranchised under the Conciliation, or under any similar, Bill are little over a million in number, are distributed among all classes and scattered over all constituencies. He knows that their influence on public affairs can never be anything but small. His political instinct, however, tells him that, as soon as the door of the Constitution is opened to admit the rate and tax-paying woman, forces will get to work to compel the ultimate admission of the married working-woman, and to bestow on the latter political power seems to him little short of madness. In the eyes of most people the workman's wife is a creature of limited intelligence and capacity, who neither has, nor ought to have, any desires outside her own four walls. She is not so much an individual with interests and opinions and will of her own, as a humble appanage of husband and children. Theoretically, no one would deny the dignity and importance of the office of wife

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and mother; practically, in a society founded on wage-earning, work which has no value in the labour market, and which cannot be translated into pounds, shillings, and pence, brings little respect or recognition to the worker.

Besides, it has become the fashion for politicians and reformers to lay much of the blame of their own failures and of their own social mismanagement on the shoulders of a voiceless and voteless class. Platform and Press constantly declare, and, therefore, the ordinary citizen believes, that the average wife of the average working man can neither sew, cook, nor wash, manage her children, nurse her baby, nor keep her husband from the public-house. Why, then, complicate Government by introducing into the body politic these ignorant and unsatisfactory creatures?

It is, of course, easier for Mr. John Burns to declare he is ready to schedule the "comforter" as a dangerous implement than honestly to face the causes which prevent the mothers from bringing up their infants in accordance with the latest medical theory. It is also easier for the middle-class housekeeper to dilate on the dirt and want of management she observes in mean streets than to consider exactly how she would herself conduct domestic life in these localities. It is easier to attack the problem of infant mortality by founding Babies' Institutes, and by endeavouring to screw up to a still higher level the self-sacrifice and devotion of the normal working-class woman, than to incur the wrath of vested interests by insisting on healthy conditions for mothers and infants alike. It is easier to pass bye-laws limiting or prohibiting the employment of children of school age than to take measures which would make their tiny earnings of less importance to the family.

The list might be indefinitely extended, but to none of their critics and detractors do the women con-

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cerned return a word. They are not, as yet, class-conscious, and are far too much engrossed in their individual hand-to-hand struggle with poverty, sickness and sin, even to realise what outsiders say of them. And so judgment goes by default.

It has, therefore, seemed to the writer of some importance to place another and a truer view before the public. Fuller knowledge will, she believes, show that, when at last the recognition of the citizenship of women of the lower social grades becomes an accomplished fact, the most timid conservative voter need have no fear. On the contrary, their votes will prove a powerful barrier against many of the changes he most dreads.

The exclusion of any class from having a voice in the affairs of the community has inevitably a cramping and limiting effect. Working women are only just beginning to grasp the fact that the life of each individual is conditioned by the social and political framework within which he or she lives, and to perceive how they are, personally and individually, suffering from the refusal in the past to allow them any influence on the structure of this framework. But they are quick to learn. Among the poorer families especially, the mental superiority of the wife to the husband is very marked. The ceaseless fight which these women wage in defence of their homes against all the forces of the industrial system develops in them an alertness and an adaptability to which the men, deadened by laborious and uninspiring toil, can lay no claim. The wives are, indeed, without the smattering of newspaper information which their husbands exchange as political wisdom in the public-houses, but they have a fund of common-sense, an intimate knowledge of the workings of male human nature, and an instinctive righteousness of attitude which make them invaluable raw electoral material.

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The writer may explain that for many years she has been connected with a small Lodge in the South-East district of London which, for present purposes, may be called No. 39. It stands in a street of three-storied houses, extending from the main road to the Thames, and the handsomely moulded doors and windows show that the place has seen better fortunes. Local gossip, indeed, tells that the street was a favourite place of residence for sea-captains and their families in the good old smuggling times, and that certain cellars below the pavement, now closed by order of the careful County Council, were used as receptacles for contraband goods. There are, at the present day, two or three families in every house, and the rent paid by each runs from three shillings to seven-and-sixpence a week, according to the number of rooms occupied.

Most of the men get their living by casual waterside labour, and it is not necessary to enlarge on the debasing features of this method of industrial organisation. The evils, indeed, of irregular employment have been so fully insisted upon, that an idea has grown up in the popular mind that the great majority of the houses supported by casual labour are characterised by careless and drunken fathers, ignorant and thriftless mothers, neglected and starving children. This is just as far from the truth as to say that the great majority of upper-class homes in England are characterised by selfish extravagance and vice. In every social grade certain individuals succumb to the peculiar trials and temptations of that grade, and public opinion tends to judge each class by its failures. Theoretically, indeed, the casual labourer, considering the conditions under which he lives and works, ought to be all that popular fancy paints him; but the human being develops powers of resistance to bad moral as well as to bad physical influences, and the docker pulls through where his critics would succumb. The experience

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gained at No. 39 shows that one cannot with truth go much beyond the measured statement of the Minority Report, that "wherever we have casual employment we find drunkenness and every irregularity of life more than usually prevalent." One fact alone speaks volumes. No home can be looked upon as very bad which sends clean and neat children regularly to school. The average attendance in the Boys' and in the Girls' Departments of the Council schools in the district varies from 91 to 95 per cent., thus showing that the families concerned do not contribute more than their share of the 10 per cent. of the "regular irregulars" who are the despair of the Education authorities. The trim appearance of the pupils astonishes every unaccustomed visitor, and, perhaps, astonishes even more those persons who know enough of the troubles behind the scenes to realise the immense sacrifices and efforts involved in the punctuality of the attendance and the tidiness of the dress.

In spite of its drawbacks, the waterside work has an irresistible attraction for certain men. The young fellow is tempted by its days of leisure, its periods of high pay, and the excitement of a life of chance. Many an older man, too, grows sick of the drudgery of low-paid, monotonous labour, which holds out to him no hopes and no prospects, and, in spite of the protests of his wife, abandons his regular job for the gamble of the water-side. "It's trying for the big shilling that ruins them," say the women; "the men think they may just as well earn thirty-five shillings in four days as twenty-five in six, and that the higher pay will make up for the work not being constant."

When the days of famine come, husbands and grown-up sons alike fall back on the wives and mothers, who uncomplainingly shoulder the burden of keeping the home together when the ordinary income fails. The men take the run of ill-luck more or less

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passively. They know in nine cases out of ten a roof will be kept over their heads, and some sort of food in their mouths, by the efforts of their womenkind, and they wait, patiently enough, doing odd jobs when and where they can. The women struggle with indescribable heroism; they persuade the landlord to let the rent run, they strain their credit with the grocer, they pawn everything pawnable, they go out charing, they take in washing. And, somehow, as the Poor Law statistics conclusively show, in the vast majority of cases the corner is safely turned without recourse to public assistance.

It must not be understood that all those who gather together at No. 39 are the wives of casual labourers. The Lodge was, in fact, first begun for the benefit of women a little higher in the economic scale, but whose lives are, nevertheless, a ceaseless round of petty cares. A housewife with four or five children, paying a rent of 6s. 6d. out of 22s. allowed her by her husband, is, compared with many others in the district, well off; but her life is destitute of any opportunity for recreation or for mental improvement. The general rise in the standard of comfort on which social reformers congratulate themselves has made life harder for the mothers. "When I was ten years old," said one, "I was helping my parents by gathering stones for the farmers; now, I send four girls to school every day with starched pinafores and blacked boots. Except on Sundays, my father never had anything but bread and cold bacon, or cheese, for his dinner; now I have to cook a hot dinner every day for the children and a hot supper every evening for my man."

In order to differentiate the assemblies at No. 39 from the ordinary Mothers' Meeting, the subject of formal religion was definitely excluded. The attitude of the "Lady from the West End come to do good" was rigidly eschewed. The ground taken was that fate

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had allotted to each individual a different sphere, but that one sphere was in no way inferior to another. If the leaders had more knowledge of books and of foreign parts, the members had more knowledge of domestic management. If those on the platform were trying to help some of their fellow creatures, those on the chairs were devoting their whole lives to husbands and children. To know the founder was, in itself, a liberal education for women who had been taught to look on their sex as essentially inferior to the male, and properly subordinated to the interests and pleasures of the latter. She was a single woman of brilliant parts, brimming over with fun and humour, declaring she detested babies and openly thanking Heaven that she had not been born a man. Her keen sympathy, quick insight, and ready resource made her an invaluable auxiliary in all the troubles of the members, and it will be long ere No. 39 will cease to quote her opinions or to reverence her memory.

That a meeting of working women should be held primarily for purposes of pleasure and recreation was something of an innovation in the district, and the women themselves were for some time suspicious, and could hardly believe that there was no danger of moral or religious lessons being slipped surreptitiously into the proceedings. They found, however, that they were never preached to on their duties as wives and mothers, but that admiration was openly expressed for the gallant way in which they faced their difficult lives, and that the speakers, so far from inculcating contentment and resignation, held strong views as to the intolerable burden imposed on working women by the blind forces of society. This method of approach apparently justified itself by its results. The defences by which the poor strive to protect themselves from the well-meant but inapplicable advice of their middle-class well-wishers were broken down, and though the

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leaders of No. 39 make no claim to have edified or elevated the women that throng to their meetings, they believe they have been enabled to know the ordinary workman's ordinary wife as she appears to herself and to her family, and not as she figures in the minds of journalists in search of copy, or of reformers in search of a way to employ their energies. And knowledge was followed by whole-hearted respect and admiration.

Of course, the home-makers of the mean streets are not to be judged by middle-class standards. Theoretically, most people acknowledge the evolutionary nature of manners and morals; practically, they fail to see that a code which works well enough in the household of a prosperous professional man would often prove disastrous in the household of a dock labourer. Take, for instance, the question of order and cleanliness. Not to have beds made till 8 o'clock in the evening would reasonably be considered to show bad management in the case of a rich woman; to have them made earlier would sometimes show lack of organising power in the case of a poor one. "How do you manage about the housework if you are out all day?" a member of No. 39 was recently asked. Her reply was entered at the time on the Lodge notes, and was as follows:—"I rise at 4.45, sweep the place a bit, and get my husband his breakfast. He must be off before six. Then I wake and wash the children, give them each a slice of bread and butter and the remains of the tea, and leave out the oats and sugar for Harry to prepare for the rest later on. (Harry is ten years old.) Then I open up the beds and take the baby to Mrs. T. My own work begins at 7 a.m. At 8.30 the firm sends us round a mug of tea and I eat the bread and butter I have brought with me. I used to come home in the dinner hour, but my feet are now so bad that I get a halfpenny cup of coffee in a shop and eat the rest of what I have brought. At 4.30 I have

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another cup of tea and get home a little before 7 p.m. I do the hearth up, get my husband his supper, and make the beds. Then I get out the mending and am usually in bed by 11. On Saturday I leave work at noon so as to take the washing to the baths."

Mrs. T.'s husband is in regular work, but owing to a maimed hand earns only 17s. 6d. a week. She herself works during the season in a jam factory and leads the awful life she described for months at a time. True, her beds are not made and her hearth is not tidied till late in the evening, but one does not exactly see what other and better arrangements of her household affairs a whole college of domestic economy lecturers could devise.

Another "painful example" may be quoted from the notes, of a house in which one constantly finds dirty teacups on the breakfast table, and mother and daughter with dishevelled hair and untidy blouses, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

The S.'s were an exceptionally happy little family till the father, owing to changes in the management of his firm, lost his work. "I've been married 33 years," said Mrs. S., her commonplace face illuminated by the light of high resolve, "and I've never once been short of my money. I'd be ashamed if I couldn't keep a roof over father's head now. I was up button-holing at 4 o'clock this morning and I'm proud of it." Though the man was in a good club the situation so preyed on his mind that he went insane, tried to commit suicide, and was only saved by the magnificent courage of the crippled daughter. He has now been for over two years in the Cane Hill Asylum, and mother and daughter are working their fingers to the bone to pay the rent and to keep the home together against his return. Once in three months they painfully scrape the pence together for one of them to visit the asylum, and nothing so brought home to the mind

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the awful poverty in which mother and daughter were living, as the discovery by a visitor that Mrs. S., in order not to go empty-handed, saved up the common little biscuits handed round with the tea at No. 39. The work, like much other home-work, has to be in the hands of the middleman before 1 o'clock, and the women would hardly render their desperate struggle easier by taking time before that hour for their domestic affairs. Broken sleep with a cross baby, delicate health on the part of the mother, are also common causes of late hours in the morning. The woman gets the older children off to school, and then goes back to bed for a little rest, but the reticent English poor do not vouchsafe any explanation of their untidy rooms to casual visitors. That is kept for those they know and trust.

But nothing is so astonishing as the prevalence of the belief that the wives are bad managers and housekeepers. A moment's reflection will show that, if this were true, the families could not live at all. Any analysis of the incomes makes manifest that, when the wives have paid rent, coal, gas, soap, insurance, and have set aside a small sum for tiny incidental expenses and for renewal of boots and clothes, they seldom have left more than from 10s. to 14s. to provide food for two adults and three or four children. The husband, of course, costs more than his proportional share; luckily, the men insist on being well fed, or incapacity through illness would be even more common among the wage-earners than it is at present. In only one instance has it been found possible to get a separate estimate of the cost of the husband's food. This worked out at 10d. a day, and his wife thought he was cheaper to keep than most men of his class. But as the family had only one child the food standard was perhaps somewhat high. Wives of the men sent by the Central (Unemployed) Committee under

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Mr. Long's Act to colony work receive payment at the rate of 10s. for themselves, 2s. for the first child, and 1s. 6d. for each succeeding one, and in only nine instances, according to the report issued in 1909, did the payments fail to suffice for the maintenance of the homes. On the contrary, the local distress committees were constantly hearing of cases where the wives sent down stray shillings to the husbands for extra pocket-money.

It is clear that women who keep their families on such incomes have not much to learn in the way of food management. Their main energies are concentrated upon securing the greatest quantity of food for the small sums they can afford, and it is not surprising that they develop an almost superhuman skill. The aim of their lives is to put on the table some kind of hot dinner every day. To this they are urged by the public opinion of their families, who do not easily forgive failures in what they consider the mother's primary duty, even though it may be for her a veritable making of bricks without straw. This is especially the case if there are grown-up sons at home; that the latter are out of work does not seem to make much difference to the demand. "Well, I can't see them want," is the natural reply of the mother when expostulated with on the reckless sacrifice of her own health and comfort. Women often get into the hands of the money-lenders simply because they do not dare to face the household with nothing but bread and butter on the table.

It may be well to enlarge a little on the working woman as housekeeper, in view of the prevalent misconception on the subject. The information given below has been usually obtained when the visitor has sat chatting with the mothers while the latter were preparing the midday meal, and is taken from the notebooks of the Lodge.

Mrs. A. said: "I had a great stroke of luck last



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week. I sent Patsy for a shilling's-worth of meat on Saturday night, and the butcher gave him a piece of skirt, a big veal cutlet, and some pieces. Out of the veal and pieces I made a pie which did for Sunday's dinner and supper and Jack's dinner on Monday. Then I cooked the skirt with haricot beans, potatoes, and flour (probably she meant a suet pudding), and that did us two days. So I reckon the six of us got three hot dinners apiece for 1s. 9d., besides the supper and Jack's dinner." (Jack is a grown-up son.)

Mrs. B. remarked: "It's no good to us if they provide the children with dinners at the school for 1d. each. Four of mine are attending the Board School (*sic*) and I can do better for them at home. I make a stew of three-pennyworth of pieces, get three pounds of potatoes for a penny, and a pennyworth of pot-herbs. If I've got it I throw in a handful of rice. This makes a good dinner for us all, including myself."

It may be noted that stews or meat pies are the commonest dinners of the district, and that a pennyworth of pot-herbs stands for the largest bunch of carrots, turnips, and onions the purchaser can persuade the greengrocer to give.

Mrs. C. informed the writer: "I've often made a good supper for my man and myself for three-half-pence. When faggots are cold you can get one for three-farthings. I boil a pennyworth of rice till it is quite soft, and then cut the faggot through it and boil up together. The faggot makes the rice so savoury that anyone could eat it."

Faggots are composed of portions of the interior of a pig and are highly seasoned. When hot, they cost three-halfpence each.

Mrs. D., in answer to a question as to how she was feeding her husband and five children last winter on the occasional shillings she earned by charing, replied: "Well, you see, nobody can manage better than I do.

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I get a halfpennyworth of carrots, halfpennyworth of onions, three pounds of potatoes for a penny. When they are nearly cooked I cut in two cold faggots. This makes a rich broth, and, with a pennyworth of bread, gives me and the children as much as we can eat for 3½d.

"Sometimes I can do better still. I get three-pennyworth of pork rinds and bones from the butcher, a halfpennyworth of rice, a pennyworth of potatoes (3 lbs.), and a pennyworth of pot-herbs. This gives us all, father included, a good dinner, and leaves enough for next day if I boil another pennyworth of potatoes, so I reckon I get fourteen hot dinners for 6½d."

In order to ascertain if the above dishes were in general use, the recipes were read out at a Lodge meeting and remarks invited. The criticism on the above was: "Yes, but you can't always get the pork rinds, and though it's quite true you can make it do for twice at a pinch, it doesn't really give enough if the husband and children are hearty."

Mrs. E., who lives in a part of the district where the food supply is somewhat less cheap and abundant, but whose husband is in good regular work, stated: "Where there is no drink I do not consider the women manage badly. For 1s. 2d. I myself can get a good dinner for three adults and four children. I get one and a-half pounds of pieces for 7d., four pounds of potatoes for 2½d., a cabbage for 1d., and a halfpennyworth of onions. Then I get a half-quarter of flour and a pennyworth of suet or dripping for a pudding. The children don't get much meat, but they have plenty of vegetables and pudding with gravy."

Mrs. F. said: "It's harder to manage, I consider, when your children are grown-up and live at home. They expect such a lot for the money they give you, and a mother doesn't like to fall short. If I wasn't very careful and watched every penny I'd never make

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ends meet. This morning I am cooking 4½ lbs. of potatoes (3d.), half a peck of peas (3d.), pot-herbs (1d.), and 4 lbs. scrag of mutton (1s.). This comes to 1s. 7d., and will provide dinner for six grown-up people and supper for four."

Mrs. G.'s husband was struck down with an incurable nervous complaint eighteen months ago, and the family's total resources are under 20s. The mother goes out to work and has to pay for the minding of her baby. There are four children, but she said: "I manage to get them a bit of hot dinner most days, though, as I'm not at home, it's not cooked as it should be. The children often have potatoes and dripping, and they like it."

Mrs. H.'s family numbers twelve, and ranges from a son of twenty-five to a baby of twenty-four months. The husband has had no regular work for five years, but does what he can. Four of the children are at work. This family takes much pride in itself, and the standard of life insisted upon has nearly worried the mother into her grave. One day she bewailed herself as follows: "My dinners come to 2s. a day, and I can't do them under, and the children eat a loaf every day in addition to their meat and vegetables. The grocer's book is never under eleven or twelve shillings." A careful investigation into the accounts of the family showed that the absolutely necessary expenses, including rent, mounted up to £2 a week, and, as the income seldom reached that sum, the mother was never out of debt. "I can't help it!" she exclaimed desperately; "if I don't keep their bellies full now, what will happen to them when they are older?"

Mrs. I. was a young woman and it was hinted she was not perhaps quite as good a manager as some of the older hands. "You are mistaken," she said quietly, opening her oven door. "I go to work as

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nearly as I can. I got that piece of meat for 5d., and with a pennyworth of potatoes my man and I will have a good hot dinner, and there will be enough meat left to eat cold to-morrow."

The above examples are sufficient to show the nature and character of the housekeeping in the district round No. 39. It will be observed they lend no countenance to the statement that the women are too ignorant and lazy to make the best of their resources.

The narrowness of the pecuniary margin may be shown in another way. Four or five years ago, from causes over which these women had no control, the price of sugar went up a penny a pound. Steps were taken to discover how this affected the homes. The poor use a good deal of sugar. It evidently supplies some special lack in their dietary, and 4 lbs. a week is an average amount for a family. The evidence was emphatic. "We would feel even a farthing's difference," said one woman; "since I have had to pay fourpence a week more for sugar, the children and I have only had bread and butter for Saturday's dinner." "I was going away by the Women's Holiday Fund," said another, "but I've had to give that up. I couldn't manage the weekly pence." Another smiled as she showed her broken boots. "I usually get myself a new pair this time of year," she remarked, "but I don't know where they are coming from now."

A tiny fact may be cited which yet is eloquent of the carefulness of the management of the food. Most families keep a cat; but there are seldom or never enough scraps to feed the animal, and the cats'-meat man is an institution in the poorest streets.

In only one case has the writer actually come across the ignorance of cooking assumed by the popular judgment to be well-nigh universal. Mrs. X. was a gallant little soul striving to maintain a consumptive husband and two children out of her wages as a jelly-

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packer. She confessed she could do nothing but fry, and, even then, had to ask her husband if the chops were cooked. As the only room she was able to afford had nothing but a tiny open fireplace, no amount of theoretical knowledge would have made much difference. Even Mrs. X., however, has apparently mastered her ignorance. An extraordinary piece of good fortune wafted her and her household to a cottage near Orpington, and she is now doing a good business by taking in boarders.

It must not be concluded, however, that the women are satisfied with the feeding of their families. They know they manage to get the utmost value for every penny, but they are fully aware of the difference between the amount of food sufficient to prevent a child being conscious of privation and the abundant nourishment necessary for building up robust frames. "My children don't go hungry," they say, "but they don't have what they ought to have." Directly a child leaves school and begins to bring in a few shillings, the extra money is at once devoted to an increased food supply, and this fact has an important bearing on certain proposals for raising the school age now before the public.

The question will be asked, how, if the facts are as stated in this article, the widespread belief in the incapable household management of the poor has arisen? Once started, the opinion was bound to find easy currency in a country where classes have so little knowledge of each other as is the case in England. The public is always glad to save itself the trouble of thinking or of personal investigation, and thankfully passes on as genuine coin any generalisation supplied to it with a sufficient show of authority. Besides, there has been an undoubted shrinking from facing facts as Mr. Rowntree faced them in York, and from being driven to acknowledge that the primary cause of the

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physical degeneracy of the children is the insufficiency of their fathers' wages.

Many speakers and writers on this subject have also fallen victims to the common error of neglecting to consider percentages; in other words, of taking the exception for the rule. There are thousands of parents in London alone who are totally unfit to have the care of their children at all, and of whom no criticism can be too severe. But it is not a justifiable proceeding, in order to point a speech or to adorn a leading article, to impute the faults of homes devastated by drink, or driven, from some special defect of character, below the normal level, to the households of decent labourers, who constitute at least 85 per cent. of their class. This is not to say that such men never get drunk, nor spend in beer money which their wives badly need for food; but their excesses are of the nature of accidents rather than of habits, and are not sufficiently frequent to wreck the homes.

Then, too, it is a very easy matter for an observer from the outside to misunderstand and misinterpret what he does actually see.

Take four instances which came under the observation of the leaders of No. 39 within a few days of each other, and which, had they not possessed means of getting behind the scenes, would have appeared to afford ample confirmation for the popular belief.

1. A woman was met going to buy a red herring for her son's dinner, a lad of eighteen, in good work, and on whose earnings the family largely depended.

2. A little girl was found buying bread and pickles for her own and her three little brothers' dinner.

3. Mrs. B.'s children were seen coming from the cookshop bearing in their hands their dinners of fried fish and potatoes.

4. Annie P., a member of the Girls' Club, com-

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mented on the cocoa being made with water. Her mother always made it with milk.

Full knowledge in each case showed that the apparent folly was nothing but intelligent adaptation to circumstances. In the first case, Mrs. D.'s boy always refused to eat cold meat, on which the rest of the family that day were dining. He was, however, quite contented if his mother provided him with a pennyworth of pease-pudding and a penny bloater—not an extravagant nor an innutritious dinner.

Many critics of the domestic management of the poor conveniently overlook the fact that the housekeeper of the tiny tenement can no more force her menfolk to eat what they do not like than can the lady of Belgravia. This is the answer to the ever-recurring question, why do not the poor use porridge? The truth is the women do provide porridge, rice, or any other cheap food, when the families will eat it; it is useless to cook viands they will not eat. But to proceed to case 2.

The mother was dying of cancer, but had refused to be removed to the infirmary, where she would have been well fed and well cared for, because, as she pathetically said to the district nurse, she wanted to manage for the children even if she could no longer work for them. The family resources for that day's dinner consisted of three-halfpence to feed four children. When the eldest child came home from school she procured from an eating-house a large part of a stale loaf for a penny, and spent the rest of her funds on pickles. Her instinct told her that something to promote the flow of saliva was necessary if the little ones were to swallow enough of the dry food to sustain them. It is open to question if she could have done better in the circumstances.

Mrs. B., who is one of the loveliest characters the writer has ever known, explained that careful calcula-

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tion had convinced her that she got more value for her money at the cookshop than by preparing the food at home; principally because it was saturated with more fat than she could afford. That morning she had had nothing in the house for the midday meal but bread and butter. A neighbour, however, had asked her to run up a child's chemise on her machine, and for this she had been paid twopence. She had, therefore, given each child a halfpenny to spend for its dinner, and one had chosen fish, and the others fried potatoes. A thick slice each of bread and butter in addition would keep them contented till tea-time, and she could thus save the cost of fuel.

Mrs. P. is an intelligent woman, though unable to read or write, and is burdened with two very delicate grown-up daughters. She has found by experience that the only way to keep them at work at all is to feed them liberally, and that every attempt to reduce expenditure in this direction is followed by collapse and absence from work. Therefore, although she never ceases to groan over her housekeeping expenses, she finds no way of reducing them.

Another example may be cited to show how easy it is to misunderstand the domestic economy of the poor, even for observers who live among them and are wholeheartedly devoted to their service.

Not long ago an excellent and enthusiastic headmaster of a Council school was speaking, by request, to a set of working women on the feeding of school-children. He told them he made a point of standing at the gate of his playground and of noticing which pupils returned to afternoon school eating bread and butter. In this way he considered he got a clue as to which boys had had no dinner cooked for them at home. With their usual provoking diffidence, the audience said nothing at the time; but several of them explained afterwards that many children demanded a

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slice of bread and butter as a finish to their meal of meat and vegetables—just as middle-class children expect pudding—and that they ate this in the street, being glad to escape into the open air as soon as possible.

Again, one has heard the theory put forth, based on the many varieties of tinned foods to be seen in the grocers' windows in poor quarters, that the men are forced to live on preserved meats owing to the laziness and ignorance of their wives. A grocer near No. 39 gave a different explanation. Tinned foods appear in the shops of poor quarters as they constitute the cheapest form of window dressing. They are seldom or never bought by the poor, being, in fact, beyond their means; but the wives of the better-class artisans and of some of the shopkeepers occasionally purchase them to serve as "relishes" for tea or supper. Women of the better class dislike dirtying their kitchen ranges late in the day.

Other people, again, base their charges of the women's ignorance of food and feeding on the scraps of bread and meat occasionally to be seen in the dust-pails. Well, every practical housekeeper knows that often the cheapest thing to be done with morsels of stale food is to get rid of them. Besides, the English are clean feeders, and accidentally soiled viands are always rejected.

One is obliged to go into these trivial details, so far-reaching are the misguided theories founded upon them.

One other point must be noticed. It is seriously contended that the relative infantile death-rates of the rich and of the poor conclusively prove the ignorance and the carelessness of the mothers of the masses. It could be far more fairly argued that since the mother of the mean streets does persuade over four-fifths of her infants to live, and often even to thrive, among

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adverse conditions as to warmth, space, light, air, and exercise, which would infallibly kill a West-End baby, the blue ribbon remains with her. That the infant mortality is not primarily due to wrong feeding is shown by the fact that, of all those who perish in the first year, half die in the first three months, while they are still being fed by the mothers. Pecuniary considerations in most poor districts prevent recourse to bottle feeding, save in cases of absolute necessity.

Next to their fathomless capacity for self-sacrifice—a trait which is developed to a degree which is positively harmful both to their families and to the State—the most distinctive characteristic of such women as are represented at No. 39 is their courage. Think of it! Two-thirds of them are without the least economic security; they have no financial reserves; their husbands either have no regular employment or are on jobs from which they can be dismissed at a week's notice. So far from having relations to fall back upon, they are constantly forced to come to the rescue of people worse off than themselves. Their homes, which are these women's all, are at the mercy of circumstances absolutely beyond their own control. Did they yield to the nervous fears natural to the situation, there would not be a sane individual among them. Their power of temporarily throwing off their anxieties is worthy of a student of Eastern occultism, and excites the envious admiration of less fortunate folk. No chance visitor to the Lodge who witnessed the gaiety of the members could ever guess at the tragedies which lie behind. "The laugh's over for the week," say the women as they troop downstairs, but their mental control has enabled them to make the most of that one opportunity.

They know that nothing that they or their husbands can do will in any way guarantee the future, and so they resolutely take short views and make the most of

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each day as it comes. Their exhortation to each other is, "Do the best you can, keep a good heart, and chance it."

It is here that the explanation lies of that want of thrift which so often distresses their middle-class censors, and of the hostility, more or less veiled, which is felt by the working classes towards the Charity Organisation Society. They know they simply could not conduct their lives on the maxims inculcated by that excellent set of people without losing all that makes life worth living, and without giving themselves over to a sordid materialism.

Actual physical privation, for themselves or their dependents, is such an horrific vision to those who have never experienced it that they cannot understand a man or woman hesitating at any sacrifice to avoid it. The poor feel differently; they have faced the monster at close quarters, and they have learnt that "man does not live by bread alone." No one can dwell among them without many times standing rebuked at their nobler estimate of the relative value of things. A man, more often out of work than in, will somehow scrape the money together to visit his idiot daughter in Darenth Asylum; half-starved families will keep a fire going day and night to prolong the life of a dying baby; harassed mothers will take something from their own children's food to save a neighbour's child from being buried by the parish; parents, after a hard winter, will provide the children with a little finery for the spring.

The Lodge annals record numerous examples of how bravely the women meet the strain when it comes. One may be quoted:—

Mrs. A. said: "My man was in the Infirmary eleven months; I had four children to keep, but he had always been a good man to me, and I made up my mind he should find his home together when he came out. It

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turns me sick now to remember how I starved and pinched and scraped. When he came home and found I had not parted with a thing, he cried like a child."

Yet the very same women who keep a smiling face and a stout heart amid the torturing uncertainty of their lives, and who rise so grandly to the occasion when utter self-sacrifice is demanded, in lesser matters show a lack of moral courage. A garment disappears from the line in a jumble sale. The culprit is known and the English sense of honesty in small things is outraged, but no one will take the responsibility of giving information, or dare to face the wordy wrath of the exposed party. When at last the affair reaches the Leader's ears, she knows the moral sense of the community is demanding the expulsion of the wrong-doer, but no one will give any direct help. Each woman, when questioned, admits she has heard the report, but will devise the most ingenious fictions to avoid giving her authority. In administration one is practically driven back on something like the old English method of expurgation. If a sufficient number of trustworthy and sensible women declare their belief in the guilt of the accused person, it is practically safe to act on their conviction; at least there is probably no more frequent miscarriage of justice than occurs in the ordinary courts. It may be remarked in passing that there are many curious traces among the masses of the era before written laws and organised legal systems. There is a sort of common law, one does not know how else to describe it, which largely regulates their relation to each other quite independently of, and, sometimes, in spite of, the law of the land.

Admirable as is the courage of the women in facing the chances and changes of their precarious lives, it is equalled by the fortitude with which they scrub, cook, and wash, and bear children, while suffering from torturing physical derangements. Judging from the

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members of No. 39, and there is no reason to suppose they differ from the rest of their class, the health of the wives and mothers of the nation is a national scandal and a national danger. That the conversation of the poor so often turns on their ailments is a matter of kindly derision to the rich; that they ever talk of anything else is a matter of wonder to those who see these women carry on their lives of strenuous exertion under circumstances which would send their well-off critics into surgical homes for months. The disorganisation and discomfort of the home is so great when the mother is laid aside that she has to keep on her feet somehow, in order to attend to the family's immediate and pressing requirements. She can spare neither time nor money for her own needs. In seasons of scarcity she is the first to go short of food, clothing, and rest, and the last to reap the benefit when good times return. What wonder that she is sometimes driven, with dire ultimate results, to stimulants as a means of getting through her day's work?

Some time ago the women householders, most of them over middle-age, of a certain ward in the Borough of Bermondsey, were invited to a meeting, and this question was put, row by row: "Are the children you see to-day healthier or less healthy than the children you knew when you were young?" The answers given were practically identical: "Children, when we were young, were nothing like so well fed and well cared for as they are to-day, but they were a deal stronger. The mothers are weaker nowadays, and so the babies are born weaker."

Rudyard Kipling says somewhere that there is no wisdom like the wisdom of old wives, and thus these illiterate women laid their finger on the weak point of most of the schemes afloat at the present moment for social regeneration. The most direct method of improving the condition of the homes and of the

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children is to improve the condition of the mothers, but unfortunately modern legislation is proceeding on a different tack. In order to deal with the comparatively small class of dirty, idle, and drunken parents, most of whom are totally unfit to have charge of their children at all, the law in its ignorance is not hesitating to harass intolerably the great mass of industrious and self-sacrificing, working-class women; but this subject will be touched upon later.

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### II.

There is no doubt that the insistent demand of to-day that something shall be done to improve the life conditions of the masses arose from the sudden realisation of the physical defectiveness of the rising generation. The report for the year 1909 of Dr. Newman, Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education, did not tend to reassure the public. Taking the whole number of children attending the elementary schools as 6,000,000, he estimated that 10 per cent. suffered from defective sight, 3 to 5 per cent. from defective hearing, 8 per cent. had adenoids or enlarged tonsils and required surgical treatment, and that from 20 to 40 per cent. showed defective teeth. In the 'forties and 'fifties Lord Shaftesbury was looked upon as a sentimental fool for troubling himself or anybody else about the child-workers in the mills and mines. Their fate was not seen to affect the national fortunes. The poet Southey tells in a letter of a manufacturer who with great pride took a friend over his large and well-appointed mill, and who, on pointing to the children collecting cotton-waste on the floors, remarked with calm regret that few would live to grow up, as

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their lungs would become choked with fluff. It never occurred to an employer of that date that, for his private profit, he was robbing the community of the wealth-producers of the future, and just as surely was creating a class of "unemployables" for it to support.

Since those days social consciousness has developed, and people are dimly perceiving that we are all members of one another, and that if one member suffers the whole body suffers with it; but there is still in many quarters a persistent refusal to recognise facts. Men of high repute lament publicly the spread of humanitarianism, which, they declare, is only perpetuating the unfit by feeding the child of the loafer and of the drunkard at the expense of the steady and industrious. They do not, however, face the logical conclusion of their own arguments. If the scores of thousands of children fed in the schools last winter are really a danger to the State, it would surely be more statesmanlike and less cruel to provide officially for their painless extinction than either to leave them to a miserable death behind the scenes from slow starvation, or to expose them to such conditions that, though they may not actually die, they must inevitably become even worse human material than their parents.

But, in truth, the offspring of the drunkard and of the loafer form but a small part of the problem confronting the school doctor.

The applicants to the Distress Committees under Mr. Long's Act, taken as a whole, are doubtless considerably below the mental and moral level of workmen who manage to exist on their own resources, and yet experience shows that between 70 and 80 per cent. of those who apply are industrious and steady men.

The anxiety about the children's physique arises, no doubt, from different reasons in the case of different persons. The capitalist fears a decrease in his labour

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supply; the military authorities think of their recruits; the Socialists see an opportunity of organising a millennium on their own pattern, with themselves as directors. Other folk merely obey the natural instinct to ward off immediate suffering from the innocent and helpless, without looking farther ahead. But the remedial schemes put forward all agree in this—that they absolutely ignore the opinions and experience of the one class in the nation which has first-hand knowledge of the matter in question. It may, therefore, be useful to show how some of the proposals appear in the eyes of such typical working women as those the writer has learnt to know at No. 39.

First, as to the provision of free meals in the schools. Each year a larger number of the mothers take advantage of the dinners. The pressure of the home behind them is practically irresistible, but the system excites neither enthusiasm nor gratitude. It is not the solution of the problem of the poverty-stricken child that appeals either to their moral or to their common sense. The English lower classes have so little power of expression, and so often use what language they possess to conceal their thoughts, that it is not easy to find out what they really think and why they think it; but the lukewarm attitude of the women towards the free meal system seems to be due to the following considerations. First, they are sincerely apprehensive of the demoralisation of the men if the responsibility of the children's food is lifted from the shoulders of the fathers. This was voiced by one woman, who said: "Feeding the children won't do us any good. Our husbands will only say, 'You don't want 20s. a week now; you can send the children to the dinners and do with 17s. 6d.'" and the whole meeting agreed that this was only to be expected. When the work is of a casual nature, neither wife, nor Children's Care Committee, nor the London County Council organiser, has



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any means of ascertaining the man's actual income; if he declares he is only working two or three days a week no one can gainsay him. The women realise how hard their husbands' lives are, and how many small easements could be secured with an extra half-a-crown as weekly pocket-money, and they know it is absurd to expect average husbands and fathers to resist the temptation of lessening the household's demands on their thinly-lined pockets. No class in the nation could stand such a test, as the whole history of endowments shows. But the women, with good cause, dread anything which weakens the link between the bread-winner and his home.

Secondly, the members of No. 39 are convinced that the provision of school meals does lead to an increase of drinking habits among a certain class of mothers, and they support their opinions by citing instances from their own streets. They point out that there are many women who are not, on the whole, bad parents, and who would not spend money in the public-house that was needed for the children's dinners, but who cannot resist the temptation of securing an extra two or three glasses of beer if their little ones do not thereby directly suffer.

They also quote cases where the feeding of the younger members has enabled that scourge of the working-class home—the loafing grown-up son—to live on his family.

Thirdly, the women have a vague dread of being superseded and dethroned. Each of them knows perfectly well that the strength of her position in the home lies in the physical dependence of husband and children upon her, and she is suspicious of anything that would tend to undermine this. The feeling that she is the indispensable centre of her small world is, indeed, the joy and consolation of her life.

Again, the women resent the moral strain of having

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thrust on them a perpetual struggle between their consciences and their pockets, and the continual irritation of knowing that less scrupulous neighbours are securing help which would be very welcome to themselves. "Of course, we could all *do* with the meals," say our friends at No. 39; "if you spend a bit less on food there's a bit more for coals and boots; and if your big girl falls out of work you can feed her on what you save on the little ones."

No one can deny that it is unfairly trying to Mrs. X, who has made a desperate effort to keep her family all the week on a totally insufficient sum, to know that Mrs. Y, no worse off than herself, has applied for the school meals, and therefore has been able to provide Mr. Y with a hot dinner on Sunday, the absence of which Mr. X will resent.

Notwithstanding the immense strength of their maternal instincts, the cry of "the hungry child" appeals very little to the members of No. 39. Nothing so rouses them to passionate indignation as ill-treatment of, or cruelty to, the young, but they do not much believe in the existence of the absolutely starving child. "No," they say, "it isn't often that a child goes downright hungry; someone will always give it a bit." Their experience teaches them that there are other and more common reasons than under-feeding for the physical troubles of the children, and in this connection it is interesting to note that the Chief Medical Officer's report for the twenty-one months ending the 31st of December, 1908, to the Education Committee of the London County Council stated that malnutrition in children may arise from upward of twenty causes, of which deficiency of food, either in quantity or quality, is only one; and, further, that there is no direct connection between bad nutrition and anæmia.

The conviction of working-class women that it is

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better for a child to be brought up in even a very poor home where there is kindness than to be reared in the best equipped institution is often startling to people belonging to the more materialised grades of society. The Mrs. C alluded to in Part I. took into her family her husband's orphaned nephew, aged three. Her life for years had been a desperate struggle with sickness and poverty, and she was asked to consider whether she was acting in the child's best interests. "When he is older," she replied, "I shall be obliged to let the Guardians have him; but I can't let a baby like that go where there is no woman to love him, as long as I can find a bit for his mouth."

The women take little account of the economic side of the question of free meals—that these are practically grants in aid of wages, and so must inevitably depress the rate of earnings; but, as mothers, they resent the idea of having the children taken out of their own and their husbands' hands, having a firm conviction that they, if given the opportunity, will do better for their offspring than anyone else can or will. Their grievance is that parents, through the operation of causes beyond their own control, are so often deprived of the power of fulfilling their natural duties, and it is to this point that the women's political influence, if they had any, would be directed.

Again, our friends at No. 39 regard with amused contempt those theorists who see a serious remedy for the defects of working-class homes in the development of cookery and house-wifery instruction in the schools, though they take just the same pride in Mary's being able to boil the potatoes or to starch a child's pinafore as the West End mother takes in her small daughter's ability to chatter French. The syllabuses of the cookery classes suggest many cheap and nourishing dishes, and these are readily bought up by the children and taken home as proofs of their skill, but one does

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not hear of the recipes becoming permanent additions to the family dietary. The mothers know they can do as well, or better, by adhering to their own methods of marketing and cooking. The difficulty lies not in the treatment, but in the procuring, of the raw material. Anyone can convince himself of this by glancing at the returns of the Poor Law schools, in which, under the superintendence of the Local Government Board, cheap catering has been reduced to a science, and which have all the advantages of buying and cooking in large quantities. In the year 1906-7 the average cost per week of food and clothing per child amounted—

In the Central London District School to 3s. 5.73d.  
In the North London District School to 2s. 9.61d.  
In Bermondsey Cottage Homes to ... 3s. 9.15d.

Now the plutocrats at No. 39 are those women with small families who receive regularly from their husbands 22s. a week. After providing, however, for rent, insurance, coal, gas, wood, soap, all unavoidable weekly outgoings, even they do not have left more than 12s. or 13s. for the food and clothing of from five to six people, including two adults; that is, at best, little more than two-thirds of the amount found necessary in the schools for children alone. Less fortunate women do not have more than one-half. The members do not, of course, deny the existence of waste and mismanagement; in fact, they tend, rather self-righteously, to dwell on these faults when seen in their neighbours; but they are clear as to the usual cause. "Where you see waste," they say, "you will almost always find drink," and though the cookery classes are undoubtedly popular, the women, notwithstanding that few of them are personally teetotalers, would have more faith in an early-closing measure and in a decrease in the number of public-houses as a remedy for foolish and extravagant housekeeping.

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The best criticism, perhaps, on the housewifery teaching was the reply of a small girl who was asked if the lessons had helped her in her first place. "At the school they teach you how to do the saucepans and the sink beautiful, but you could never do them like that in service; no missis would let you take the time." Much less is there leisure for elaborate processes in the ordinary workman's home. Rougher and readier, if not less effective, measures have to be adopted.

One feels that the proposed baby-minding classes will, in all probability, lay themselves open to something of a like reproach. Teachers, anxious to satisfy the inspector and to propitiate the doctors, whose maxims the community at large do not in other respects attempt to follow, will insist on plans and methods which never could be carried out in a home where the mother is caterer, cook, laundress, sempstress, and charwoman, as well as nurse. Still, it is easy in every department of life to reduce the ideal to within the limits of the practical, and there is much knowledge of human nature in the old exhortation to aim at the moon if one wants to hit the church steeple. No opposition will come from the mothers as regards domestic economy teaching, though they know that the troubles of their homes are not to be thus easily cured.

Quite different is their attitude towards another scheme for improving working-class conditions. The proposed raising of the school age to fifteen, and the limitation of hours (and therefore of pay) of young people under eighteen, though it finds favour in the eyes of men of all social grades, fills the women with helpless dismay. Now it is quite true, as Mr. Sidney Webb has so earnestly pointed out, that the present system of exploiting boy-labour is sapping the mental and physical vigour of the nation. The lads are employed during cruelly long hours—hours only

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possible because they draw on their balance at the bank of life and there exhaust their credit. The women acknowledge this, but the immediate question before each housekeeper is not what sort of a citizen her boy will be at the age of twenty-one, but how she is to satisfy his demand for food in the immediate present. It is no use telling her that the decrease of boy-labour will, proportionately, increase the demand for men's labour. Industrial history lends but little support to this assertion; but, even supposing it to be true, the mother has not the least guarantee that her husband will be one of the beneficiaries, whereas she is perfectly sure that as the children grow older they will become more expensive to keep, and that it is beyond human powers to make her weekly money provide another ounce of food. Even the Labour leaders fail to realise how entirely the burden of the family among the lower grades of workers falls on the wives. The man gives what he can afford or what he considers adequate, and the wife has to make it suffice. Any increase in the family expenses only touches the father after every other member has been stinted. As the income of the family depends entirely on his health and strength, this is not unreasonable. Nor can he be expected to relinquish his few small luxuries. The members of the Lodge reported considerable dissatisfaction among their husbands over the increased tax on tobacco under the Budget of 1909. When asked what other impost would have been preferred, the women replied, "The men would rather have had it on the tea or on the sugar; *we* should have had to pay that; the halfpenny on the ounce of tobacco comes out of their bit."

Opponents of the extension of the franchise to working women may be presented with the following admission. If these women had had the vote the school age in London could not have been raised to fourteen without very important modifications of the

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scheme. A short calculation will show that, as regards hundreds of thousands of women, the compulsory keeping back for twelve months of each successive child from entering the labour market was practically an income tax of from 20 to 25 per cent. levied on the bare subsistence income—a demand no enfranchised class would stand for a moment.

The politician, the philanthropist, and the educationalist seized the opportunity of carrying a reform urgently needed in the interests of the whole community, but wrung the greater part of the cost out of the flesh and blood of the mothers. Doubtless an apparently cheap bargain, but of the sort for which a nation pays dearly in the long run. Healthy and happy homes cannot be built up on the physical and moral misery of the home-makers.

Probably few people realise into what intolerable positions the unrepresented working-class mother is constantly being driven by the law-givers of the country. Take, for instance, a common experience of a "Notice B" Committee. For the benefit of the uninitiated it may be explained that, in order to reduce to a minimum summonses for keeping children out of school, parents are first called before a committee of managers, assisted by certain officials, and given an opportunity of defending or of explaining the non-attendance. It is frequently the case that a woman sets forth that she has two children, aged respectively somewhere about three years and eighteen months; that the one three years old suffers from some ailment which involves constant attendance at the hospital, and that she cannot carry both the invalid and the baby. What is she to do? If she keeps an elder child at home to mind the infant, she is breaking the law. Nominally her husband is fined; practically it is she who will have to provide the money by selling, pawning, or starving. If she leaves the baby alone in the

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house, and it gets the matches, falls out of bed, or in any way fatally injures itself, the mother is hauled up before the magistrate, and, at the very least, is held up to public obloquy as an unnatural wretch. If she refuses to take the child to the hospital—the only means she can afford of obtaining medical treatment and advice—she renders herself liable under the Children's Act of 1908 to prosecution for cruelty and neglect.

There are variations, of course, in the precise circumstances, but the central fact of them all is the same: the woman is ordered by the law to perform the impossible, and punished if she fails. Another example may be given. Not long ago a mother came before a committee and asked leave to keep her daughter from school one-half day in the week while she herself did the family washing. She explained that she lived in workmen's flats and that the washing had to be done on the roof. Her baby was a lively boy of twelve months, and she could not take him into such a dangerous place, nor dared she leave him alone in her room. A lady on this occasion was chairman, and deeply sympathised, but felt bound to refuse the application. Half the mothers in the district were, some time or other, in a like predicament, and the education of the little girls could not be sacrificed to exigencies which were none of their making. Legally, indeed, she had no power to decide otherwise. As the woman left the room she exclaimed, with concentrated wrath: "Well, Miss, I only hope you will have five children of your own and the washing to do yourself!"

The theory doubtless is that the father is the responsible party, and that failure to make proper arrangements for his family is visited on him. The responsibility of the father, however, among large sections of the population, is a mere legal fiction, and the administrators of the Education Act seldom

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allude to it. They know the men are helpless, out at work from dawn to dark, and earning far too small wages to allow of their providing domestic assistance for their wives. Still, as it is the officials' business to insist on the children going to school, they have devised a fiction of their own. They assume that there is among the poor an endless supply of neighbours endowed with the loftiest altruism who, without a fraction of pay, are always ready to neglect their own concerns in order to attend to a mother who is lying ill in bed, carry a baby to the hospital, or take charge of two or three troublesome children. To the everlasting credit of human nature this assumption materialises in fact oftener than anyone could expect, but the injustice is glaring. What right has the Government of the country, in order to save the trouble and expense of making proper arrangements, to extort unpaid services from the poorest of the poor by exploiting the pity which one down-trodden and harassed woman feels for another?

As regards the efficacy of the medical inspection of school children in districts like their own, the members of No. 39 are a little sceptical.

They still cling to their hereditary belief in the potency for good of "a beautiful bottle of medicine," but they perceive that no amount of medical advice from the school doctor, nor any number of visits from the school nurse, can do much for a child suffering in its home from a deficiency of air, space, and light.

The task in London alone of supervising the health of hundreds of thousands of children is enough to appal the boldest, and it is being courageously tackled. The present scheme of the Council, however, whereby the voluntary character of hospital treatment is abolished as far as concerns children who have come under the school doctor, is being severely criticised. The Council points out in its circular of March, 1910,

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that it is compelled by Act of Parliament to fix a charge for every case of medical treatment provided at the Council's expense, though it is not obliged to enforce payment in all cases. Considerable pains have been taken to adjust the scale of charges to the incomes, considered with reference to the liabilities of the wage-earner, and many of the families connected with No. 39 are poor enough to escape the new impost altogether. But even the minimum charge of fourpence for each attendance will be a strain on those mothers whose incomes are somewhat over the amount fixed for exemption from payment. The husband will not increase his weekly allowance to his wife because she has now to pay a hospital fee, and the money must be squeezed by her out of the housekeeping. In practice this usually means out of her own food. Our friends were asked what would happen if the husband were compelled to defray such extra expenses, compulsorily incurred on behalf of the children, out of the weekly cash he reserves for himself, and the answer was startling: "If the Government tried to make the man give up his 'bit' he'd chuck his job altogether." One really cannot much blame the man. He works hard, and feels he has an indefeasible right to his clothes, boots, club-money, and to a few pence in his pocket. Unluckily for the women, their stake in the home is too great and too intimate for them to secure their similar rights by a similar threat; and of this fact our law-makers take full advantage.

Quite apart from the question of fees, attendance at the hospital with sick children involves the mothers in endless difficulties. The notes of No. 39 are full of the laments of the members over a system which often means sacrificing the whole family to the invalid. The woman's absence during the greater part of the day demoralises and disorganises the entire home. The

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other children go late to school, the place is not cleaned, the dinner is not cooked, the husband goes off to the public-house, and the grown-up son will perhaps take himself and his board-money elsewhere. It is therefore with keen regret that one reads of the decision of the London County Council to develop and extend its present system of hospital treatment instead of establishing school clinics in the various localities.

The proposal, however, which strikes most terror to the hearts of the working women of the district is the threatened further limitation, shadowed forth by Mr. John Burns, of the married women's permission to work. They do not realise the political danger of such a prohibition, which would inflict a serious disability on their class and come perilously near repealing, as far as they are concerned, the Married Women's Property Act, but they know from their own life experience the wholesale ruin that would result, under the present industrial system, from the passing of such a law. There is scarcely a woman belonging to No. 39 but has kept her home together and saved her family by her almost incredible exertions during some prolonged disability of her husband. It is not that the women want to leave their homes. It may be different in the North of England, but in the district round No. 39 the hours are far too long and the pay far too small to tempt the mothers away from their children. They know too well how the latter suffer from their absence. The commonest of all explanations given of unsatisfactory sons is, "When he was little I had to work, and there was no one to make him mind." Nor do the children themselves ever forgive the loss of their natural home life. Some time ago the writer was pressing certain home truths upon a young wife who was wrecking her life by her undisciplined temper. The girl listened silently for some minutes and then burst out, "You are too hard on me; you ought to

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remember that our family never had the same chance as other children, with mother sitting at the head of the table and us little ones gathered around her. She had to work for us, and we had to play about in the streets till she came home with the food. What chance had I of being different?" Nevertheless, the women are appalled at the idea of their liberty of action in this matter being forcibly taken from them. To do this and to leave untouched the causes which drive them into the labour market seems to them about as wise a proceeding as trying to cure a broken leg by removing the splints. The bread-winner may be incapacitated by illness, or he may lose his work through bad seasons, the shifting of his trade, or the introduction of a new machine; or he may be a drunkard, or a loafer, or simply incompetent. In each case the proper course is to deal appropriately and efficiently with the man, not to pile disqualifications on his unfortunate wife.

It is, of course, contended that the loafer, and possibly the drunkard, would be driven to earn if his wife could not work. There is probably some truth in this, but to inflict a general disability on a whole class in order to meet the case of a small section of that class is surely a mark of careless and unintelligent law-making. Unfortunately, much of the legislation affecting women is of this character, and a moment's digression to illustrate this farther may perhaps be pardoned. Some time ago a sensational journalist thrilled the nation by drawing terrific pictures of dishevelled women sitting whole mornings in public-houses, while their infants crawled over the floor and picked up phthisis germs. The Children's Bill followed, forbidding babies to be taken into drinking bars. The members of No. 39 have no bowels of mercy where a bad mother is concerned; they would cheerfully consign her to the deepest dungeon for the rest of

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her days, but they think it unfair that the liberty of all should be curtailed because those who undertake to manage affairs are too stupid or too weak to deal with the guilty parties. Some of the women described how this clause in the Bill would affect them personally. Mrs. P. is a plucky little woman who is gradually reclaiming a drunken husband whom everybody else thought hopeless. She said: "If I have his dinner ready punctually at half-past twelve and his glass of beer on the table, I can get him safe back to work for the afternoon. But if I can't go for the beer because of the baby in my arms he will have to go himself, and won't leave till he is fuddled."

Mrs. B. said: "The Bill will put a stop to our chief bit of pleasure. Our husbands now often take us on the trams or out into the country in the summer evenings; of course we have to take the babies. About nine o'clock or so the men want some refreshment, and we go and sit with them in a respectable public for half an hour, have a glass of beer or kola, and no harm is done. We are home by 10.30 p.m. But it will be very different if the men have to go in by themselves while we stand outside with the children, and it will end by our never going out with them at all." As another example of proposed harassing legislation we may quote the suggestion made not long ago in Parliament that expectant mothers should, in the interests of the future citizens, be expelled from the factories. It did not apparently occur to our legislators that this would mean depriving the poverty-stricken woman—for no one who was not poverty-stricken would work in a factory at such a time—of the means of procuring warmth and nourishment just when she badly needed both. If the State for its own ends interferes with a worker's liberty of action, the State should make compensatory provision, and this, in the case of voters, it would be compelled to do.

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But to return to married women and the labour market.

A very common reason for a wife's going out to work, perhaps the most common, is the fact that the man's wages alone are too small or too irregular for the family to live upon. Many extracts showing this could be quoted from the Lodge diary; a single example must suffice. Mrs. W. said: "I have been married twenty-two years and have never been away from home a single night. My husband has never missed a day at his work and has never had more than 24s. He has always given me 22s., but I had to help pay his clothes and clubs. My eldest boy was crippled seven years, and nursing him took a lot out of me. I have had nine children, of whom seven are alive. They are all good children, and I have always kept them tidy. When I was 'carrying' I used to work at the fur pulling. I never went on Saturdays, but I used to earn 12s. for the five days; out of that I paid 3s. to have my baby minded. I used to do my washing after I came home at night, and was often up till twelve or one."

According to the scale of expenditure of the Poor-Law Schools, to provide merely food and clothing for Mrs. W.'s children would absorb their father's wages, and no management, however good, could make 22s. suffice for the decent shelter and maintenance of nine people.

As in the case of boy labour, the women are, however, told that if they are withdrawn from the labour market the demand for men's labour will probably increase and wages rise. There may be some fragment of truth in this contention, though the Majority Report states that "only one-fifth of the males of the country are engaged in trades where women enter, to the extent of 1 per cent. of the whole number of occupied females."

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But if anything could convert one to a demand for immediate womanhood suffrage it is such an argument as this. In the case of the brewer and of the landlord the greatest pains are taken that the public gain shall not be at the price of ruin to the individual, and every case of special hardship is carefully considered and met. But men, apparently, think it quite fair to say to gallant souls like Mrs. W.: "If we keep you and your fellows off the labour market we expect, though without much ground for our belief, that within a few years the wages of the men alone will be about equal to what you and they together earn now. You must, therefore, cheerfully consent to surrender your personal interests and see your own children grow up half-starved and badly cared for."

And this sacrifice of the individual is demanded by people who abhor the very name of Socialism!

It may, however, be fairly asked what method of improving social conditions does commend itself to the average working woman, seeing she has so little belief in the expedients offered her by an anxious Government.

Small as is the knowledge of politics or of economics possessed by the working-class wife and mother, she has studied life in a hard school, and knows quite well where her own shoe pinches. What she wants is the general introduction of a system already existing in the case of 2,000,000 of English manual workers and of the whole Civil Service, and the adoption of which would only mean the extension of a principle already proved to give satisfactory results. Had the working women of England votes, politicians would find themselves irresistibly driven into gradually extending the rule of the living, or minimum, wage till it covered the whole field of industry, and there is little doubt that this solution of the social problem is not only ethically just but economically sound.

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Were this living wage secured to the worker, and the measure fortified by State insurance against unemployment, and by the establishment of fair-rent courts to prevent the increased income from disappearing into the coffers of the landlord, the present costly and clumsy machinery for school feeding, with its inevitable openings for abuses, could be abolished; neither the married woman nor the immature youth would be driven into the labour market, and there would be a clean sweep of all the evils accruing from the employment of these classes of workers; the drunkard and the loafer could be detected and dealt with, the school age could be raised without the risk of half-starving the families affected; mothers could afford to subscribe to co-operative school dispensaries; the ill-health of the workers and of their children, which is responsible for one-half of the huge total expenditure under the Poor Law, would be greatly diminished; and the condition of the woman of the mean streets would cease to wring the hearts of all who realise it.

So far from the concession of the principle of the living wage being a step on the road to Socialism, it would be the greatest barrier to the progress of that creed. English people do not yearn after equality; they have too little imagination to be envious of other people's luxuries, but they have the deepest attachment to their homes and families, and are well content if things prosper within their own four walls. Nothing but the present intolerable industrial disorganisation could have rendered possible the Socialistic propaganda of the last few years among a nation of born individualists.

The shrinking from this natural solution of two-thirds of our social problems leads to extraordinary mental confusion. To cite an example. A Paper appeared in June, 1908, in "The Nineteenth Century and After," by Mr. Montague Crackanthorpe,



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K.C., entitled "Eugenics as a Social Force." In this Paper the author exhorted the public to cease from the folly of taxing the rich to make the poor comfortable, and to employ its energies in teaching mothers how to guard their unborn babes and so diminish the terrible infant mortality of the poor, which, he stated, was a matter of urgent public concern. The Paper then went on to speak with scorn of "the right to work," asserting that a man's primary right was the right to a chance of a healthy life. But the writer did not grasp the fact that no teaching would enable a woman to guard her unborn child if, through its father being out of work, the burden of maintaining the family fell upon her during her pregnancy, or that no baby, however vigorous at birth, would have any chance of growing up into a healthy man unless someone was able to provide it with the necessaries of life.

The "Living Wage" formula rests on such obvious logic that any difficulty in defining the term is theoretical rather than practical, as the history of trades unionism shows. Any labour involves the expenditure of a certain amount of energy. To restore this to the worker a certain amount of rest, food, shelter, and clothing is necessary; no employer, using horses in his business, would dream of stinting his four-legged workers in their equivalent of the above. It would not pay him to do so. In order to ensure a supply of future workers the man's wages must enable him to maintain his family, and this expenditure should be the first charge on the cost of all production. If the sum paid as wages is insufficient to maintain the labourer and his family in physical and moral health, the employer, or sometimes the ground landlord, benefits at the expense of the general community, which has to make up the deficiency at immense expense by school meals, infirmaries, workhouses, asylums, and so forth.

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It is urged that certain trades would disappear were the employers bound by law to pay adequate wages. This may or may not be true, but no one would argue that a parcels delivery company, for instance, should be enabled to throw part of the cost of the stabling of its horses on the general public because it could not otherwise pay a dividend. A trade that can only keep going by forcing the community at large to pay part of its costs of production—that is, part of its wages bill—is a loss to the country and had better vanish. Labour and capital are being wrongly applied. Often indeed, it is the consumer who ultimately reaps the benefit of the unfairly low wage. Competition among the manufacturers passes the advantage on to him; but for the halfpenny he may thus save on his matches, or on his biscuits, he has to pay a penny in rates, taxes, or charity. It would be cheaper, as well as more honest, to pay the wages of the human worker as one does those of the equine, direct to the earner. The establishment of the principle of a living wage is the only reform which really appeals to the hearts and minds of the women of No. 39 and their compeers. They do not want charity nor rate aid, but they do claim that it shall be put within a man's power to keep his family. The standard of life would then rise automatically among the whole wage-earning class, and the dread of a degenerate nation would be a thing of the past.

This is not the place to deal with the undoubted difficulties which stand in the way of the adoption of this only honest remedy for our social troubles. It is obvious, however, that the unenfranchised condition of that part of the nation which has the keenest interest in the establishment of the "Living Wage" theory is in itself an enormous obstacle. To do for the great body of workers what the trade unions have done for their members means alarming and antagonising

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numerous and powerful interests, and while women are politically helpless a reforming Government could obtain no counter-balancing support. In the meantime, to try and achieve something of the desired ultimate result, at the cost of harriving and harassing a voteless and voiceless class, is apparently a temptation that neither Tory nor Liberal, Labour man nor Socialist, can withstand.

ANNA MARTIN.

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The  
Mother  
and  
Social  
Reform

By ANNA MARTIN

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## THE MOTHER AND SOCIAL REFORM

By  
ANNA MARTIN

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## The Mother and Social Reform

The writer laid down the thick volume containing the report of the First International Eugenics Congress held in London, July 1912, and reflected. How far did experience gained in the actual homes of the masses tally with the conclusions of those eminent men who had come together from all parts of the world and whose years of patient toil had found expression in such elaborate statistical tables and in such ingenious diagrams? Dr. Schiller, of Oxford, had declared "that the present ordering of all civilised societies, and particularly of our own, was promoting, not the improvement of the human race, but its degeneration, and that at a very rapid rate." Dr. Mott, of London, endorsed Professor Karl Pearson's assertion that, while restriction of families is taking place in the better-off classes, "children are born freely to the feeble-minded, the criminal, the pauper, and the thriftless casual labourer." Dr. Raoul Dupuy, of Paris, stated that "the number of abnormal children, deformed beings, future criminals, lunatics, prostitutes, increased day by day, compromising the future of the country, society, and the race." Other speakers were no less pessimistic. Three main causes had been assigned for the threatened racial decay: first, adverse conditions of life during the development of the individual by which fair, or even good, human material was irretrievably ruined; secondly, an over-moralised public sentiment which tended to keep alive the unfit and the incapable, and enabled

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them to propagate their kind; thirdly, the undermoralisation of individuals which led to the dissemination of race poisons whereby healthy stocks were continually vitiated and degraded, and the supply of degenerates maintained.

In spite of certain counterbalancing considerations which were apparently overlooked by the Congress, practical experience led one to think that its general indictment was to a large extent justified, and one turned with mingled hope and anxiety to the remedies suggested.

Dr. Louis Queston advocated the placing of children under the control of appropriate institutions during the whole period of their growth; Professor Davenport, the sterilisation or segregation of the socially unfit; Dr. Schiller, a large extension of the scholarship system for the children of the well-to-do; Dr. Alfred Mjöen, a different method of licensing spirituous liquors; Professor Kellog, a recognition of the dysgenic aspect of militarism.

The writer took up a private letter, dated a fortnight after the Congress rose. "The baby at No. 15 is wasting; I hope it may go altogether. Mrs. G. says that, if it does, she means, when you come home, to make a dash for it and get away from her husband." The sentence recalled an interview with the mother three months previously. The woman, gaunt and haggard, sat staring into space. "I dreaded your finding out, for I knew how upset you would be; of course, it's only bringing poverty and misery into the world, but what is a woman to do when the man's got a drop of drink in him and she's all alone?"

The letter went on: "The Reynolds' baby, two months too soon, is not like a human baby at all, and I hope it will also go, but one cannot tell."

Now in both cases the women concerned have been irreproachable mothers. The first has given two of her girls trades, despite the direst poverty; and the second,

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by ten months' unremitting devotion, nursed back to health a child returned from the hospital as incurable. Yet the families of both have given more than one unit to the huge army of physically defective children, and their dead infants have swelled the mortality tables of their borough. Nor are the life stories of these women, which compel those who know them to rejoice at the death of their babies, by any means exceptional. Similar tragedies are to be found in every poor street and, in the light of the facts of the individually known cases, it must be confessed that the antidotes advocated by the eugenists seemed not a little futile.

Long before the Congress met, however, the failures of the Boer War, the increasing commercial rivalry of America and Germany, the growing forces of democracy, had aroused anxiety concerning the alleged physical deterioration of the nation, and, since the disquieting symptoms were considered due to environment rather than to heredity, many remedial measures sprang into existence. "Mothering" the children of the poor became almost a fashionable sport. Doctors and journalist began it; politicians and ladies of fashion took it up. Huge schemes were initiated, staffed with well-paid and, doubtless, competent officials. Free meals are now almost to be had for the asking; in London and other large towns children are ordered up to the hospitals in droves to have their spectacles fitted, their teeth out, and their tonsils cut. Philanthropists start school clinics at their own expense, and even clinics for children under the school age. Grave legislators debate the material of which the baby's nightwear should be composed, and endeavour to lay down the principles which should regulate its sleeping arrangements. Local authorities decide the hours at which Annie may earn twopence by cleaning steps or Johnnie add to the family income by lathering chins. School doctors take a hand in the administration of the family finances, and



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virtually decree that Mrs. Smith shall spend less on bread and boots and more on Adeline's adenoids.

Amid the hum, however, of all this beneficent activity, and despite the impressive reports, departmental and otherwise, furnished yearly to the public, there are those who doubt if these schemes are really achieving their object. The more critical members of Children's Care Committees constantly express in private their belief that most of their work is unavailing. Miss Margaret Frere, member of the Education Committee of the London County Council, warns managers "that in many London schools where widely extended, highly organised systems of free feeding have flourished for years, the stream of child misery flows on unchecked." Mr. Douglas Pepler, Principal Organiser, Children's Care Committees, writes: "Where school meals have been provided for any length of time no one can point to any improvement in the condition of these children, while there are many who know there has been a steady deterioration." Mr. Havelock Ellis, surveying society as a whole, asserts that the results of improvements in external conditions "have in no degree corresponded to the efforts which have been made to obtain them, or to the expectation of those who initiated them."

The Majority Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1909 stated:

Notwithstanding our assumed moral and material progress, and notwithstanding the enormous annual expenditure, amounting to nearly £60,000,000 a year, upon poor relief, education, and public health, we still have a vast army quartered upon us who are unable to support themselves.

The object of this article is to suggest that the reason why ratepayers, taxpayers and the charitable public are reaping so scanty a reward for their struggles and sacrifices is that an essential factor of the problem has been overlooked; that the social disease has not been correctly diagnosed. The history of agriculture presents us with a useful parallel. No industry has been an object of more constant care to successive Governments.

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Royal Commission after Royal Commission has striven to promote its prosperity and avert its decay, for even in the palmy days of Protection it suffered from distress. A whole State Department is devoted to its service. The results of the latest scientific experiments and the services of skilled experts are freely placed at the disposal of the cultivator. Local Societies and Chambers of Agriculture are ever on the watch to further the interests of farmers and landowners. Nevertheless, during the last thirty years two million acres have gone out of cultivation, and, in spite of the general increase of population, the number of labourers has diminished by 900,000. It is now realised by statesmen of all schools that the fatal mistake was made of ignoring the personal claims of the man who looked after the pigs or who trimmed the hedges. As regards male workers the nation has learnt the lesson that, if an industry is to prosper, its human tools must be able to "live and thrive." Not only must their physical needs be supplied, but they must be relieved from the depressing effects of fear, be able to cherish a sense of personal worth and dignity, and, in order to satisfy the cravings of individuality, have some share of "those little things a man cares about."

Now, the rearing of the child crop is, confessedly, the most vital to the nation of all its industries, being that which alone gives to other industries any meaning or importance; but, though its quality is occasioning grave concern, no attempt has been made to apply the above principles to those on whose care and devotion it necessarily depends. Theoretically, no one would deny that the mother is the main influence in the life of the child, and that its moral and physical development is closely conditioned by hers. Practically, there has been no grasp of the significance of the fact that it is precisely in that portion of the community where the dysgenic effects of alcoholism and of syphilis are rife, and where the young are constantly thrown on the public

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for support, that the married women are still little removed from a state of domestic slavery, dependent solely on the goodwill of their husbands for any chance of a decent life. "Begin with the child" was a popular cry; "Begin with the mother" would have been a sounder principle.

The wealth of a country does not consist of its gold and silver, but of the vast complicated production and exchange of goods and services whereby the wants of the community are supplied. Unfortunately, the fact that these goods and services are usually measured against each other by means of money tends to an ignoring of goods and services not so appraised; but this does not alter their real nature. The woman's work in the home in cooking, washing, cleaning, nursing, managing is every whit as essential to society as her husband's work in bricklaying, hawking, or driving a motor-bus, and often demands greater brain power. That she should be forced into accepting degrading terms of labour, injurious to a healthy, self-respecting life, is just as detrimental to the body politic as if men were the sufferers. That the wife is in the disadvantageous position of being tied to only one possible employer should have been the most powerful of reasons for safeguarding her interests, for protecting the weaker party in the bargain. Inquiry, however, into the actual facts of the daily life of the humbler classes, as distinguished from legal fictions and conventional beliefs, reveals the truth that, as compared with the male worker, the wife suffers from two fundamental disabilities: firstly, the law does not enforce contract for her as against her employer-husband; secondly, it does not, save in the feeblest and most inefficient way, protect her from his personal violence.

Misled by the fact that in one small section of the community the husband bestows on the wife much greater economic advantage than he derives from her,

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Mr. Harold Owen and other distinguished anti-suffragists attempt to justify the political subordination and other disabilities of women as a natural corollary of their economic dependence. But in nine families out of ten the husband is fully as dependent on his wife's work as she is on his. He may mend tin kettles for the public and with his earnings provide the raw material for a dish of tripe and onions, but unless she cooks the viands neither he nor his children will be fed. His wages may buy sheets and underclothing, but unless she keeps them washed the family will speedily come under the notice of the sanitary inspector. The latent consciousness that among the poor the wife is the more indispensable partner crops out somewhat oddly in an unsigned article in the January *Quarterly* of this year. The author argues against the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Divorce Commission that desertion for three years should, in future, form a ground of divorce, but goes on to observe that the case for the adoption of the proposal would be much stronger if desertion by the wife were anything like as common as desertion by the husband.

From one point of view marriage is merely the most important of all civil contracts. Countless unions confessedly exist where the great natural forces of love of man for woman, and of woman for man, render any idea of a hard-and-fast bargain between the parties unthinkable; where the joy of each is found in the happiness of the other, and where both willingly sacrifice themselves for their children. Nor are such unions found only among the well-to-do. But the fact that marriage in most cases has an emotional and spiritual side seems an inadequate reason for permitting the relationship in a large number of others to sink below the every-day level of business honesty and fair play. The woman takes permanent service under her husband-employer, who, in return, is supposed to bind himself to support her and the children she may bear, and this

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must be taken as meaning to support *adequately*. But, contrary to the general belief, the law affords her no effective redress for her employer's default. Inasmuch as it affects a far larger proportion of the population, probably well over a quarter of the whole, this question of maintenance is a far more vital matter to the married women of the poor than the various suggestions set forth in the Report of the Divorce Commission. The marriage contract is just as much violated by the husband's failure to support his family as by his misconduct, and, sentiment aside, the lack of maintenance is usually more directly hurtful to the wife and to the State. A few months ago the Mrs. G. referred to above resolved to throw herself and her children on the Guardians. Her husband gave her sums varying from half-a-crown to thirteen shillings a week. Her rent stood at five-and-sixpence, and she had four children, with another coming. The relieving officer refused to admit her. "Your husband has not deserted you," he said. "He may not give you enough to live upon, but you are no worse off than hundreds of others. *If we took in such as you we should be crowded out.* Before her marriage, as a hand in a jam factory, the woman had the legal right of demanding from her employer, in return for her services, the agreed-upon means of living. As wife and mother, beslavered with sentimentality though the office is, she stands outside the protection of the law. Later on the doctor, discovering Mrs. G.'s condition, gave an order on the parish for medical nourishment. This, however, the relieving officer would only hand over on the personal application of the husband. The man refused to apply, and, again, the wife had no remedy. Bootless feet, ragged clothing and a starving body are not considered a serious enough breach of the man's marriage contract to justify "breaking up the home," not even when, as in this case, the mother had to watch her children slowly perishing from privation.

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Let the reader pause and consider what would be the public outcry were any class of male workers in an equivalent plight. "It is practically impossible," states the head relieving officer of a large London district, "for a wife to prove that her husband fails to maintain her as long as she cohabits with him." But even if a neglected wife succeeds, by performing the difficult task of proving complete destitution, in forcing her way into the workhouse, her prospects are so unutterably dreary that a respectable woman very seldom attempts to take advantage of her supposed remedy. In the first place, success involves separation, probably lifelong, from her children, and this to mothers of the abyss, whose only stake in life they are, is a horror indescribable. Furthermore, unless she can rely on relatives coming to her rescue, admittance for an absolutely destitute woman—and only such are received—means permanent imprisonment within the workhouse walls. She cannot come out into the streets, later on, without a farthing in her pocket, and begin life afresh on the off-chance of securing a job before she starves. Her desperate case itself would militate against her obtaining employment. The Guardians may indeed prosecute the husband for the expense they have been put to in maintaining his family, but not a penny of the money extracted from him goes to satisfy the wife's claim. Recognising, therefore, that the law affords them no redress, the women bend their necks to the yoke and bear their wrongs with what dignity and patience they may.

I had a shocking time last week [said Mrs. H—, a woman who, in spite of her troubles, still shows traces of remarkable beauty]. Owing to the strike, the rent is £4 behind, and I have to pay three shillings extra each week to make up. This only leaves twelve out of a guinea my chap gives me to provide for nine of us. He came in the worse for drink on Saturday, and only gave me sixteen. When I asked for more, he put me and the four youngest children into the street. I walked up and down till 2 a.m. carrying

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the baby, and feeling ready to drop. A policeman came along and said I would be locked up for having the children out so late, but he was a kind gentleman, and, when I explained, he came round to the house with me to see if H— was asleep and if it was safe for me to go back. It doesn't seem right a woman should have to put up with such treatment, but it was no use my charging H—. Even the if the magistrate had put him "away" I should have lost my next week's money, and he would have half killed me when he came out.

Considering the frailty of human nature, it would indeed be surprising if the weak economic position of the wife who has no legal claim on a single farthing of her husband's income did not prove an almost irresistible temptation to hundreds of thousands of men. A comparison of the wages bill of the country with its drink bill, to say nothing of the huge amounts spent in gambling and betting, demonstrates that vast sums are annually wasted by the male portion of the community in ways that have nothing to do with the domestic responsibilities they have voluntarily undertaken.

"Last night I found a poor woman crouching in the rain on my doorstep," reported Mrs. T. "She said she had come out because she had neither fire nor light, and her husband was drinking in the public-house just opposite." Mrs. R. said to a visitor, "I am just baking a little pudding for a neighbour of mine. Her man earns good money, but he half starves her and the children while having the best of everything for himself." The wife of a tram-driver in the London County Council service was recently fed surreptitiously for months by a lady who had chanced to discover her underfed condition. It is unnecessary to multiply instances. Those who live among the poor and have the power of getting behind the scenes can supply them by scores.

The law's neglect to enforce adequate maintenance for the wife is due, in part at least, to historic causes. In its present acute form, the grievance is probably a

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modern one. Up to the end of the eighteenth century England was still largely "a country of commons and common fields." Husband, wife and children all worked together on the land in summer and carried on small home industries in winter, and all shared alike in the products of their united labours. The husband had neither the temptation nor the opportunity to divert the means of living from his family. The industrial revolution, with its substitution of labour for wages in place of labour devoted to the direct supply of the commodities needed for the family, brought about enormous legislative changes regulating the conditions of industrial labour. A revision of the business relations between husband and wife was equally imperative, but in the circumstances of the time practically impossible. The ecclesiastical view of the marriage contract has constantly tended to obscure the economic, and, in the sacred name of religion, women have been continually exhorted to endure patiently a vast amount of injustice and wrong, too often to the moral ruin both of themselves and of their husbands.

When the man's default arises solely from his low wages, the wife, though saved from much bitterness of soul, is materially no better off. The inspecting doctor at A— School recently reported that Lizzie S., a child of five, showed such marks of terrible neglect that the parents should be prosecuted. Investigation revealed that the family of twelve lived in two small rooms, the walls of which swarmed with vermin, but which were cheap. The father earned a guinea a week, out of which he paid one-and-fourpence insurance and gave the wife seventeen shillings for the household expenditure. To make ends meet, she worked at wood-chopping from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., with an hour and a half's interval for meals, during which time she suckled her seven-months'-old baby. On Saturdays she left work at 4 p.m., took her washing to the baths, getting home about 8 p.m. On Sundays she devoted herself to

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cleaning up her place and her offspring. To do more was beyond human power and endurance, and the parties really responsible for the child's condition were those who control the present social order. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children states that over 47,000 cases of neglect were reported to it last year, most of which were substantiated. One would like to know in how many of the families the mothers were in a plight similar to that of Mrs. S. The officials of the Society themselves declare that downright cruelty is rare, and that 90 per cent. of the above cases were due to ignorance and hopelessness. Every woman, however, knows that a child ought to be kept clean, be well shod, be warmly clad, and have enough to eat; and the charges of ignorance which are always being brought against poverty-stricken mothers by all sorts and conditions of men are little else than an effort to avoid facing the real causes of the shortcomings of the homes.

It is true, as in the foregoing instance, that the man's failure adequately to maintain his wife and children may be due to no direct fault of his own, but in no other case of contract is a debtor allowed to escape the consequences of insolvency by pleading inability to pay. That the husband can do so puts the social and legal position of the wife below that of any sweated worker in the kingdom.

Mr. Frederic Harrison, when explaining the withdrawal of his support from the suffrage movement, wrote: "It is the sacred and religious duty of men to relieve women from exhausting outside labour and to provide for their maintenance within the home." It is to be presumed that he understands maintenance as meaning provision up to, at least, prison or workhouse standard, and he would add much to his social information by running through a few hundreds of the case-papers which come before the various Children's Care Committees. Those examined recently in A— School

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gave an average of under six shillings as the amount handed over in the previous week by the husband for household expenses. Mr. Harrison's deliverance, in truth, belong to that class of fine sentiments which, as somebody puts it, is the Devil's favourite device for preventing right action.

Lord Loreburn, shortly before his resignation, in an anti-suffrage meeting, declared that the English law favoured women. In the case of male workers one wonders if he would consider a contract valid, or in accordance with public policy, by which one party was held to the rendering of services payment for which on the part of the other was optional. This is no small or unimportant matter. Nine-tenths of our social problems and difficulties originate in those families in which the male head of the household, either willingly or unwillingly, takes advantage of his option.

It is true that the husband is equally without legal power of compelling his wife to perform her share of the matrimonial bargain. Theoretically, this is also a serious defect in the law, but, practically, does not lead to widespread evil. Among the poor, neglect of her domestic duties by the mother, in so far as she is physically or economically able to perform them, seldom occurs, save in cases of advanced alcoholism or of feeble-mindedness. This is not because of any inherent moral superiority on her part, but because the incessant, insistent needs of the children train her unconsciously to self-control and unselfishness. Whatever part the fierce desire for food may have played in the past evolution of the race, in the case of the human mother the craving is, perforce, often relegated to a very subordinate place. "I've only just found out something," said Mrs. H., a tidy, respectable young woman with a husband in regular work, though with small wages. "Now the children are getting bigger I find they eat all the dinner and there is none left for me. Looking back, I

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remember that we children never expected mother to have dinner. She always took a bit of bread. Now it has come to my own turn I don't like it." To their sympathisers women often explain that they become so used to going without food all day that they really do not much mind its absence.

In cases of confirmed inebriety the husband has his remedy and can secure a separation, and, as far as the writer's experience goes, the working classes would welcome a change in the law whereby he could obtain relief for a lesser degree of intemperance than he now has to prove, and by which the relief took the form of divorce rather than of separation.

It is difficult to feel much pity for a potential father who deliberately marries a mentally defective wife, or to understand why this class often proves attractive to apparently normal men. In such cases, however, the interest of the children should be held paramount, and legislation should secure whatever is best for them.

The law's failure to enforce the wife's claim to maintenance has had a far-reaching economic effect, the gravity of which is seldom realised. It has practically meant to the less organised industrial classes the loss of the exchange value of the woman's domestic work, and is a powerful factor of the present unsatisfactory distribution of wealth. An illustration may make this clearer. A wife, compelled to undergo a serious operation, is sometimes away for months in a hospital or infirmary. If no relative or neighbour comes to his assistance, the husband, especially if he has young children, is forced to engage a stranger, to whom he will pay at least five or six shillings a week, as well as providing her with food. Supposing this were to happen simultaneously in every working-class family in the country, wages, in some shape or form, would have to rise to cover the new expenditure. The business of the homes could not go undone, nor could the men

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themselves go to work unless someone catered, cooked, cleaned and washed for them. The fact, however, that it is possible to obtain these services at slave rates—that is, for just enough to keep the worker alive—has resulted in establishing a level of earnings which, in hundreds of thousands of cases, renders it impossible for men, even though they strain every nerve, properly to discharge their duty to their households.

A similar result would follow were the right to demand rent only a moral one, and were the landlord deprived of his legal rights of recovery and eviction. Conscientious tenants might strive to give the owner his due, but they would not long have the power to meet his claims. The competition of their less scrupulous fellows would reduce wages to a point at which rent-paying became an unattainable luxury. The fact that the mothers work for bare subsistence is also the main cause of the small earnings of girl factory hands. The six or seven shillings the daughters pay into the home barely covers the cost of their food and their share of the rent. Their "service" they get for nothing. Were they obliged to pay for this their wages would have to rise to cover the increased cost of living, and their families would thus enjoy a larger proportion of the national dividend.

There is much vague, distressed talk nowadays concerning what is called "the decay of parental responsibility." It would be a great gain if the word "parental" could be banished from the language for a few years. The term may refer to the father, the mother, or to both, and this ambiguity of meaning has afforded much welcome cover for obscure and confused thinking. As will be shown later, more is demanded from the mothers than ever before, but no one seems to realise that the state of the law is a direct inducement to the husbands to take no thought for the morrow as regards the number and the nurture of their children, and inevitably

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leads to their demanding from their wives a passive acquiescence in an unlimited maternity. As long as the father can, if he chooses, practically escape all pecuniary responsibility for his offspring, it is futile for eugenists and philanthropists to bewail that "the fertility of the socially unfit is alarming and that the procreation of their kind is their only industry." The children of alcoholic fathers and of crushed, degraded mothers are curiously often "well-born," but their constitutions are rapidly undermined by their environment, and they either succumb altogether or develop serious physical defects.

Even when the man is what is known as "a good husband," law and custom allow him to throw the whole burden of a large family on his wife. Out of his weekly wage he may, in the early years of his married life, allow her 21s. or 22s., but he is under no compulsion to increase this amount as the family increases. As has been shown, his lack of obligation practically brings about in a large portion of the community his lack of power so to do. Each baby, therefore, plunges the wife deeper into poverty until she may find herself struggling, by means which will be described in another article, to provide for eight or nine mouths out of the same sum with which she originally provided for three or four. The husband is only touched indirectly, if at all. His food, clothing, and club money must, if he is to keep at work, always be the first charge on the income, and though he doubtless suffers from the growing discomfort of the home, he may even make this an excuse for spending his evenings at the public-house.

But it is not only as regards its refusal to uphold her right to maintenance that the law sins against the wife. She alone among the workers of the country is still exposed to the humiliation of blows and the consequent moral degradation and loss of self-respect which enforced submission to physical violence entails. It is usual to deplore the prevalence of drinking habits

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among married women. Analysis of individual cases seems to show that, in very many instances, the wife first betakes herself to the public-house as a protest, however futile, against her husband's ill-treatment. The women, moreover, often drink as a mode of self-defence.

I should say seven out of ten of the wives down my way [said Mrs. C—, who lives in a very poor neighbourhood] feel their husband's fists at times, and lots of 'em are used shocking. When I tell 'em it does 'em no good to go to the public themselves, they say, "If you had to put up with what we do you'd go yourself. If a man comes in boozed and you've got everything tidy and comfortable, he's as like as not to beat you black and blue, but if you've a drop of drink in yourself you can stand up and defy him." It really is true [continued Mrs. C—]; there's my landlady, for instance; when she's sober her husband is a brute to her, but if she comes in singing and shouting, he undresses her and puts her in her own bed. The men are really a bit afraid of them when the women get drunk.

This testimony by no means stands alone. "The men think more of you when you take a drop yourself," was the unexpected assertion of an assembly of fifty respectable married women, not one of whom had ever been the worse for liquor in her life, but many of whom had drinking husbands.

Psychologically the situation is perhaps intelligible. Not only are men of low moral character likely to be egged on to violence by patience and submission, but the lapse of the wife relieves them from the strain of a double moral standard in the home. Many men, indeed, keenly resent teetotalism in their wives. Moreover, the woman who, when ill-treated, goes to the public-house and takes her fling, is making some sort of personal claim on life, and is, as compared with the colourless drudge who submits meekly to injustice, a more vivid personality, and therefore, in the long run, is more interesting and attractive to her mate.

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It is by no means easy to discover the full amount of marital cruelty to which English wives are subjected. The higher the social standing of the family the less willing is the woman to confess that her husband ill-treats her, partly from a desire to uphold the reputation of her home in the eyes of her world, and, partly, from that curious group-consciousness which often makes people feel more disgraced by the bad behaviour of a near relative than if they were themselves guilty. Shame, too, often holds the women back from speech. "It's not because they distrust you," explained Mrs. H., who herself has risen from the ranks and speaks with knowledge, "but they feel so much of their lives with their husbands to be a degradation that they conceal the truth as long as they can."

Sir Almroth Wright recently caused the anti-suffrage world to thrill with righteous exaltation by declaring that men had declared a "truce of God" between the sexes, thereby voluntarily renouncing the advantage arising from their physical strength. Police-court magistrates could tell a very different tale. In spite of the almost insurmountable obstacles to be described below which lie in the path of women who seek legal redress, nearly seven thousand separation orders are made every year by courts of summary jurisdiction in England and Wales. Most of them are granted to wives because of ill-treatment by their husbands, though not one case in a hundred of what would, were men concerned, be considered an "assault" ever comes before the courts. The Acts of 1878 and of 1895, which afford the wives what little protection there is, did not, indeed, contemplate granting redress or relief save in the case of "aggravated" assault or "persistent" cruelty. This is quite well understood by the men. "There's no need to mark your wife," declared a strapping young lighterman in honest indignation with a friend who had overstepped the limit; "the flat of your hand is quite sufficient."

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People are still to be found who argue that this state of things, on the whole, works well. The wives, they say, may be dirty, drunken, or inefficient, and need keeping up to the mark. But the same traits are found, and much more frequently found, in the husbands, and no one proposes to secure equivalent powers of physical coercion to the wife. Besides, in the case of no other British subject is the party who considers himself aggrieved allowed to act as both judge and executioner, and that this is possible in marriage is degrading to the relationship, and is no inconsiderable factor in the revolt against the legal tie which is beginning to be perceptible among the less conventional working women. "I know lots of *good* women nowadays," said Mrs. B., herself very happily mated, "who refuse to be married to their husbands; the men are so much kinder if the wives are free to leave."

It must not be supposed that the injuries inflicted are always of a trivial or transitory nature. The women frequently suffer all their lives in consequence of some blow or kick. "My husband hit me on the side of my head two years ago," said Mrs. S., a most respectable woman who has managed to rear a strikingly fine set of girls amid indescribably squalid surroundings, "and I've never been out of pain since, but he would never forgive me if he knew I had told you." "I have to go to the hospital at least once a month," said Mrs. D.; "he kicked me in the side some years ago when he'd lost money over a horse, and I've never got over it." Complaints are often heard that the mothers of the lower classes fail to control their children, that there is a lack of effective home discipline, that grown-up sons often feel no obligation to support their parents. The marvel is that any woman living under the conditions described contrives to retain any moral control over her children at all. The young soon learn to despise a creature they see can be bullied and ill-treated with impunity. Moreover, it is not only open violence that the



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wives have to fear. They are subjected, and sometimes deliberately, to injuries of a far worse kind, as doctors in the leading hospitals can testify.

The laws of the country, indeed, sometimes seem as if they were designed to drive the women to ruin and despair. If, for instance, a drunken man behaves in a filthy or disgusting manner in the street, he is at once arrested as an offender against public decency. Let that same man, however, manage to get inside his house door, and he may with impunity subject his wife to indescribable barbarities. "Yet," as one victim said bitterly, "you are never supposed to say a word when he comes to himself next morning. You must put up with it all; if you speak, it's called 'nagging.'" "Why on earth did you not appeal to your sons for protection?" exclaimed the horrified listener to Mrs. M., who for years had guarded her secret so carefully that she had always posed at her meetings as an "anti" and an upholder of male prerogatives, but whose reticence an unreportable outrage had at last broken down. "Could I tell my young sons a story like that?" was the unanswerable reply, and, in truth, the very enormity of the offence usually acts as its own screen. The worst offenders do not, by any means, always belong to the lowest social levels. Mrs. M.'s husband earned a regular wage of 8s. a day. It did not need the speech of Professor Marro at the July Congress to teach working women that a much more efficacious and far-reaching eugenic measure than any that were there advocated would be the closing of the public-houses in certain districts at ten o'clock. "The drunkard begets nothing that is good."

Apologists for the failure of a purely male electorate to defend the interest of the home, when these conflict with the interests of brewery shareholders and of political party leaders, commonly fall back on the maxim that men cannot be made sober by Act of Parliament.

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They can, at least, be helped to be temperate. The report for 1909 of the Prison Commissioners for Scotland stated that, as a result of the raised price of whisky due to the recent Budget, convictions for drunkenness in three towns only sank by 6,965, and that, taking Scotland as a whole, apprehensions for drunkenness decreased  $26\frac{7}{8}$  per cent. in the cities and 19 per cent. in the rural districts. As but a small proportion of those who are "the worse for liquor" ever falls into the hands of the police, the above figures are but a slight index of what must have been the total decrease in alcoholic excess. Besides, "the Trade" probably knows its own business. At the last annual meeting of one of the largest brewery firms in Birmingham it was stated that Sunday Closing would decrease receipts by one-seventh. No figure among the poor is so much commended as the hard-working, self-devoted drudge who, in spite of a drunken, worthless husband, keeps her home together and rears her children respectably. It is doubtful whether she be not a national enemy. If, automatically, every family the breadwinner of which consumed and destroyed its means of livelihood in the public-house came forthwith on the ratepayers for support, the licensing system would speedily be drastically revised.

The beery, useless wife of a sober and industrious husband is no doubt a tragic and a hopeless spectacle, but she is by no means so common a phenomenon as is ordinarily supposed. At the Eugenics Congress figures were quoted which showed that out of 3,271 children in France who were afflicted with hysteria, epilepsy, or idiocy, the father had been an excessive drinker in 1,156 cases, the mother in 100, and in 53 excess was attributed to both. The authors of the paper considered that the amount of maternal alcoholism was understated, but gave no reasons for their belief; and the disparity is no more than one would

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expect to find in England, provided that the same standard of drunkenness were applied to both sexes.

The denunciations so often heard of the drinking habits of women are, in reality, the expression of the fears of the community that the mothers will cease to stand between it and the natural consequences of its drink policy. It is felt possible to allow very considerable freedom and opportunity as regards indulgence in alcohol to men if the women can be depended upon to ward off its worst results from the homes, and therefore from the State.

It now remains to explain why married women suffering from neglect and ill-treatment take so little advantage of the Acts of 1878 and of 1895 which were intended for their protection and relief. As compared with the position of their own grandmothers, the legal status of even the women of the abyss shows an advance. Their earnings, if they have any, are now their own, and they generally manage to retain them; nor can their young children be arbitrarily taken from them. More important still, in its moral effect is the public acknowledgement that the wife has nominal rights, even though she is seldom able to enforce them. There is always an off-chance that, through the help of friends, or by some unlooked-for outburst of independence, she may take out a summons for assault, or secure a separation order, and the fact makes for her better treatment even from the worst of men. She is no longer the chattel of her husband to do as he likes with, short of quick murder. Ill-treated and neglected wives, however, have little further cause for gratitude. Only those who have stood side by side with such victims, and have tried to share their burdens, can realise in the least the appalling difficulties that confront them when they try to avail themselves of their supposed facilities for securing redress. Summonses for assault are of little use. If the man is found guilty

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he may be imprisoned for a time, during which period the wife is left without money for herself or her children, and at the expiration of his sentence she is exposed to whatever vengeance he chooses to take. So far, divorce has been absolutely out of her reach. A judicial separation is therefore her only hope of escape, but her path towards it resembles an obstacle race which has been arranged with the express view of deterring all but the most reckless aspirants from the course.

First of all, the wife must either produce two shillings or exhibit such marks of violence that the magistrate may be moved to grant a "free" summons. The woman, however, may not have a farthing in the world to call her own, and her injuries may be of a kind that does not show immediate results. Nevertheless, if she is proceeding under the Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Act, 1895, she must go up to the court immediately after the assault, or her case will in practice nearly always be dismissed. Furthermore, the application is more or less of a gamble. Everything depends on the view the presiding magistrate takes of what constitutes serious cruelty. Not long ago a magistrate ruled that a horsewhipping which left marks for several days was too trivial an act of savagery to justify an order, and another decided that the wife being dragged out of bed by her hair and forced to spend the night in a outhouse was likewise an inadequate reason.

Supposing, however, that the woman manages to borrow the two shillings, and is tolerably sure of her magistrate, she cannot obtain a separation order for "failure to maintain" unless she first leaves her husband's roof. As she cannot possibly leave her children behind her—for, even were she not afraid of her husband's brutality to them, there would be no one to attend to their physical wants—she must take a room, furnish it, and provide food and fuel for herself and her brood before she can apply to the court. In most cases it would be as possible for her to hire Buckingham Palace.

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It was perhaps hardly to be expected that the well-to-do middle-class framers of the Act should have enough imagination to enable them to realise the absolute powerlessness of a woman destitute of money, credit, or friends able to help, but the lack has fatally detracted from the value of their work. If, like Mrs. G., the mother, in order to fulfil the condition laid down by the law, tries to shelter herself and her family in the work-house, she is met at the door by the relieving officer, whose business it is in the interests of the ratepayers to keep down the statistics of official paupers to the lowest possible level, and who will seize upon every pretext to avoid admitting her. It is therefore easier, on the whole, if the women can in some way prove gross violence, but in hundreds of cases they are deterred from seeking relief by sheer physical fear, having no confidence that they will be protected from their husband's after-vengeance. "He's always swore he'd be the death of me if I took him to court," said one. "He's told me again and again that he'd follow me all over London and do for me if ever I left him," declared another. "I'd never dare to go out after nightfall," asserted a third; "I'd feel he was lying in wait behind every doorway." The women are directed always to carry their separation orders on their persons, so as to be able to appeal to the police if molested; but the police cannot be everywhere at once, and an angry man can easily find his opportunity.

Even, however, if the husband is of a less brutal or determined character so that the wife does not fear bodily harm, she is, in case after case, held back from seeking release by uncertainty as to the fate of her "few sticks." By law the furniture belongs to the husband, even though it has been got together by the wife's savings and pinchings. A sympathetic magistrate often aids and abets her, even though he thereby strains the law, in securing at least part of it; but, unless she is

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sure of this, the woman simply dare not take proceedings. The ragged towels, worm-eaten bedstead, battered teapot and rickety chairs might not fetch twenty shillings if sold in the open market, but they mean the possibility of her starting a new home for her children. She cannot take her family into a perfectly empty room, nor out of her scanty resources could she ever afford to pay for hired furniture, or hope to purchase new.

But even if all these obstacles are surmounted, if the woman finds the money for the summons, has a married sister able and willing to afford shelter, contrives to master her physical fear and comes off victorious as regards the household gods, the greatest impediment of all remains for a mother hampered by three or four children. In only very exceptional cases can she hope by her own efforts to be able to feed and clothe them, and she knows that "maintenance orders" made on the fathers are worth little more than waste paper. "Not one man in ten pays the money after the first three months, if he gives it as long as that," is the women's estimate of the risk. The nominal remedy provided for the wife shows how completely Parliaments can fail to understand, or even to care about, the circumstances of non-voters, for whom they nevertheless lightly legislated. This indifference is reflected by the administration, and the courts show little desire to vindicate the injured majesty of the law by troubling about their contemned orders. As far as the writer's experience goes, the woman who worries the police-court officials concerning her husband's non-payment of her maintenance is soon made to feel she is a foolish and unpopular person. The practice seems to vary somewhat in different courts, but the man must be in arrears for at least three or four weeks, during which time the wife and her children may be starving, before any action can be taken. The woman has then a choice of courses. If she knows where her husband is living, she may earn, borrow, or beg the money for a sum-

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mons, and the man can be imprisoned for his neglect to pay. Imprisonment wipes out his debt, and the story begins all over again. "My husband has been in gaol three times," said Mrs. L., a hard-featured, desperate-looking woman, who has somehow contrived since her separation to keep a family of six by taking in washing, "and it's no use going to court any more. Putting him away only costs money and doesn't bring me a shilling." Or the wife may betake herself to the parish, throw herself and her children, on proof of absolute destitution, on the Guardians, and leave them to recover from the father. If they find him, and very often they do not, the Guardians may, as has already been stated, proceed against him for the expenses incurred by them in the support of his family, but not one farthing of the money reaches the wife's pocket. But, before the man can be punished by either wife or Guardians for neglect to maintain, his ability to maintain must be fully established. This, in the case of casual and other low-grade labourers, as one experienced Poor-Law official writes, "is so difficult to prove that nine out of ten men escape, and the tenth one would if he knew the law. Consequently he generally does if he employs a solicitor."

It is doubtless true that under the mediæval conception of marriage which still dominates the marriage laws it will be no easy or cheap matter to secure justice for the wife. Institutions, however, exist for the benefit of the living generation of human beings, and, if they fail of their object, must be modified or supplanted. Women, either by their labour or their money, contribute their full share to the upkeep of the State, and, in return, they have a right to its protection. If a certain class of the population proves unable to avail itself of the ordinary safeguards of men and of unmarried women, legislation must be devised to meet its especial case. Wherever indentured labour is allowed, special precautions are taken in the interests of the

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workers, and it is to this type of labourer that the wife approximates.

The final blow to any hope the separated wife might cherish of reconstructing a happy home life is given in the name of morality and religion. While not raising a finger to help in removing the hardships and disabilities under which the wives of the lower social grades suffer, the Church, as at the present moment, has steadily opposed every extension by the legislature of the grounds of divorce. Owing partly to the poverty of their parents, partly to the trade jealousy of men, few women of the class which generates most of the country's social problems receive any industrial training. The only work for which they are qualified is the management of a small household, and, as they are not free to marry again, they are deprived of all chance of obtaining a new employer, save on terms of technical dishonour.

Much is made of the fact that separated couples often come together again. Sometimes, doubtless, the discomfort and loneliness of being without a family and a home teaches the man a lesson, and the wife acts wisely and rightly in giving him another chance. But in an enormous number of cases she is coerced into returning, because the husband, simply by refusing to pay the maintenance ordered, makes it impossible for her to feed and clothe the children.

When one remembers the outcry about Kanaka labour in Queensland, the moral indignation over Chinese labour in South Africa, the more recent anxiety about the recruiting of British West Indian subjects for South America, one feels it is but little to the credit of the Labour Party that the legal conditions of English wife labour have never attracted its attention. Its leaders wax eloquent over the grievances of the sweated industrial female workers, but when the offending employers belong to their own class they are silent.

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That the good husbands and fathers in the ranks of the workers vastly outnumber the bad is undoubtedly true. The affectionate tributes of the wives to the men who love and cherish them are often touching in their homely eloquence, and countless marriages are true partnerships. "It's his rule never to eat a mouthful unless I share it"; "He's the best that ever walked in shoes"; "He would never touch a bit if I and the children were without"; "Mine's one that always thinks of home first"; "All his thought is for his little children," are samples of sayings that rise to one's memory. Many men who have to rise early for their work make a practice of bringing up a cup of tea to the wife before they start. In times of unemployment, when the woman has to turn bread-winner, the husband often prides himself on having the place clean and comfortable and the kettle boiling for her when she returns in the evening. In seasons of scarcity, as during the late strike, it is the general rule among the men to touch no food indoors. What the wife manages to secure is held sacred for her use and the children's. "I didn't dare to go home all day yesterday," said a big fellow once with tears in his eyes to the writer; "I was so afraid I should go to the cupboard." In the coal strike of 1912, however, the fact that 80 per cent. of the miners were satisfied as to their pay and conditions of work did not seem to the men a valid reason for ignoring the wrongs of those of their fellows who were less fortunate. Far from abandoning them to their fate on the plea that they were "exceptional cases," the unions called out a million of workers, risked a serious industrial crisis, and carried on a struggle involving untold suffering to thousands of innocent people. Public opinion, for the most part, held them justified. Men have learnt by experience that to allow any section of any class of workers to fall below a certain standard lessens the security and the standing of all workers in that class. Even so the fact that a certain proportion of the married

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women of the country are still in a condition little removed, as has been said, from a condition of domestic slavery, lowers the dignity and the status of every wife in the country. In another article the position will be examined in further detail.



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### II.

It may have seemed to readers of the first article that the case was too strongly stated—that the married women of the poor have no such keen sense of their legal and social disabilities as naturally animates a social investigator accustomed to other conditions. It is quite true that law, religion, custom, and the economic system have all combined to compel the wives to accept a position of subordination and dependence. Some, indeed, become so cowed and crushed, so lost to all sense of dignity and self-respect, that they not only take ill-treatment as a matter of course, but actually resent other women resenting it. "The neighbours have gone on to me something shocking," said Mrs. T——, whose battered visage in the police court had procured three months' imprisonment for her husband; "they say none of them would have gone up with a face as bad as mine, and had him 'put away' for so long." The matrons of the slums were at first genuinely horrified at the suffrage agitation. "All this talk about the vote is going against God," emphatically declared one elderly dame; "women were made for men." "It's true we have a terrible hard time," said another, whose life of "sacrifice" might satisfy even Miss Violet Markham, "but it can't be right to go against the Bible." Scripture is sometimes unconsciously misquoted in the effort to find religious sanction for the traditional position of the wife. "He told me last night," sobbed a girl, whose husband had refused to let her help her mother in distress, "that it was in the Testament that I was to forsake my father and my mother and cleave only to him." Any way of life,

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however filled with suffering and injustice, seems natural to those who have no experience of any other. The women of one of the cannibal tribes on the Congo told their white visitor, without the least sign of indignation, that their husbands would, of course, eat them should food become scarce. But the fact that the majority of slaves acquiesced in slavery, and sometimes even conceived warm affection for their owners, never yet rendered slavery any the less a source of untold evil to the State. Human beings possess extraordinary powers of moral as well as of physical adaptation to existing conditions, and there is less of continuous, conscious unhappiness among even badly-treated women than one would expect, but their minds and wills are stunted and distorted to the irreparable loss of their families and of the community.

Consider, for instance, a report on a family, recently furnished by an official of the Education Department of the London County Council. "The mother has reached that state of hopeless poverty when she no longer cares what happens; says her husband has given her nothing for three weeks. There are seven children under twelve. Man once had good work but lost it long ago through drink." Or this, from the notes of a chairman of a school attendance committee: "Delicate, hopeless-looking woman; child absent because of boots. Father brought in 4s. 6d. for two weeks. Six children, eldest eleven, youngest five weeks. Officer reports father well-known drinking man. Wife has had to work ever since her marriage, though the husband had regular work."

There is a widespread feeling that the nation is not reaping an equivalent return for the huge sums spent on elementary education, but the foundations of character are laid outside the school walls, and it is the mother's attitude towards life which is the prime factor in the moral and spiritual development of her children. As well look for water to run uphill as for the State to

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derive right-thinking and right-living citizens from the offspring of broken and ill-used mothers!

Women of naturally vigorous character, when they recognise the hopelessness of their future, sometimes become almost incredibly brutalised, defiantly repudiating the conventions and the dictates of a society which has left them defenceless to their fate. The public-house is their real home, drinking with their "pals" their only pleasure, while sexual morality hardly exists among them. From both the crushed and the brutalised arise mischiefs incalculable to the body politic; but did the voters of the country, who in the last resort are responsible for the laws, receive their deserts, the numbers of each would be increased a hundredfold. "It needs such a lot of strength," said Mrs. P——, who spoke from long observation of life in poor quarters, "to hold up against a man who drinks the rent and leaves you to face the landlord, who forces you to pawn the children's boots and your own shift, who knocks you about one day and takes you to the public-house the next, that, were it not for the children, not one woman in a hundred could keep herself straight."

The children, indeed, in some sort save the situation, and instances in which they are wilfully neglected or unkindly treated are surprisingly few. Unsatisfactory homes are practically certain to come, sooner or later, under the notice of the school-attendance officers, but one of those working in a large London district stated recently that not in five per cent. of the cases referred to him for investigation did he find a lack of love and care. For the children's sake the women go hungry and ragged, bear with blows and insults, remorselessly sacrifice their moral standards and their personal health. No more perverse misrepresentation ever misled the country than the theory so vigorously promulgated a few years ago that the high infant mortality among the poor was due to the decay of their maternal instincts.

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Since then, the charge has practically collapsed owing to its inherent falsity, but the leaders of public opinion so shrink from facing the real facts of the lives of the mothers that, as was noted last month, they have found a new cry. The position now taken is that the women, though well-meaning, are so ignorant of the care of infants that health visitors must be appointed and schools for mothers opened to instruct them in their duties.

Could these agencies restore the crushed or the degraded, they would doubtless be the most meritorious of institutions, but experience shows this is beyond their powers. Society cannot thus easily get rid of the fruits of its own misdoing, and the only remedy is to cut off the supply of wrecked lives at the source by dealing with the causes that create them. The visitors and the "schools" have brought a much-needed element of sympathy, friendship, and co-operation into the lives of many poverty-stricken and isolated women, but as far as the care of their babies is concerned, average working-class mothers have little to learn. They have their own ways, which, though horrifying no doubt to their middle-class critics, are suited to their circumstances, and are crowned with amazing success. To any unprejudiced mind the statistics of infant mortality are an eloquent tribute to the extraordinary skill and self-devotion of the women of the mean streets. Take, for instance, the figures from the last annual report of the Medical Officer of Health for Kensington. In North Kensington the infantile death-rate was 148 per 1,000, as against 103 in South Kensington—a difference of only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. between the poor district and the rich one. Yet consider the difference of conditions. The typical baby of South Kensington has a skilled attendant told off for its sole service. It has at least one whole room devoted to its especial use; it has regular hours for exercise, food, and sleep; the best medical advice is available for

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its smallest ailment; its mother guards her own health jealously for its sake; should its natural food fail, the best substitutes in the market are at its disposal. The mother of the typical baby of North Kensington staggers to her feet a few days after her confinement and begins her endless round of cooking, cleaning, mending and washing, and can only attend to the newcomer when she has satisfied the needs of the rest of the family. The home is small, dark, and ill-ventilated. To save expense the mother must as long as possible feed the infant herself, but should her milk fail, or, as more often happens, become so poor in quality that it half kills the child, she must, perforce, fall back on boiled bread and condensed milk, and at the earliest possible moment promote it to "bits" from the family table. This is not due to her "ignorance," but because milk of any sort is so far beyond her resources that it can only be obtained through stinting the other children's necessaries. In short, she is unable to secure for her baby a single proper condition as understood by well-to-do parents.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that the infant mortality of North Kensington is swollen by factors which either do not operate at all or which operate to a much less extent in the case of its richer neighbour. All poverty-stricken areas have a residual population of alcoholics, consumptives, and mental defectives, whose fecundity is great, and whose young children die in great numbers, thereby swelling the infant death-rate of their districts. Their fate, however, does not lie at the door of the average mother of the poor. We are told, also, that nearly one-third of all infant deaths is due to ante-natal causes, of which maternal exhaustion is chief, and this factor must necessarily be far more frequent in those social levels where the women are constantly overdriven, underfed, and not seldom ill-treated.



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Were it possible to make the proper deduction on these scores, one may well question whether the balance would not weigh against the wealthy portion of the Royal Borough, in spite of its hygienic and economic advantages. The Kensington figures can, to a certain degree, be paralleled by those from other places. The difference as regards infant mortality between favoured localities like Hampstead and Lewisham and poor ones like Bermondsey and Shoreditch, varies from six to seven per cent., and Mr. Rowntree found much the same proportion existing between the richer and the poorer parts of York. The lesser ratio in the case of Kensington is probably due to the fact that its divisions contain a greater intermingling of rich and poor than do the last-named districts. It is not easy to say what inference should be drawn from these figures. Are we to conclude that the children of the masses are born so vigorous that they can combat the myriad difficulties of their physical lives? If so, what becomes of the cry of national degeneration? If, on the other hand, we are to gather that the maxims of Harley Street are far from being of universal validity, what becomes of the modern claim of the medical profession to dominate human life from the cradle to the grave? In truth, one cannot understand why the babies live, or how they recover from their grievous illnesses, and it sometimes seems as if the mothers of the people possessed some secret, not known to those whose children are cared for by hirelings, whereby they transfer some of their own vitality to the infants in their arms. It is a well-known fact that young children will often dwindle and pine in hospitals and convalescent homes in spite of the greatest care and the most scientific treatment, and only begin to recover weight when sent back to the care of their mothers.

After the age of two the children frequently begin to fall off. Maternal care and skill can no longer neutralise the bad conditions of the homes, and the boys and

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girls in the elementary schools compare badly, as regards height, weight, and freedom from physical defects, with the children of the upper classes. If it be true, however, that the first twelve months of life are the supreme test of "mothering," working women have no cause to blush.

The attitude of authority towards these unfortunate beings—the Prime Minister refuses to include them in the category of people—on whose shoulders the whole economic and social fabric rests, but who, as was shown in the last article, are denied the elementary rights of protection for their persons, and the enforcement of their most important contract, is one of shameless exploitation. Parliament increasingly assumes the right to interfere in the upbringing of the child for the benefit of the future citizen, but has not dared to lay the burden on the fathers who have political and other means of self-defence.

Among the better-off artisans, as among the income-tax paying classes, where the increased cost of child-nurture springs mainly from the desire of the parents to give the young the best possible chance in life and is voluntary in its nature, the man undoubtedly bears his share of the burden; and it has been conveniently assumed, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that this rule holds good throughout all grades of the community. Despite the general advance in working-class conditions, the strain on the women of the poorer half of the nation was never so great as at present.

Time was when, if the father brought in no money, the mother, untroubled by thoughts of soap or soda, could crouch with her brood in a room shared by other families, and could send her children out barefoot and in rags, to beg their living from passers-by. Sanitary officers and the schools have changed all that, and she now exists in a state of being continually driven to live beyond her means. Poverty is a comparative term. A

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family in the South of Ireland without any sense of degradation can live on twelve shillings a week, but this is impossible in London or in any large town. Those things which are not necessary for actual existence but which are demanded by public opinion, have been termed by Professor Marshall "conventional wants," and to be unable to satisfy these entails as much suffering as the lack of more essentially needful commodities. Such are boots, white pinafores for girls, changes of underlinen, cleaning requisites for house and person, scraps of cheap finery for the school parties, death insurances, and the hot Sunday dinner. These things the mother must provide at all cost, or else expose herself to countless humiliations. The schools are veritable harrying machines. Not only do the reports of the inspectors depend largely on the appearance of the children, but the teachers are genuinely devoted to their charges, and anxious that the best should be done for them in every way. The wherewithal is not their business. If a child turns up dirty or untidy the mother is ruthlessly called to account. "The nurse sent my two girls home to-day," whimpered Mrs. H—, "because they had so little clothing on, but I can't give them more. Their father hasn't brought me thirty shillings during the last two months." "I have only six pinafores for my four girls," lamented Mrs. H—, whose husband drinks and ill-treats her, but I wash twenty-four a week, doing them after the children have gone to bed. Yesterday I was so ill I couldn't stand up to the wash-tub, and the teacher sent me such a sharp message that I couldn't help crying."

It must be remembered that the poor are exceedingly sensitive to criticism. The power of taking one's own line and of disregarding other people's opinion comes only with freedom and independence, and women who have neither suffer keenly under censure. "You're husband mayn't give you a halfpenny to buy soap,"

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said Mrs. S—, bitterly, "but if the children go dirty to school it's you that gets the black looks."

The whole burden of the Education Act falls practically on the mothers. There is seldom a meeting of any school attendance committee but one or more forlorn-looking women appear to explain that their children's absence from school is due to lack of boots. They are met with remorseless pressure and vague threats, are told they are breaking the law by keeping the children at home, and that boots must be procured from somewhere. Now it is not the wife's province at all to provide boots; it is the father's, and the woman would be within her rights in declining to be bullied. Let the authorities deal with the legal parent. It is but seldom, however, that anyone shows defiance. When the men are kind husbands and fathers, unable to do more for their families without unreasonable personal privation, their wives stoutly defend them. "My husband only earns a guinea," exclaimed one, "and he gives me 18s. What more can he do? He can't go about in rags and not be able to pay his clubs. A man must be decent." When the case is one of actual unemployment the wives are even more indignant at the idea of the fathers being harried, declaring emphatically, "They can't give what they haven't got." The fact that, as citizens, men are collectively answerable for an ordering of society which results in no one being responsible for the child's maintenance is hardly, as yet, within their grasp. If a woman knows her own husband is doing his best, she will be no party to persecuting him, preferring to bear the brunt herself. Furthermore, even if the man has squandered his money in drink or vice, the wife is none the less constrained to shield him. She knows by experience that the knowledge that the father is able, if he chooses, to provide for his family closes the purse of charity, and thus deprives her of her last resource. Besides, should he be compelled to

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appear before a magistrate, she knows he will be fined or imprisoned. If the first, he asks for time to pay, comes home, "knocks her about" for allowing him to be summonsed, and takes the fine off her housekeeping allowance. If the second, she is left penniless while he is "away." The whole position is outrageously unjust and would be allowed to exist in no other relationship of life. Much would be gained if the wives were no longer permitted to appear as their husband's proxies where the children are concerned. The system would then be revised in the light of common sense and first principles, and a distinction drawn between the father who was, for no fault of his own, unable to provide for his family and one who wasted his strength and his money in self-indulgence. A civilised society could hardly confess itself unequal to devising appropriate treatment for each class, but it is so much easier to browbeat an isolated and unfriended woman than to deal with the root questions of alcoholism and unemployment, that the authorities are not likely to choose the more difficult path till their victims have the power to insist that the real issues shall be no longer shirked.

The situation repeats itself with respect to the much-vaunted medical inspection of school children. The rising generation is probably benefiting to some extent by the services of the doctor, but all schools in poor neighbourhoods show numerous instances of children for whom the medical treatment ordered has not been obtained. A round of visits to the defaulters in A—— School revealed that the commonest reason for not complying with the doctor's orders was the mother's lack of means. Mrs. P——'s answer was typical: "My man gives me 22s., and I have to pay 8s. rent; coal, insurance, and so forth take another 4s. There are six to keep. I asked for the free dinners last month when my man was only doing three days a week, but the committee refused and said they thought I ought to

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manage. People do think you ought to manage on such a little. If I take Lizzie to the hospital, what with fares, medicine, and someone to mind the others while I'm gone, it will cost me one-an-six. *I don't see the good of taking money off the food to put it on the medicine.*" It is the practice of some care committees to requisition ladies of leisure from the wealthier districts of London to assist in this "following up" work, and it is not uncommon to hear such helpers congratulate themselves that they have succeeded in persuading or in forcing "the parents to do their duty." Naturally they do not in the least realise that all they have accomplished is to induce the mother to get spectacles for Jane at the expense of Tommy's shoes or the baby's milk.

It is to be noted that the prohibition of street trading and the limitation of the hours of work of children attending school, both highly commendable measures in themselves, have nevertheless the vital defect of adding to the burdens and responsibilities of the mother, while diminishing her resources. One cannot assert that no man has increased his wife's housekeeping allowance because of these restrictions, but inquiries so far have failed to reveal him, and the women questioned scoff at the idea of his existence.

The question arises whence the women derive the means of meeting the demands made upon them in the name of their children. Sometimes relations come to the rescue, but in the economic groups which supply most of the cases which come under the notice of the various school authorities, friends are seldom in a position to render much help. Apart from them the mother's resources are of three kinds.

The first expedient, and the one which involves least moral or physical damage to herself and her family, is that she herself supplements the weekly income. Nothing shows more provoking ignorance of the characters and life circumstances of the poor than the repetition of

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the parrot-cry, "Stop the married women going to work in the interests of the race." Where nothing is known, much is apt to be assumed. Many would-be leaders of social reform apparently think that the mother's aim in life is to escape from the company of her children, and that it is necessary to wall her up in her home by artificial restrictions. Putting aside those cases where the wife is a confirmed alcoholic or is of feeble intellect, she is far more keenly alive to the interests of her children than any philanthropist or politician can possibly be. She alone is in a position to decide whether under existing circumstances she serves her offspring best by ministering directly to their wants, or by augmenting the family income. Let her nominal right of maintenance for herself and her children be transformed into a real one, and it will be found that her supposed passion for working ten hours a day in a jam factory for a mere pittance is a figment of men's imaginations. When the woman is a highly skilled worker, outside interference is still more impertinent and obnoxious. Everyone with first-hand knowledge can tell of scores of homes in which large families have been successfully reared and started in life in a way which would have been impossible had they depended on the father's wages alone.

But this self-respecting method of supplying her needs is not available for a woman who is sickly, unskilled, or who has two or three young children, and such a one is driven back on the plan of stinting herself and the rest of the family of necessaries in order to meet the demands of the authorities for the ailing child, the main shortage falling on herself and fatally undermining her health and energies. To some this seems of little real importance. "I know it sounds horrible," once said an earnest humanitarian to the writer, "but I do believe we should be justified in draining the last drop of blood from the mothers, if we could thereby secure a better

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crop of children." The point, however, does not arise. Even supposing the denial to the mother of all personal rights resulted in every child being well washed, clothed and fed, the moral loss would still outweigh the physical gain. No middle-class parent would consider his duty to his offspring discharged because their bodies were efficiently cared for. As well try to ripen wheat without the aid of the sun as to rear children, worth the nation's having, without the mother's love and solicitude, and no broken-down drudge can rise to the opportunities of her high office. Even when the woman's health is not altogether sacrificed, life-long toil and privation render her stupid and unattractive, and her growing boys and girls, even when well disposed, soon begin to seek their friends and their pleasures outside the home. This drifting away of her children, natural though it is, is the hidden tragedy of many a work-worn mother's life. "I've slaved twenty-five years for them, early and late," said Mrs. W——; "I've never had a week's holiday and hardly ever a day's pleasure; they have never once been short of anything I could get for them, but none of them seem to care about me now." The dullness of the family circle caused by the wife's want of charm and freshness doubtless accounts in part for the curious fact that so many men of the working classes about the age of forty deteriorate as husbands and fathers and tend to give way to gambling and drinking habits.

It is but seldom, however, that the wives, much as they pinch and scrape, can squeeze out enough for their children's needs, and they therefore take refuge in the third expedient, utterly destructive though it is to the moral well-being of themselves and of their families. The women sink into cadgers and beggars, skilled in every mode of exploiting the district visitors, the church workers, the members of care committees, the ladies of the Babies' Institute, and the general philanthropic

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public, and prove more than a match for every precaution against overlapping. Nor do they spare their own impoverished neighbours. Neither at the time nor afterwards are they condemned by their children. "She was always a good mother to us," said one girl; "father often never gave her a shilling for weeks together, but she always found a bit for us somewhere." Their cleverness in concealing from each almsgiver the existence of the others verges on the miraculous. They know that Miss A—— will not give boots to Johnnie if she learns that Mr. B—— has provided half-a-crown for coals, and that Mrs. C—— will not send the delicate Amy away to the seaside if she realises that the Vicar is keeping Mary at a convalescent home. Can they, in common justice, be blamed? It is dinned into their ears, week in and week out, that the welfare of their families is their sole excuse for existence, and their mother-instinct makes them apt to learn the lesson. Annoying though it undoubtedly is for members of the charitable public to discover that the recipient of their gifts is also deriving aid from other quarters, the complexity of the problems which face the impecunious mother must be judged with more sympathetic insight than is displayed in an occasional tract, written by the Rev. Clement F. Rogers and issued by the Charity Organisation Society. The author tells of a case for which he signed a dispensary letter, but later felt he had blundered in so doing. The husband had an incurable disease; the wife, who from the amount of her wages must have been a respectable and hard-working woman, earned 14s. 6d.; three dependent children brought in between them 2s., and the parish allowed 2s. and four loaves. Total income 18s. 6d. and four loaves for five people. Mr. Rogers adds, "I discovered later that Mrs. B—— writes begging letters to ladies in the West End and that the district visitor sees no sign of poverty in the home."

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Now can anyone maintain that Mrs. B—— was to blame for doing her utmost to keep her sick husband and dependent children clean and comfortable? She certainly could not accomplish the task out of 18s. 6d. What else was she to do but to take advantage of every possible resource in the way of free dispensary letters, begging appeals, and charitable aids of every kind?

We hear many complaints of the low standard of truth and honour among large sections of the rising generation. What else can be expected when the children grow up with the knowledge that the home is only held together by the lies and shifts of the mother? Nothing is more heartrending than to watch, in case after case, the slow deterioration of the women, as rendered desperate by the ever-increasing needs of their young they sink into lower and lower depths of dishonesty and untruth. The blame, however, does not lie on their shoulders, but on those who have blindly set them an impossible task.

The advocates of the raising of the school age to fifteen, or even to sixteen, are now challenged to state from what source they propose to derive the living expenses of the children during their additional years of dependence. If they are to be booted, fed, and clothed sufficiently well to enable them to profit by the longer schooling, at least sixpence a day will be required for each, besides something for the extra sleeping accommodation which their advancing ages will render necessary. The male parents among the workers, on whom an ill-informed public vaguely expects that the burden will rest, fall into three main classes, the overlappings and sub-divisions of which must be neglected here. First, men possessed of a margin over and above their necessary household and personal expenditure, who cooperate with their wives in all that concerns the welfare of the children, and who are far keener to give the latter "their chance" than any Government Depart-

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ment can possibly be. But in such families the parents are increasingly keeping their boys and girls at school beyond the compulsory age, and laws for them are only an impertinence and a hindrance.

The fathers of the second type also possess a margin over and above their necessary expenditure, and were they willing to give up their evening's at the workmen's clubs or at the public-houses, their transactions in horse-racing, their spells off work, could fully discharge their domestic responsibilities. To these men, however, the weak legal position of the wife proves an irresistible temptation to self-indulgence and selfishness. "There are heaps of men in this very street," said Mrs. W——, "who never give their wives more than a pound, even though they are earning two. If the women ask for more they are told that lots have to manage with less, and that they are lucky to get what they do." Such heads of households are not reckoned as "bad husbands." They pay the stipulated sum regularly and, though careless and indifferent to the fact that their wives are being worn out in the struggle to make ends meet, are seldom actively unkind. Accustomed to see the women round them become sickly and dejected creatures, they feel no personal responsibility, and their callousness to the physical sufferings of their wives is often startling. Men of this class will not of their own motion increase the housekeeping allowance whatever be the compulsory outgoings of the mothers. They did not give an extra penny when the school age was raised to fourteen, nor would they give it were the age raised to twenty. The third class consists of men—one-third, we are told, of the whole population, but many of whom are not yet married—whose income never exceeds twenty-five shillings a week and is often under a pound. Now, recent investigations have conclusively shown that it takes over a guinea a week to keep a town family of even five or six persons supplied with the

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barest necessities of life. Every household, however, spends something on such items as stamps, trams, beer, tobacco, relishes and insurance, and is, besides, practically certain to have its weekly average reduced by the illness or unemployment of its head during the year. It therefore follows that unless the income is supplemented by the earnings of the wife or of the children, much less is spent on food and clothing than is necessary for moral self-respect or for physical efficiency. When there is no extra source of revenue the pound-a-week budgets obtained by Mrs. Pember Reeves in Lambeth show that without making any allowance for irregularity of employment or for the inevitable "extras," the sum available per head for the food of mother and children varies from a penny three farthings to threepence a day, the latter sum being only reached when the family was very small, or the rent very low.

The advocates of raising the school age object to wage-earning on the part of either mother or children, and are prepared to restrict or abolish both by legislation, and it therefore remains for them to state clearly what they propose to do. Do they intend to secure a State grant of at least £12 a year for every child remaining at school after the age of fourteen, or do they intend passing a law compelling both the fathers of Class II. who are able, and the fathers of Class III. who are not able (and sometimes not willing) to fulfil their legal and nominal obligations? No hint of any such heroic measures reaches the public ear, and it is to be feared that the would-be reformers are, consciously or unconsciously, once more about to throw the burden and the responsibility on the defenceless wives.

It is not disputed that the school age should, at all events, in many cases, be raised, but women should unite in demanding that the financial side of the matter, in so far as this affects the homes, should be honestly faced and adequately dealt with.

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In the case of infants the authorities are equally determined to hold the mother to her task of making bricks without straw. The newspapers recently reported a case at Nottingham in which the coroner, when sitting on the death of a baby who had died of bronchitis while being carried to the doctor's, declared that the conduct of the mother bordered on criminality, that her action had accelerated the child's demise, and that he hesitated whether or not she ought to be tried for manslaughter. It came out in the evidence that the husband provided sixteen shillings a week to keep a family of six, but the coroner found no words of reproof for him. Yet it was his default which made it impossible for the mother to have the child treated at home.

It has now been shown that the low legal status of married women, as compared with the mass of male workers, results in a vast amount of suffering to the individual or of injury to the State. It has been shown that the wife has no security for her maintenance other than what public opinion and the goodwill of her husband afford; that she is repeatedly exposed to serious physical violence for which she, alone among British subjects, has practically no redress; that law and administration are continually increasing her liabilities and responsibilities, while diminishing her already scanty means of meeting them. It has been shown that the depressed condition of the wife and mother is one of the main causes of low wages; of the reckless propagation of children by men unable or unwilling to support them; of the low moral standard of thousands of homes; of the qualified success attending all efforts of social reform.

Are there any counterbalancing considerations? Do even the men of the country profit? It is a commonplace that the worst evils of slavery are those suffered by the slave-owner, and it is undeniable that even an averagely good man is exposed to a severe moral strain

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by having always at hand a dependent creature on whom he can, if he chooses, cast most of his family responsibilities, and who is forced to stand between him and the consequences of his incontinence, his intemperance, his extravagance.

Because of the wife's exploited domestic labour the consumer does, indeed, obtain some of his goods at an unfairly cheap rate, but this advantage is nullified many times over by the indirect expenses the system entails on him. Dr. Tredgold states that England possesses an official pauper to every forty-five of the population, one definitely insane person to every 275 normal, and a vast army of the feeble-minded, amounting to at least 300,000 persons. Mr. Lloyd George laments that 50 per cent. of the recruits are annually rejected as physically unfit. Mr. Chiozza Money tells us that, prior to the Old Age Pensions Act, one-fifth of all deaths took place in public institutions, such as workhouses, convalescent homes, hospitals, and lunatic asylums.

An obvious criticism may here be anticipated. It will be pointed out that, in spite of the alleged defects of the marriage laws, innumerable Englishwomen manage to lead dignified and happy lives as wives and mothers, and the question fairly arises why these same laws should work havoc in other cases. Much might be said in explanation. Among the better organised classes of the community the man's social standing is involved in the way in which he maintains his home; the wife is in constant communication with her own relatives, by whom any physical or other ill-treatment of her would be powerfully resented. Even among the very poor this family support is the main safeguard of the woman, and this is probably the reason why marital cruelty is less common in the villages than in the large towns. It often casts a lurid light on apparently satisfactory marriages to discover that the real reason why the wives refuse to emigrate, even when such a step would be of

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immense economic advantage to their families, is that they do not care to trust themselves to their husbands away from the protection of their own relations. Again, no one whose memory goes back thirty years can fail to be struck by the enormous improvement in the practical position of middle-class wives which has synchronised with the opening up of many careers to fairly-educated women. This has rendered practicable a far more careful selection of mate than is possible for those whose choice often lies between an unsatisfactory husband and the workhouse. As long as there are multitudes of women just on the starvation line, so long will it continue to be true that the worst of men can always find a wife, and this fact is a powerful eugenic reason for providing industrial opportunities for female workers.

Then, too, it must be remembered that in the upper classes of society the courts do, in fact, recognise and enforce the woman's claim to a provision in accordance with her husband's means, and that a sufficiency of pecuniary resources does much in itself to render unions tolerable which would be unmitigatedly wretched lived out in the close contact necessitated by two rooms and twenty shillings a week.

It is freely and fully acknowledged, however, that the real reason why married life in England, taken as a whole, is happy, is because Englishmen, taken as a whole, are a kindly and home-loving race; that they have, as Matthew Arnold pointed out, a strong sense of "conduct," and that their feeling of fair play extends into their domestic relationships. Even among the lowest, few men take anything like full advantage of their legal position.

These facts, however, though they have rendered a certain degree of civilisation possible, do not justify the state of the law, which should confirm and strengthen the best instincts of human nature, not pander to the lowest, and which has no more right to provide facilities

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for cruelty, sensuality and idleness than to furnish opportunity for fraud. Every generation contains a certain number of individuals whose moral sense is weak, and whose will is undeveloped, who are, in short, below the ethical standard of the age, and in all relationships of life other than matrimony infinite pains is taken to guard the community from their ravages. It is on their account, indeed, that the whole penal code and its machinery exists. The wife, however, as has been shown, stands, for the most part, outside this protective influence and is delivered over to the basic principles of anarchy.

A vague consciousness that the alarming contrast between the unexampled prosperity of the country and its threatened racial degeneracy is somehow connected with the condition of the married women has resulted in a crop of schemes and proposals as futile as they are well meaning—veritable pills to cure earthquakes. Municipalities issue leaflets of good advice and appoint health visitors; charitable ladies support babies' institutes and arrange for the supply of a few hot dinners to newly-made mothers. Advanced reformers demand free supplies of milk to every home in which a birth has taken place, or even the payment of small money grants. Others are insisting that the married woman shall be prohibited from earning, though they refrain from suggesting any alternative method by which she and her children can be fed and clothed, if her husband fails to support her.

Many base their hopes on the teaching of infant hygiene and of the cutting out of baby clothes in the elementary schools, magnificently disregarding of the facts of infant mortality as stated above. Others stake their faith on the medical inspection of school children, and, without a qualm, hound mothers whose own bodies are literally dropping to pieces into spending hours and hardly-spared pence in taking a child to the hospital



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for a decayed tooth or a swollen tonsil. As always when the refusal of justice has produced its inevitable crop of weeds, the English public shows itself self-sacrificingly anxious to come to the rescue with doles and palliatives.

Suffragists at least will not believe the case can be met thus. That all this suffering, misery and wrong has grown up, unnoticed, under the rule of men, the vast majority of whom are good husbands and devoted fathers, and who, certainly, never set out to make the lives of women bitter, is but one more proof of the truth of Mr. Lyttleton's words in the house of Commons in January last:—"You cannot entrust one class to the uncontrolled guardianship of another, and you cannot govern wisely without knowledge." But under the party system there is no inducement for politicians to acquire knowledge concerning those who stand outside the Constitution, and who are therefore unable either to support those who champion their rights, or to punish those who neglect their interests. This, to the ordinary man, is the real significance of the vote. To improve the position of married women will not be easy. A good many hoary legal maxims and mediaeval theological conceptions may have to go, but it is imperative that the failure of a purely male electorate to secure any improvement in the status or condition of the mother-worker at all commensurate with the improvement in the general condition of other workers should be frankly recognised and acknowledged.

Not that the bestowal of the vote will work any instantaneous miracle or immediately render all ameliorative efforts unnecessary. Nations, like individuals, must reap the consequences of their past negligences and ignorances, and for many a long year a sorry crop of spoiled lives will still work woe to the commonwealth.

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Multitudes of working-class wives are so isolated, so inarticulate, so accustomed to methods of government which, so far as they are concerned, are methods of despotism, that enfranchisement, come when it may, will come too late. It has been painful to witness the abject humility with which they have submitted to the Insurance Act, which has deprived thousands of the little weekly jobs, so insignificant as viewed from the green benches of Westminster, but which made just the difference between solvency and insolvency to the women. They showed no more anger or rebellion than if their means of living had been interfered with by a thunderbolt or an earthquake. The crying need of the moment is for leaders able to gain their confidence, who will help them to realise that the largest portion of their troubles arises not from any "Act of God," but from the stupidity of Parliaments. They need to be roused to the truth of Mr. Cecil Chapman's words, based on his long experience as a police-court magistrate: "I have no hesitation in saying that the absence of the woman's point of view is the root cause of the inefficacy and injustice of the laws I have to administer, and owing to natural differences men are incapable of supplying the deficiency."

It would be premature to dogmatise on any remedy, or set of remedies, for the indefensible condition of the wives and mothers. They themselves are the natural guardians of family life and the only safe judges of the ultimate effect of any proposed measure on their homes, their dearest and most vital interest. There is reason to think, however, that the women would demand, first of all, if they thought that any demand of theirs would have the slightest weight, that their right to maintenance, in return for their services as wives and domestic workers, should be rendered effective and not left, as at present, theoretic and moral.

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The term "maintenance" must therefore in some way be defined. This could be done either by establishing a legal minimum which might vary with the locality, or by a separate contract at each marriage, whereby the wife would be entitled to a definite provision agreed upon between the parties, and which would increase automatically according to the number of the children. Such a change in the legal position of married women ought not to be viewed as revolutionary. It would simply level up the condition of all wives to that already attained by the great majority through the force of public opinion and of private affection. But the gain to that 25 per cent. of the female population who, as Professor Karl Pearson tells us, produce 50 per cent. of the births, would be incalculable. The mere fact that his wife and children had enforceable pecuniary rights would be a moral education to many men. The wife's sense of responsibility would also be quickened. Too many now take refuge in fatalism when confronted with the yearly baby for whom its legal parent will never dream of providing an extra shilling. Had she a remedy and refused to use it, she also would be answerable for the unprovided-for life.

The question at once arises, "What is to happen if the husband fails to supply the money or its equivalent?" The working women best known to the writer make little of the practical difficulty, saying: "A wife knows within a year or two whether a man is going to support her; if he can't, or if he won't, she should be allowed to leave him. As long as she had only one or two children she could struggle along and work at what she did before marriage." The definition of maintenance would indeed be as ineffective as the present supposed safeguards of the wife, were she not given the power of withdrawal from cohabitation. The women consulted trouble little regarding the question of divorce as against legal separation, probably because public opinion in mean streets has small condemnation for a

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"separated" woman who goes to another man and lives faithfully with him. The judgment of the masses is based, not on theories, but on direct observation of the facts of life around them, and they see little difference between such homes and others more normally constituted.

It is recognised, of course, that any proposal facilitating the "breaking-up of the home" will appear to many responsible and influential people subversive of the social order, and to be resisted to the uttermost. But is the present system as conducive to the interests of religion, public morality, and of family life as the London Diocesan Conference thinks? Consider the following cases, taken at random, from the writer's notebooks, to which every Poor-law officer, or experienced schoolmanager, could supply scores of parallels:

(A) Mother sickly, anaemic, worn out; attendance officer reports her husband has ill-treated her ever since marriage, that she has always had to work to feed herself and children. Five living; youngest, a baby of three months; children all sickly; little girl of five looks like child of three.

(B) Caretaker reported that Mrs. T—— was confined this morning; her last is only eleven months; she had not even a cup of tea till Mrs. A—— took pity on her. "Her husband is no good at all."

In sober truth, to compel women under such circumstances to live with their husbands and to continue to bring children into the world doomed from birth to cold, hunger and disease is sheer barbarity.

The English public thrilled with horror when it read of Bulgarian babies bayoneted by Turkish soldiers before the eyes of their mothers, but the women in its own great cities suffer no less from outraged and insulted maternity. "I've lost three beautiful children in two years," sobbed Mrs. G——, "and they have been as truly murdered as if their father had shot

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them," "I've put up with his ill-treatment of myself for sixteen years," declared Mrs. S——, "but when I see the way his habits are ruining the girls' constitutions I feel as if I could kill him."

It is evident, however, something more would be necessary than merely enabling the wife to take the children and go. The man could not thus be allowed to escape all responsibility for the lives he had brought into the world. The mother would discharge her share of the liability by her personal care of the children; the father should be obliged to provide them with the necessaries of life. The enforcement of this duty, however, must be laid on the community which, for its own sake, is bound to see that its future citizens are duly nurtured, and not, as at present, on the helpless wife. Were the mother, under all proper safeguards and precautions, allowed to draw on the local authority for the requisite sum, leaving it to recover from the father in any way it thought fit, the ratepayers would soon insist that some way should be found of forcing defaulting fathers to fulfil their legal obligations. The practical certainty of exposure would in itself prove a powerful deterrent; slight though the risk at present is, the worst men fear the off-chance of "being shown up in the court," and will make spasmodic efforts to avoid it.

Many, however, who might possibly bring themselves to approve of the release of the wife where there is physical violence, or when the man's failure to maintain is wilful, would hesitate in cases where it was not wilful. But justice demands that in these cases also the wife should have the option of leaving. The man is in the position of a bankrupt; no longer able to meet his commitments, and therefore in no condition to contract others. So strong are the forces binding women to their homes and families that there would be small danger of their making a harsh or unreasonable use of

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their discretion, or of deserting a mate who had fallen into merely temporary difficulties. But some possible path of moral salvation must be found for the wife in cases like one which the writer has watched for years. The husband neither smokes nor drinks, earns his dinners and eighteen shillings a week. This sum he passes over almost intact to his wife, but accepts no further responsibility for the family, saying: "As long as they all share and share alike they've no call to grumble." He has, however, never seen any reason why the family should not have its yearly increase. There are now nine children, all of whom have to be fed, booted, sent to school decently clad, out of eight shillings left after rent and insurance are paid. The strain on the mother has more than once nearly driven her to suicide. "They all come round me clamouring like young sharks," she exclaimed one day, "and I haven't a farthing for anything." Being of an exceptionally strong character, the woman struggled desperately for years, fed the children on rolled oats and lentils, and on a diet devoid of fats and sugar kept them in good physical condition. "I never have but two loaves of bread a week," she said, "and I daren't spend more than a penny a day on gas and a pennyworth of matches has to last me two months." She was personally very energetic, and when she could manage to get a day's work charred, as one of her employers expressed it, "more like a demon than a human being." But her health broke down again and again, and, finally, her *morale*. She is now an incorrigible begging-letter writer, a liar, and a thief. But on whom does the responsibility for her moral and spiritual ruin rest?

It will be said that under every system hard cases occur, and that society, in order to secure the stability of its institutions, the sanctity of marriage, and the progress of the race, must make up its mind to put up with tragic instances of individual suffering. Setting aside the consideration that these particular instances

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are numerous enough to render largely abortive every effort to improve social conditions, let us try to see what are the real fears, conscious and unconscious, which lie behind these high-sounding phrases.

Some apprehend that if the State allowed marriages to be dissolved for certain definite additional causes, the fact would react on all marriages and render them less secure. This seems like saying that because a boiler without water bursts, its explosion will cause another, duly supplied, to burst in sympathy. The fact that a man can be evicted for non-payment of rent does not put the solvent tenant in fear of ejection.

Others dread the increase in the number of separations or divorces which would undoubtedly take place were women allowed to leave husbands who did not maintain them and their children. There are always people who think that to keep the injured parties from complaining is much the same thing as to abolish their grievances. No doubt the present system does keep hidden within the walls of the homes a vast amount of misery and injustice, but it does not prevent either the individuals affected, or society as a whole, from suffering in consequence. Many also would dread the diminution in the birth-rate which would probably ensue were men made really responsible for the support of their families. The fact that at present a third of the total annual deaths take place under the age of fifteen should allay such apprehensions. The nation could afford to have fewer births were the children who are born given a fairer chance of life. Others, again, point out that even a bad man is the better for the society of his wife and children. This is probably true, but his morality is not the only morality at stake. The wife and children also have souls.

Should, however, the policy of making the father actually responsible for the maintenance of his children appear too harsh to an English public accustomed to

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see the burden borne by the wife, there are, of course, other possible expedients for all of which something can be said and all of which are open to criticism. Considerations of space, however, forbid a detailed examination here.

A wife could be given a right to draw part of her husband's wages direct from his employer in cases where his neglect to maintain had been proved. The State could endow motherhood, or undertake the entire cost of all children up to the age of fifteen, or it could extend the principle of the minimum wage over the whole field of industry, at the same time giving the wife a legal claim on a certain proportion of her husband's income. Or French precedents could be adapted and extended. From information supplied to the Eugenic Society by Monsieur Michel Huber, statistician to the Statistique Générale of France, we learn that the city of Paris gives to all its workmen earning less than a specified amount and being the fathers of at least four children, fifty francs per annum after the fourth who is under thirteen; the Crédit Lyonnais gives ten francs a month for the second child, fifteen for the third and others following. The Department of the Seine gives fifty francs per annum to all workmen who have four children on their hands.

The question is primarily one for men to settle. They jealously keep all the best-paid industries in their own hands on the express plea that it falls on them to support the wives and children. Whether they choose to fulfil this duty in their capacity as fathers, or as rate-payers, or as taxpayers, does not very much concern women. But every mother in the country has a right to demand that she shall not be compelled to undergo the trials of maternity without some security that the fruit of her body shall not perish from want and privation, and that her own indispensable services as home-

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maker, and therefore as empire-builder, shall no longer go unrecognised and unrequited.

With regard to the second great grievance of the married women of the poor—their liability to personal ill-usage—a word must be said. In the first place, with the improvement in the status of the wives which would come from the knowledge that they, like all other workers, could enforce the fulfilment of their contracts, much careless and contemptuous ill-treatment would cease. A blow or a kick often signifies little more than that the man is in a bad temper, and as his wife is more sensitive than a cat or dog, he prefers to vent his feelings on her rather than on them. "When he's drunk he breaks up the home, when he's sober he breaks up me," said Mrs. T——, grimly. Now, to the signatories of the Minority Report of the Divorce Commission it seems a less evil to leave women exposed to a considerable degree of personal violence than to risk the danger of divorce suits being promoted by "collusion" on trumped-up charges of cruelty. They say—and to the disgrace of the rulers of the country, say truly—that a blow to the wife is not the unforgivable insult in some circles that it is in others. Would the Archbishop of York and his fellow-signatories, however, be willing that dock labourers, for instance, should be afforded no practicable redress for blows and kicks from their employers, provided that these did not actually endanger life or limb? They would indignantly repudiate such a suggestion, and declare that to render the worker liable to physical violence from his employer would be fatal to the dignity of his manhood, and would reduce the free labourer to the condition of a serf. But to live in danger of bodily ill-treatment is quite as derogatory to the self-respect of a woman as to that of a man, and the feminist agitation of the last few years will indeed fall far short of fruition if it does not succeed in establishing this elementary truth.

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No nation can with safety permit any portion of itself to live under degrading conditions, lest the gangrene spread and threaten the life of the whole. Until this problem of the status and of the rights of the married woman of the people be honestly faced and solved, not all the proposals of the Eugenics Congress, nor the efforts of philanthropists, nor the labours of Parliament will avail to arrest social decay.

ANNA MARTIN.



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WOMEN'S  
SUFFRAGE  
AND  
MORALITY

An Address to Married Women.

BY  
LADY CHANCE.

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND MORALITY

AN ADDRESS TO MARRIED WOMEN.

BY LADY CHANCE.

NATURE has so made women that they are necessarily the greatest sufferers in any falling from virtue. Theirs is the harder punishment *by nature*: men escape *by nature*. This fact, which no laws can alter, would, one might have supposed, have inclined people to be less hard on the immoral woman than on the immoral man, but far from this, we find the exact opposite is the case. A woman who has left the path of virtue is considered an outcast, and has immense difficulty in regaining a foothold among respectable people, indeed in returning to a respectable life at all, once she has fallen.

Why should this be so? We know a woman cannot fall by herself. Why then is she to be the only one cast out? Is not the partner of her fault equally to be blamed? But no. He retains the respect of his fellow-creatures, he is not looked upon as an outcast. He can go on associating with decent people; he can take a respectable woman for his wife. He will be

little less thought of in his after life for having brought a woman, or women, to shame.

Now the answer to these questions is not entirely a simple one, and in order to arrive at it I must go back rather far, and try to explain how this state of things which I have described has come about.

The fact is that this double standard of morality, this condition in which there is one law of conduct for the man and another for the woman is the necessary outcome of the position women have occupied for long ages past.

It would take me too long to tell how it has come about that women, who in the very earliest times of all, were men's equals, companions and helpmates, gradually lost that free and independent position, and in the course of countless centuries became little better than slaves; though of course it would be absurd to say that in civilised countries women are slaves at this present time.

In the time of the ancient Romans, about 2000 years ago, we read that women never came of age. They were the property of the men of their family as much as if they were cows or sheep. If a woman married she passed from her father's hands to those of her husband. If the husband died, she passed back again to her nearest male relation. She could never, however long she might live, be her own mistress.

It may be said that on the whole women's position in the State has almost everywhere been for many hundreds of years past, and still is in most parts of the world, one of inferiority to men. The woman, because she is a woman, and for no other reason, is thought to be of less value to the State than the man. She is just as necessary, of course, but not so important.

Even in this civilised country of ours, and at this present time, it is literally true that women are not equal to men in the eye of the State or of the Law. And the reason of this inequality, this inferiority, is that up to now men have not only made all the laws that exist, but have also the administration of the laws in their hands as well as the making of them.

Now I do not at all want you to think that men have had any conscious grudge against women, or any desire to be other than just to them; but all men are not perfectly good and just, nor are even good and just men perfectly wise, and although they may have the best will in the world, it is impossible for men to see quite with the same eyes as women, especially in the matter of sex morality.

It is hardly to be expected that the ordinary man of to-day, with all the inherited unconscious feelings and traditions of male superiority in him, should help believing that he must know better what is good for women than women can know for themselves. We must not blame the men too much, for they are only human, and many of them are also very ignorant. I think we ought rather to remember that at this day we have working with us and for us an ever-increasing number of noble and disinterested men who are doing all that lies in their power to help the cause of the enfranchisement of women.

At no time in history have men come forward in such numbers to press a woman's question and women's interests, and I am glad to say that we have a great many working men with us as well as men of the wealthier class. The Independent Labour Party, for

instance, has stated officially that no further extension of male suffrage will be acceptable to them unless it includes some measure of suffrage for women. When, besides these working men, we have Cabinet Ministers and professional men of all ranks, many of them famous and distinguished, speaking and agitating and forming themselves into Leagues in order to help the women's cause, we may be assured that our movement is not, as our opponents so often try to persuade people, a sex-war, and a struggle between men and women as to which shall rule the other, but on the contrary, a movement towards friendly and peaceful co-operation between the two sexes for the benefit and advancement of the whole race. I may mention too that the Women's Movement is not confined to this country alone, but is now world-wide, and that every year sees the enfranchisement of an increasing number of women, mostly of the English-speaking race or of other Northern races closely related to the English.

This being so, we should not allow ourselves to feel bitter or hard about the injustice or unfairness to women that undoubtedly exists, but rather thankfully determine to work with all our strength to help those noble men I have spoken of, who are doing all they can to improve the position and status of women.

It will be found that everywhere *the demand for women's political enfranchisement is rooted in and springs from one main fact.* In the mind of every man and woman who has studied the subject lies the deep-seated and firm conviction that *so long as women are men's inferiors in the State—that is, are not full citizens—so long must the evil continue of the double standard of morality for men and women.* I do not of course

say that if women had the vote this bad state of things would be changed immediately as if by magic. That is impossible. People's customs and habits of thought are not changed in a day. It may take many years, and possibly a whole new generation for the improved ideas to sink into the minds of the people and to bear fruit in better thoughts and actions. But this is certain—until men and women are politically and legally equal, the improvement cannot be seriously begun, and there can be no sure and lasting foundation for a better condition of things.

It will be remembered that in November, 1911, the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, made an announcement that he intended to introduce a Manhood Suffrage Bill in 1912, which would give the vote to every male over 21 who had resided for six months in the country. These were his words:—"We believe that a man's right to vote *depends upon his being a citizen*, and every man who is of full age and competent understanding ought to be entitled to a vote."

Now think for a moment what this means. It means that a man, merely by virtue of his being born a male, *is* a citizen of the Empire. He need not serve the nation in any way, he may refuse to train himself for the defence of his country, he may be a ne'er-do-weel, a drunkard, a wastrel, or a criminal who has undergone a term of penal servitude—no matter—he can get a vote. But no woman, however competent, however patriotic, no matter what her age or position, or her services to the State as trained Teacher, as Nurse, as Graduate of a University, or as Lady Doctor—no woman can ever claim what practically every raw youth of 21 may take as his right and privilege. The

opponents of Women's Suffrage say there is no real slur cast on women by this, and that they have so much influence and indirect power that the vote would be quite a superfluity to them. The answer to this argument will quickly be got by asking any man whether he would submit to being disfranchised, and whether he would be content, in return for giving up his vote, to exercise such indirect influence as he might or might not possess. I think there is no doubt as to what his reply would be. The great majority of men highly value the vote and the political freedom it stands for, and rightly. They fought for it on a good many occasions in the past, and no person in his senses doubts that they would fight for it again if such an unthinkable proposition were ever made as to take it away from them. Now, must not that which men consider of so much value to themselves be of value to women also? In fact, what is "sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose"—to turn a homely proverb the other way about. But there is this difference, and it is an immensely important one. The question of sex morality which lies deep at the root of the Women's Suffrage question is one that affects the lives of women infinitely more closely than the lives of men. As I have said, immorality is almost always accounted a sin of the worst description in a woman, while in a man it is a slight offence easily forgotten and forgiven. Now we Suffragists want to change that false view. We want to make everybody feel that it is equally wrong for both sexes to transgress the moral law. I say especially *we Suffragists*, because our desire to win direct political power is founded upon our belief that in that way only shall we become possessed of the power and the weapons necessary to fight this terrible

evil. The Women's Movement is in fact a great Moral Movement. It means the lifting up of women to be the equals of men in the eyes of the whole nation. It means giving them the right not only to *say* what they wish in those matters which concern themselves, their homes and their children, but it means giving them the right and the power to get those wishes *carried out* with reasonable despatch, exactly in the same way as men do, and what is even more important, it means giving them the power effectively to oppose measures of which they disapprove.

Anti-Suffragists often say "Women do not want the Vote." It is true that some women may not want it, but all women—or rather—women as a sex, *need* it. It is true that rich women need it much less than poor women, and I am afraid those women who are going about to-day trying to persuade people that women do not need it and therefore should not want it, belong to the well-to-do classes. Many of them are titled and wealthy ladies, who from their position and education ought to know better, and perhaps do know better in their hearts; but human nature is a very selfish thing, and what these ladies do not need themselves for their protection they cannot understand that other less fortunately placed women may need most sorely.

Now I am writing for women, and principally for working-women, and they will know that I am telling the truth when I say that the women who supply the market of immorality, who recruit the great army of prostitutes are not drawn from the well-to-do classes. The daughters of the rich stand in very little danger—certainly not in the danger of having to sell themselves in order to buy the means of existence.

We hear a good deal of "Rescue and Preventive Work." I was present at a meeting some time ago, which was held in support of this kind of work, and I came away feeling that only one side of the question had been really dealt with, and that the most important part of the subject had hardly been touched upon. Much was said about the fallen "women"—most of them, be it remembered, young girls of 15 to 18 years old, and some, terrible to say, children as young as six or seven. But I heard scarcely a word as to the part played by men in the ruin of these unfortunate lives. There is probably no subject in the world more distasteful to women than this: most women avoid speaking about it, and many even refuse to know about it. This is especially true of well-to-do women, whom it does not touch at all in the same way as their poorer sisters. But it is most certainly the positive duty of every woman of full age to know what is going on in the world around her. And even though all women may not be competent or suited to take an active part in combating the "social evil," all women can and should be armed with clear knowledge and understanding of it. Through a knowledge of facts alone can a healthy opinion be formed among women, and such opinion is of course of the utmost value in influencing men. Indeed, it is probably the only way in which men can be brought to realise the evil of their ways. Certainly no Acts of Parliament alone will make people moral, but on the other hand, laws do express the opinions of those who make them. The laws of this country as they are made and administered by men, naturally do not and cannot reflect the opinions of women correctly. It is therefore not at all surprising that we should find the way of the male transgressor made very much easier

than that of the female. Take as an instance the law as it affects the maintenance of illegitimate children. In the large majority of cases the father will only under compulsion, that is, under a Magistrate's Order, make any payment towards the support of his child. And when this Order is obtained (at her own expense) how is the mother to enforce it? The man changes his place of residence, and the woman, for want of means and knowledge of how to proceed, is helpless. According to the existing law the man is only liable when the demand for payment is made by the woman in person. This for all practical purposes makes it impossible for her to claim if he has removed from the neighbourhood. In consequence of this most defective law the great majority of illegitimate children are entirely supported by their mothers, with the aid of charity and the Poor Law. It is no easy matter for these unfortunate women or girls to obtain decent employment, and consequently they have great difficulty in earning enough to support both themselves and a child, and here we come upon one of the most fertile sources from which the army of prostitutes is recruited.

Another gross injustice to the mother of an illegitimate child is that the greatest payment the father can be ordered to make is 5s. a week. The man may be a prosperous tradesman or a "gentleman," and as not seldom happens, the former employer of the girl, or he may be earning several pounds a week. But this makes no difference. He is often, if in receipt of small wages, ordered to pay as little as 1s. 9d., but never more than 5s.\*

\* In Norway, where women vote, an excellent move has been made in the shape of a law enabling illegitimate children to bear their father's name and to inherit a share of his property.

Now, which are the more to be blamed—men or women—if these girl-victims of men's unrestrained passions turn to the streets for a living, or, in their despair, kill their offspring? The White Slave Traffic, of which everyone has heard so much lately, is another example of the terrible results of men's immorality, because you must realise that this traffic *exists to supply the demands of men*, and unless there were buyers there could be no sellers. Is there any other trade or business in the world in which the seller of a thing is looked upon as a nameless and shameless outcast, while the buyer and user of that same thing remains a respectable member of society? And is there any other trade or business in which the merchandise bought and sold has to be stolen and supplied by fraud and force? For what is the meaning of the girls having to be kidnapped and decoyed? It shows plainly that there are not enough of them to supply the demand of their own free will. It also means that there are enough men willing to pay so highly for their so-called "pleasure" as to make the purveying of human merchandise for the vilest of all purposes an exceedingly profitable business, out of which large fortunes are made. But the misery and early death of these thousands of poor girls (it is said that the majority perish after about five years of such an existence) shocking as it is, is by no means the greatest evil that follows upon the practice of vicious living, and this is one of the things I had especially in my mind when I said it was the absolute duty of every woman of full age to have accurate information and understanding of these unpleasant sides of life.

The dreadful fact is that many horrible diseases are caused and spread, among the innocent as well as the

guilty, by vicious living. If these results could be confined to the guilty alone, perhaps we might leave them to this natural punishment, and even feel some satisfaction that they should suffer it. But we know on the highest and most modern medical authority that the wives and children of vicious men suffer even more than the men themselves. The origin and causes of many diseases which were formerly unknown are now recognised by all doctors to lie in the immoral practices of men. How many people, I wonder, know that a very large proportion of inherited blindness is due to this, and of premature and still-births? Epilepsy, convulsions, mental affections, including acute madness, paralysis and deafness are among the other serious disorders that must be laid to the account of the immoral man, and as I have said, it is his innocent wife and unfortunate offspring who may have to suffer more than himself.

It must be borne in mind that these awful things are not the result of a fall from virtue on the part of an otherwise decent man and woman, but are the effect of vice *as a trade*, and are the result of the horrible conditions which are a necessary part of that trade.

Now what was (and still is in many places) men's remedy for this state of affairs? Was it to teach boys continence and to train them to control their natural passions? No; it was to keep them in ignorance of the evil results of vice and to try to do away, as far as possible, not with vice but with its consequences. Until 1883 there was a system in force in England by which prostitutes were compulsorily examined by doctors, and if found in an unhealthy condition, were compelled to go into special hospitals, where they were treated until they were considered fit to go out and ply

their trade again. It was the splendid courage of a woman that put an end to this shameful state of things in our country. That woman was Josephine Butler, who almost single-handed fought the battle which ended in the repeal of what were known as the "C.D. Acts." Those who are interested in her and her work should read a little sketch of her life which can be bought or borrowed from any Suffrage Society. She had to fight a battle in the cause of righteousness such as few human beings, whether men or women, would have had the strength to go through. She was assailed with vile abuse, and even with stones and mud; and on more than one occasion she had to fly secretly from the place where she had been holding a meeting, to escape the violence of the mob; and once the building where she was speaking was set on fire, and she barely got away with her life.

These wicked laws which she succeeded in getting done away with in England are still in force in some of our Colonies, and to a modified extent in India, while similar ones are the rule and not the exception in most foreign countries.

The fact is that the only weapons which women have are their prayers and their tears, and although they can and do accomplish wonders, it is pitiful to think of the waste of strength and time and money which this unarmed battle entails on them. It is as though a man and woman had each a piece of ground to dig, and the man, already the stronger, were allowed a spade and the woman nothing but her bare hands. As an old lady from America said to Josephine Butler: "Tears are good, prayers are better, but we should get on faster if behind every tear and every prayer there were a vote."

When women have the vote they will not suddenly bring about the Millennium, or the end of everything evil, but at least they will be free to put all their efforts and strength into the real constructive work of reform. Now we are having to fight with bare hands at breaking down senseless obstructions, which do not bar the path of progress to men, but only to us because we are women.

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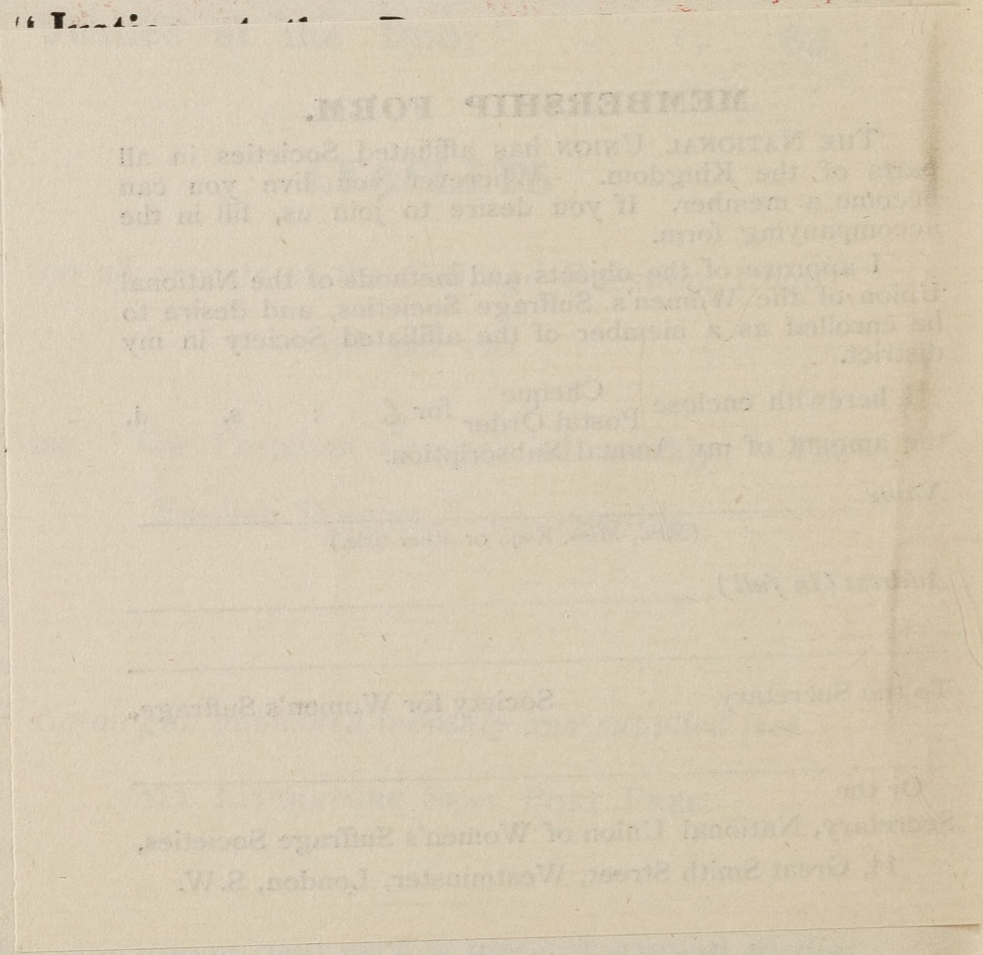
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=== WORDS TO ===  
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## WORDS TO WORKING WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

BY LADY CHANCE.

I have written this little book for my fellow-women, especially for you who are workers, or the wives of working men, in order to tell you something about Women's Suffrage. It is not easy, even for those who have money to spend on books and leisure to read them, to acquaint themselves with the whole of the past history and the daily growth of this great movement. I hope, therefore, that the following pages may be of interest and help to those of you who wish to know more of the subject, but are unable to give a great deal of time to studying it.

The question is no new one, though it has only recently come so much to the front. More than 40 years ago a society was formed whose object was to gain the vote for women. The oldest of the existing Women's Suffrage Societies is the "National Union" of Women's Suffrage Societies, which has now nearly 400 branches, and is increasing rapidly. Its President is a most distinguished lady, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, L.L.D.

The Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association is a much newer society, but it has made immense progress since its foundation in November, 1908, and is now one of the most important and influential of all the Suffrage Societies. Its President is the Countess of Selborne, daughter of the late Marquis of Salisbury. There are about 30 other societies working for the same object, including several whose members consist of men only. In 1905 there were *only three* Women's Suffrage Societies. This will give you an idea of how immensely the movement has grown in the last few years.

If then people try to persuade you that women do not want the vote, you may ask. "Why have they been working for it so long and in ever-increasing numbers and strength?"

### **What is the object of all these societies?**

It is to "get the Parliamentary vote for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men." By this we mean that we want the following classes of women to be enfranchised:—

1. Women property owners.

- \*2 Women occupiers, including widows and spinsters who are heads of households and lodgers paying more than a certain rent (about 4/- a week).
3. Women who have taken a degree at a University.

### **Why do we wish for the Vote?**

Because under the present law women are classed with criminals, lunatics, paupers and children. Do you think this is just to the women who support their families, to women householders and employers of labour, to those who, as widows, become heads of households, to those who educate your children, and to lady doctors? All these women have to pay taxes, and to obey the laws just like men. Ought they to have no voice in choosing the men who make these laws, especially as their taxes now help to pay the salaries of Members of Parliament?

### **White Slave Traffic and Immorality.**

We wish for it because there exists a terrible trade or organized system of procuring young girls for immoral purposes. The girl is first trapped and seduced, and when once she has fallen it is very difficult for her to return afterwards to her home or to be received among respectable girls in workshops or in domestic service. She probably becomes a prostitute as this is often the only means left to her of gaining a living. After many years of fruitless endeavours on the part of a few people to get the law amended, public opinion has at last been roused, *largely through the efforts of the Suffrage Societies and other Women's Associations* throughout the country, and a Bill known as the "White Slave Traffic Bill" passed its second reading in Parliament this summer (1912). This Bill, if carried into law, will do much to make the trade in vice less easy and profitable to the people who carry it on, and in so far as it succeeds in doing this it will be a great step in the right direction. But it must not be forgotten that the "White Slave Traffic" is only a part of the question of immorality. There remains the army of "unfortunates" who have not been actually entrapped, but who have taken to prostitution as a means of earning a living. It is said by those who do rescue work among this class, that only a small proportion are bad by nature. What then is the remedy for this state of affairs?

You will realise that no remedy can be of lasting use that leaves untouched the *causes* which drive girls who are not

\*According to investigations made by the Independent Labour Party in 50 different districts, about 8 out of 10 women occupiers are of the working class.

naturally bad into a life of shame. We must, in fact, seek ways of *preventing* the evil rather than ways of rescuing the victims after they have fallen.

Now it is generally agreed that there are two main causes underlying the evil. One is the double standard of morality for men and women, by which a woman is condemned as a shameless outcast for the same sin which is accounted but a slight fault in a man. This false and unjust view is the result of the position of inferiority which women have occupied for ages past. It is true that things have gradually altered for the better since the times when women and all they possessed were the absolute *property* of their husbands or male relations—as much as if they were sheep or cows—but there is still some way to be travelled before they can be considered men's equals in value and importance to the State. And so long as they are denied the rights of full citizenship, just so long will they remain *inferior* in the eyes of all but the noblest and best of men; and so long will those men who are neither noble nor good continue to believe that they have a right to use women for their pleasure, thus *by their demand* keeping up the supply in the market of immorality.

The second important cause of prostitution is that the wages women receive are in many trades *insufficient for them to live on*. Suffragists do not say that the possession of a vote will immediately raise women's wages, but they do say that it would be of *great indirect benefit*. For instance, we have it on the authority of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that it would be *impossible* for the Government to pay women as at present, at a lower rate than men for *equal work* (e.g. Post Office\* clerks and sorters, school teachers, etc.) if they had the vote. And as the Government *sets the standard* to all other employers, a great improvement in this respect would be brought about immediately.

### Domestic Legislation.

Yet another reason why we wish for Women's Suffrage is because laws affecting the home, the welfare of children and the conditions of women's work, are being passed during every sitting of our Parliament. Formerly Parliament did not occupy itself much with this kind of law-making. Its work then had chiefly to do with taxation and war. Now what we call "domestic legislation" has taken a prominent place in the work of Parliament, and we think that women's special knowledge of everything concerning the home should be used—that is, they should be allowed to help in choosing the right men to

\* Speech of Mr. Lloyd George at the Albert Hall, December 5th, 1908.

make these laws. Another point of great importance is that in these days laws which formerly affected men only, now affect women in ever-increasing numbers, because during the last century an enormous number of women have been compelled to enter the labour market, and are now employed in countless trades and industries outside their homes. The census returns in 1901 showed that between four and five million women were working for wages. The last Census (of 1911) will no doubt show an even larger number.

### Special Laws for Women.

Now you may hear it said that the condition of women *has* been greatly improved by special laws made by men for their benefit. There is some truth in this; but it would have been very much better *if women had had a voice in the making of those laws*, for some of them, though made with the best intentions, have been *anything but good* for the women they were intended to help. There is grave danger that these laws may have the effect of driving women out of healthy and well-paid occupations, thus forcing them (for they *must* live) into others already crowded, and so lowering wages by increasing competition.

The following are examples of other laws affecting women that need altering, and there is no doubt that if they had the vote these laws could then be improved very much more quickly than is likely to be done as long as women are voteless:—

- (1) In the eye of the law the only parent of the child is the father, who has the "custody" of the children, that means that he has complete control of them, and can take them away from the mother if he likes. He can also appoint for his children a guardian (whom she may dislike or distrust) to act with her after his death; but she can only appoint a guardian to act with her husband after her death if he consents. The *unmarried mother now actually occupies a better position with regard to the custody of her children than the lawful wife*.
2. The bastardy laws are most unfair to the mother of an illegitimate child, and they are so framed that it is extremely difficult for a poor woman to put them in force; so that in practice a large majority of illegitimate children *are supported entirely by their mothers*, with the help of charity. These laws, as made and administered by men, do in fact, make the way of the male transgressor very much easier than that of the female. One of the grossest injustices under them is that the *highest* amount the father of an illegitimate

child can be ordered to pay is 5s. a week, no matter how well off he may be, while he is often ordered to pay as little as 1s. 9d.\*

3. A man may divorce his wife for adultery alone, but a wife cannot divorce her husband for the same reason, but must prove that he has also been cruel to her, or that he has deserted her.

I think I have given you a sufficient number of reasons why you should want the vote; and now I will answer some objections which you will, no doubt, hear raised against your having it.

To begin with, you will certainly be told that the woman's place is in her home. So it is; but why should that prevent you from knowing about, or taking an interest in, things which are going on outside, especially those things which deeply concern you and your children? Do you think your washing, your cooking, or your sewing would be any the worse done because you know something about the Education Question or the Temperance Question? Of course, you do not think anything so foolish. True womanliness does not consist in being ignorant either of Nature's laws or of those made by man. Women should know how to spend and how to save; they should know as much as they possibly can about the health and training of children, and the better they understand these and other home duties *the more valuable would their influence be upon public affairs*. Whenever you hear this objection to Women's Franchise, you may reply that the same reason has *always* been given against any change in the condition of women, and that *experience* has shown these fears to be entirely groundless. For instance, this objection was made to women being given as good an education as men. Fifty years ago people said quite seriously that if girls were taught the same subjects as boys they would cease to be good wives and mothers, and, besides, would be driven into lunatic asylums. The objections to women studying medicine with the object of becoming doctors were equally strong. There are now over 700 lady doctors doing splendid work, principally among women. We should not have had one of them if the objections of past times had not been overcome, and the nation as well as our sex would have been greatly the poorer.

Another objection you will certainly hear made is that women should not have votes because they cannot fight. The answer to this is to ask how many men do actually fight for their country, and also whether it is suggested that the men who are either too timid or too old or too weakly to be of

\*A soldier in the ranks for instance *cannot* be ordered to pay more than 1/9.

use in war should be deprived of their vote in consequence? The truth is that we no longer live in a time when fighting is the principal occupation or necessity for the grown men of any country. And in our own country the fighting forces are paid bodies of professional soldiers and sailors, very small in numbers compared to the rest of the population; and—*this is important*—they are paid for out of the taxes to which *women contribute* as well as men.

Another thing you will certainly be told is that to give women the vote would lead to the ruin of the country, and the downfall of our great Empire. You will not be told why or how this will come about, but merely that it must and will happen. The answer to this prophecy of evil is that among the strongest supporters of Women's Suffrage are to be found many of England's greatest statesmen—such as the late Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and among living Statesmen, Lord Morley, Lord Selborne, Mr. Balfour, Lord Haldane, and Sir Edward Grey, to mention only a few names. You probably know that the late Lord Salisbury was considered, not only by his own country but by other nations, to be one of the best Foreign Ministers England has ever had. Would he have been in favour of Women's Suffrage if he had thought it would bring about the ruin of the Empire? This is also a complete answer to anyone who may try to persuade you that the Women's Suffrage movement is only supported by a few noisy people of no importance.

You may know that in certain other countries and in some of our own Colonies, women have already got the vote. In New Zealand they have had it since 1893; in South Australia since 1894, and in West Australia since 1899. With regard to the first-mentioned Colony, Lady Stout, the wife of Sir Robert Stout, a former Premier and now Chief Justice of New Zealand, tells us that the experience of New Zealand has proved the fear to be groundless, that the interests of the Empire and the home would be endangered by the women's vote. She says that New Zealand women have shown that freedom and power of citizenship have developed in them a higher standard of morality and sense of the dignity of womanhood. They show their loyalty to the Empire in very practical ways. At the time of the Boer War they sent their sons to fight for the Mother Country. In 1910 New Zealand was the first of our Colonies to telegraph to England the offer of a "Dreadnought" battleship. So much for their patriotism. As to their homes and children, the vote has not caused them to neglect these, but exactly the reverse. The *infant death-rate*

in New Zealand is the *lowest in the world*, and the birth-rate is increasing. Of Australia, we are told by Australians of high standing that since women were enfranchised, the patriotic spirit of Australia has increased; and the awakening of this spirit would hardly have taken place if the women voters had not encouraged the men (and also taken their share in the responsibilities and privileges which are part of the full rights of citizenship). The Australian Senate has twice telegraphed resolutions to the Government in England to the effect that *the reform has had the most beneficial results and has brought nothing but good, though disaster was freely prophesied.*

It is also considered to be the result of granting the vote to women that the moral character of the Parliamentary representatives in these countries has improved, and to the same cause is attributed the great reform in the treatment of prisoners, especially of women prisoners.

You will be told that you must not compare far-away, thinly populated Colonies like New Zealand and Australia with the central portion of this great Empire. I do not wish for a moment to suggest that the conditions in those countries are the same as in England, but I ask you to remember that *the people* who inhabit them are our *blood relations, of one race and language* with ourselves, and what anti-suffragists ask you to believe is that *English women at home* will be *less honourable, less patriotic, and less capable* of using their increased responsibilities wisely and for the good of their country than their Colonial sisters have *proved* themselves to be.

Lastly, you will sometimes hear it objected that if women had the Parliamentary vote they would of necessity sit in Parliament. Now this objection is of the nature of a prophecy, and one can only answer that in New Zealand, where women have had votes for nearly 20 years, no woman has ever come forward as a Parliamentary candidate, and in Australia the only three who have ever come forward were not elected. It lies with the electors to decide whether they wish women to sit in Parliament or not. If they do *not* wish it no woman can ever be an M.P. for she will not be elected. Surely, then, we may leave it to the electors to decide this (at present far-off) question, if and when it comes before them as a practical issue.

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# VOTES FOR WORKING WOMEN.

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# VOTES FOR WORKING WOMEN.

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THE reception of the delegates of the East End women by the Prime Minister may mean, if the friends of the suffrage are resolute and wise, a new departure and a new chapter of hope in the history of this question. The public conversation between them was memorable, not merely for the moving directness of what the women said, but also for the sympathy and understanding shown in Mr. Asquith's reply. If the movement has lately met with some passing disfavour among those who, at the best, take no movement seriously, it is steadily making its way in grades and classes of working women whom it used to find indifferent. Its basis has steadily broadened. For at least a generation professional women have been all but unanimous in their demand for the vote. It is twelve years since the textile workers of the North of England began, through their trade unions, to work steadily and decidedly for it. There is now at last in the East End of London among the sweated workers themselves, the class which is always the last to find the freedom of mind to strike a blow for itself, an agitation considerable in its volume and vehement in its energy. For these last recruits in the struggle for emancipation the deputation spoke. They

had little or nothing to say about some aspects of this movement, which appeals especially to educated minds, to whom it is first of all a protest against the whole view of women, of which their inferior political status is the sign. A class condemned to statutory inferiority will either spend its energy in revolt or allow its powers to be depressed by the consciousness of an accepted stigma. These East End women live among realities. For them the vote means the engine by which they may remove some at least of the intolerable hardness, some of the crushing inequalities, of their shadowed lives. They put their case by accumulating fragments from the life-history of themselves and their neighbours. One woman produced a brush which sells for ten shillings. Her share of the price is twopence, and for that reward she fixes the bristles, a two hours' task. A shilling a day, in spite of the good which Wages Boards have done, is still an average woman's wage. Starvation wages, crowded homes, insanitary factories, children born without the hope of health, and at their door the tragedy of the unmarried mother—these are some of the realities of life as these women see it. They, therefore, demand the vote for working women as a weapon of protection.

It is a simple claim of right, and perhaps because it rises so directly from the hard facts of modern life it is more readily grasped than the moral argument for equality of status. Mr. Asquith reminded the deputation quite fairly that Parliament has done something for sweated women, but he admitted as candidly that it has not done enough. The neglect which makes part of the case for enfranchisement is rarely absolute. The Factory Acts were passed long before the Reform Bill which enfranchised the workmen of the towns. But it was only after their

enfranchisement that social reform became a national policy, and the foundations of modern democracy were laid in the next Parliament through compulsory elementary education, and the charter of trade unionism. Few politicians are so callous as to deny in principle the more urgent claims of an unrepresented class to legislation. Such claims are met rarely with denial, usually with delay, and always with half-measures. The average politician is conscious of a certain virtue when he turns aside on Friday afternoon, or in those slack seasons of a session which grow constantly rarer, to "do something" for those who have no direct claim upon his time and no control upon his votes. *To the unrepresented he gives of his charity; for his electors he works.* The gain from the enfranchisement of women would not be so much that Parliament would advance to questions which it will not touch to-day. It is rather that these questions would become central in its thinking. In one guise or another the fairer distribution of wealth is the question which must absorb and include all others in the future. Vital for the prosperous and organised male worker, it touches the unorganised and scarcely organisable woman worker with a tragic and elementary directness. For him it means the possibility of a decent human life; for her it is bare existence, with possible personal dishonour as the alternative. By the direct pressure of votes, women cannot fail to achieve much in the way of promoting legislation and stimulating the activity of administrative departments which have their economic welfare in their keeping. The advance towards a wider application and a larger interpretation of the minimum wage will be rapid. The women who work for the State in schools and post offices, or for contractors who

serve the State, will be the first to feel the new temper. But even more influential than the force of direct pressure from voters, will be the new habit of mind in which Parliament, parties, and the press will be trained, when they realise that, in fact as well as in sentiment, women are half the nation.

The time has long passed for argument over the academic merits of woman suffrage. For some years the question has not been whether it shall be granted, but when, and how, and by whom? The opposition hopes only for delay. Its supporters fear only that delay must mean the waste of a great force, the risk of a growing embitterment, an intolerable unrest, a wanton alienation of this ardent self-sacrificing movement from the progressive forces which ought to have been its allies and champions. *It is, on our reading of the future, morally certain that if Liberalism fails to grant it on a democratic, Conservatism will concede it on a narrow basis.* Nothing less than the powerful opposition of the Prime Minister could have delayed it during the last three years, and even that would have been unavailing if our politics had not been overshadowed by the Irish question. The tone of Mr. Asquith's answer to the East End deputation makes for the hope that his attitude will in future be less unqualified. He seemed to attach less importance to the broad question of giving or withholding the vote, than to the terms on which it shall be granted. His preference for a straightforward measure of adult franchise is shared by most Radicals and by all the Labour Party. That means much, for the unflagging work of the constitutional suffragists in recent years, in alliance with organised labour, has converted its old academic assent into active sympathy. No one will

doubt that who saw the great platform of the Albert Hall last February at the National Union's meeting, packed by hundreds of working men from all over England, of whom each represented a trade union as its accredited delegate. The Conciliation Bill seemed a valuable instalment of reform in 1910; but after five years of work and agitation and hope deferred, it will be a much larger recognition of their claims that women will demand and deserve.

But the choice between adult suffrage, the "Dickinson" compromise, or the "Conciliation" instalment, will depend entirely on the attitude of official Liberalism, and on the distribution of parties in the next House. After the instructive history of this Parliament, *no man who cares for his own repute as a sincere and clear-thinking politician will play with proposals for a Private Member's Bill, or waste his energy on face-saving efforts by unofficial groups of members. The thing can be done only by a Government which knows its own mind from the first.* Those Ministers who believe in woman suffrage are clearly bound to put it in their electoral programme, and to declare for a Government measure. The obstacles to this course are obvious—the importance of other issues, the opposition of a small minority within the party, the unpopularity of militancy. *The obstacles to shelving the question are, to our thinking, much the more formidable.* If a minority in a party counts for something, the overwhelming majority counts for more. It cannot again bind itself to the delays which Sir Edward Grey and other Ministers long ago declared to be intolerable. Some of these Ministers would not, we think, consent to take office in a Cabinet precluded from action on the suffrage. The middle course of waiting for something to turn up, and trusting to the luck of



a Private Member's Bill, is discredited by its history in this Parliament. *The party refused the method of unofficial compromise when it was open, and the "torpedo" which sank the Conciliation Bill submerged the hope of any similar procedure.* The way out of this tangle is clear. The next Liberal Cabinet is bound to be a Suffragist Cabinet. There may, of course, be a Tory Cabinet, which will aim at a narrow Bill. But Mr. Asquith's instinct is sound. Liberalism can adopt this reform with full conviction and enthusiasm only in a democratic shape. *But the party which moulds a great human claim to its own principles and its own reckoning of expediency must pay the price and shoulder the responsibility.*



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# The War and Woman Suffrage

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[As the N.U. has expressed no official views on the present War, those passages referring to it must be taken as an expression of the individual opinion of the writer.]

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## THE WAR AND WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

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We are glad to learn that Women's Suffrage Societies of all types are discussing the relationship of women to the war and to the peace which will one day end it. Women belong to the nation as much as men, and they fall as readily into the national attitude. But they were not consulted about the origin of the war, and probably feel that when negotiations begin, their ideas and feelings will be taken into no kind of formal account. This neglect of opinions is one of the peculiar wrongs of their sex, but it also exists as a grievance of most democracies. From them springs the modern conception of the nation, "in arms," be it conscript or volunteer. When war comes, a great part of the nation marches, but it is not asked to vote. When war ends, the survivors return, but they have never yet been called in by their rulers to shape the conditions of the new national and international life decreed for them. Wars, however, are not supported merely by soldiers; behind them stand a great body of non-combatants. Their share lies in the sustenance of the armies, the supply of ammunition, the organisation of trans-

port, the regulation of civil life. Women have their full share of most of these activities. The business of "taking care" of the nation while its men are at war devolves especially upon them. They are also subjected to a peculiar and double strain. Not only do they experience the most acute mental sufferings which war entails, but they take the largest part in the physical succour of its victims. It is the work of the hospital and its women workers and directors which keeps millions of men in the field, and renews their exhausted energies. Meanwhile, in the civil community a host of questions arise to show how close is a people's dependence on women's labour, and how war affects its purpose and direction. The fabric of women's labour usually suffers a sudden, and in many of the luxury trades, a revolutionary shock, while their responsibilities as mothers or bread-winners are suddenly enlarged by the disorganisation of family life. Yet the State makes its re-arrangements of these matters with slight reference to women's desires and little knowledge of their necessities. On Monday, Mr. Tennant suggested that male shop assistants should be replaced by women, and that the Trade Unions should assist this transference of labour from one sex to the other. On what terms? On an equality of wages, or a lower scale for women workers? How can such an issue be fairly settled without reference to women and their representatives? No woman sat on the Select Committee of the House of Commons which re-arranged the scale of allowances for soldiers' dependents. If the problem of child-labour, which the farmers

have raised, becomes acute, it will be regulated by male authorities. If conscription for foreign service is adopted, the decision will be arrived at by an executive or a Parliament consisting exclusively of fathers or childless men.

The exclusion of women from political life is, therefore, not a smaller, but a greater injustice in times of war and of great political disturbance than in a period of peace. For it is at such moments that the "confusion" in the household of humanity—to use a phrase of Mrs. Bramwell Booth—becomes most conspicuous. It is hardly an accident that we should be at war with a State which prides itself on the purely masculine character of its civilisation and its rejection of feminine influences. Hartmann considered Germany the essentially male State, whose union with more feminine strains of humanity—such as Slavs and Latins—must now, we suppose, be attained by reviving the ancient practice of marriage by capture. Modern German arrogance is indeed largely a measure of its contempt for the art of living whose fruits spring from a union of the qualities that men and women together contribute to it. Nowhere within the range of the Western civilisation do women occupy a lower place than in Germany; nowhere is the ground-plan of State living and thinking so conspicuously laid out as if male force and male stratagem covered the entire field of human achievement. Such a Germany and its methods are a challenge to the woman's conception of life, and a reminder of what States do and suffer when they found themselves on a half-idea of social conduct. Nor is this German

egoism an example merely of extreme self-exaltation in a powerful but hardly a finely constituted race. It springs from an exclusive reliance on one source of spiritual energy and the neglect of another.

It is, therefore, an appropriate time to discuss the great reform on which all the more enlightened nations in the world will sooner or later reconstitute their political systems. Mrs. Fawcett well said at the meeting of the National Union, that the scheme of peace roughed out by the Prime Minister at Dublin appealed to principles identical with those of the Suffragists. Indeed, if the Allies win, and know how to use their victory, no cause ought to gain more from the re-establishment of public law in Europe, the downfall of militarism, and the respect for nationalities, which Mr. Asquith defined as the governing objects of their alliance. Each of these advances in international morals means a defeat for those elements in society which are anti-womanly, or which deny or curtail the representative principle—the principle of equality of opportunity—on which the women's cause rests. But there are practical reasons why, when the war is over, and the community meets the full shock of the privations it has caused, we shall want all the co-operation of all the people to fashion it anew. Doubtless, if it is held that women merely double the ideas of the men, their accession to their full share in the management of the State may not greatly affect its structure. Even so, its foundations will have been laid more justly than before. But no such view is possible to those who truly measure the resources of human

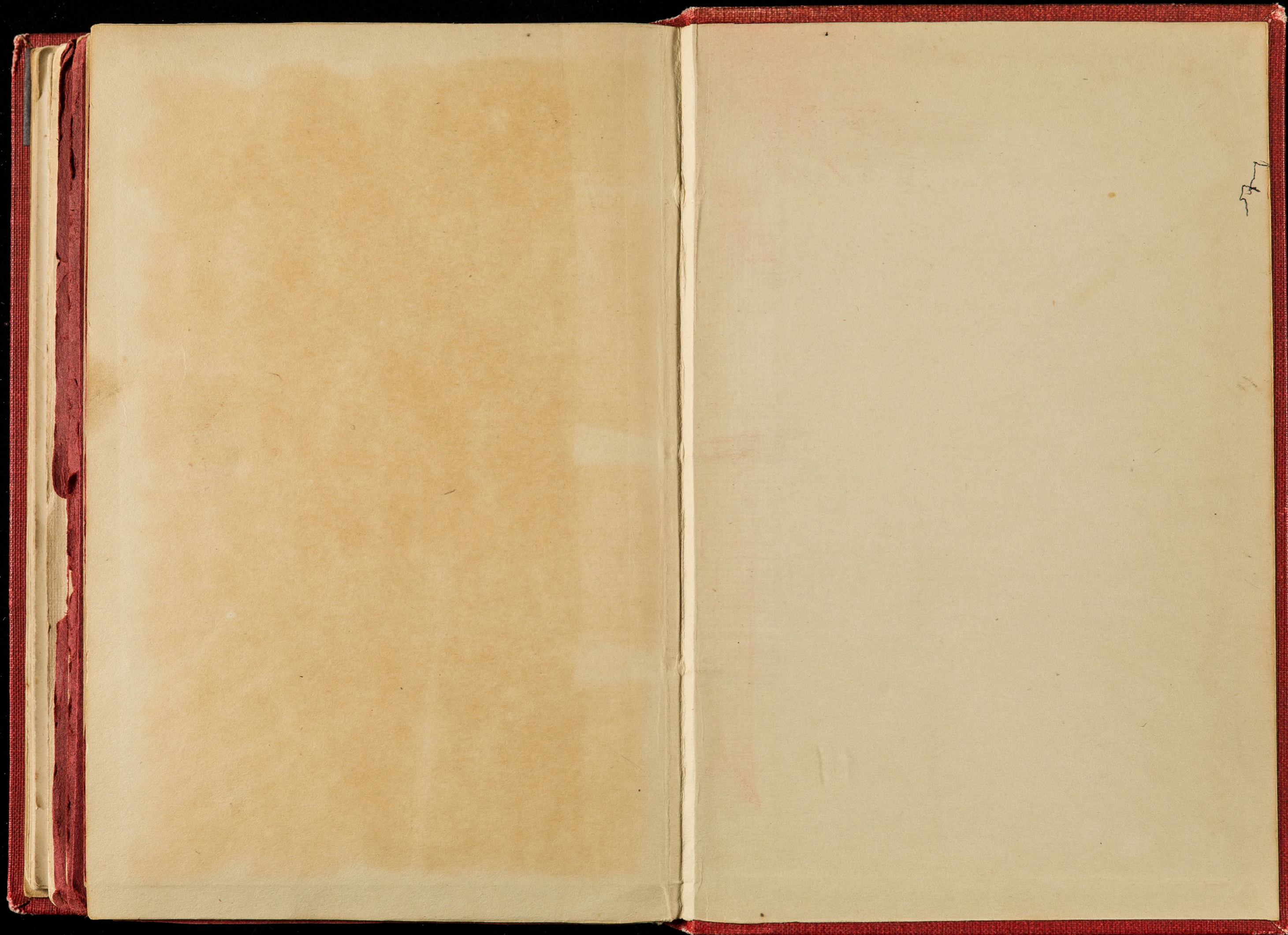
life, and believe in its infinite promise. If full citizenship for women endows the State with a finer tact, a more sympathetic intelligence, than the typical "male" Empire commands, its policy will not only be more firmly based on the common will, but should thereby be given a new moral direction.

We do not mean that women are always and necessarily opposed to war. History shows that their incentive and even their example have spurred men on, in siege and in battle, to the most desperate resistance to invasion. But as mothers and wives, beginning with a strong instinctive aversion from war, they must needs regard it for what it is, the last and worst expedient of civilisation in resisting forces that have completely outgrown control. Its romantic side (which is virtually dead) may have appealed to them as to most men, but not, we think, the grand fallacy that the universal suffering which it inflicts carries an ample compensating good in its train. They can have no traditional respect for the formulas of statesmanship which justify or lead up to it. On these they will bring fresh critical minds to bear; minds quickened by experience gained in hundreds of hospitals, as well as in homes where the pinch of war will be felt years after the last trench has been dug and the last soldier carried to his grave. The nations then called into council will have had their fill of force, and of the neo-German idea of it as the first and most natural activity of the State. The most progressive of them will rather long to end the disharmony which has put their great co-operative energies out of tune.

Force must indeed be used to batter down the German aggression in Eastern and Western Europe; but it cannot build up a Germany that Europe can respect and tolerate. For that end, and for the creation of a new Europe, even the best institutionalism will not suffice. Something new and helpful must be born in the heart of the world from its long travail in war. Is it too much to suggest that in such a society the chief argument against the enfranchisement of women must fall to the ground?



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