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ADULT SUFFRAGE.

AN ADDRESS TO DEMOCRATS.

By

F. D. ACLAND, M.P.

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ADULT SUFFRAGE.

An Address to Democrats.

A Speech delivered at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on February 23, 1911,

By F. D. ACLAND, M.P.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—If you at all believe in the principles of democracy, I hope this evening to persuade you to believe in Adult Suffrage; and if you believe in Adult Suffrage, I hope to persuade you to work for it as the inevitable and practical conclusion of your democratic faith.

Let me then, first of all, put the matter briefly in this way. May I assume that you are all strongly opposed to what we call the plural vote? Yes, that receives, as at all Liberal meetings, a fine round of applause! But if I go on to say that if we oppose the plural vote we must be adult suffragists, you only give a very mild murmur of approval. And yet, in my opinion, one follows immediately from the other, and I will try to reason the thing through.

1. We object to the plural vote because it gives a dominating power in our politics to wealth and property.

2. We don't object to it, I hope, because this power always works against us politically; we should object to it just as much, or shall I say nearly as much, on principle.

3. The principle on which we go is that the vote should depend upon personality, not upon property.

If voting depends upon property, occupation or lodging, clearly a man who has much property or many occupations should have many votes ; if the vote depends upon personality, then, however great or widespread is a man's property, he should have only one vote.

4. We say, therefore, that the vote should depend on personality ; if so, surely the only classes we can debar from having a voteworthy personality are aliens, criminals, lunatics, persons depending on public charity, persons so migratory as not to be attachable to a particular constituency or voters' list, and those who are not yet adults.

5. If we proceed to enfranchise all the personalities not thus excluded, the result will be what is known as "Adult Suffrage." Therefore, in objecting to the plural vote we are adult suffragists. Q.E.D.

Before trying to substantiate this by considering it from any other point of view, let me consider some of the objections usually brought against Adult Suffrage, and see whether we cannot fairly meet them.

Objection 1.—*Adult Suffrage is too big a proposal to be practical ; it would make too great a change.*

I reply : Remember what J. S. Mill said—"Small cures for great evils do not produce small effects, they produce no effects at all." We ought not to favour change simply because it is change ; but neither should we be afraid of change simply because it is change. Is there anything to be afraid of in this change ? We now have 7,000,000 voters—we should have 21,000,000 under Adult Suffrage. I believe the Reform Bill of 1832 did a good deal more than multiply by three, and the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884, though not making so large a multiplication, had a much greater effect in moving the balance of power, which is the only thing to be afraid of in Adult Suffrage when we say it is a great change. The Reform Bills each enfranchised *a new and a lower class* in society, but now all classes are more or less represented on our voters'

lists, and Adult Suffrage would only extend the vote to the unenfranchised members of enfranchised classes. It is much more a strengthening than a lengthening of the chain of political responsibility. Therefore, no one has anything to fear from it.

Objection 2.—*Adult Suffrage will give votes to all the "scum."*

I answer : Let us see what people mean by scum.

1. If they mean those crowded together in highly rented slum dwellings, they very often have a vote already.

2. If they mean the poor, half-starved, sweated woman worker, the sweating employer has a vote, and surely the worker should have one, too.

3. If they mean people who stand in the market place all the day idle, living on what their wives make charing, they, too, are mostly enfranchised already ; and it certainly would improve matters to give the better half a vote, considering that the worse half is already considered worthy of one.

4. If they mean generally the most sunken residuum of our big cities, they are such a small number (when you exclude paupers, criminals and perhaps a few aliens) that their vote would have no appreciable effect on our politics, and we couldn't make them worse off by a vote, and might make them better off.

Objection 3.—*But if it is a fact that a fair proportion of every social class (even of the lowest) has a vote now, so that Adult Suffrage would not shift the balance of power, is not every class sufficiently represented by its voting members ? What is the use of such a mere addition to the mass of voters as Adult Suffrage would entail ?*

I would answer that a democratic representative system does not mean a system in which some of the voters represent others in choosing their representatives in Parliament. If democracy be fully and properly

carried out, it should mean that everyone, if not disqualified by some definite disability, should take part in the choice of a representative in Parliament and exercise the other rights and privileges of a citizen. And surely if we are democrats (and it is wonderful how many people who call themselves Liberals are not really democrats) we must oppose a system in which certain voters represent their class, not only because of its possible unfairness (such as one class being more fully represented than another, or the chance that the representatives do not properly interpret their class, &c.), but because we hold a positive principle. This principle is that self-government is a good thing in and by itself. I would rather be governed by everyone—and worse governed—than governed by my own friends, even if everyone consented, and better governed. A vote, I hold, is a necessity for citizenship, and citizenship is necessary for progress.

This is very far from saying that the vote is the be-all and end-all of what we want. The vote is like the foundation of a house—you can't build a good house without it, but you can't live on the foundation alone. It is a poor citizen who only votes; it is what you build on the vote—what the vote leads to—that counts.

I would give a person a vote in the belief that only by so doing have you any chance of so educating him that its exercise becomes, as it should be, one of the least events and functions of his citizenship. I hope for a citizenship—a brotherhood for common objects—far higher than that which shows itself merely in the quinquennial record of a vote for a Parliamentary candidate, and believe that the more citizenship develops, the more the vote will become a mere foundation and safeguard.

But as a foundation for the enjoyment of responsible freedom it is essential. To a child to some extent you can give education without responsibility; to a grown-up person you can give no education without first giving responsibility, and no responsibility which

will not lead to education. I think, for instance, that those people who want votes for women only or mainly because of the laws which the vote will enable women to get passed, do not see the whole way into the matter. The present tyranny of the priestcraft over women, of Mrs. Grundy, of Society, of fashion, I believe to be worse than any tyranny of man-made law. But to give women trust and responsibility with regard to the elements of citizenship is a necessary preliminary to their imposing trust and responsibility in themselves and one another in these matters, which to me seem more ultimately vital and fundamental than any political questions.

Objection 4.—*But even if you extend the suffrage to all men, why should you also give it to women? The principle "personality, not property" is right enough, but it only leds to manhood suffrage—for women are property, not personality.**

I know that there are half a dozen plausible reasons for withholding the vote from women; and we will consider them in turn, but first let us notice two things.

In the last twenty years politics have been rapidly coming into the acknowledged sphere of women. The questions of Education, Temperance, Free Trade, Land Reform, Town Planning, Unemployment, concern women as much as, or even more than men. During the same period women have been rapidly coming into

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* A friend of mine writes to me most justly on this point: "That a woman is property of course would not nowadays be put in that brutally frank form; nevertheless that is the real and surviving idea at the back alike of the working man who doesn't want his wife to have a vote, and of the upper-class man who doesn't want his wife to demean herself to the political arena. Neither of them stops to ask what she wants; both would settle her affairs to suit their own ideas of what 'their' women folk should do. The same thing is, of course, embedded in English law; we still have reiterated judicial decisions that a mother is not a 'parent,' that a woman graduate is not a 'person,' even that girls are not 'children.'"

the acknowledged sphere of politics. Think of their better education. The opportunities of education for girls are now normally just as good as those for boys, and in many families it is usual to send girls to better schools than the boys go to. Think how women have come into our trades, professions, inspectorships, public work on our Councils and Boards of Guardians, and into the sphere of politics itself. I may say that, in my belief, if a husband has the right sort of wife, and a wife the right sort of husband, I know of nothing that will not be done better by the wife if she talks it over with the husband, and by the husband if he talks it over with his wife. Why should politics, which concern a woman and her children vitally, be the function of the man alone? I claim this to be certain: that if women had the vote, far fewer men would vote simply for a glass of beer. Let those, therefore, who want men to vote drunk object—but let us know their reason.

But I must not run away from the usual objections to women's votes. Here they are—

(A) *Because men are men, and women are women.*

So they are, bless them! and so they will remain, each bringing to every common problem peculiar elements of strength and of weakness, peculiar knowledge, and a peculiar aspect towards political questions drawn from their different instincts, training, and experiences. These different aspects towards political and social questions will correct and balance one another. A man said in the time of Terence, "Nihil humanum alienum a me puto" (I do not think that anything of human interest is outside my sphere), and may not a woman say it too, 2,000 years later? If not, we have not advanced much, and the sooner we do the better.

(B) *Because woman's proper sphere is the home.*

There is something worth thinking about here. I think I should have agreed with any Englishman

who had said this five hundred years ago, but let us see what has happened since then. The home has both contracted and expanded. Then wool and flax were spun and woven at home, clothes and boots were made there, all the washing, baking and preserving, all the killing, drying and salting of meat, all the education of children, the whole of the provisioning of the house were done at home, and all this was women's sphere. Now the home has expanded into the factory, the workshop, the laundry, the bakery, the warehouse, the shop and the school, and a woman is only following pieces of her former home in claiming these things for her sphere. We surely do not wish to confine women to a narrower sphere than that which was given them five hundred years ago, but this we certainly do, and shall do more and more as civilisation increases the subdivision and specialisation of processes, if we regard home interests as being only those which are confined to the four walls of the house. A woman does infinitely less within the four walls of her house than she used to do; therefore, unless she is to be allowed to consume her energies and her soul in hats and gossip, she must be allowed to do infinitely more outside it. And to do this properly she will want more than a municipal vote. To fill her proper place with regard to the school, the factory and the shop, formerly parts of the home, she needs direct influence in Parliament as well as in the Town Council.

(C) *But women can always influence men, and it is better that they should use their influence over men voters than that they should come out into the rough and tumble of politics themselves.*

I am always ashamed when I hear men or women use this argument. To my mind it is beastly. Women who rely on this influence and men who like to be influenced should never meet one another except

in a harem, and should not be allowed inside decent-minded people's houses.

(D) *If you gave all women the vote, the women voters would be in the majority. Government rests on force, and if there were a majority of women outvoting a majority of men, the men would rebel and the State would be dissolved.*

In the first place, anti-women suffragists must agree whether they are going to use this argument or that which they generally use almost in the same breath, that women are properly and sufficiently represented by their men-folk, and that the two sexes have so much unity of interests that to give them both political rights is unnecessary. If there is any truth in this, the argument that all women might be on one side—all men on the other—falls to the ground. But it is perhaps worth adding :—

1. That the women who work in politics now do not work altogether *as women*, but against one another, as Primrose Leaguers, or Tariff Reform Leaguers, members of Women's Liberal Associations or of the Women's Free Trade Union, members of the Labour Party, or Socialists, and they would do just the same if they had votes.

2. That where they have got Women's Suffrage there is no tendency towards such action as is imagined here. In some constituencies in New Zealand women voters outnumber men—but still they are divided among themselves—belonging to the different political parties ; though as a result of their votes one finds measures pushed forward by all parties towards temperance, decrease of infantile mortality, &c., and it is harder for men of bad moral character to get into Parliament. These things surely are by no means a bad result of giving women the vote.

3. As for the argument that the State is based on force, and therefore the people will not obey a majority unless it has the greater part of the force of

the nation behind it, and therefore that woman, whose sphere is not physical fighting, cannot be given any share in the government of the State, let me say at once that the premises in this argument are not true, and that the conclusion is absurd.

The State is not based on force. Force is based on the State. Government is based on consent, and force is by general consent given to the Government, to use in the last resort against those who oppose the common will. The force of the Home Office is not derived from the police ; the force of the police is derived from the Home Office. As long as we remain constitutionalists, and are governed constitutionally, we shall obey the properly constituted authorities. Whenever the Liberals are in, the greater part of the organised fighting force of the country, and the wealth which can buy force, are on the side of the minority. But the minority do not rebel. They only write to the *Times*. And surely, so far as it is true that government depends on force, is it not a thing to be ashamed of ? Does not civilisation largely mean the passing away of the rule of force before the rule of right ? And will not this be facilitated by the enfranchisement of a sex which cannot rely upon force, but only upon right, for obtaining justice ? And surely, if force still survives as one factor for obtaining political rights, the sex which is physically the weaker and has not got the force is in still greater need of the other factor for obtaining rights—namely, the vote.

(E) *But though there may be some little injustice in not giving the women the vote, it cannot be safe for the State to trust with a share in government any persons except of the sex which bears arms for the State in war.*

If this argument is carried out logically, we should disfranchise all but the Territorials ; and if it is merely potential service to the State that is thought of, I would ask, Which does most for the State, the man

who bears arms, or the woman who bears children ? The idea that the only useful sort of national service is military service is far too common. Military service, particularly if given under compulsion, is often the least enlightened and the least useful form of national service.

(F) *But a very large proportion of women do not want the vote. Why give them what they do not ask for ?*

A very large proportion of the slaves in the Southern States did not want to be free. Was Abraham Lincoln wrong in freeing them ?

But that is enough for the women's side. To sum it up, I say that if you believe that the vote should rest on personality, not on property, there is no valid argument at all for regarding masculine personality only and excluding feminine. The women's vote will benefit themselves by leading them to true responsibility and freedom—political, social, industrial and religious, it will benefit men by leading them to regard women less orientally, and it will benefit politics by gaining greater attention for the most important questions, and by bringing into political matters an improved spirit of duty and responsibility.

We will return to the main question, which surely is, " Is it the duty of all the parties of progress to force Adult Suffrage to the front of practical politics ? " I can imagine a man agreeing to all that has been said here, and yet feeling at the end of it that Adult Suffrage is too big a job to tackle after all. " People are not ready for it," he would say. " It will need a terrible amount of work. It will distract our energies from pressing social reforms. It will alienate from us many working men who really do not want their wives to have votes. Can we not get rid of the worst abuses and anachronisms of our present system, and give a good many women the vote, and then get on again with land and Poor Law, and education and unemployment ? "

There is a great deal in this point of view, and I think one must suggest answers rather than try to give them dogmatically.

I suggest, then, that the history of democracy in England shows constant alternations between working at social questions and working at machinery, and that the time has come for us to put the machinery once for all into good order. We have never yet got the machinery good enough to give democracy a clear road. We have been contented with a little reform at a time, have gone merrily forward for a few years and then found that we must come back again and improve the machine in order to get ahead.

Let us briefly consider the facts. There was a great Liberal majority in the first reformed Parliament of 1832, but the enfranchised classes were too Tory to be willing to go really far. Grants were given for education, Poor Law was amended, a Factory Act was passed, and slaves were emancipated, but the Liberals could not keep it going, and the Tories gained in 1835 and in 1837, and came in with a big majority in 1841. During the late fifties and the sixties, the Liberals more and more realised that further advance depended on further reform, but after it was obtained in 1867, though they passed an Education Act, repealed religious tests in Universities, swept away the last trace of the duty on corn, and reformed the Army, the spirit of social reform soon came to an end because the control of affairs was too much with the Whigs, which means that political reform had not gone far enough. But the Liberals again came in in 1880, and again realised the necessity for more reform, which they forced through in 1884, in spite of the action of the Lords. The reforms which were then due were prevented in the short Parliament of 1885 by the Home Rule struggle, and largely by the same cause in the short Liberal Government 1892–1895. But that Government was long enough to show us that still more would have to be done to the machinery—and Gladstone left to us the question of the Lords as a

legacy. We refused to take his advice in 1906 and suffered for it. Our programme then was mainly social, not political. We cleared off an enormous mass of arrears of social legislation, but the fight with the Lords and the huge power of wealth displayed in the recent elections have shown us that the reforms of machinery which we thought quite unnecessary in 1906 are vital now if we are to get further.

Whether we like it or not, then, we are into another period of reform, and I suggest that we ought not this time to be too easily satisfied. While we are about it we ought to make a good job of it. Many would be satisfied if we got rid of the veto of the Lords, and the plural vote, but if we did so we should more and more find ourselves held back by the limitations of our franchise and the injustices, inequalities, and absurdities of our representative system.

Let us look, then, fairly at some of these matters concerning the machinery of democracy, to see what lies before us.

We all feel, in the first place, that the power of the Lords over legislation and finance must be limited. We must free the House of Commons from the congestion with matters concerning only one part of the United Kingdom to which it is now liable. We are pretty well agreed, also, that we must have payment of Members and of returning officers' expenses, and either complete abolition of plural voting or at least all elections on one day; we must have public-houses closed on that day; we must shorten the period of qualification for a vote, and we need either legislation or a proper organisation to deal better with the organised powers of wealth in politics and with intimidation and undue pressure. We must get rid of the absurdities of our present system of registration. Sooner or later, also, the smaller boroughs must be merged in county divisions and more Members given to places like Walthamstow, and when a good opportunity comes we must not be afraid of

tackling the matter because of the awkward question of Ireland.

If we think of it, we shall see that many of these reforms are far more likely to make important changes in the balance of political forces than is Adult Suffrage. Let us, therefore, get Adult Suffrage on to the same plane with these reforms, and push them all forward together. If they go forward together, there will be a better chance for them than for each singly, and we shall get forward much better with social reform when we have got them all than by just taking a minimum and trying our luck with that.

Let us now see how Adult Suffrage, and Adult Suffrage alone, can solve the task that lies before us of simplifying and getting rid of the absurdities of our present system of registration.

What is our position now?

1. An owner comes on to the list after nine months' ownership; an occupier must wait for from eighteen to twenty-nine months.

2. A lodger who marries and becomes an occupier must start compiling a totally fresh term of residence.

3. A man changing from one side of the street to the other, if in another constituency, loses his vote and has to begin another wait of one and a-half or two and a-half years.

4. A lodger must claim afresh every year, and the amount of fraud in lodgers' claims is amazing.

5. The law as to the large class of latch-key voters is utterly uncertain, and depends on the revising barrister; and you all know that a man lost his vote simply because he had a parrot, for his landlord had inspected the bird when it shrieked, and this established his right of entry.

6. There are a large number of people who have votes as borough freeholders in a county division which they have never even visited.

7. The joint occupation vote gives endless opportunities of advantage to wealth, for in many parts of the country a man is refused a joint tenancy of a house or farm with his father or brother unless his landlord can trust both to vote his way.

All these things are unnecessary, undemocratic and vexatious. Patching is no good. The only way out is a simple residence qualification for everyone ; and properly paid officials to revise the register at short intervals

I believe, too, that Adult Suffrage, if not the only possible way to solve the question of Women Suffrage, is far the best way. It is almost impossible to sandwich any scheme of Women Suffrage into our present electoral system. Women are not normally owners or occupiers, and of the lodgers those who most need the vote are not those who would come on under the present lodger qualification.

I am aware of and appreciate the valiant efforts of the Conciliation Committee, but could give several reasons why they cannot be regarded as wholly satisfactory. It is enough to say that until they have established the fact that there is a majority behind some definite scheme, the ground is open for any other solution. Even were some limited Bill possible, I should feel bound to point out what seems to me a great weakness in the Women Suffrage position as we so often hear it. I cannot understand how women can use all the arguments which point to Adult Suffrage only, and then, as they so often do, conclude by running away from their own principles and advocating the "is or may be" formula or that of the Conciliation Committee.

If they are dealing with the question practically, they tell us, quite rightly, that the women who require a vote are the working women, and the women who manage the working-class homes ; and yet when they come to their plan we find that there is no idea whatever of giving the vast bulk of either of these classes any chance

of a vote whatever. And it is just the same when they deal with the principle of the matter.

For what are the principles at the root of the Women Suffrage movement ? How often have we not heard them ! The vote is claimed as an elementary right of citizenship, and we are told that the person with no vote bears a political stigma, and is, indeed, almost an outlaw ; that democracy is government by consent ; that there should be no taxation without representation ; that government should be for the people, of the people, by the people. All these expressions are one in principle, and the principle is Adult Suffrage and nothing else. They involve the removal of *all* the impediments to suffrage, accidental or otherwise, under which we suffer to-day, just as much as the removal of the sex impediment. Yet persons who voice these principles belong to Conservative Suffrage Societies, one of whose declared objects is the prevention of Adult Suffrage ! And many other suffragists as well, while fighting for their own vote as an elementary citizen's right, perpetually condemn as enemies those who fight for that right for all citizens.

If we believe in our principles, let us see where they lead us, and follow them fearlessly. Adult Suffrage certainly means Women Suffrage, and Women Suffrage means Adult Suffrage, and democracy means both. There are too many people who, when they have a job to do, let the job look at them, instead of looking at the job. Let us look at the job fair and square, let us tackle it and get it done.

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The Earl of Selborne

ON

Woman Suffrage.

A Speech delivered at the Hotel Cecil, on March 9th, 1911.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I do not approach this great question from any point of view of theory. We all have the points of view from which we approach political questions. Theory is not one of mine. It seems to me, whether we are dealing with Constitutions, or with the franchise as part of a Constitution, theory has little place in this matter-of-fact world. What you have to decide, each woman or each man for herself or himself, is whether a given proposal will in practice be for the advantage of the country or not.

Now, take the question of our Constitution. There are some people who are so enamoured of that Constitution that they think that it is fitted, and it alone is fitted, for the government of all races in all places and in all times. That certainly is not my view. Indeed, it seems to me to be rather an absurd view for the people of these islands to put forward, a view which the intelligent foreigner might characterise as founded on insular conceit. What matters to us is that it is the Constitution which suits us. I am quite sure that there

are many peoples and many countries which it would not suit, and there have been many epochs in the history of the world when it would have suited no people or country at all. We believe in it because it is a national growth. We believe in it because the experience of centuries has proved that it is exactly the kind of Government that suits us. We have, as the years have gone by, brought into that Constitution, incorporated into our Government, different sections of the population. The growth for a long time was very gradual; in the last century it has been much more rapid. But each of those additions to our electoral body was made because the majority of people in the country at that time believed that the proposed addition would not be a mere addition of numbers to the electors, but that it would prove an addition to our national strength. Now, if you ask me whether such and such a body of my fellow countrymen should be added to the electorate, in each case it is to my mind a question of practical consideration. Will they or will they not add to the stability and the strength of our country? If I thought they would not then I should oppose that proposed addition, and when the question at issue is not one of my countrymen but one of my countrywomen, I apply exactly the same test to the proposition. If I am in favour of Woman Suffrage it is not on *a priori* ground or on grounds of theory, but, because, drawing on such experience as I have had, I believe they will be an addition to the stability, good order, and strength of the country.

Now, all forms of Government have their drawbacks. There is no such thing as a form of Government which embodies within itself all the advantages and brings in its train no disadvantages. No doubt the best possible form of Government for any country would be an

autocrat, if he combined with the wisdom of Solomon the character of St. Paul. But we have abandoned autocrats because we have found that as a matter of practice we do not get a succession of such men. Now we are a democracy, it does not mean that there are no drawbacks in a democratic system. On the contrary, the weaknesses and failures of that system stare every intelligent person in the face. But we believe in it because we have found that for our country, at any rate, its advantages largely preponderate over its disadvantages. One of those disadvantages is this: If A, B, and C are classes enjoying the franchise they can be trusted on the whole to do justice to class D so long as there is no clash between the interests of A, B, and C, and the interests of unenfranchised D. Directly there is such a clash of interest it is inevitable in a democratic system that the unrepresented class does not get its full share of consideration. Now, approaching this question from that standpoint, and remembering that it has been our national practice to add to our electorate class after class, for the reasons I have given, it seems to me that the burden of proof rests with those who would state an unanswerable "No" to any proposal for adding women to the franchise. The homage one pays to opponents whose views we know to be honest, is to examine them and see what strength lies in them. We have been greatly assisted in the question before us in applying that test by an excellent publication that has been issued by one of the principal societies, giving the case of the men against the women. Looking through that publication, I have taken out what appeared to me to be the arguments on which the opponents of the proposal lay most stress, and, with your permission, I should like briefly to examine some of them to-night.

"Women cannot fight."

In the first place, I notice that we are told that women ought not to have the franchise because, in case of war, they cannot fight. Now, that would be an argument which might command our respectful attention if there were any connection at all in the men's franchise between the voting and the fighting. But we know that the vote is not only conferred on those who bear arms in some capacity or other in defence of our country, but that it is equally freely given to those who are physically incompetent to bear arms and to those who are conscientiously determined under no circumstances to bear arms. And, therefore, as our system of Government is not based exclusively on militarism, I do not think we need pause any longer over that argument.

The next argument is akin to it, though not stated quite so inartistically. I am told that there is an elemental fact whch makes it impossible to give the vote to women—namely, no woman could, in the last resort, make the law effective. Now, that sounds like one of the maxims of Solomon. But is it? "No woman ought to have a vote because it is an elemental fact that she cannot, in the last resort, make the law effective." What does make the law effective? Is it the mere fact of being a man? Or is a man with a revolver more capable of making the law effective than a man without a revolver? Or, if it comes to an imaginative personal experience, is a man without a revolver an absolutely equal match for a woman with a revolver? Mr. Winston Churchill is the Home Secretary. He is charged with the Constitutional responsibility of seeing that the law is made effective. Does the effectiveness of the law depend entirely on the physical stature of Mr. Winston Churchill? We have had great rulers in

this country who were women. Did the dominant position in Europe of Queen Elizabeth depend upon the fact that she was capable physically of making the law effective? Ladies and Gentlemen, we know perfectly well that the final effectiveness of the law does not depend upon physical conditions at all but on the character and brain of the ruler. It has been part of my lot and duty to wander into savage territories. I have seen native tribes where, apart from the *pax Britannica* imposed upon them, and the paramountcy of British law, apart from that, the only natural right in those tribes was might: tribes in which the ordinary position of a woman is most degraded, where she is a mere drawer of water and hewer of wood. But even in such a tribe as that I have seen a woman swaying the whole tribe with unquestioned supremacy, because of the force of her character. This seems to me to be a proof, drawn from the elemental conditions of primitive humanity, that this elemental fact is nothing but elemental rubbish.

Then, of course, I met the two great arguments that loom over every speech dealing with this subject. They always appear sooner or later. One is that women are not fit for the franchise and the other is that the franchise would degrade the true womanly character. It might be said that the arguments are mutually self-destructive. One of them says that the woman will destroy the Constitution and the other says that the Constitution will destroy the woman. But we will not allow them to commit mutual destruction. We will examine them for ourselves. Women are not fit for the franchise. The real bottom of that argument is that men are so fit that inexperienced women are obviously unfit. Now, I am not going to pay any very

great compliment to women when I tell them that, in my opinion, they need not fear the comparison. Are all men fit for the franchise? We know perfectly well, all of us who have to do with the rough and tumble of democratic politics, that, judged from this standard, this unreal and supposititious standard, that there are many thousands of men enjoying the franchise who are not fit. It is not only a question of character. We do not examine the moral character of a man before we put him on the voters' roll. We know that there are many thousands of electors who take very little interest in politics. At a General Election you see that 90 per cent. of the electors have gone to the poll. Yes, but if it had not been for the canvassers and the workers, what would the percentage have been? Not 90, no, nor 80, and I doubt if it would have been 70 per cent. We know also that there are many voters who understand very little about politics. We accept that as part of our democracy. Democracy does not mean that every voter is a man of the highest personal character, or that he is well educated, or that he is intelligent, or that he understands politics. What it means is that he is a human being, and we get the best average results out of democracy by bringing within the sphere of responsibility, be it direct or indirect, as many of our fellow creatures as we can, because everything is by general results in democracy. We want to get the general opinion of the average man in the street, even if he be not the best of men or the wisest or the most intelligent. If you were going to apply tests of that kind we should soon reduce the seven million electors to a very small proportion of that number, and if you are going to exclude women for that reason, what right have you to include men, although they offend against the canon of

that law? I am told again that although that may be true, yet on the average the average man understands more about politics than the average woman. So he ought to. He has been a voter for all these years. Against his will he has been educated in the matter. Have not many women joined in educating him? Given the same experience and the same opportunities, I do not believe that the average result will be materially different. Women may not be wiser than men, but men are not wiser than women.

"The Emotional Sex."

Then I am told that you ladies are the emotional sex. Well, I have some experience of men as well as women. Does anyone mean to tell me that men are not emotional too? I would say, quite deliberately, from my experience that men are, as a whole, quite as emotional as women, and although we may have too much of emotion, and emotion may be misplaced, yet I do not think politics would be as sound as they are if there were no emotion.

Then I come to the argument that the franchise would degrade the true womanly character. Now, there are some arguments which I can treat with respect, because, although I differ from them, I understand them. Let us examine this one and see whether it comes under that head. According to this rule, and taking facts as we find them, and as those who use this argument admit them to be, what do we find? It is a womanly thing for a woman to be a keen politician; it is a womanly thing for her to write political pamphlets and leaflets; it is a womanly thing to go on the platform; it is a womanly thing for her to make a speech at a meeting of a Liberal or Conservative Association; it

is a womanly thing for her to go in any weather, at any time of day or the evening, to canvass a voter in any slum of any city; it is a womanly thing for her to toil the whole of polling day in a carriage or a motor-car to bring men voters to the poll. All that is true women's work. But how degrading, how sad, how ruinous to her character that she should walk into a polling booth and put a cross on a piece of paper? But that is not all. I know, I understand that there are some conscientious and strong opponents of Woman Suffrage who will go further still in their definitions of what is true womanly work. Not only should a woman do this, not only does she acquire merit when she does these things in connection with a Parliamentary Election, but she has acquired even more merit if in a Municipal Election she goes into the polling booth and puts a cross on the bit of paper, and she has acquired a merit that passes words if she takes her place on a Municipal Council. It is right, it is more than right, it is a noble example of what a woman should do for her country if she goes through all the turmoil of a Municipal Election and stands to be elected. But if she goes into the same polling booth and puts her cross for the Member of Parliament of the same constituency, she has degraded her womanly character. I honestly confess that my intelligence is not adequate to the task of comprehending that argument.

"Women do not want the Vote."

Then I am told that women do not want the vote. That is a very fine old crusted argument. I think if you turn up the files of the newspapers about the time of the first Reform Bill, and then again about the time of

the second and third Reform Bills, I am sure you will find that that is one of the stock arguments of the best old Tories of the day. "The men whom it is proposed to enfranchise do not want the vote." I have not the least doubt that many of them did not. But was that a reason why the whole class of our fellow countrymen should be refused the franchise, because a proportion, an unknown proportion, perhaps a large proportion, of them had at that time no desire for the vote and took no interest in politics? Would the sons of those men be as good voters as they are to-day, with all their limitations—their limitations which I do not deny—if their fathers had been refused the franchise half a century ago? Those women who do not want the vote need not use it. You will find, year by year, that exactly the same thing will happen with them as has happened with men. The longer that they have the vote the greater will be their political interest and the greater the number that will exercise their privilege. Let us suppose that there are a great many women—I do not know how many—I am quite prepared to state for the sake of argument it may be a majority. I have no reason to suppose it is. For the sake of argument I will assume that the majority of women are indifferent to this question. Is that any reason why a deaf ear should be turned for ever to the arguments of the women that do? And are the women who do, and are the women who have made their opinions heard, are they so few, so unqualified to express an opinion that their pleadings may be fairly or safely neglected? I have here a list of these in a pamphlet published by the National Union. Think of the Trade Unions, with their membership, who support this movement. Think of the 15,030 women members of the University. Think of the 52,000

women engaged in various paths of public and professional work. Think of the 538—not a great number here, but the quality a great deal more than compensates for the smallness of the quantity—538 out of 553 of the registered medical women in the United Kingdom, and the 600 members of Local Government bodies. They are women who have achieved in the eyes of some of the opponents of this measure the highest merit, those who have known the exact point at which womanly virtue achieves its greatest height, and who have not stepped over that line of degradation, the polling booth for the Parliamentary Election.

The Case of Australia.

But what is our experience in this connection? I quite agree that conditions here are not identical with those in Australia. Australia is a new country with a small population. We are big and old. But, after all, our kith and kin, in crossing the sea, have not changed their natures. They are exactly the same as we are, only living under a different star. Now, in Australia, as you know, women have the vote. Judged by our standards, the polls in Australia are very low. The percentage of voters that go to the poll in Australia we should consider here poor. That, I think, is to be accounted for largely by the vastness of the country. The population is far less concentrated than it is here, and we have certainly educated ourselves up to a pitch of interest in politics which has not been surpassed, if equalled, in any other country. Now, I find that, taking the three elections in Australia, the three last, in 1903, 1906, and 1910, I find that in the first 56 per cent. of the men voted, in the second 57 per cent., and in the third 68 per cent. You see the law which I have indicated. That

increasing interest in politics is being taken by the men is shown by the percentage going to the poll—an increase from 56 per cent, in 1903 to 68 per cent. in 1910. Now take the women : in 1903, 43 per cent. ; in 1906, 44 per cent. ; and in 1910, 56 per cent. That is, in 1910 the percentage of women voting was as great as it had been of the men seven years earlier. It shows that the same law is operating there. They are benefiting by the privilege they enjoy just as much as the men. The average of interest in public affairs among women is increasing in exactly the same steady ratio as it is among men.

"Men look after Women's Interests."

Then I am told that we run the risk of a terrible national calamity, if some epoch-making measure were passed, by a majority of women coercing the minority of men. Now, there is a great deal of truth in that, for the argument does not only apply to questions of women versus men. When you come down to bed-rock questions, where people, be they men or women, care with the whole intensity of their character and intelligence, it is a very dangerous thing for half of the people to try and coerce the other half. Such questions, even when they are between men alone, can only be permanently settled by compromise. That is just as true, but not more true, when you are dealing with the question of women and men. Is there the slightest reason to suppose that on questions, be they great and fundamental or ordinary and normal, that women are all going to be on one side and men on the other. Why, Ladies and Gentlemen, we know perfectly well, we are as sure of the fact as we are that we are meeting together in this hall, that women will be divided in their politics exactly

the same as men are. And when questions are decided in the future, normal questions that do not shake the foundations of our political beliefs, that do not involve them, when normal questions are settled by a majority in the future, when the women share the franchise, not only will nobody ask how the women voted, but if they do ask they will not be able to know. Nobody can know unless there is a scrutiny of the ballot papers of every constituency in the United Kingdom.

Then I am told that women are adequately represented by men, and that men have, especially in recent years, passed many important measures involving acts of justice to women. Perfectly true. I do not think quite so badly of men as to think that they have done nothing just to women. They will continue to intend to act fairly to women—as men understand these questions, and if the particular interests of no class of unrepresented women clash with the interests of represented men. But there are great questions coming to the fore, questions which affect women vitally, at least as much as men, and on which women as women do not take exactly the same view that men do as men. Take questions of marriage, divorce, children, and education: these deep questions centre round the home-life and the bringing up of the children. Women seem to me to be as entitled as men to make their views heard in the settlement of these questions, and with the best intentions on the part of men I do not think that these questions will be as well settled by men alone as they will be if women can make their voices heard as well as men.

Then I come to the question of women workers, the women who have to toil for their daily bread, the women who very often have to support some parent or younger sisters or brothers, the women who are wage-earners

and have to face the battle of life under even more difficult conditions than men. Does it never happen that the interests of the men workers who are represented are different from the interests of the women workers who are not represented? And is it fair that these questions affecting the livelihood of many thousands of women should be settled only by men, some of whom may have interests that conflict directly with those of the unrepresented women?

Why I believe in Woman Suffrage.

I have examined some of the stock arguments of our opponents, and I have given you the reasons why I find them wanting, why I think the arguments adduced against the admission of women insufficient. Therefore, I am driven back to my original position. I am obliged to consider why women who are not, in my judgment, disqualified for the reasons that have been given, why women should be admitted to the franchise. I am not going to give you all those reasons. I am going to give you the one that weighs most with me. What I care for most—we are not talking religion tonight—putting that aside—what I care for most is my country and my home. I believe that the great questions of the future of my country and the existence of the sacredness of the home, I believe that on both those two great questions women not only ought to be heard, but I believe from my experience, that they care more deeply than men. That is my experience, drawn not only from the United Kingdom but drawn from over-seas. And I say on these two great questions, which I care for most, I should trust the women's instinct even more than the men's. I believe that their feelings are deeper, less susceptible of change, less susceptible of fluctuating

emotion. Because I want to strengthen all the forces in my country that will make my country stronger in that world competition that lies before her, and which is going to grow more strenuous from generation to generation, because I believe that the whole soundness of our national life depends on the existence and solidity of the home, therefore I want to join to the ranks of the voters and so to those of the supporters of the country and the home, women whose influence, I believe, will be great to that end. I know that there are many women who will take a different view from that which I do about what is best for the country's honour; they will take a different view from that which I do as to how the home should be safeguarded. But on the whole, taking the average of influence, I most firmly believe that by giving the vote to the women I should be establishing bulwarks of greater strength for my country and for the home.

Now I come to the resolution. It is this :—

> That this meeting urges the Government to grant facilities for the passage of a Woman's Enfranchisement Bill through the House of Commons this session.

The Bill in question is the Conciliation Bill. That Bill is not ideal. It is not the one I personally would have drafted. It is not the one that a great many other people would have drafted either, but it is a fair compromise, accepted by those who are entitled to speak, by the great organisations which have piloted this movement to where it stands to-day, and we have a right to ask for facilities for that Bill. It occupies a wholly different position from any other Bill of the kind that has ever been before Parliament. It unites those who have a right to speak—the pioneers and supporters of

this movement. I understand the opposition of those drawn from both sides in politics who are conscientiously opposed to any franchise Bill at all. That I understand. But there is an attitude which I do not profess to understand. The attitude of those who have always posed as supporters of this movement, and who have done whatever they could to prevent this Bill passing into law. That attitude is particularly manifest on the part of two gentlemen whom I will not name, but whom perhaps you would recognise under the title of the little twin brethren of modern politics. How can anyone of those who have hitherto supported this movement support them in denying facilities for this Bill? I should not mind so much if they contented themselves simply with a refusal to give this Bill facilities without giving a reason. What I do object to is when they assume towards us an air of moral indignation. When they, of all people, apply to us a system of lecture and sermon. We are denounced as traitors to democracy, because we want this Bill passed. We are traitors to the democracy because we want to pass a Bill so utterly undemocratic that it only adds a million voters to the roll. May I ask at what other period in politics in this country or in any other country has a Bill for adding a million voters to the list been called undemocratic? Has not every addition to the franchise of the men been brought about stage by stage? Who would not have laughed if in 1832 denial of facilities for the great Reform Bill had been pleaded because it only added something under a million voters to the franchise? With the men the work has proceeded step by step. That is the natural order and sequence, when you are extending the vote to women. What right have these men to assume this air of unctuous rectitude and to

denounce us who are promoting a Bill to which all sections of all parties who support this movement have agreed, as traitors to democracy? We know the real reason. The real reason is that there has been a matter of miscalculation. If that calculation had shown the majority of those million women were likely to vote Radical, we should have heard nothing about an undemocratic Bill. Their attitude is simply due to the fact that the calculation was to the effect that the majority would probably vote Unionist. I, the other day, was listening to a man who had come asking for money for a public object in which he was greatly interested, and, on cross-examination, it was shown that the people for whom he pleaded and for whom this work was so necessary, were not figuring very largely in the subscription lists, and on being closely pressed, the man reluctantly said this : "Well, the real truth of the matter is that my fellow countrymen do not take any pride in subscribing." It seems to me, ladies and gentlemen, that there are politicians in our midst who do not take any pride in honouring their own cheques on the bank of principle.

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THE HOUSE OF LORDS

AND

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

SPEECH BY

THE EARL OF LYTTON

in the Debate in the House

of Lords, — May 6th, 1914

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for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

1914

THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

THE EARL OF LYTTON: My Lords, this debate has now been carried on for two days, and before your Lordships go to a Division I am anxious to sum up, as best I can, the issue upon which we are going to divide, and also to state one or two facts which have not hitherto been brought out in this debate. My noble friend Lord Newton said, and said truly, that there was nothing new to be said upon this much-discussed question, and although I have no confidence that any of my arguments will be new to your Lordships, still I think I can mention one or two facts which, if I may judge from the speeches which have hitherto been made, are not fully appreciated by your Lordships.

First, as to the issue upon which we are going to divide. The real point which we have been discussing is not whether the pos-

session of a qualification for a vote in a municipal election shall carry with it a qualfication for a vote in a Parliamentary election, but it is the great principle which has been dwelt on throughout the discussion whether the mere fact of sex alone should permanently, throughout her life, and under all conditions, debar any woman in this country from voting at Parliamentary elections. That sex disability exists to-day; and I may point out, in passing, that it has not always existed in this country, as most speakers have assumed. It is a legal disability which was imposed on women by law for the first time in the Reform Act of 1832. Up to that date women were not, in fact, disqualified by law from voting at Parliamentary elections, and on many occasions women actually did vote. I do not want to press that point. I merely mention it in passing, to show that what we are discussing here is not a disability imposed by nature, but a disability imposed by law. If it were a disability imposed by nature, obviously it would be foolish to attempt to do away with it by an Act of Parliament; but as it is a purely artificial barrier imposed by law,

it is by law that that barrier can and should be removed. The Bill introduced by my noble friend, Lord Selborne, would remove that disability, and all those who vote against the Second Reading of it will be voting for its continuance.

Again, we are not discussing in general the merits or shortcomings of women as compared with men. We have had several opinions expressed in this debate. Some noble Lords have told us that they think women are superior to men; others have indicated that in their opinion women are inferior to men. But the opinions of your Lordships on the comparative merits or demerits of women have nothing whatever to do with the vote that is going to be taken on this Bill. Lastly we are not concerned either with the mere abstract right of women to vote all over the world. What we are debating is the justice or expediency of denying to British women any share of representation in the British House of Commons under the British Constitution. I emphasise that fact, because I think that before we can come to a decision as to

whether women should or should not be excluded from the franchise, we ought to have some understanding as to the grounds on which any one is admitted to the franchise in this country. No speaker in this debate has put forward any explanation of our existing representative system which would justify the exclusion of women from any share in that representation.

I ask your Lordships, What is the ground upon which any man has a vote in this country to-day? I have no doubt that if you were to answer that question a great many different explanations would be given. But it has been assumed in the speeches which have been made in this debate that the franchise is only given to such persons as Parliament believes are capable of exercising a wise choice; in other words, that it is the object and basis of our electoral system to secure the most intelligent House of Commons. I think it could very easily be demonstrated that that certainly is not the basis of our franchise laws to-day. If it were, we should expect to see some test of education or intelligence imposed upon the voters, and a

great many men who have a vote to-day would be without one. I submit—and I do not think there can be really any disagreement between us on this point—that the object, and the only object, of our electoral system is to secure a representative House of Commons; and when I say "representative" I do not mean representative of individuals, because Parliament does not legislate for individuals—the laws which Parliament passes do not apply differently as between one individual and another. When I say "representative" I mean representative of every class or body of opinion which is recognised as a corporate class or body in the laws which Parliament passes.

Now, what are the facts to-day? As has been pointed out in this debate, there are still a great many men who do not possess a vote at any particular election. Nevertheless this is true, that every man in the country to-day, if not a voter in a particular election, is at least a potential voter. Every man in the country to-day is capable some time or another of obtaining the Parliamentary vote, whether he be rich or poor, wise or ignorant,

whether he be capable of exercising physical force, or whether he be incapable of it. To whatever class he belongs, whatever may be the interests of his occupation, his trade, his profession, or his labour, that class and those interests are represented in our electoral system. That is the case as far as men are concerned. It is equally true that no woman in this country is even a potential voter. To whatever class she belongs, and whatever her interests may be, in so far as those interests are distinct from the interests of men, they receive no recognition, and are without any representation at all. Now, I submit that that is quite inconsistent with any theory that it is possible to bring forward of representative government; and since representative government is the basis of our Constitution, I say it is unjust to women, because it is in direct conflict with the theory of our Constitution, that they should be denied all representation. That injustice is all the greater when the reason put forward for it—it was the reason given by Lord St. Aldwyn in this debate—is that women are a majority of the population. Surely it is the

strangest argument ever put forward in a democratic country for refusing to a particular class any share in the representative system of the country that that class happens to be the largest proportion of the population.

Then last night another speaker, Lord Ampthill, said that in his opinion there was no injustice involved in this exclusion of women, because he regarded a vote not as a privilege but as a duty. My Lords, this discussion of women's franchise produces very strange interpretations of representative Government. What could be stranger than the argument that a vote is a duty which it is unwise and unfair to impose upon people? That is a curious interpretation of the history of the struggle for political representation not only in this country but in all democratic countries. Was it to fulfil a duty, or was it to enjoy a privilege, that the men of 1832 and 1867 and 1884 fought for and obtained a share of political representation in this country? And was it to impose a duty upon the Uitlanders in South Africa that this country a few years ago plunged into a long, disastrous, and expensive war?

No, it was not to impose any duty upon those men but to win for them a privilege, the same privilege which the women of this country are demanding to-day, to give them a weapon of defence, the same weapon of defence for which the women of this country are asking to-day. It was to remedy the injustice which the people of this country felt that those men were under, that we went into that war—the same injustice which women feel, and feel acutely, in Great Britain to-day.

That, my Lords, is my contention, that the exclusion of women from the Parliamentary vote is a real injustice; and in order to establish that contention I wish to show two things. First, that women are a distinct separate class in the country, which is not, and cannot be, represented by the votes of men; and, secondly, that the injustice under which they suffer is recognised and resented by the women, and that they have given emphatic proof of their demand for its removal. If it could be shown that every law which Parliament passes dealt only with matters in which the interests of men and of

women in all classes were identical, then I think it would be impossible to argue that any injustice was involved in the exclusion of women from representation. However much the feelings and sentiments and *amour propre* of women might resent such exclusion, at least there would be no injustice. We might argue that the exclusion of women in those circumstances was illogical, inexpedient, and foolish, but we could not argue that it was unjust. And that was exactly the argument used by John Bright in 1867 against the enfranchisement of women. He said, in effect, "Women are not a class, and therefore they do not require special representation." Without going into the question as to whether that was true in 1867, I think it may be very easily demonstrated that it is entirely untrue as regards the women of the present day, because if women do not need special representation as a class, they do not need separate legislation; but if you give them separate legislation you cannot deny their right to separate representation. From the moment that you passed Factory Laws, and Shop Hours Acts, and Insurance Acts which

differentiate between the industrial conditions of men and women ; from the moment that you passed Divorce Laws which differentiate between the rights of the husband and the wife; and, more particularly, from the moment that you passed such laws as the Married Women's Property Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, laws dealing with nurses and midwives—laws, that is to say, dealing with women alone—from that moment it became impossible to argue that women are not a class and therefore do not need special representation. I say that their separate representation is not based upon any inherent right to a vote in an individual, but it is established by the present position of women on the Statute Book.

During the whole time in which Parliament has been more and more interfering, or rather I would say occupying itself, with matters which we regard as more especially the interest and sphere of women—during all those years the higher education of women has progressed, their sphere of activity has been enlarged, and they have been brought more and more every year into close touch

with the industrial and the political life of this country. Let me give to your Lordships one or two facts. It has been suggested that this debate is merely a matter of opinion. I submit that whatever our opinions may be there are certain facts which we are not entitled to ignore. Let me mention the following facts to your Lordships. One-third of the total number of women over the age of 15 in this country to-day are working for their own living ; 50 per cent. of the single women, 30 per cent. of the widows, and 15 per cent. of the married women are wage-earners. What does that mean? It means that nearly five million women in this country to-day are obliged to work for their own living in order to have the home which you tell us is their special sphere ; and in that work they find themselves in competition with men ; they find that their competitors have not only their trade organisations, but that they have the vote also which gives them representation in Parliament. You regulate the labour of these women in every direction ; you restrict their employment ; you deal with their industrial conditions ; and

it is only adding insult to the injury which they suffer when you tell them that they are represented to-day by the votes of the men with whom they have to compete. I think I have established my first contention that women are a separate class. You have made them so in your laws; you recognise them as such in your laws; and so long as that class is specifically recognised in law and at the same time specifically disfranchised by law, I say that your Parliament is not representative, that it does not fulfil its primary function; and all your boasted democracy, your principle of "Government of the people by the people" is in this country a falsehood and a sham.

The second point which I said required to be proved was that women had in fact given evidence of their demand for political enfranchisement. It has been asserted by almost every speaker in this debate who has spoken in opposition to the Bill that in his opinion women did not want the vote. I might content myself by reminding your Lordships of what Mr. Gladstone said in 1884, when he was told that the agricultural

labourers did not want the vote. He replied then—

"I am not concerned whether they want it or not; the State wants it for them."

I might make the same reply to those who say that women do not want the vote. But I do not, my Lords. I am concerned to prove by every test which politicians apply to the consideration of political questions that women have shown overwhelming evidence of their desire for the vote. What are the tests which statesmen apply to a consideration of any proposed legislation? They are not content with their private opinions; they do not speculate as to what the opinions would be of those who have never expressed them. They obtain and consider and balance such proofs as exist of the organised articulate expressed demand in support of, and in opposition to, the particular proposal which they have under consideration. They estimate and compare the demand expressed in favour of and against their proposal, and they judge accordingly. I submit that if that is done in the present case there would be a stronger case for the Bill of my noble friend than can

be produced in support of any measure introduced by the present Government since it came into office.

If this debate is not to be purely academic it is necessary that it should have some relation to the realities of the woman suffrage movement as it is going on in the country to-day. The difficulty which I feel in discussing this question for the first time in your Lordships' House is that the nature and the extent of the woman suffrage movement is to a very large extent unknown, and the reasons for that are to be found in the peculiar circumstances of this agitation. The manner in which a political agitation generally progresses and makes itself felt in Parliament is through the expression of opinion, firstly, amongst the electors, and secondly, in the public Press. Now, owing to the peculiar circumstances of this agitation, owing, I mean, to the fact that it is not included in the programme of either political Party, neither of these tests can be applied to it. Whenever a question has been an issue at an election there is not much danger of its being ignored for long in Parliament, but no subject can be

an issue at an election in this country unless it forms part of the programme of one of the political Parties at the time of the election. That is not the case with women's suffrage, and the irony of the situation in this case is this, if I may be pardoned for a somewhat paradoxical statement, that if women had the vote to-day they would not have had to wait so long to obtain it, moreover, if they had the vote to-day it would have been impossible for any Government to deal with this agitation in the way in which it has been dealt with by the present Government. But since it is not, and never has been, and never can be, an issue at an election unless it is submitted by the Government or by the Opposition, that test cannot be applied to it.

Lord St. Aldwyn said that in his opinion this movement had really made no progress in the last few years. It is inconceivable to me that there is any human being in this country who really believes that the woman suffrage movement has made no progress during the last few years. The progress of that movement has been phenomenal; it has been unprecedented; it is unparalleled in any

other political movement in the country at the present moment. I have been actively connected with and intimately associated with this movement for the last six years, and therefore I know what I am talking about when I say that I can find in the support of no other political question in this country the same degree of enthusiasm, zeal, devotion, self-sacrifice, and even spiritual force, as I find behind the women's suffrage movement at the present moment. I will here mention one or two facts to your Lordships, because it was asserted even by the noble Earl who introduced the Bill that there is no evidence of a popular demand for it, that it is really only a matter of opinion. I submit that there is evidence, that there are facts upon which we can base our opinions and that no one is justified in expressing an opinion on this point without considering them. Some of these facts have already been mentioned by my noble friend Lord Willoughby de Broke.

Let me again put them, with a few additions, before this House. It is true to-day that every organisation which can speak for

women in a corporate capacity has passed a resolution or petitioned Parliament in favour of women's suffrage; that wherever women are organised for purposes of trade, profession, or occupation, those organisations have expressed an opinion in favour of women's suffrage. Lord Willoughby de Broke mentioned some of them. There are the National Union of Women Workers (the largest Women's Union), the National Federation of Women Workers, the British Women's Temperance Association with 155,000 members in England and 110,000 members in Scotland, the International Council of Women, the Women's Co-operative Guild. Let me mention here that this last society is the only body in this country which can speak for married women, and yet that body has expressed its approval of the principle not merely of women's suffrage but of the principle embodied in Lord Selborne's Bill. Then there are the Railway Women's Guild, women teachers, women graduates, doctors, writers, actresses, social workers—wherever women are banded together, wherever there is an organisation which can speak for women in a

corporate capacity, you will find the opinion of that body expressed only on one side. Can you conceive any question in which men are concerned of which every corporate body of men had expressed itself in favour, yet with regard to which we should still be told in a debate in Parliament that men were opposed to it? Some 179 city and town councils and other municipal bodies, which represent women as well as men, have petitioned Parliament in favour of this Bill, or a very similar one; 50 trade councils, 35 trade unions representing the whole body of working men and working women, the Trades Union Congress which represents the whole Trade Union movement in this country, have passed resolutions in favour of women's suffrage. Lastly, the principle is supported by the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party, which embraces the whole field of labour in this country. Yet we are told that there is no evidence of a demand for this reform of the franchise.

Now, let me come to the agitation itself. I have dealt hitherto with bodies and organisations formed for general political and

industrial purposes. Let me take the bodies which are organised for the express purpose of the women's suffrage movement. There are at this moment 53 women suffrage societies in this country, 53 separate bodies organised amongst women and men for the purpose of demanding the political enfranchisement of women. I am quite aware that the membership of those different societies overlaps considerably, but I will give your Lordships some facts connected with the two chief societies, the chief constitutional society and the chief militant society, where no overlapping occurs. The chief constitutional society is the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies, which has 480 affiliated societies with 53,000 members, and if you add to those subscribing members the number of persons who are described as friends of women suffrage—that is to say, who approve of the policy of that society but do not subscribe to its funds—it is true to say that the avowed supporters of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies in this country to-day number 100,000; they have an income of £45,000; and they conducted, as your

Lordships will remember, a great pilgrimage last summer from all parts of England to London, and during that pilgrimage they held 480 meetings and collected over £8,000 from their sympathisers *en route*.

Now, let me take the other society, the membership of which is derived from an entirely different class—I am speaking of the Women's Social and Political Union, the chief militant suffrage society. That society has a membership, counting non-subscribing adherents, of about 15,000 and an income of £36,000. In the year 1912 they held 25,000 meetings; in fact, that society now and for the last two or three years has held regularly from 200 to 300 meetings a week all the year round. Yet we are told that women do not want the vote; that there is no evidence of the demand for it. I apologise for having read to your Lordships a number of facts—I know facts and statistics are apt to be tedious—but it is absolutely necessary to produce them when we are told that there is no evidence of a demand for women's suffrage. There is just this last fact in this connection, that there have been presented to Parliament

upwards of 2,000 petitions in favour of women's suffrage, containing over one million names. I challenge the noble Earl who moved the rejection of this Bill to produce on behalf of the society which he represents any statistics in any way comparable with those I have put forward. I do not wish to minimise the importance of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, of which he is the distinguished head, but I say that that society can produce no evidence which is in any way comparable to the evidence I have submitted to your Lordships of the expressed articulate demand of women for a measure of women's suffrage. And I repeat what I said just now, that I challenge the Government to produce in support of any one of their chief measures similar evidence of popular demand. Can they produce such statistics in support of their Insurance Act, or of their Plural Voting Bill, or of their own Reform Bill which they introduced into the House a year ago? Can they say that there is any evidence of support on the part of the electors of this country for any of those measures in the way that I can say there is

an express demand for the Bill which we are discussing to-day?

I have shown your Lordships why women are entitled to political representation, and how they have expressed their demand for it. I want to say one word now about the way in which this Bill would confer it. Women are not concerned to-day with whether the franchise is based upon property, tenancy, education, or residence. They are merely concerned with the removal of the sex disability. At the present moment a woman may have one or all of those qualifications, and yet be unable to vote, and therefore from the woman's point of view any Bill which would remove that disability is a Bill which would satisfy them. The question as to what women should be enfranchised under any particular Bill is a matter for Parliament and Parliament alone. Of course, if either of the great political Parties accepts the principle of women's suffrage it is entitled to, and we may expect it to, embody that principle in a Bill which will be drafted in the interests of the Party which brings it forward; but until that day comes any private individual who on his

own responsibility brings forward a measure of women's suffrage will be wise, I think, to do what my noble friend Lord Selborne has done, and embody the principle in a form which raises the least amount of Party controversy and difference of opinion. It is for that reason that I support, not merely the principle, but the Bill which my noble friend has introduced. It is not the most logical, it is not the most easily defensible, embodiment of the principle, but it is the least controversial from a Party point of view. Moreover, it is the form in which the principle of women's suffrage can be most easily grasped, and is, in fact, best understood by the people of the country to-day—namely, that women who pay rates and taxes should have a vote at Parliamentary elections.

Now, who are the opponents of this Bill? First of all I think I ought to refer to the noble Marquess who leads this House. He tells us that he is going to vote against this Bill although he is a sort of mild supporter of the principle of women's suffrage. I do not think I ever listened to a more shameless,

unblushing exhibition of cynicism than the speech which the noble Marquess made in the debate this evening. Who is the noble Marquess? He is a leading member of His Majesty's Government, a Government which is at this moment face to face with a very serious and widespread discontent and agitation in this country; and he tells us that he has never taken the trouble to find out whether that agitation is really serious or not, or whether this is in fact a matter of sufficient importance for a Government to deal with. He does not really know whether this agitation is real, whether women do or do not want the vote. He went on to tell us that if he really did think that this agitation was real he would then vote for a Women's Suffrage Bill. But he says that this Bill is in a sense a Bill which would enfranchise a majority of well-to-do persons. That opinion, my Lords, is expressed in direct contradiction to facts. We are not dealing here with opinions; we are dealing with a perfectly known factor—we are dealing with the municipal register of to-day.

Now what are the facts? The Labour

Party two years ago held a searching inquiry into the present municipal register, and nobody will suggest that the Party conducting that inquiry was in any sense biased in favour of well-to-do persons. That inquiry disclosed the fact that 80 per cent. of the women municipal electors in this country to-day belonged to the working classes and earned their own living. In spite of that fact the the noble Marquess tells us that in his opinion this Bill will enfranchise a majority of well-to-do persons, and since, presumably, in his opinion the majority of well-to-do persons are anti-Liberal, he tells us that he is not going to vote for the Bill. What then is the position of the noble Marquess? Is it not precisely the same position as that of a great employer of labour who has reason to mistrust the political opinions of his workmen, and who, therefore, so arranges the hours of his factory as to prevent those labourers from going to the poll? The noble Marquess has told us, and apparently had no shame in telling us, that he is going to prevent these women going to the poll because he believes they would vote against his political party.

The other great criticism which has been made by all the speakers against this Bill is that in the main it will not enfranchise married women. The noble Earl who moved the rejection of the Bill said he was astonished at the willingness of its promoters to exclude married women from the franchise, and he said that if any women at all should have a vote surely it should be given first to the married woman. Why, my Lords? Because, he said, they were eminently qualified by marriage and maternity for the Parliamentary vote. That is an entirely new qualification to me. I have never heard that marriage and paternity was considered a qualification which would specially entitle a man to the franchise. But if it be true that marriage and maternity is a qualification for the franchise, then surely that is a very good reason for giving the vote to widows. They have married; in many cases they are mothers; if the mere facts of marriage and maternity are to entitle you to give votes to wives, they should equally entitle you to give votes to widows. Is the noble Earl aware that the majority of women who would obtain

votes under this Bill are widows. Lord St. Aldwyn told us that married women were chiefly interested in the infant mortality question referred to by the right rev. Prelate the Bishop of London last night. Are not widows equally interested in this question of infant mortality?

The noble Viscount said that the right rev. Prelate had given away the whole case for women's suffrage because he had said that married women were represented by the votes of their husbands. What are the facts? At the present moment every married household in this country is represented by one vote. This Bill provides, in effect, that every single household shall also in future be represented by the vote of its head, whether the head of such household be either a man or a woman—in other words, it will ensure for the first time that every household in the country shall be represented by at least one vote. I have no desire to exclude married women from the franchise; but I do say this, that if you are to make a small beginning, and if you must pick and choose among women, it is unquestionable that you ought

in fairness to them to begin with the single women and widows. I entirely deny that marriage is any qualification for the franchise, and that married women have a stronger claim than single women. I state, and state emphatically, the precise opposite. The woman who is single-handed, the woman who is alone, the woman whose household is not represented by anybody in Parliament, who has not a husband, who is either a single unmarried woman, or a widow working for her living—she is the person who has the first claim; and if you are to make a small beginning it is with these women who most need the protection of the vote that you should begin. There was only one other class of objection brought forward in this debate. It was made by those who enquired, Will this be the end of the question? Will this settle the women's suffrage question? No, my Lords, of course it will not settle the women's suffrage question, any more than the Bill of 1832, or the Bill of 1867, or the Reform Bill of 1884 settled the question of the enfranchisement of men. It will settle one thing, and one thing only. It will settle

the question whether or not sex alone should be a permanent barrier between women and the vote.

I have one last word to say about a totally different question. I have spoken hitherto about the interests of women. I want to say one word in conclusion about the interests which are specially represented in this House. In order to understand the interests of women, the women who will be most vitally affected by this Bill, it is necessary for your Lordships to exercise a good deal of imagination. It is not our wives, our sisters, and our daughters who will be most materially affected, whose interests are most concerned, in a Bill of this kind. In so far as those women have interests I think they are very well looked after at the present day. It is the interests of women in a totally different position in life which we have to consider. I do not say for a moment that your Lordships are not capable of exercising that imagination, and entering sympathetically into the circumstances of the lives of these women, but it is a matter I do not feel qualified to develop in this House. I want,

therefore, to say one word about the interests which are represented in this House, the interests of Party; and in this respect I make an appeal to both sides of the House. I hold that it would be fatal to the interests of either political Party in this country for that Party to become definitely associated with a movement which was distinctly anti-democratic in its tendency. Though the voting power in this country is now predominantly in the hands of the working classes, the political machinery is still mainly in the hands of the well-to-do classes; but it will only remain there so long as those classes show themselves to be faithful stewards of the interests which are confided to them. There is no doubt whatever that this movement for women's enfranchisement is a democratic movement, and that, whatever may be the result of the Division to-night, the opposition to women's suffrage is a losing cause. For that reason I join with my noble friend Lord Newton in deploring the fact that the noble Earl who moved the rejection of this Bill should have identified himself so markedly with the

opposition to women's suffrage. It is a very different attitude from that hitherto adopted by the leaders of the Conservative Party—by Lord Beaconsfield, by the late Lord Salisbury, by Mr. Arthur Balfour, and even by their present leader Mr. Bonar Law; and I think it would be most deplorable if the Conservative Party were ever to become committed as a Party to so disastrous a policy.

A good deal has been said in this debate about the question of militancy. I have, I think, more reason than any member in this House not merely to regret and to deplore but to hate and detest the action of the militant suffragists. I say "more" reason, because that policy renders infinitely harder the task in which I and the other promoters of this Bill are engaged—the task, namely, of trying to obtain from Parliament the recognition of a demand which I believe to be eminently just and reasonable and to reflect infinite credit on those who put it forward. That is my first reason for hating this policy. But I have another. Those who have criticised militancy in this debate see only in

these acts the destruction of property and the financial loss which has resulted therefrom to private individuals and insurance companies. I see those things too, and deplore them. But I see something else in that policy over which I grieve even more. You see in it only the folly and the wickedness; but I see also in it the pity and the tragedy. Your Lordships, I hope, will pardon my making a personal reference, but it has been my painful experience to be brought very closely into contact with the results of this militant movement. I have seen the sacrifice of health, the sacrifice almost of life itself, on the part of some who are very near to me, whom I love and admire. I have seen the exhibition of human qualities which I consider to be as rare and as precious as anything which a nation can possess. I have seen those qualities given to a cause which is in itself as great and as noble a cause as you could well find, but given in such a way as to defeat the very objects that they sought to attain. Therefore I feel that those magnificent things are being wasted, squandered, thrown away; and that, to my mind, is a tragedy.

For this reason I do not say, as some speakers in this debate have suggested I should say, and as many have said to me privately up and down the country, "I will not do anything to support this movement; I will neither speak nor vote for it until these criminal acts are stopped." Such things are generally said by people who have never been very strenuous in their support of the cause even before these militant outrages were committed. I do not say that. I say rather that I will never pause, never slacken in my efforts until I have accomplished that which can alone put an end to this pitiable, this deplorable waste which I see going on around me—waste of idealism, of courage, of devotion, of heroism, of self-sacrifice, the finest qualities of which our human nature can boast. Therefore I make a final appeal, not to the noble Earl who moved the rejection of the Bill and those who, like him, are convinced opponents of its principle—their opinions I cannot hope to change; but I appeal to noble Lords who are not opposed to this Bill in principle not to allow themselves

to be deterred from doing what their judgment tells them is right merely because the excess of zeal in others has led them into doing what is wrong. The noble Earl reminded us of our share of responsibility for militancy. I accept it. I do not shirk it. I recognise that we have a responsibility, and anyone in this country who has any political influence at all must share that responsibility. But I say we have a right to criticise these actions because we are doing our utmost to secure their object by other means; and if responsibility rests heavily on anyone, it is surely upon those who support the question in principle but who do nothing to put their principles into practice.

It is the opinion of those who sit on this side of the House that before very long they will be sitting opposite and will find themselves supporters, instead of opponents, of the Government of the day. I hope their expectations may be realised. But, my Lords, when that day comes you will then be in the position in which your predecessors are to-day. You will find yourselves face to face with a

rebellious element in the country. How are you going to deal with it? Your choice will be exactly the same choice as that of King Rehoboam of old, because it is true of the women of England to-day, as it was true of the men of Judah then, that they are only asking to serve you as loyal citizens if you will allow them. You will not quench that rebellion, you will but enflame it still further, if you endeavour, as King Rehoboam did, to substitute scorpions for whips; but if you in your turn will serve these people, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants for ever.

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Women's Votes and Wages.

BY

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WOMEN'S VOTES AND WAGES.

BY

F. W. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

> Women are told to stay in the house and mind the home; and not to go looking for a vote. But how have we safeguarded the interests of the home and defended the interests of women when we allow the wives and mothers of the citizens of Belfast to bore 380 holes for one penny and work twelve hours a day at the most laborious of all occupations for 4s. a week? I hope the women will get the vote and emancipate not only themselves, but also some of the men.—*Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., at Belfast, September 7th*, 1910.

I WONDER sometimes how we are content to be happy ourselves. I wonder sometimes how easily we are able to pull down the curtains of our imagination, and live comfortably within, when if we dared peep out we should be covered with shame at what we saw. For here, in the very midst of our civilisation—one of the very pillars on which it rests—is a countless body of

women whose every waking thought is concerned in the well-nigh fruitless effort to sustain the life of themselves and their little ones by ceaseless toil. It is not that glad, happy labour which makes the daytime a song and gives the night for refreshing sleep, but the dull monotonous task of grinding poverty. We—our world, the whole of our civilisation—are riding as it were on the backs of these women and bearing them down, breaking their bodies, and perchance, too, their spirits. And we are content to let it be.

I suppose it is a merciful dispensation of Providence which thus limits our finite minds; for if for one moment the barriers which shut out from our eyes these sights of sorrow could be swept away, if we could see in one flash even all that we *actually know* exists, I think we should ever after be blinded by despair. But though this be so, I know that we are wrong if we draw too closely the curtains. If we are content to forget or to remain in ignorance we are guilty of criminal neglect. For there is much to do, and we have got to do it.

The Call to Action.

Action must be our test. Are we prepared to act? If not, we are being false to our common humanity, the pulse of life beats but feebly in our veins, we are only half alive. But if we are ready to act we ask at once, "What, then, can we do?" The Suffragette supplies an immediate answer:—"The Parliamentary vote is the key which unlocks reform. We will first win the vote, and then we will use it to improve the condition of women. By means of it we will abolish

the sweating of women's labour, and we will gradually secure the raising of women's wages until there be not two standards of pay for the same work—one for men and the other for women."

But the Anti-Suffragist replies, "This is all a fallacy: votes cannot affect wages." In the words of Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler:—

> Not only has Nature decreed that the same amount of work takes far more out of a woman than it does out of a man, but society has also decreed that she shall, as a rule, receive considerably less payment than he for that amount of work. This is undoubtedly hard upon woman; but I fail to see how the promise of a vote would in any way remedy this evil.

And the Anti-Suffragist is backed up by that peculiar type of Suffragist of whom it may be said that she is "so anxious to be upright that she leans over backwards." Generally such an one is possessed of a smattering of economic knowledge which on the principle that "a little learning is a dangerous thing" leads her woefully astray.

"Inferior Work by Women."

The three stock answers which are usually given by those who deny that the possession of votes by women will raise their wages and abolish the double standard of payment of work according to the sex of the worker are as follows:—

Firstly. Women, it is said, are weaker than men. Their day's work is inferior both in quantity and quality

to that of a man, therefore they cannot expect to receive as much wages for it as men do.

This answer implies a misunderstanding of the problem. Women are not claiming equal pay for a day's work. They are claiming equal pay for an equal result. Where a woman does equal or better work in a day than a man, they claim she should receive equal or better pay (at present in many occupations she only receives one-third to two-thirds his wages for the same work). Where a woman does less or worse work than a man she will expect to receive less wages. Women also claim that the inferiority of women's work, in so far as it exists at present, is mainly due to the fact that they do not receive equal chances in the way of education and training, and that therefore they are handicapped at the outset.

"Men Have to Keep a Family."

Secondly. It is said men receive better wages than women because they have to support themselves and their families on their wages, while women do not have to do so.

This is a common retort from the man in the street. It is ridiculously untrue. In the first place, it is only a conscience-soothing theory that women earn wages not to support themselves or others, but merely as pocket money. As a matter of fact, a very large number of women have to support others besides themselves by their work, and at the same time a very large number of single men have no one else dependent on their earnings. But apart from this, every employer

and practically every workman knows that this is not the principle on which wages are paid. Single men do not command lower wages than married men with wives and families to support. Widows with children do not command higher wages than spinsters. Let a workman on the eve of his marriage go to his employer and say, "To-morrow I am going to get married. I shall have a wife, and perhaps later children, to keep. You will, of course, double my wages." That employer's face would be a study.

The Law of Supply and Demand.

The third answer is one given by the more educated classes of people who have studied a little political economy, and think that "all that they don't know isn't knowledge." These people look with pity and contempt on all those who are ignorant enough to suppose that wages can be affected by anything so direct as votes. "Wages are not to be altered by Act of Parliament, they are determined by the law of supply and demand," they say, with a superior shake of the head, and think that with that sapient remark they have settled the whole question.

In reality this answer proves nothing at all, because it suggests at once the question, "What do supply and demand depend upon?" and unless the Anti-Suffragist can answer that neither supply nor demand are to be influenced by votes his case goes by default.

The ancients used to wonder as to what supported the earth. At last an answer was supplied—the earth rested on Atlas; but a little thought showed that this

was not sufficient. What did Atlas rest on? Then it was said that Atlas rested on an elephant; but again came the question—what did the elephant rest on? A tortoise. And in this unsatisfactory position, of the earth ultimately resting on a self-suspended tortoise, the ancients left the problem. The Anti-Suffragist answer is of a similar character. It is quite true that the rate of wages does in the main in the first instance depend on the supply of labour and the demand for labour, but both these factors (supply and demand) are in their turn, as I shall show, to be influenced by votes.

How this Law Operates.

The operation of the law of supply and demand can best be understood from an individual case. A few years back the number of girls willing to enter into domestic service was much in excess of the demand, there was always a large number of capable girls out of work, consequently they commanded comparatively low wages. Latterly domestic service has gone somewhat out of favour among girls. Mistresses find a difficulty in getting servants, and so, in order to tempt them to take up this work, they have been obliged to offer higher and higher wages and to give better and better conditions. In new countries, where the supply is still less, the wages are still higher and the conditions still more favourable to the girls, for, as the mistresses say, " we have to give them what they want or they will leave us, and we do not know where we shall find others." The first is a case of the supply being in excess of the demand, the second of supply and demand

being about equal, and the third of the demand exceeding the supply, and it should be noted that a very small difference in supply or demand may make a great difference in wages, for in the old days the girls actually out of work were only a few per cent. of the whole, and to-day in the new countries the number of mistresses actually going without servants is not very large.

When we put in place of the girls seeking domestic service the whole number of women offering themselves for all the different avocations of life, professions, business, factories, home work, etc., and in place of mistresses the whole range of employers, we have the problem of supply and demand as it applies to women's labour in general. And taking the whole range we do not find that wages have increased during the past few years in the same way as those of domestic servants. We find on the contrary that in a very large number of women's occupations wages have remained stationary, and that in many others they have actually gone down. Thus in his book " Labour in the Longest Reign," Mr. Sidney Webb says :—" Women's wages for unskilled labour still gravitate, as a rule, pretty closely to the subsistence level, below which they can never have sunk for any length of time."

How Votes will affect Supply.

Now how will women's votes affect this? In the first place, legislation controlled by the vote has a direct effect upon the supply of labour, both as to its quantity and as to its quality. Hardly any industrial or educational legislation or departmental instructions can be

put into effect without altering supply. A few concrete illustrations may be given of cases in which the supply of women's labour would be particularly affected :—

Firstly, suppose that a law were passed raising the school age from 14 to 15, this would reduce the supply by cutting off from the labour market the girls from 14 to 15 years of age.

Secondly, suppose that a law were made compelling a husband in work to give to his wife a certain proportion of his wages for the maintenance of herself and her children (at present a bad husband is able to spend the whole of his wages on himself), that would reduce the supply of women's labour by withdrawing from it those married women who at present go out to work only under the absolute compulsion to provide for themselves and the family.

Thirdly, suppose that widows with young children were provided by law with a special maintenance so that they could devote themselves to those duties of motherhood which Anti-Suffragists call so sacred, but which they do nothing to secure. That would reduce the supply of the worst sweated labour, which is forced to accept starvation wages and monstrous hours as the only alternative to breaking up the home and going into the workhouse.

Fourthly. Suppose the technical training of girls in suitable occupations was carried out much more thoroughly than at the present time (this might be the direct result of a law or be brought about in consequence of a departmental minute of the Board of Education), then the quality of the supply of female labour would be improved.

I have selected these hypothetical changes which might be effected by votes, not because they will necessarily be the ones to be made by women when they get the vote, but because they illustrate the general proposition that the vote will give women the power to influence the supply of women's labour.

The Exclusion of Women from Employment.

By means of the vote women will not only be able to alter the supply of women's labour, but also to alter the demand for it. It must be remembered that the vote controls not merely the making of the laws, but the administration of the laws, for Ministers of the Crown are subject to the pleasure of the House of Commons, and therefore both legislation and administration are liable to be altered when women are enfranchised.

In the first place the Government are the largest employers of labour in the whole country, the total number of their employees exceeding half a million, or more than one-thirtieth of the total number of persons working for wages. An examination of the conditions of employment under the Government exhibits two salient features. Firstly, the exclusion of women from a very large number of occupations for which they are thoroughly well fitted, and secondly, the systematic under-payment of women. This extends also to the Government contractors.

Government service consists of civil, military, and

naval positions. Civil appointments account for some two hundred and fifty thousand employees. These include the vast army of officials working in Government offices, from the permanent heads of departments down to the junior clerks, also some hundred thousand employees in the Post Office, also the posts of Customs officers, tax collectors and assessors, inspectors of schools, inspectors of factories, governors and doctors of prisons, diplomatic agents, consuls, etc., etc. These positions are not all open to the best applicant; the bulk of them, practically all the best paid, are arbitrarily closed to women. Thus, women cannot be appointed to any of the more important work in Government offices, they cannot fulfil any but the lower grades of the service. Women cannot be customs officers, as they frequently are in France; they cannot be tax collectors or assessors; there are no women governors or doctors of prisons, even for such a prison as Holloway, which is confined solely to women. There are no women consuls, and no women in the diplomatic service. There are only about twenty women factory inspectors, where there are some nine hundred men; there are only about twenty women school inspectors, where there are about two hundred and fifty men. In the Post Office all the best places are held by men. Yet women are well fitted to occupy many of these positions, and if they were thrown open to merit irrespective of sex many of them would undoubtedly be filled by women.

Turning to the Army and Navy, most people will agree that these occupations are essentially masculine; but even here the folly of excluding women entirely from the service was shown years ago by the appalling

death-rate in the Crimea before Florence Nightingale and her staff of trained women nurses came on to the scene, and it is now recognised to be necessary to send out a body of women to the field of action whenever a war takes place. It is open to question whether in the Police Force, which in London is directly responsible to the Home Secretary, women might not with advantage be included for special purposes, as they are in Norway. An illustration of what is meant will be found in the fact that women's lodging houses have to be open to the inspection of the police at any hour of the day or night.

But the possession of the vote by women would unlock the door to other employments besides those directly under the Government. There are many trades and callings from which women are excluded by operation of law or Government regulation. The Factory Acts provide that in factories women shall not work after 10 p.m. This may in some cases be a wise provision, but, contrary to the express protest of the women concerned, the Government have recently extended its application to the case of florists. Now, it is necessary for florists, under certain circumstances, to go on with their work after 10 p.m., and as women are not to be employed for this purpose, even though employers are prepared to guarantee a thirteen hours' interval before re-employment next day, women are being turned out of this essentially women's trade, and the work is being given to foreign men. There are other cases where this provision is having a similar result.

Women are excluded from practising at the Bar by the joint action of the law and of certain men's societies,

for, by the law, the only persons allowed to appear as advocates are the members of these societies, and they have decided not to admit women to their ranks. The natural way to open the Bar to women (as it has been opened in almost every other civilised country) would be for the Inns of Court voluntarily to admit women, but if they refuse to do so after women get the vote it will be possible to compel them to do so by law. Similar considerations apply to women in the Church; and that some women, at any rate, are needed in the Church will perhaps be realised when the anomaly of a man chaplain in a women's prison is considered. At present this chaplain always has to have a third person present when he is trying to speak direct to the heart of a woman prisoner. There are other occupations from which women are excluded. For instance, women are not allowed to be drivers of cabs drawn by horses, or of taxi-cabs, in this country, while they are allowed to be so in other countries.

Some of these callings, it will be said, are more likely at present, at any rate, to be filled by exceptional than by average women. Even if this be true in some of the cases which I have mentioned, it is not true of much of the work in the Civil Service. Moreover, though Anti-Suffragists are fond of asking women to remember that laws are not made for exceptional women but for average women, as a matter of fact the laws do operate to exclude not only the average women but the exceptional women from all these employments. The only satisfactory way of dealing with the matter is to leave Nature to settle it. In those occupations particularly suitable to women, women will predominate; in those

equally suitable to men and women they will very likely be found in about equal proportions; while in those least suited to women only the exceptional women will be found.

Reference must also be made to the question of the unemployed. When work was being provided for the unemployed by the local authorities under the direction of the Local Government Board, they commenced by finding work both for men and women, but after a little while they discontinued the latter. The excuse given by Mr. John Burns was that the work was unremunerative. How false this excuse was will be realised from the fact that the loss on the men's work per person was even greater than that on the women's.

In all these ways when women get the vote they will have the power to alter the demand for women's labour, and thereby affect the wages which are paid to women.

The Underpayment of Women by the Government.

It is always a mystery to me how anybody can stand up and deny the power of the vote to alter wages when it must be perfectly clear to anyone that a decision of the House of Commons would compel the Government directly to raise the wages of its own women employees. Of course, if these only numbered a few hundred, such a change might be considered negligible, but as a matter of fact they number more than 50,000, and a change in the rate of wages of 50,000 women, even if it stood alone, particularly when it would affect the

badly-paid Post Office and telephone girls and the miserably paid girls in the army clothing factory, must be considered of importance. But it would not stand alone. In the first place, beyond the direct employees of the Government are two large classes of workers for whom the Government has special responsibility : (1) the teachers ; (2) the employees of Government contractors.

The teachers are directly employed by the local authorities, but the Board of Education supplies from the national exchequer a large part of the funds, and has wide powers of control. Therefore, if, after women get the vote, M.P.'s decide that the wages of women teachers shall be raised so that there shall no longer be two standards of pay for identical work (the rate for women being to-day about two-thirds that for men), the Board of Education will be able to get this carried out. There are about 110,000 women teachers.

Government has been compelled to insert a "fair wages clause" into the contracts it makes with contractors. Theoretically this applies both to men and women employees, but practically it only applies to men. As this is a good illustration of how men have failed to protect women, it is worth giving at some length. The clause runs as follows :—

"The contractor shall, under the penalty of a fine or otherwise, pay rates of wages and observe hours of labour not less favourable than those commonly recognised by employers and trade societies (or, in the absence of such recognised wages and hours, those which in practice prevail amongst good employers) in the trade in the district where the work is carried out."

Now the men employees of the contractors are almost

entirely employed at work for which there is a recognised standard rate of wages, therefore in their case the clause is operative. But it is not so with the women. I will quote the words of Mr. Haldane :—

"As the Hon. Member is no doubt aware, the clothing industry is very imperfectly organised, and the consequent absence of any recognised or prevailing rates for any given work tends to weaken the effect of the Fair Wages Clause."

Mr. Haldane went on to say that in some cases they had established a minimum wage, but he hoped the most from the creation of Wages Boards.

The Wages Boards (themselves the result of Parliamentary action) may achieve something, but a still more direct method might be employed. The wages of the women (either day wages or piece wages) might be directly standardised in money. There is nothing extraordinary or new in this. It is the method carried out by the London County Council. At present Government work is reckoned among the worst sweated work in the country, and that this is the fault of the Government the following story from the Westminster Police Court will show.

A Living Example.

On Monday, April 26th, 1909, a woman was brought before the magistrate charged with attempting suicide. In the evidence it came out that she was engaged on Army contract work, and, working ten and a half hours a day, earned two, three or four shillings a week—six

shillings at most if she worked full time. The magistrate commented on these disgraceful wages.

Next day Mr. Guildford Lewis, solicitor, asked to be allowed to make a statement in court on behalf of his clients, the contractors. In the course of this he said:

"The whole of this trouble—and this is a matter of public importance—is due to the prices at which the contractors are compelled by the force of competition to take the Government work. If the Government were to insist on the rate of wages of the workers being standardised—as they undoubtedly should do—the whole of the system of cutting down the prices to the lowest fraction would be at an end. There is one public body (the L.C.C.) which insists on a standardised rate for the tailoring, and the workers on their uniforms, etc., do not complain, and have no reason to."

What a comment this is on the theory that the vote has no effect on wages!

I have now shown that the wages of women who are (1) direct employees of the Government, (2) school teachers, or (3) employees of Government contractors, may all be altered by the power that the vote gives. These three classes together cannot fall far short of, and may possibly exceed, 200,000, or one-twentieth of the total women employed for wages in the country. The direct raising of the wages of this one-twentieth will have a very important effect on the wages of the remaining nineteen-twentieths. This is not merely due to the force of example—though no doubt example has a good deal to do with it—it is the necessary economic result of altering the *character of the demand* for women's labour.

How the alterations in the demand for Labour Operate.

The two main changes with which I have dealt—(*a*) opening up of new well-paid employment to women; (*b*) increasing the wages of women at present employed directly or indirectly by the Government—will operate in fact upon the labour market somewhat in the following way: The most capable women in the country will find that there is demand for their labour at a good price in the new or improved occupations, and therefore they will seek employment in them. Other employers will find in consequence that they can no longer retain the services of the most capable women unless they pay a higher price than before. Some of them will do so, others who refuse to do so will only obtain the services of second rank women who were previously getting a lower wage. In the second rank similar considerations will apply; some of the women will be drawn off into the new appointments, some will receive better wages under Government than before, some will go, as I have just shown, into the ranks above. Consequently there will be more competition among employers to secure good work. Better wages will be given, and women from a still lower grade will be brought in to fill the vacant places. Similarly for every grade of labour down to the lowest. And in this lowest sweated grade the effect will be enhanced by the fact that there will be no grade below from which workers can be drawn, and therefore at last the supply of labour will not outrun the demand, as it does at present. Thus, in consequence of the increased and improved demand for

women's labour, there will be a tendency to improve the wages of women, not merely in one trade or calling, but in all.

Supplementary Factors.

Every true political economist knows quite well that all the forces which go to make up an economic result are not capable of detailed economic analysis; they cannot be labelled and pigeon-holed and the exact quantitative value of their contribution ascertained. This is essentially true of the question of wages.

Thus, while it is true that wages depend in the main on supply and demand, it is true also that other factors —some tangible, others intangible—contribute their quota to the result. I have already shown how the enfranchisement of women may affect women's wages by altering both the supply and the demand for women's labour; it remains to notice that these other supplementary factors are also dependent on the power given by the vote.

Direct Legislation.

That wages can, under certain circumstances, be altered directly by Act of Parliament (or by the fiat of a body responsible to Parliament) is evidently the opinion of the statesmen of Australia and New Zealand, who passed the laws relating to minimum wages and toWages Boards, and also of the statesmen at home who have recently caused Wages Boards to be appointed in this country. The results in Australia and New Zealand and in this country at Cradley Heath, where the women

chain-makers have secured a considerable increase in wages, certainly bear out their opinion; and it may be that much of the worst sweating of women's labour can be prevented by similar means. Again, it is also hardly disputed by anyone that legislation can directly modify the conditions under which labour is performed or the hours during which it continues. These matters are intimately bound up with the remuneration in money which that labour obtains.

Political Goodwill.

It is often a small consideration which finally decides an employer whether to grant or refuse a demanded increase in wages; and among those considerations the desire to keep on the right side of employees *because they have votes* sometimes plays a considerable part, especially where the employer regards himself as an important local political magnate. In this respect women employees, because they are voteless, do not receive the same attention.

Custom and Sentiment.

In spite of all that is said to the contrary, custom and sentiment still count for a good deal in business. An employer will appoint a woman to do precisely the same work as has hitherto been done by a man and give her half or two-thirds his wages. Asked why, he will answer, "It is customary." And though this may not be in fact the whole reason for his action, yet there is enough in it to make it a factor in the result. In my opinion the increased status which women will get

when they are enfranchised will help them to shake off this custom.

Collective Bargaining.

It is now almost universally recognised that the power of collective bargaining as exemplified by trade unions and by associations of employers has an important influence on wages, for though this was denied for many years by the rigid theorists who took their stand on the sole action of the law of supply and demand, facts have been too strong for them. Women by their isolated position have long been at a great disadvantage in this respect. Sometimes through ignorance of the condition of the labour market, sometimes through their sheer inability to combine, they have been induced to accept wages which in association they could have resisted. When women obtain their citizen rights and are brought into more frequent contact with one another they will escape to some extent from their present isolation, and will gain some of the advantages of collective bargaining. This point was clearly put by Mr. Haldane in the House of Commons on July 11th, 1910, when he said:—

"Everyone knows that the position of women in point of remuneration, of their wages, is not as good as is the case with men, and that is to some extent due to the fact that women cannot associate themselves together with that force and with that authority which is given by the fact that people possess a certain political footing in the State. If for that reason alone I should like to see that happen."

These four examples illustrate the influence of the vote in affecting wages in other ways than through supply and demand.

Three Questions.

It remains to notice three rather pertinent questions which have been put with regard to this discussion.

(1) *Are not the wages of women in reality dependent on the prices which the articles made by women obtain, and in view of international competition is it possible to pay higher wages without placing a tariff on foreign goods?*

I have no intention of entering into a discussion on the merits of a tariff as applied to the industries in which women work; I shall confine myself to showing that wages of women can be raised without *necessarily* imposing a tariff.

In the first place it is not true that price alone determines wages; the price which can be obtained for goods is only one element in determining the demand for labour; and it is by the interaction of demand and supply that wages are determined. Secondly, a very large part of the women of the country are engaged in occupations (*e.g.*, postal employees, teachers, domestic servants, etc.) in which there is no question of international competition. Thirdly, low wages by no means necessarily imply cheap labour, nor high wages dear labour; employers often find it more economical to pay high wages and get the best work. Fourthly, international agreement is already tackling some of the problems relating to the condition of sweated work, and

it might easily be that the provision of Wages Boards and of similar ameliorative legislation might simultaneously be carried out in different countries.

(2) *Will not the entrance of women into the labour market on more equal terms with men injure men and reduce their wages?*

Whether men like it or not, women are being driven to-day more and more by economic necessity into the labour market and are competing with men. And the most dangerous form of competition is that in which women are undercutting men by selling their labour for a lower price. When women's wages are raised so that equal work commands equal wages whatever the sex of the worker, this unfair competition will come to an end.

(3) *Do you expect that the result of women's enfranchisement in increasing women's wages will be immediate?*

The full result will certainly not be immediate. It will be gradual, and it will not be finally complete until all the artificial hindrances have been removed and the change of status of women has acted and reacted upon all the conditions of life. But some improvement will be seen immediately, for just as when a part of the human body has been artificially compressed the slightest release of the pressure brings relief, so it is with the body politic; directly the artificial hindrances to women's development begin to be removed relief will be felt. This relief will extend throughout the whole industrial world of women.

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Why Men Should Work for Women's Suffrage.

—The Wages and— Employment Question.

By

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This League was founded in 1907 in order to enable men sympathisers with the cause of Women's Suffrage to band themselves into a separate organisation, and thus to concentrate the electoral strength of the movement. It is non-party and non-militant, but contains sympathisers with all phases of the Women's Suffrage movement, and it has given help in all constitutional ways to Women's Suffrage Societies of every kind.

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WHY MEN SHOULD WORK FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

WHY should men take an active part in helping to secure women's suffrage? Those who have been carrying on the fight for the last few years have observed that a very large proportion of men have become increasingly sympathetic to the women's demand. Large crowds, principally of men, gather in the parks to listen attentively to speeches from men and women advocates of women's suffrage, and testify to their appreciation of the arguments concerning the justice of the cause. They realise that women, as workers, wives, and mothers, perform services to the community which entitle them to recognition; that many of them pay taxes which give them a right to a voice in their amount and expenditure; and that if men may occasionally be called upon to fight for their country, women have to fight the never ceasing battle of maternity which provides its "physical force," a battle which wounds and kills far greater numbers than the most sanguinary war. They also appreciate the fact that women as mothers have the strongest possible interest in the community and the Empire, and that the value of their work has been testified to, wherever opportunity has been given them to do it. Lastly, they realise that women are heavily handicapped by their unrepresented state, as men were before the Reform Bill of 1867, that the marriage and divorce laws are grossly unfair to them, that girls are insufficiently protected, that women's wages are extremely low, and that attempts at improved legislation are balked by the want of political power of those who are oppressed.* All these things they realise are true, whatever anti-suffragists may say to the contrary, and the commonest

* e.g. The recent White Slave Traffic Bill which was "talked out" by Sir F. Banbury (an Anti-Suffragist) after being introduced time after time. It is now receiving attention owing to the persistent agitation of the Suffragists.

dictates of justice and chivalry demand that men should come forward in their numbers to help women to gain the same rights and protection that they have made such struggles to obtain for themselves. Fortunately, for the honour of British men, there are large numbers who have recognised the duty and privilege of assisting in this noble fight; and the number of men who have joined the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, and other men's organisations, which are earnestly working for women's suffrage, independently of all feminine influence, is a testimony to the fact that true chivalry is not dead but is awakening, and that some Britons not only repudiate slavery for themselves and for black men, but for the women of their own race.

On the other hand it must be regretted that for the thousands who are actively helping the cause and the hundreds who are actively opposing (and who are just as useful to it), there are tens or hundreds of thousands of men who are passively sympathetic, who will attend meetings and stand by while the finest women of our country are pouring out their strength in the fight, sacrificing themselves in every way they deem useful for the cause, besides withdrawing their magnificent energies from other causes which need their help, because they feel that this help cannot be effective without political power. They are touched by the proofs which the women bring forward of the injustices under which they suffer, and of their helpless state; but the injustices which would make the blood of Englishmen boil if inflicted on themselves, and which would probably lead to riots or revolutions in which life and property would be sacrificed on a huge scale, leave them comparatively cold and indifferent when the women they profess to love and cherish are concerned. All that can be done with such people is either to shame them into action, or, better still, to show them that these injustices re-act on themselves, and that they suffer in their own pockets and in the security of their livelihood by allowing them to continue. No doubt can exist in the mind of any rational person who has given any attention to the subject that this is the

case, and that the wages or salaries and the security of employment of men are most seriously affected by their refusal to put women upon a social and political equality with themselves. At the present time we are passing through a period of acute labour unrest, wages have fallen in comparison with the cost of living, and we have recently experienced times of severe unemployment. The causes of these painful phenomena are no doubt complex, but a very little examination will show that the position of women is at least one very important factor in the situation, and that little improvement can be expected while women remain politically unrepresented.

Economic Theory of Wages and Unemployment.

The fundamental basis of wages is demand and supply. If demand increases and supply is stationary, wages rise; if the supply of labourers increases faster than the demand, wages tend to fall. Many anti-suffragists, including Mrs. Humphrey Ward, therefore contend that the franchise has no effect upon wages, and they actually bring forward the writings of Mrs. Fawcett and other economists in support of this contention. But this is a gross misrepresentation of the position. In dealing with the general theory of wages, the economist is concerned with the average gains of the whole working classes, and it is certainly true that in a free community this is a matter over which legislation has comparatively little control. But as regards certain trades or classes of labour, no person with the least pretension to intelligence can deny that combination and legislation can have a very great effect upon wages *because they can influence both demand and supply in those industries,* and the whole history of Trades Unionism clearly shows it. Under unrestricted conditions supply of labour always tends to increase more rapidly than the means of subsistence, and real wages therefore tend to fall to the minimum upon which life can be supported. This is well known as the "iron law of wages" of Lasalle, and long before it was recognised as an economic law it was felt and combatted by the Trades Unions. By combining the workers in each

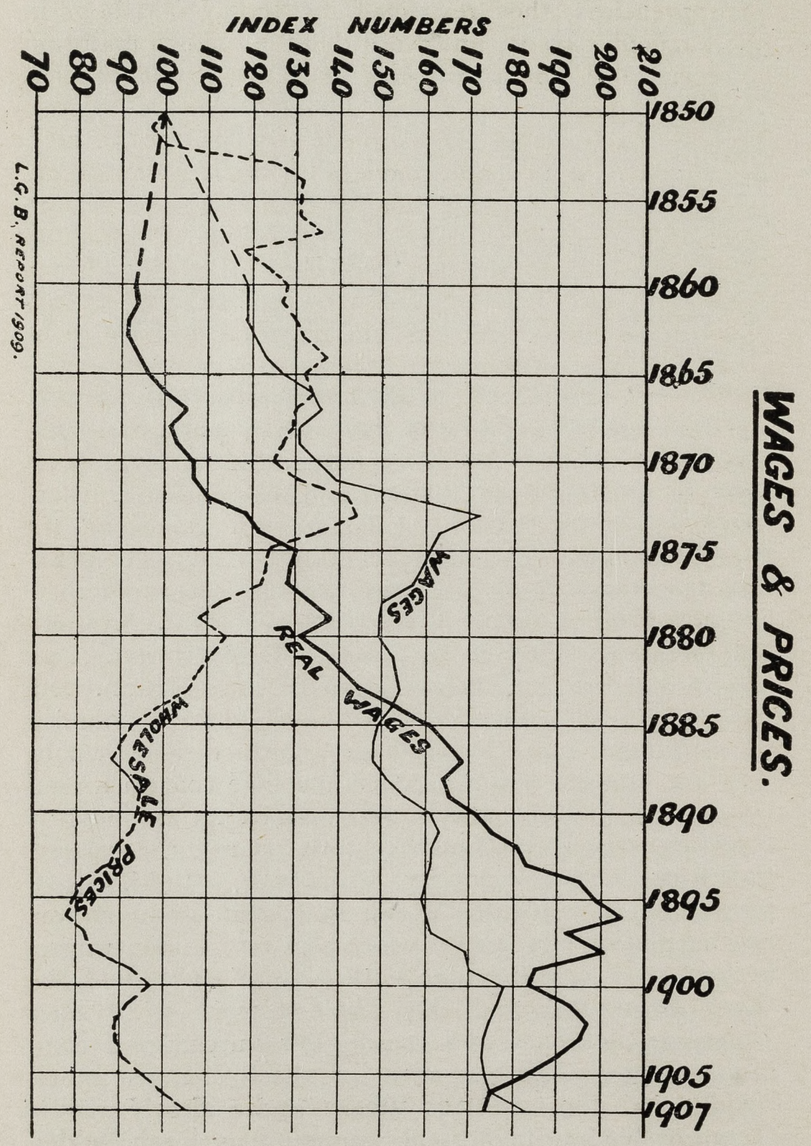


FIG. 1.

trade into a Guild or Union, and limiting the number of apprentices, they restricted the supply of labour in the particular trade, and were thereby able to maintain or even raise wages *provided that they could prevent the employment of non-union labour.* All the various professional societies, legal, medical, engineering, etc., are similarly, in principle, devices for limiting the supply of labour in the profession, by imposing a certain standard of qualification, and, frequently, a minimum scale of fees; and, at the same time, by securing some legal recognition, which militates against the employment of outsiders. So far, the question appears to be chiefly one of voluntary combination, and this was sufficient in the old days of handicrafts and sharply defined trades, and in the days when population was frequently checked by pestilence and wars. But with the great rise of industrialism and machinery, with the consequent sub-division of labour, the power of the Trades Unions became considerably reduced, and it has become increasingly necessary for the workers as a whole to obtain political power if they are to secure a minimum and increasing standard of comfort for all. The power that has been obtained by them since their admission to the franchise in 1867 and the formation of the Labour Party is notorious, and the recent securing of the minimum wage principle after the coal strike is a clear proof of this power, and that it enables them to secure the best conditions that the economic situation admits of.

An actual illustration of this fact is shown by the annexed diagram (Fig. 1), which shows the variation of wages and cost of living from 1850, as given by the Local Government Board in 1909, and employed by Professor Ashley in his well-known enquiry into the cost of living.* In order to make the effect of these changes in the conditions of the working classes more clearly visible, a third line marked "real wages" has been added, obtained by dividing the "wages" by the "prices." It will be seen that in 1867, when the Reform Bill was

* *Pall Mall Gazette,* 28th March, 1912.

passed, the real wages, or the purchasing power of wages, were exactly the same as in 1850, but from then to 1896 they rose over 100 per cent., owing to a maintaining or increase of money wages, while prices fell. Since 1896 prices have risen without a material increase of money wages, and the purchasing power of wages has therefore dropped. This is admitted by most authorities to be the principal cause of labour unrest, and it is certainly the best justification for it.

Women in Industry.

We now come to the entry of women into the industrial world. The majority of anti-suffragists are fond of telling us that woman's place is the home. So it used to be, and so women as an average would perhaps be pleased for it to remain. But men have not allowed it to remain so. At the commencement of last century the numbers of the sexes in Great Britain were approximately equal (5,450,000 males, 5,492,000 females). But since that time the great development of our Empire has taken place, and young men have emigrated in large numbers, leaving their women-folk behind and unprovided for. Owing to this and other causes the disproportion between the sexes has increased, until in 1909 there was an excess of women of a million and a third (19,650,000 males, 20,983,576 females), and this excess is principally in the marriageable ages. It is therefore absolutely futile as well as cruel to say that woman's place is the home, when this million and a third can have no hope of marriage, and an even greater additional number are unlikely to marry, in view of the ever increasing inability or disinclination of men to support wives and families. According to the Registrar-General's Report for 1909,* only 60.5 per cent. of women above 15 years of age were married, as shown by the 1901 census, and the percentage appears to be still falling. The number of women engaged in the industries has therefore necessarily gone on increasing, and it has now reached about five and a half

* p. xi.

millions* in the United Kingdom. In most European countries the number of women in various employments is about half that of men, but being unorganised and unrepresented their remuneration is very low. According to Miss McArthur the average wage of women workers in this country is only 7s. 6d. per week,† and many receive 4s. 6d. or less. It is no wonder that many of them are driven to sell themselves, and it is becoming more and more recognised that the horrible economic position of woman is the chief cause of prostitution. In most European countries the average wage for women is not much over half that obtained by men, as will be seen by the Appendix.

It will, of course, be said that women's work is frequently less skilled or less productive than that of men; and this is no doubt true at present, although less true than is generally assumed. But there is one case in which no one who has the least pretence to knowledge of the subject can suggest that the greater skill or effectiveness lies with men, and that is the case of teachers in elementary schools. On the contrary, women have not only to go through the same training and pass the same examinations, but they are certainly more conscientious, and frequently more capable, and they are often willing to give a great deal of voluntary work. And yet the difference in their salaries starts from the very commencement, even when neither youths nor girls are supposed to be self-supporting. This is by no means the worst, but it is the most clearly defined example of the injustice under which women suffer. In the Appendix is shown the Official list of salaries in the case of the London County Council, as well as in New York, France, Germany, etc. In London, women teachers receive 90 per cent. down to 75 per cent. of the salaries of men for the same qualifications and work. In New York, women teachers obtained, until last year, only from 50 to 60 per cent. of the remuneration of male teachers, although the women are officially admitted to be better teachers and disciplinarians. In

* 5,310,000 at the Census of 1901. Webb's Dictionary of Statistics, p. 428
† Evidence before the Select Committee on Home Work, 1907, p. 139.

France women teachers receive 70 to 85 per cent. of the men's salaries, and in Germany 65 per cent. (in a few German towns the commencing salaries are equal). In Holland and in Sweden, so far as I have been able to ascertain, teachers salaries used to be equal, but the men have gained increases lately, leaving the women behind.

But anti-suffragists tell us that the vote has no effect upon wages. It is amusing to hear this remark from them, as a great many profess to be Imperialists and Tariff Reformers, and promise wonderful improvements in wages if people will only vote for Tariff Reform. And among advanced Liberals the idea is no less prevalent that by redistribution of wealth and land, such as can be produced by legislation of the Lloyd George variety, the gains of the working classes would be greatly increased. All that can be said is, that if votes have no effect upon wages, the utterances of both political parties at elections are terminological inexactitudes. And when we have just seen that a vote in Parliament has enabled our legislators to give themselves salaries of £400 a year, it is going a little too far to suggest that there is no connection between political representation and wages.* In Government employment it is perfectly evident that the consideration given to the employees depends greatly on their political power, and we have recently had a flagrant case of bad faith as regards women in the case of the Post Office, where the present Postmaster-General, Mr. H. Samuel, in the early part of this year, suddendly decided to introduce a new grade of women clerks at a lower salary with longer hours, which would have rendered the scale of payment fixed by the Hobhouse Committee a few years ago to all intents and purposes a dead letter. This project caused a storm of indignation among Women Postal Clerks, and it has been partially dropped, but it

* The strong belief of Anti-Suffrage men as to the power of the vote was vividly shown to the present writer when addressing a large crowd of hostile men a few months ago on the subject of Women's Suffrage. As they ridiculed the idea that the enfranchisement of women would improve their economic position, I stopped short and asked those men who did not believe that their economic position would have been worse if their class had not been enfranchised to raise their hands. Not one single hand went up from among at least 500 men present.

still appears to be enforced in the Telephone Department, and there is no doubt that a few years ago it would have been adopted without any possibility of effective action against it.

Again, not only is the Government a very large employer of labour in itself, but it is indirectly responsible for a great deal of employment through the contracts it gives out. Do the anti-suffragists forget that within the last few years the Government have been forced to insert a fair wages clause into their contracts, and do they suppose that this, or the miners' minimum wage bill would have been obtained without the pressure of the working class vote? But there is no fair wage clause as regards women, or no attempt to render one operative. As Mr. Lloyd George, who as Chancellor of the Exchequer has the greatest knowledge concerning the payments in Government service has said:*

"That inequality would be impossible if women had the same right to vote, and therefore to call the Government to account, as men have. And this is one of the greatest arguments for women's suffrage."

According to Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald in giving evidence before the Select Committee on Home Work in 1907, employers simply laughed when asked if they paid a fair wage to women. Nobody ever came to inspect or to see what they paid.† Does this not show beyond any possibility of dispute how the absence of representative power enables the Government to ignore the interests of any class of the community? There is no need to give illustrations of the terribly low wages obtained by the women sweated workers, as instances of them frequently appear in the newspapers.

Displacement of Men.

As indicated at the outset, however, the object of the present pamphlet is not so much to call attention to the glaring injustices under which women suffer, but to show men that they are very seriously injuring their

* Speech at the Albert Hall, December 5th, 1908.

† "Votes and Wages," Miss Royden, p. 8.

own interests by allowing these inequalities to continue. If two persons, equal in other respects, apply for a situation, the one who will take the lower salary will get it; and, even if he or she is less efficient, the position will as a rule be obtained if the salary accepted is low enough. It is for this reason that Trade Unions, besides maintaining the standard and restricting the number of their members, have always fought so fiercely against the employment of non-union labour, and in the recent strikes and elections this has been a very prominent feature, as well as the question of picketing against "blacklegs." It is sheer nonsense to pretend that the vote has no influence in such matters, and thus upon the rate of wages for union labour. In the early days of industry, before machinery and unskilled labour played such a prominent part, the Unions were fairly easily able to keep the field to themselves, but it has become increasingly difficult of late, especially after the Osborne judgment, which the Labour party is bent on reversing. But, above all, the most serious factor in the situation has been the exceedingly rapid incursion of unorganised and unrepresented women into the labour market, owing to the causes which have already been discussed. At first the men regarded this incursion as of little importance, they made no effort to get the women into their Unions, and were perfectly content to see them taking "pocket money" wages. When a strike took place they would ask the women to strike with them, and the latter generally complied, but if the women ventured to make a claim for the increase of their own wages, they were generally told that this would make the position more difficult, and that if they would forbear to make any claims for themselves the men would help them later. These pledges, like those of many Members of Parliament, being made to women, were never kept, and the women frequently underwent all the privations of a strike to go back to the same conditions. But every time men's wages went up and women's remained low, employers began to take on more women, and men were frequently told to go home and to send their wives in

their stead. Every man who is engaged as an employee realises bitterly to-day how women are coming in and under-selling him, and how difficult it is for him to raise his salary and feel secure of his position.

The facts as regards the entry of women into the labour market are vividly shown by the annexed diagram (Fig. 2), made from the figures compiled by Sir C. Booth.* According to this, in 1841 the number of men engaged in a certain group of industries was 1,030,600, and of women only 463,600, or less than half. By 1891 the men had increased to 1,576,100, and the women had nearly caught up, being 1,447,500. In the succeeding ten years the increase of the number of men was much slower and of the women much faster, and the result was a change over to 1,762,445 women and 1,652,422 men. Probably this will be found even more manifest when the census figures of 1911 come to be published.

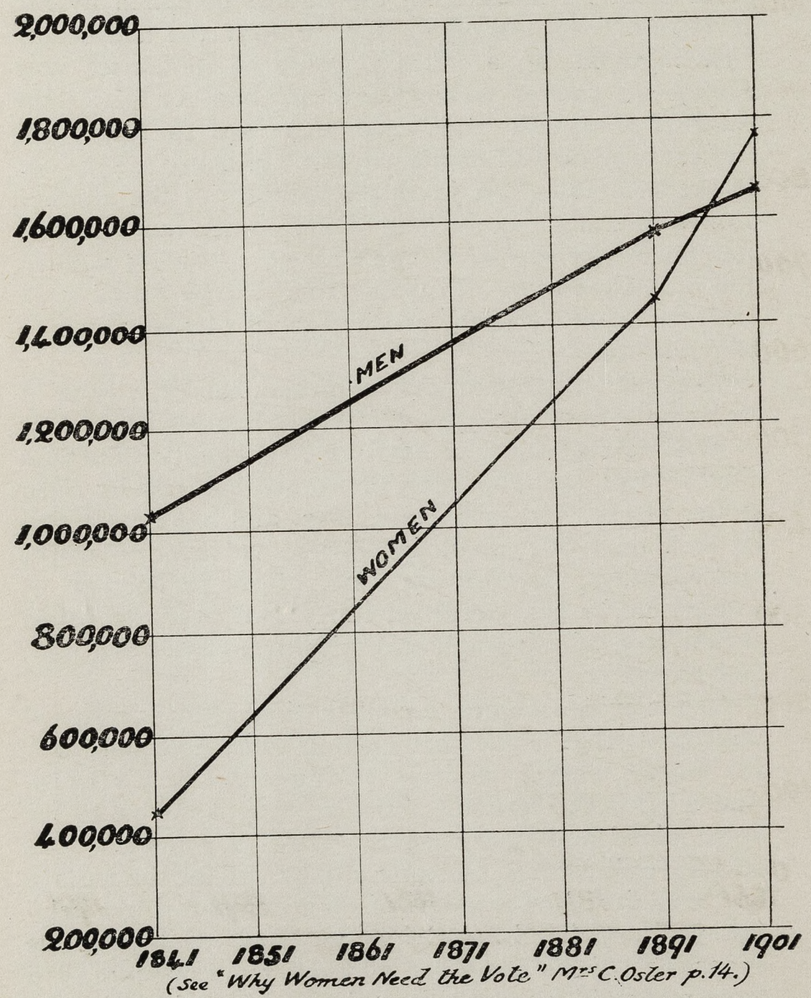
The next diagram shows the proportion of women to men employees (Fig. 3) in different industries, according to Webb's Dictionary of Statistics. Of twenty industries cited by him the proportion of women has rapidly risen in the fifteen more important ones, and has only fallen in such relatively small industries as laundry work, strawplaiting, lacemaking, etc. The proportion of women clerks has increased thirty fold over the whole period, and of telegraph and telephone clerks five fold, and so on.

All the evidence goes to confirm the hardly questioned statement, that women are coming more and more into the labour market, and are taking away men's work. And what is the reason? Simply cheapness, due to the uncombined and unrepresented state of women. It is all very well for men to stand idly by and let the women be "exploited" on account of their comparatively helpless position, but in so doing they have cast aside the experience of the last three hundred years or more, and have relegated women to the class of "blacklegs" who are underselling them and casting them out of employment, however unwillingly.

* Quoted in "Why Women Need the Vote," Mrs. C. Osler, p. 14.

NUMBER OF MEN & WOMEN EMPLOYED IN A GROUP OF TRADES.

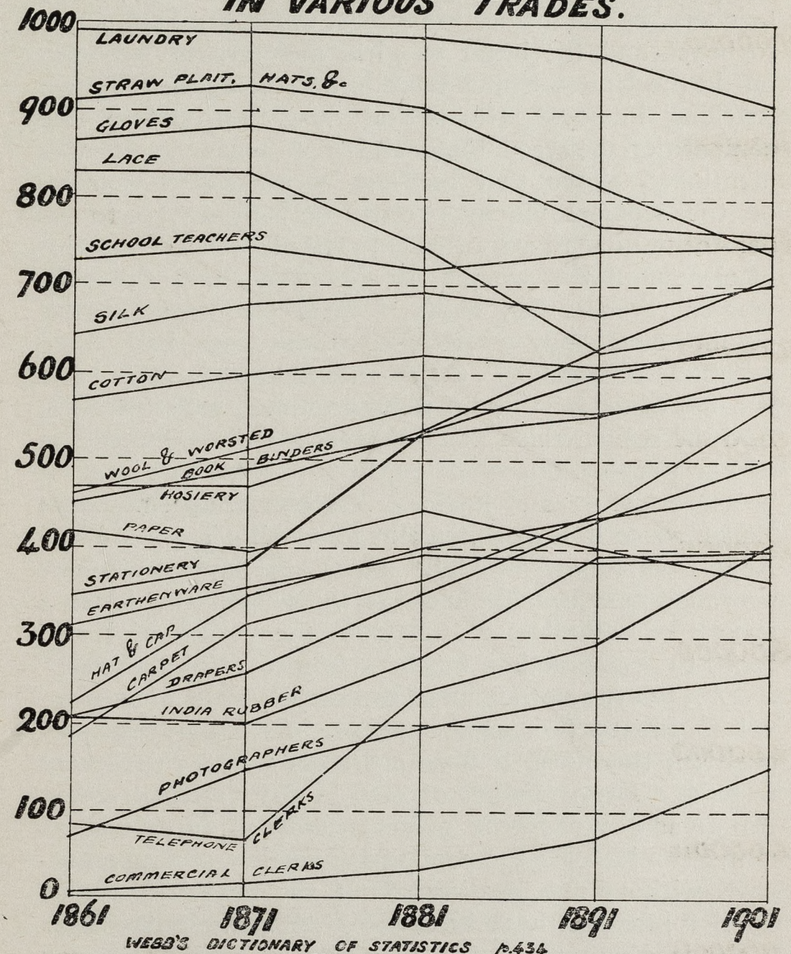
(Rt. HON. C. BOOTH)



(See "Why Women Need the Vote" Mrs C. Oster p. 14.)

FIG. 2

NUMBER OF WOMEN PER 1000 WORKERS IN VARIOUS TRADES.



WEBB'S DICTIONARY OF STATISTICS p.434
FROM CENSUS RETURNS.

FIG. 3.

We have said that the case of the teachers is one of the clearest as regards the unequal pay of women. It also affords the clearest example of the injury done to men by their selfish indifference, or even hostility, to the claims of women. In our own country there is little competition between men and women elementary teachers, as the former are almost universally appointed to boys' and the latter to girls and infants' schools; but in the United States there is no rule against women teaching in boys' schools and there is therefore free competition between them and men teachers. It was mentioned above that in New York State the salaries of the women teachers were only from 50 to 60 per cent. of those of men, although the superior efficiency of the women is admitted; and that the women teachers had made several strong efforts to obtain equal pay ever since 1862 and had been rebuffed because of their unrepresented state and because of the hostility of the represented male teachers. And the result which has followed is a vivid illustration of our proposition, and ought to give the keenest pleasure to lovers of justice. Associate Superintendent Edson wrote in Superintendent Maxwell's Tenth Annual Report as follows:—"The usual scarcity of teachers prevailed until near the close of the school year, when a special examination was held in the month of April, 1908, to accommodate teachers from outside the city." . . . . "On the other hand the employment of men involves greatly increased expense. As a business proposition, therefore, it does not seem wise *or necessary* to have a large number of men in any teaching corps. As far as any *necessity* exists *a few will do as well* as more."* Here is the economic question put in a nutshell without any beating about the bush. And this opinion seems to have been accepted by the authorities.

"It is often stated that 'Equal Pay' will drive men out of the schools. It is evident that 'Unequal Pay' is *keeping* them out. The daily press for over a year has contained letters from these men teachers, complaining that they are not appointed, and the men on

* Equal Pay for Equal Work," p. 108.

the eligible list have now organised into what is called 'The Association of Unappointed Men Teachers.' They have compiled facts showing that since June, 1908, 1,500 women and only 39 men have been appointed. This Association has recently presented a petition to the Board of Education, praying for appointment.

"Following are some samples of their plaints:—

"Letters to *Globe*—

"October 13, 1909: 'Since February, 1908, 196 have passed the examination. Only 15 appointed.' 'To see over 1,000 women and young girls (many of whom had barely succeeded in getting the necessary rating of 70 per cent., and had not yet demonstrated their capability) appointed before them. To bitterly realise that most of these girls appointed had passed the examinations later than they.'

"May 17, 1909: 'Three men out of a total of over 100 were appointed last month. And as it happened one of the three was a re-instated teacher at that. The merging of the present and the coming eligible list will mean that some of us, already despairingly distant from the top, will be pushed still further down into the realm of almost utter hopelessness.' . . . . 'The men on the No. One list this year seem to be singularly fortunate (?). They were notified of their having passed way back in July. . . . The schools open and no men are appointed. They wait two months, and have the pleasure of witnessing the enlivening spectacle of 250 women appointed and no men. They wait another month and see the entire list of women appointed, and still no men, etc.'" And an official report of the Board of Education, Nov. 10, 1909, stated that 300 vacancies existed at a certain time, "most of which were filled by the appointment at the last meeting of the Board of 250 women and 24 men." *So serious had the matter become that last year, after more than fifty years of agitation, equal pay was at last secured for the teachers of New York in 1911—although complete women's suffrage is not yet granted there. The women's suffrage agitation has, however, recently attained great dimensions in

* "Equal Pay for Equal Work," p. 110.

New York, and has very probably had a considerable influence upon bringing about this result.

During the present writer's visit to Stockholm last year in connection with the great Congress of the International Women Suffrage Alliance, he took the opportunity of enquiring into the position of men and women teachers in Sweden. The information obtained was not official but is believed to be correct, and it was unchallenged when given at a public meeting in Stockholm. It appears that until about ten years ago the salaries of men and women teachers were equal all over Sweden, and their numbers were approximately equal. Since that time, however, an agitation sprang up among the teachers in Stockholm for a rise of salaries, in consequence of the increased cost of living, and the men teachers being represented got it, while the women did not. *To-day it appears that four-fifths of the teachers in Stockholm are women.* And this cannot be because the men have better opportunities in other directions, as the emigration from Sweden is very great.

Finally, one of the clearest examples of the displacement of men by the cheapness of women's labour has just been given in Germany, in which women hold almost the lowest position obtaining in any civilised country. In order to meet its vast military and naval expenditure, the German Government finds itself forced to economise, and it has just been stated that as a measure of economy 8,600 male Post Office employees are to be replaced by women,* in order to save £300,000 a year in wages. And, according to Sir Francis Oppenheimer, the British Consul-General in Germany, the same thing prevails throughout the country.†

"There is one detail specially deserving of comment, which is characteristic of the general commercial situation. *Female labour has again increased in* 1910 (*as it had alreay increased in* 1909). Since 1905 the returns show that female labour has multiplied by one-third,

* *Daily Mail,* 24th June, 1912.

† *Daily Mail* Year Book, 1912, p. 230.

after making due allowance for the growth of population. The steady extension of female labour is due to a determined effort to reduce at least to that extent the total cost of manufacture, because the finishing industries, with the high price of their raw material, find it difficult to make both ends meet. The increasing use of female labour is quoted to explain why the wages for male labour have not yet reached the level of the last boom, though there was great activity, and though the cost of living is still increasing."

Doubtless many other even more glaring instances could be found, but the foregoing ought to be sufficient to convince every sane man that he is simply committing economic suicide by permitting this inequality of wages to continue. It must be remembered that this evil, like many others, is cumulative; and that the displacement of men by women means that fewer men still will be able to marry and that more women still will be forced into the labour market. Unless something is done, and done quickly, to stop this process, the next generation will probably find that man's place is the home, while the women go out to earn a pittance to support themselves and their men dependants.

The Cure of the Evil.

What can be done to check this tendency? Obviously there are two courses. The first, and apparently the more direct, is to debar women from the industries. Mr. John Burns has recently stated that the employment of women must be greatly reduced, and the Factory Acts which have ostensibly been passed in the interests of women are merely ingenious subterfuges for reducing women's value and thereby injuring their prospects of obtaining employment. Only a few months ago a bill for the abolition of barmaids was proposed, and was only rejected by the indignant agitation of the suffragists. Just lately Lord Curzon has given as a reason for refusing the vote to women, that their action in resisting such limitations upon their labour showed their inability to realise what was good for their own interest. What his remarks did show was the absolute inability

of Lord Curzon, in common with many other men, to realise the conditions under which women work; and the necessity for their enfranchisement, in order to teach such men as Mr. John Burns and Lord Curzon that when it is a choice between unpleasant labour and starvation, women have to claim the former.

But in any case the answer to those who would restrict women's labour, without consideration of their sufferings, is that it is now too late. When five and a half millions of women are already in the industries, and all the weight of the employing classes is in favour of retaining them on account of their cheapness, it is hardly likely that any legislation in that direction will be successful. Moreover, there are, fortunately, a fair number of Parliamentary representatives who are sufficiently favourable to the women's cause to repel such attacks. The only thing therefore for men to do, is what they should have done at the outset, to recognise that a woman has precisely the same human rights and privileges as a man, and to help women to combine and to obtain equal pay for equal work, so that they shall no longer be chosen on account of cheapness.

There are many who will appreciate this point, but who say immediately, "Why don't the women combine into Trade Unions and let the vote alone." The answer is that there is no advantage in gradually climbing up a steep staircase as the men have done, if there is a lift ready to take one up rapidly. It has already been said that the great diversity of modern work makes combination much more difficult than formerly. But apart from this, where women have combined, as in the Post Office and the Teaching profession, their wages have rarely approached that of men, and they are still liable to incursions such as that of the Postmaster-General already referred to, and which they are almost powerless to resist. And, in addition to theory, experience shows that the possession of the parliamentary franchise is the most rapid and direct step to equalisation of remuneration. In Wyoming, where women's suffage was passed as far back as 1869, a measure of equal pay for teachers was passed almost simultaneously.

In Utah, where women were enfranchised in 1896, equal pay for teachers was granted the same year. Idaho also appears to have equal pay for teachers. "In Colorado there is equal pay for teachers, clerks, and stenographers, and in all State employment."* Women's suffrage has also been granted quite recently in Washington and California, but there has not yet been time for much legislation. We see, however, that in the only four States where women have been long enfranchised their pay *has* been equalised.

Turning to our own Empire, New Zealand granted the suffrage to women in 1893. A general election in which women voted took place in the same year, and returned the party to power which passed the Arbitration Act in 1894. A minimum wage has since been fixed which is equal for men and women, and both in educational and other State employments equal pay for equal work is the rule. The Amendment to the Education Act, passed in 1908, put women teachers on a complete equality with men.‡

"In Australia the wages of men and women throughout the Federal Public Service are equal, and in the Junior Grade of the State Education Department there is an equal minimum wage for men and women. Women Inspectors have been appointed in all Government institutions.† The Federal Public Service Act embodying these reforms was passed in 1903, the year following the grant of the Commonwealth Franchise to Women.§

The only other countries in which women's suffrage has been granted are Finland (1906), Norway (1907), and Iceland (1911). In Finland 26 Bills were introduced by the women into the first Diet, containing the majority of the reforms which women have obtained in other countries, but the interference with the constitution by Russia stopped all progress. Norway does not appear to have made any agitation concerning women's wages,

* "How Women Use the Vote," by Maude Royden, p. 10.

‡ According to the New Zealand Year Book for 1911 there are only 140 women teachers per 100 men teachers in New Zealand, as against 323—456 in England and Scotland.

† "How Women Use the Vote," p. 11.

§ Miss M. Hodge. "Report of International W.S. Alliance," 1911, p 76.

but in Iceland a woman has been appointed mistress of one of the largest commercial schools and has been granted the same salary as that of men in similar positions.*

We therefore see that of the eleven countries or states in which women's suffrage has been granted, equalisation of wages has followed almost immediately in seven of them, while of the remaining four, three have as yet hardly had an opportunity of carrying out legislation. It cannot be doubted that Washington and California will soon follow the example of the other suffrage States of America. Whatever anti-suffragists may say to the contrary, therefore, women's suffrage *has* brought about an increase of women's wages in a large majority of cases in a very short time, and there is every justification for supposing that it would do the same in this country. Surely, after this, men will realise that the most rapid step towards the removal of the excessive and unfair competition of women, and securing greater security of employment for themselves, will be to enfranchise women.

As this is being sent to the press the following appears in the *Standard* of July 4th, 1912. Will anyone pretend that it has no relation to our vigorous women's suffrage agitation?

"Equality of Sexes.

An interesting innovation was agreed to without dissent at the County Council Education Committee yesterday, when Miss T. M. Morton and Mr. H. Peploe were appointed principal organisers of Children's Care Work, each at a salary of £350 a year. This is the first time that the Council have recognised the principle of equal pay for similar work for men and women."

This example, like that of the New York teachers, will doubtless be seized upon by the anti-suffragists as showing that women can obtain equalisation or improvement of their wages before securing the suffrage. No suffragist denies this. But it has taken nearly fifty years of agitation to secure this reform in New York; and it, as well as the L.C.C. example above, has not

* "Report of the International W.S. Alliance," 1911, p. 111.

occurred until a strong women's suffrage organisation has been built up, with all its cost of work and funds. Are the women to have to build up these great organisations again in order to redress each single grievance, or should they press forward to secure once for all that representation which ensures that their interests in all departments shall be steadily kept in view? No rational, honourable person can hesitate as to the answer.

Will Raising Women's Wages Lower those of Men.

One further point in conclusion. Admitting, as reasonable men must, that the political recognition of women will lead to equalisation of wages, will this lead to a raising of women's wages to those of men, or to a depression of men's wages? It has been contended that in all cases where equalisation has been brought about, men's wages have fallen part of the way to meet the women's.

It is not easy to give a general answer to this question, as it depends very much on the industrial conditions of the country. In the case of manufactured articles, where severe competition exists with other countries, it would very likely be impossible to bring up the wages of women to those of men at a jump, and it might pay men, in order to regain their footing, to accept somewhat lower wages. But there would be no more necessity for them to do so than at present, and in fact less, as it is clear that men earning say 25s. have less to fear from the competition of women at 15s. than from that of women at 7s. It is difficult to see, therefore, in the industrial labour market, how men could lose by it, while it is clear that they would stand to gain. The difficulty lies rather in the Government Services, where the increase of women's remuneration to that of men would certainly be a serious charge on the Budget. It is not easy to obtain evidence on this point, as legislation affecting the salaries of Government employees is generally accompanied by administrative reforms which make it difficult to ascertain whether the work is the same or not. For example,

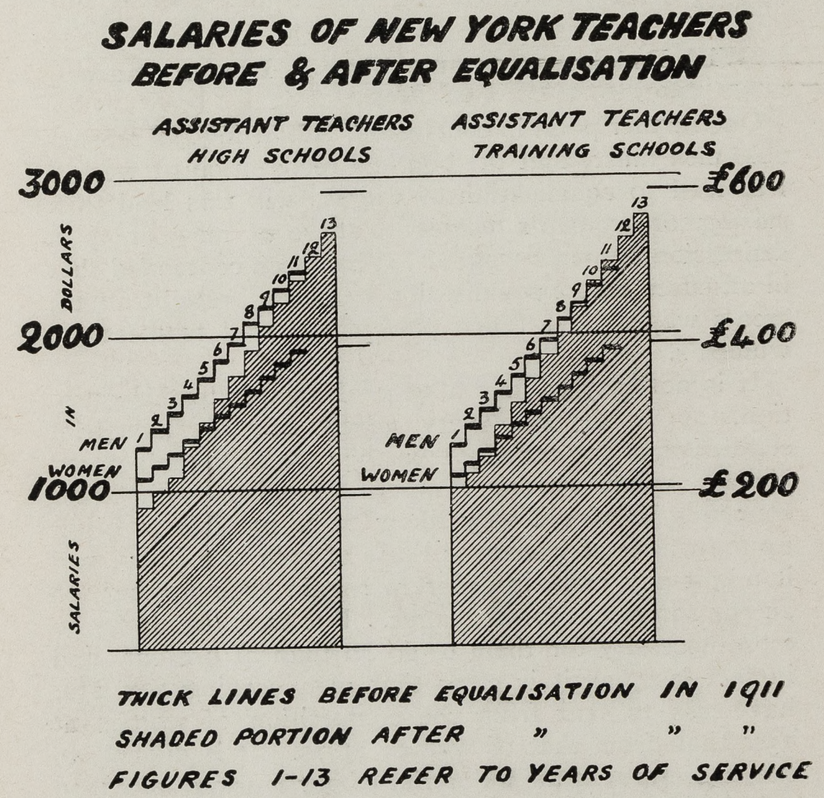


FIG 4.

the equalisation of salaries of women with men teachers in New York last year was accompanied by a distinction between kindergarten and other elementary teachers which had not previously existed; and the schedules concerning elementary teachers do not show whether the work is of the same class as before or not. But there seem to be two classes which have remained unchanged—that of assistant teachers in high schools and in training schools. Before the equalisation of salaries, assistant teachers commenced at $1,100 for women and $1,300 for men, rising to $1,900 and $2,400 respectively in the eleventh year of service. Since the equalisation the commencing salary is $900-1,000 for each, which is less than for either sex before, but it rises to $2,450 in the eleventh year, *or to more than for either sex previously,* and continues rising to $2,750 in the thirteenth year instead of stopping at the eleventh.* At the same time it was enacted that those previously appointed who would lose under the new schedule should continue to be paid on the old scale. Such a rule is almost invariable in governmental changes, and men already engaged need have little fear of being prejudicially affected by the equalisation. The changes introduced by this law are clearly shown in the diagram (Fig. 4), in which the scale of salaries for men and women separately are shown by the thick lines, and that for men and women together after equalisation by the shaded portion. I am informed by Miss Royden, who has just returned from New York, that a much larger proportion of men teachers have been appointed since the equalisation took place.

There is a most important reason, however, why women's enfranchisement should ultimately lead to a great increase of the remuneration and prosperity of the working classes. It has already been pointed out that the *average* wage of labour, apart from differences between men and women or between one trade or profession or another, depends upon the rates of total supply to total demand. The average wage has re-

* Official Schedule of Teachers' Salaries, Document No. 1, 1912. Adopted by the Board of Education of the City of New York.

mained low despite all improvements, not only because of the want of combination of women, but because of the over supply of labour. John Stuart Mill, whose zeal for the working classes is so well known, not only brought forward the first Women's Suffrage Amendment in 1867 on the grounds of justice, but in his "Political Economy"* he says: "On the present occasion I shall only indicate, among the probable consequences of the industrial and social independence of women, a great diminution of the evil of over-population." And in the previous chapter he says: "Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make fortunes. They have increased the comforts of the middle classes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny which it is their nature and in their futurity to accomplish. Only when in addition to just institutions the increase of mankind shall be under the deliberate guidance of judicious foresight, can the conquests made from the powers of nature by the intellect and energy of scientific discoveries, become the common property of the species, and the means of improving and elevating the universal lot."

Mrs. Fawcett, the pioneer in the women's suffrage movement, in her "Political Economy for Beginners," says (Section III., chapter II.):—

"The cheap food, which the repeal of the Corn Laws brought to England, has stimulated a vast increase of population; the benefit which might have been derived from a plentiful supply of cheap food has been absorbed by the demands of millions of hungry mouths. The principal effect, on the labourer, produced by the repeal of the corn laws, is that cheap food has enabled him, not to live in greater comfort, but to support an increased number of children. Such considerations lead to the conclusion that no material improvement in the con-

* Book iv., Chapter vii., Sec. 3.

dition of the working classes can be permanent unless it is accompanied by circumstances which will prevent a counterbalancing increase of population."

The same view has been strongly expressed by the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. W. R. Inge, who has recently said that in his opinion the main cause of the labour unrest is the excessive increase of numbers in this country and the breeding from inferior stocks. "As long as our social reformers and agitators shirk these problems, I find it difficult to have much confidence in their intelligence or honesty." Is it not clear that this is a question which above all concerns women? We need not fear that emancipated, economically independent women will flood the labour market with unwanted or unfit children; and experience shows that enfranchised women do not do so, the prosperity of New Zealand and Australia being continually brought to our attention. On all grounds of economic betterment and industrial and national efficiency, thinking men will realise that the political recognition of women and their education in full national responsibility which will result from it, is the most practicable, indeed the indispensable requisite. *Even supposing that women did not want the vote, it is just as necessary for men to induce them to do so, as it is for members of a trade-union to get all men in their industry enrolled in their society.*

The Men's League for Women's Suffrage therefore most earnestly calls upon all men to band themselves together in the interests of men, women, and children and the nation, with the determination to see this far too long delayed measure of justice to women carried into law.

NOTE.—The statements made in this pamphlet are given on the best authorities I have been able to find, and in most cases have been checked by reference to two or more publications. I should, however, be very glad if any reader would give me references to any official publications in which such information occurs, and shall be pleased to acknowledge and correct any errors, if such are proved.

C. V. D.

APPENDIX.

A—United Kingdom Census, 1901.

14th Abstract of Labour Statistics, Board of Trade, 1908-09, p. 257.

MALE AND FEMALE POPULATION AT DIFFERENT AGES.

	Under 20.	20—50.	Over 50.	Total.
Males ...	8,781,653	8,407,009	2,913,746	20,102,408
Females	8,787,355	9,170,436	3,398,522	21,356,313
Males & Females	17,569,008	17,577,445	6,312,268	41,458,721
Excess of Females	5,702	763,427	484,776	1,253,905

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Persons.	Males.	Females.	Excess of Females.
36,070,492	17,445,608	18,624,884	1,179,276

Excess of Females 6·8%.

NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES EMPLOYED.

Census 1901.

	England and Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	United Kingdom.
Males	10,156,976	1,391,188	1,403,022	12,951,186
Females	4,171,751	591,624	546,585	5,309,960
Total	14,328,727	1,982,812	1,949,607	18,261,146

TEXTILE FACTORIES.

14th Abstract of Labour Statistics, p. 273.

	1895.	1896.	1897.	1898.
Males	411,881	412,841	396,851	387,583
	1901.	1904.	1907.	
	379,211	382,835	407,360	
	1895.	1896.	1897.	1898.
Females	663,870	664,846	654,713	648,987
	1901.	1904.	1907.	
	650,142	643,543	679,863	

It will be observed that not only is the number of women employed in these factories 60 per cent. above that of men, but that in 1907 there were fewer men employed than in 1895, while the number of women had materially increased.

B—Average Daily Wages of Workers.

AVERAGE WAGES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Men.

Prof. Bowley gives the number of men employed in regular occupations as about 8,000,000, with the following wages (including valuation for payment in kind). (See *Daily Mail Handbook*, 1912, p. 45).

Under 15s.	320,000	Average about 30/- per week.
15s. to 20s.	640,000	
20s. to 25s.	1,600,000	
25s. to 30s.	1,680,000	
30s. to 35s.	1,680,000	
35s. to 40s.	1,040,000	
40s. to 45s.	560,000	
Over 45s.	480,000	

Women.

Miss Mary Macarthur, in her evidence before the Select Committee on Home Work, p. 139, Sec. 2,573, estimates the average weekly wage earned by the industrial woman as 7s.

Others have given it as from 7s. to 7s. 7d.

M. L. de Pessargevsky. Journal de la Société de Statistique de Paris. August, September, 1911.

FRANCS PER DAY.

	Men.		Women.
	Skilled.	Unskilled.	
Denmark—Capital	6·69	5·39	2 89
Provincial Towns	5·25	4·5	2·40
Country	4·63	4·17	2·71
Average	5·81	4·70	2·71
Germany	4·46		2·36
Baden	2·43		1·82
Belgium—Textile Workers	2·80		1·92
France	3·90		2·10
U.S.A.	9·85		5·60

It must, of course, be understood that the above figures are the average for all trades and *not* for equal work.

C—Salaries in Educational Work.

I.—Where Women are Unenfranchised.

London County Council.

	Masters.	Mistresses.
Student Teachers: Free training and	£55	£30
Certificated on 2nd year's papers—		
First year	£100	£90
With 6 or more years' service	£125	£102
With University degree—		
Commencing	£110	£100
Maximum	£200	£150
Head Teachers—		
201-400 pupils	£200-£300	£150-£225
Above 401 pupils	£300-£400	£225-£300

*

France.†

	Francs.	Francs.
Professors—Paris	5,500-9,000	4,100-6,900
Departements	3,700-6,200	3,000-5,400
Drawing	2,900-4,900	2,000-4,000
Gymnasium	1,600-2,600	1,400-2,200
Economes	4,000-6,000	2,600-4,600
Sous-Economes	2,600-4,600	2,200-2,400

Germany.‡

	Marks.	Marks.
Teachers—Prussia	1,400-3,300	1,200-2,450
Hamburg	2,500-5,000	1,700-3,200
Baden	1,600-3,200	1,600-2,400

Holland.§

Elementary teachers frequently equal.

Amsterdam higher schools—Annual salary per hour per week	Florins 115	85

New York.‖ (before Equal Pay Act of 1911).
Teachers in Elementary Schools—

* L.C.C. Form E. 40, 1911.
† M. L. Marin "l'Action Feministe" No. 5, 1911.
‡ Lärarekarens Löne-och Pensionsfragor, Stockholm, 1911.
§ Information specially obtained from National Bureau von Vrouwenarbeit.
‖ Document No. 1, 1912, Schedules of Teachers' Salaries, Board of Education, City of New York.

	Men. $	*Women.* $
First year of service	900	600
Second	1,005	648
Third	1,110	696
Fourth	1,215	744
Fifth	1,320	792
Sixth	1,425	840
Seventh	1,520	888
Eighth	1,635	936
Ninth	1,740	984
Tenth	1,845	1,032
Eleventh	1,950	1,080
Twelfth	2,055	1,128
Thirteenth	2,160	1,176
Fourteenth		1,224
Fifteenth		1,272
Sixteenth		1,320

Principals of Elementary Schools—

	$	$
First year of service	2,750	1,750
Second	3,000	2,000
Third	3,250	2,250
Fourth	3,500	2,500

For High Schools and Training Schools see Fig. 4.

*Canada.**

Average salaries of Teachers, 1901	£100	£50

II.—Where Women are Enfranchised.

New Zealand.§ (Women's Suffrage granted 1893).
By the Amendment to the Education Act 1908 the salaries of men and women teachers were equalised for equal work at from £90 to £400 per annum. Equal minimum wage for men and women, and equal wages for equal work throughout the State service.

Australia.† (Commonwealth Franchise granted to Women 1902).

* Webb's Dictionary of Statistics, p. 627.
§ "How Women Use the Vote," Miss Royden, p. 11.
† Report of International W.S. Alliance, Stockholm, 1911, p. 76.

Federal Public Service Act 1903. Equal pay for equal work throughout the Federal Public Service.

United States.

*Wyoming.** (Women's Suffrage granted 1869).
Equal pay for men and women teachers, in same year.

Colorado.‡ (Women's Suffrage granted 1893).
Equal pay for men and women teachers, clerks, and stenographers, and in all State employment.

Idaho.‖ (Women's Suffrage granted 1896).
Equal pay for men and women teachers.

Utah.‖ (Women's Suffrage granted 1896).
Equal pay for men and women teachers, 1896.

Washington. 1910. No election till 1913.

California. 1911. No election yet.

Norway.§ (Women's Suffrage granted 1907).
Equal pay for women Post Office employees same year.

Iceland.† (Women's Suffrage passed first Parliament, 1911).
A lady has just been appointed Head of Communal School at Akureyn at the same salary as men in similar positions.

New York.† (School and Taxpayers' Suffrage granted to Women).
Equal Pay Bill for teachers passed 1911. See Fig. 4.

D—Metropolitan Tailoring Trade.

"That women are formidable and successful competitors in the making of trousers and vests is, I think, indicated by the census statistics of the entire metropolitan tailoring trade, which show that while the male workers have actually *decreased* in the decade 1871-81, the female workers have increased in number by 25 per cent."℔

* "Women's Suffrage in Many Lands," Alice Zimmern, p. 10.
‡ "How Women Use the Vote," Miss Royden, p. 10.
‖ "Women's Suffrage in Many Lands," Alice Zimmern, p. 11.
§ "Votes and Wages," Miss Royden, p. 7.
† Report of International W.S. Alliance, Stockholm, 1911, p. 111.
℔ "In the Census of 1871 we find a total of 38,296 workers—23,516 males and 14,780 females; in 1881 a total of 41,221—22,744 males and 18,471 females."—Sir C. Booth's "Life and Labour of the Peop'e." Vol. I., p. 217.

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Mothers in Mean Streets;

or,

The Toad under the Harrow

BY

ANNA MARTIN

With a Preface by GERALD GOULD

PRICE TWOPENCE

PUBLISHED BY THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS,
27 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C.

Preface

Miss Anna Martin has a very special claim to be heard on the subject with which she deals in the following pages. She has for years lived among the working women of Rotherhithe, been a personal friend to many of them in their struggles and troubles, and thus gained a knowledge, both of social forces and of legal enactments, such as no study, however prolonged and profound, of social and legal documents could give. Legislators notoriously often fail to embody their intentions (even when their intentions are strictly honourable) in legislation: the mere wording of a law is small guide to its actual incidence and operation. Miss Martin has observed in the lives of those around her the incidence and operation of the laws which seek to govern in this country the marital relations of the sexes. She has seen what really works and what is just made game of; she has traced, not only in formulæ and statistics, but in the lives of human beings, of our sisters and our brothers, the effect of the inferior social and political status of women. All her cases are first-hand cases: all her facts are facts. And this surely gives her pamphlet an interest over and above the propagandist value it undoubtedly possesses. For, quite apart from any views about Woman Suffrage, no one who has the chance of learning the truth about any social fact has the right to shut his or her eyes to that truth. Even those who have thought and read seriously on such problems as Miss Martin here discusses will have much, very much, that is new and vital and illuminating to learn from her: whatever their views, and whatever their views about *her* views, they should be, and will be, glad to learn.

The case for Woman Suffrage is, of course, broadly speaking, twofold. There is the general democratic argument, which maintains that any class, sex or sect excluded from a voice in the laws which it has to obey is a degraded, an enslaved class, sex or sect, irrespective of whether the laws are just or unjust, harsh or merciful. In this view, even if women *were* (as some pretend they *are !*) the pampered darlings of the

law, their position would still be an intolerable one for anyone conscious of the dignity of the individual soul. We men can easily realise how unanswerable the democratic case is, if we for a moment try to realise how *we* should like to live under laws (however favourable to our capacities and indulgent to our weaknesses) made for us entirely by women. Clearly, we should not stand it: and if we expect women to stand a similar degradation, we must, to be consistent, maintain that they are really and essentially inferior beings, without that individual and personal dignity which we are so ready to recognise in ourselves. Few of us, I fancy, in a country where the appeals of a male Government for the co-operation of women in the salvation of the State cry aloud from every hoarding (and where, by a special dispensation of Providence, we are all born of women), are prepared nowadays to go quite as far as that.

The second argument is one of fact as well as theory. It declares that one sex cannot possibly legislate adequately for another, because, even if it had the best will in the world to understand and meet the specific needs of the other, it would not know how to do so: and it declares that, as things actually work out, man-made laws, both in their drafting and their administration, do press with a weight of intolerable hardship and injustice upon women. This last question is one of fact pure and simple. It is so wide that it would be in the strict sense impertinent for me even to attempt to begin to deal with it here. Miss Martin's articles, with all their wealth of detail, aim at covering only one part of it. But what they aim at covering, they cover: what they set out to prove, they prove. There is no avoiding their conclusions. However reluctant you may be to admit the pitifulness, the misery, the degradation, of the present economic and political status of women, you cannot but admit the hard facts which Miss Martin presents. Having admitted them, you must be prepared either to countenance their continuance—or, by helping to give women the power to tackle the difficulties they alone can fully appreciate, to co-operate in doing away with them. Here lies the value, or rather the invaluability, of Miss Martin's pamphlet.

GERALD GOULD.

Mothers in Mean Streets.

I.

It is hardly possible to set forth in plain language the actual, as distinguished from the nominal, position of married women under English law without seeming to bring a railing accusation against the ruling sex. Theoretically, doubtless, men are responsible for the laws they make, or which they permit to continue; practically, men, like women, are very much the creatures of the circumstances into which they are born. If our forefathers forged the chains which now make self-respect impossible for multitudes of miserable wives, our female forbears submitted to be shackled. Furthermore, knowledge of a condition implies a knowledge of its contraries, and it is almost impossible to realise the true nature of evils to which we have always been accustomed. To the Greeks, the institution of slavery seemed essential to an advanced civilization, and there is little evidence that the slaves of the ancient world much resented their servile state. Less than a century ago, any proposal to deprive employers of child labour was denounced as striking at the roots of national prosperity. The mills of God, however, do not cease their grinding because of the ignorance or apathy of either the victimizers or of the victimized. Slavery destroyed in time every nation which persisted in it, and to-day we are still reaping the crop of ills sown by the child labour of the early nineteenth century. Similarly, the fact that neither men nor women as a rule realise that the low status of the wife is the main source of our many national sicknesses, does not prevent those sicknesses from sapping the national strength.

Let it be said at once that in the great majority of English homes counteracting influences are at work which render the mother's disabilities less destructive than they would otherwise be. These checks will be considered later, but the position in those numerous unions, where they altogether fail to act, must first be explained.

Independent Before Marriage.

Before marriage, over 80 per cent. of the female population support themselves. Owing to lack of training and opportunity their wages are usually in normal times pitiably small, but the women's right to receive them is indisputable. On her wedding-day a girl practically burns her boats and ties herself for the rest of her life to one main employer. Though as a married woman she is not actually debarred from the labour market, in all probability the care of the home, the bearing and rearing of children will henceforth fatally handicap her in any attempt to earn her own living. Her mate, therefore, nominally undertakes to maintain her and the children she may bring forth, but the law has never defined "maintenance," and the extent of his liability is left to the man's own assessment. It is open to him to drink or gamble away every penny of his wages, to loaf about smoking half the week, to destroy his constitution by dissipation so that he becomes unable to work at all, to throw on his wife the burden of just as many children as he chooses to bring into the world.

There is a vague idea abroad that if a man fails to maintain his family, or if he neglects or ill-treats his wife, the legislature has provided the woman with a remedy. The victims themselves know better—know so well, indeed, the utter fallaciousness of the supposed remedy that only the smallest proportion of ill-used wives ever bring their wrongs before a Court of Law. Let us see what the procedure is. Probably every poor street in London contains certain men who for weeks at a time never contribute more than a few uncertain shillings to the family exchequer, and who would repress any remonstrance on the part of the wife by kicks and blows. Over and over again did the writer, until hard experience taught her the futility of the proceeding, strive to persuade the women in such cases to apply for a separation order. If the ground of the application is lack of maintenance, the wife must first leave her husband's roof, an astute provision which effectually gets rid of nine out of ten possible applicants. How is Mrs. Jones, whose husband has handed her on several succeeding Saturdays sums varying from nothing to 7s. 6d., to hire and furnish a room, feed herself and four or five children while the law takes its slow course? Furthermore, even if she succeeds in her application, she is faced by the fact that she has no right to take with her a single stick of furniture unless she can show receipts

for it made out in her own name, which condition can, naturally, hardly ever be fulfilled. To furnish a couple of rooms even in the barest fashion costs nearly £5, and the woman could just as easily produce £100. Yet cups, plates, towels, bath-tub, bed, and bed-covering she must have, or run the risk of being prosecuted for child neglect. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the grievance of the working-class wife is confined to lack of maintenance—that is, non-fulfilment of the essential condition on which she married—she practically never carries her case before a magistrate.

When aggravated physical violence, however, is added to the pecuniary offence, the wife, despite her knowledge of the probable ultimate futility of her action, is often driven to seek at least a temporary respite by applying for a separation order. Even so, her path is strewn with difficulties. She must either produce a witness of her ill-treatment or show the actual marks of it. Few men, however, care to give way to their brutal instincts in public, and the women are frequently too unnerved and demoralised by what they have gone through to be capable of making an immediate appearance in a Court. Besides, the worst injuries are often not visible ones. Furthermore, the bruised and battered wife has to reckon with the possibility that after her application she may be sent back into her husband's power, exposed to any vengeance he may choose to take. Few middle-class people have any conception of the state of bodily fear in which scores of thousands of Englishwomen live. It is, however, one of the main causes of intemperance among women. They drink to gain courage to face their tyrants.

The main factor which deters injured and cheated wives from seeking legal redress has yet to be mentioned. It is, as a rule, impossible for a woman with three or four dependent children to earn enough to provide them with food and clothing. The magistrate who grants the order will indeed direct the man to pay a certain sum weekly for the maintenance of his family, but the mandate is little more than a farce and all the parties concerned know it. One would not say that no separated wife ever receives the allowance to which by order of the Court she is entitled, but in nine cases out of ten the course of events is as follows: The husband pays the full amount for a week or two, then he misses a week, then he gives half the prescribed sum, then he suspends all payments for a fortnight, and so on, until, within six months, he has ceased to give anything at all. He hopes in this way to starve

his wife out; a calculation only too often justified. He is quite aware that his contempt of the magistrate's order will almost certainly go unpunished. He knows that no summons will be issued against him till the arrears have reached a considerable sum, and that if he can ever induce his wife, driven desperate by want of money, to take even the smallest instalment of what he owes her, the acceptance cancels the whole debt.

Where the "House" fails.

Theoretically, the woman who does not receive her maintenance money may betake herself and her children to the workhouse, but entrance to this is by no means so easy to obtain as the uninitiated suppose. A few weeks ago a woman she knew well appeared at the writer's door in the direst straits. After savage ill-treatment, her husband had, the previous night, turned her and her children into the street. In the morning she took her courage in both hands and went up to the Court, but the magistrate adjourned the case for inquiries. Not having a cent in the world, she then applied for admission to the workhouse, but was refused on the ground that, as she could go back to her husband if she chose, she was not destitute. When she said she dare not again put herself in his power, she was told that her remedy was to have a policeman put on point duty outside her house. She could as easily have commanded the services of the Household Troops! Even, however, if a woman succeeds in gaining admission, she is ultimately no better off. The Guardians may, indeed, prosecute the defaulting husband, but whatever sum they recover is their property, not hers. If she manages to starve along somehow outside the House, and even contrives to find the means of prosecuting her husband, she gains nothing but an empty vengeance. The man may possibly be sentenced to a month's imprisonment, but the penalty automatically extinguishes the whole debt, though it does not procure for the wife the price of a pint of milk. The law, moreover, still further provides the husband with convenient bolt-holes. He can, and often does, throw up a well-paid job, take to casual labour, and then plead inability to pay, knowing that as soon as he has worn his wife out, he can resume his own trade; or he can change his place of residence. No summons will be granted against him unless the wife can furnish the police with his exact address, and to ascertain this needs both time and money. "I know I could

find him if I could get to Woolwich," wailed a recent victim to the writer, "but there and back would cost me sixpence, and I have only ninepence in the world."

It is somewhat curious to reflect that the conditions described above are the outcome of well-meant endeavours on the part of a male legislature to "do something" for neglected and ill-treated wives.

II.

It is usual to take refuge from the painful and discreditable circumstances set forth above by dwelling on the fact that the great majority of Englishmen are affectionate and home-loving men who would never dream of taking advantage of their legal position to defraud and ill-treat their wives. A still greater majority of Englishmen would neither forge a cheque, fire a barn, nor murder their neighbours; but no one proposes on that account to abolish the penal law. Paupers constitute a little over 2 per cent. of the total population, but pauperism is recognised as such a danger to the State that twenty millions of money are spent annually to check its ravages and regulate its treatment. No statistics exist as to the number of married women who lead horrible and degraded lives because of the law's refusal to enforce their marriage contracts or to protect their persons, but the evil of wife ill-usage is far more prevalent than either crime or pauperism, and ultimately entails far greater injuries on the body politic.

6,000 Separation Orders a Year.

In spite of all the obstacles and discouragements which confront the would-be applicant, over 6,000 separation orders are granted every year, nearly all of them on the woman's plea of ill-treatment and non-maintenance. Yet for one case which comes before a court, there are probably at least fifty in which the aggrieved wife does not venture on any action. An opportunity was taken last summer to tabulate the matrimonial experiences of 225 poor women of irreproachable private lives, whose histories happened to be well-known to the investigators. Terrible to relate, over 24 per cent. were found to be suffering, or to have suffered, humiliations and wrongs at the hands of drunken husbands which no man would for a single day be allowed to inflict with impunity on an individual of his own sex.

Public Opinion a Restraining Force.

It is true that forces are always at work which tend to raise the position of the wife above her legal status, and which act as checks on the mischiefs inevitably arising from the defects of the English marriage laws. Otherwise, the nation must have perished long ago. Setting aside altogether the great emotional influences which, even among the most degraded, do something to lift the relations of father, mother, and child outside and above the domain of law, there are other factors making for the protection of the wife. No man, however selfish or unscrupulous, who claims to belong to the "respectable" classes, could, for instance, venture to let his wife go bootless or his children appear in rags. Not only would his wife's relatives call him to account, but he would ruin himself socially. In the case of the well-to-do, indeed, the law will, and does, enforce the wife's right to a maintenance. In every class, moreover, public opinion in some measure acts as a restraining force on conscienceless or brutal husbands. One is told that in villages where everyone is known to his neighbours there is much less ill-treatment of women than in large towns, where a man's mates seldom know where he lives or how he passes his leisure hours. Besides, even in the towns, it is nowadays exceptional for men to assault their wives in public.

As regards failure to maintain, public opinion is less to be depended on as a safe-guard for the women of working-class quarters. Under the present industrial system it is frequently impossible to say, when one discovers a woman trying to keep herself and her children alive on a few shillings a week, whether their condition is the result of the husband's want of will, or of his want of means.

The Subsistence Minimum.

The moral culprit, therefore, can always shelter behind this doubt whenever he can conceal the amount of his wages, or his opportunities of employment. No man, indeed, however dissolute, can venture to drink or gamble away quite all his wages. If he wants a roof kept over his own head, he must give his wife at least some assistance towards the upkeep of the home—but the sum only too often tends to be what will just enable her by every reputable and disreputable shift, to keep the family a unit.

Of course, no human being is always at his lowest and worst, and even downright bad men have intervals of normal human feelings and affections. Much of the moral and physical suffering of married Englishwomen comes, in fact, from men who would be genuinely surprised to find themselves classified as tyrannical or unkind husbands. Odd as it may seem, they often have at bottom genuine affection for their wives and children; their wrong-doing arises mainly from the fact that their characters fall short of the standard—confessedly a very high one—which can be trusted with irresponsible power. They spend most of their money on self-indulgence, because they know their wives will be driven, by the might of their mother love, themselves in some fashion to make good the deficiency; or they assault their partners as casually as an ill-tempered man kicks a dog or a cat, and expect the woman to bear as little after malice as do the brute beasts. There is, in truth, no such "sweated" labour in the world as the labour of great masses of working-class wives, and no employers so utterly ruthless as scores of thousands of working-class husbands. And just as in the industrial world the existence of an underpaid and badly-treated set of workers tends to drag down the remuneration and the status of all workers in their class, so the existence of the half-starved and battered wife has a dire influence over the standard of life of women in average marriages. Painful and unwelcome as the statement may be, there is no escaping from the conclusion that the moral and social forces which are popularly supposed to render unnecessary the protection of the wife by law demonstrably fail to achieve their end.

Take, for instance, the result of Mrs. Pember Reeve's researches in Lambeth as embodied in her little book "Family life on a pound a week." She there shows that when a man, having from two to four children, hands over to his wife, in normal times, an allowance of from 20s. to 23s. a week, the amount available for food per head is between twopence and threepence a day. No working man, however—fortunately for the nation—can or will live on any such pittance, and, therefore, all provision for the sustenance of the wife and dependent children practically vanishes. True, since the war, women, as a whole, are much better provided for, but no valid deductions can be drawn from a temporary phenomenon, nor fruitful action based upon it.

Economic Reason for the Vote.

It will be at once objected that, even in pre-war days, the women, as a matter of fact, contrived to live, that even in the poorest schools most of the little girls sported hair-ribbons and starched pinafores, while their brothers visited the cinemas in droves on Saturday afternoons. The explanation is that in the poorer economic grades practically every woman burdened with children contributes largely to her own support and theirs. She works more or less regularly at some trade, goes out nursing, takes in washing, runs a mangle, holds clubs, acts as charwoman at a neighbouring public-house, finds little jobs for her children out of school hours, "does for" a young man lodger, and vigorously exploits all the charities of her neighbourhood. Her life is an endless struggle to perform the impossible and she is often a wreck at forty. To consider these and similar activities, however, a normal part of the normal life of the working class wife, is to surrender at once the whole theory on which the present position of women rests. If men cannot, or will not, maintain their families, but have to call in the aid of their partners, it is indefensible to exclude the latter from industrial opportunities and from political rights.

That the conditions of life of large classes of wives and mothers are insupportable, has been once again evidenced by that terrible little book "Maternity" recently published by the Women's Co-operative Guild. One would like to think that no voter had been able to read it without acute feelings of shame. The women of the Guild are confessedly at the head of the married working-women of England. They are, as a whole, neither so poor, so badly husbanded, so isolated, so depressed, as the bulk of women in their respective grades. Yet the letters presented as a fair sample of the four hundred received from the members concerning their motherhood give an appalling picture of semi-starvation, chronic overstrain, horrible suffering and permanent injury. The records of the most dangerous occupations known to the Board of Trade fade into insignificance by comparison. It is beside the point that in the majority of cases the individual husbands were, as far as appears, not to blame—that they faithfully did their best according to their lights. The condition of the married women of the country as a whole is the outcome of the theories and of the deeds of our male rulers as a whole, and therefore suffragists are demanding a change in the management.

III.

PARADOXICAL as the assertion may seem, nothing arouses more admiration for the sterling qualities of the nation than a first-hand study of its unfair and dishonest marriage system. Only men and women endowed with a large share of that sense of "conduct," which Matthew Arnold considered the dominant English characteristic, could withstand and overcome, as in innumerable instances they do withstand and overcome, its demoralizing influences. In the strong tones of action the law sets forth that to steal a bit of old iron is a serious offence; to bruise and batter one's spouse, a venial one; that to break a contract with a fellow-man is to incur penalties; to keep one with a wife is a work of supererogation.

Two Unrecognised Factors.

Even the sturdy national virtues, however, are unable to do more than partially neutralize the evils arising from the economic disabilities of the mother, combined with the practical irresponsibility of the father. These barely recognised social factors are, for instance, rendering almost entirely useless that great mass of supposedly remedial effort which may conveniently be summed up under the title of Child Legislation. Considerations of space make it impossible here to do more than touch on this vitally important subject. As an example, however, let us see how the recent laws concerning mentally defective children work out in practice.

Some years ago, Parliament determined that these unfortunates should be sent to special schools and kept there till the age of sixteen. The theory was, and is, that the additional years of education would enable at least a proportion of them to become eventually self-supporting. Our legislators, however, quite ignored the question as to how the child was to be fed and clothed during the extra years of dependence. Schools were splendidly equipped and officered by special teachers, nurses, and doctors, and no pressure was, or is, spared to keep the premises full and the staffs employed. Yet every attendance sub-committee in London is approached over and over again by despairing women, begging and entreating that their children may be allowed to leave at the usual age, and take up some "little job" they have found for

them. "What unpardonable selfishness!" some readers will exclaim; "to sacrifice the child's whole future for the sake of a few weekly shillings." Now, let us examine a case exceptionally favourable to the official point of view—that of a good steady man with four children, earning 28s. a week and allowing his wife 24s. Half the male workers in the country earn less, and, therefore, cannot give so much. Some of these low waged men are, of course, not married, or have only infant children; on the other hand, many men earning more than 28s., have large families, or see no reason why they should give their wives more than the minimum sum on which the women can struggle along. The expenditure of a woman with four children who received 24s. a week from her husband worked out, in London, before the war, much as follows:—

	s.	d.
Rent	6	6
Light	1	2
Insurance	1	0
Coal (all the year round)	1	0
Boots and clothing (all the year round) ...	1	6
Soap, soda, wood, and sundries	1	0
	12	2

None of the above outgoings are really optional if the family is to be kept within the limits of respectability. The wife's next expense is her husband's food. This, in normal times, cannot be estimated as costing less than 5s. a week. Luckily for the national physique, no man in work will consent to be insufficiently fed, but the result is that even in this exceptionally favourable case the mother is left with 6s. 10d. with which to procure food for herself and children—that is, a fraction over twopence per head, per day. Yet if such a woman has the misfortune to have a mentally defective child, she is ordered by an irresponsible Legislature to feed and clothe a big boy or girl for two long additional years. Nominally the father is liable, but no Court in the country would order or expect the man to surrender his own "bit" for the child's maintenance, and public opinion would be outraged at any such proposal. The demand is, in fact, solely a requisition on the wife. Officialdom has discovered that the woman's maternal instinct and overmastering desire to preserve her home, makes her infinitely squeezable, and it shows no squeamishness in applying the screw. She dare not risk "a row" with her husband by letting him be summoned for the child's non-attendance.

Besides, she knows the man is doing his best, and that, even if he were fined, the situation would only be worsened. The fine could only be met by means of a loan which would eventually have to be repaid by herself. It is idle to urge that because the mother by ceaseless struggle kept the child to the age of fourteen, she can therefore keep it till it is sixteen. It is the last straw which breaks the camel's back; besides, every year each child costs more.

The Mother Pays.

To what expedients, therefore, are the women driven? There is certainly no such elasticity in their own personal earning powers as would enable them to raise the extra 3s. a week a child in its 'teens necessarily costs. In the first place, they are compelled to save every possible farthing off themselves. Their clothing becomes more dirty and ragged; their food less in quantity and worse in quality; they more and more seldom go outside their own four walls; their health, seldom good at the best of times, steadily goes down hill. To expect to benefit a child, however, by converting its mother into a broken down and hopeless drudge is surely the maddest idea which ever entered the brain of man.

Next, the standard of the whole home is inevitably lowered; a lodger is squeezed in; less coal, soap, and soda are used; household garnishings, when worn out, are not replaced; the insurance is dropped; all "reserves" disappear; and any mishap brings the family within sight of the Poor Law. Worse remains behind. Mother after mother piteously explains that if Tommy is to be kept at school till he is sixteen, Polly, Jack, and the baby must go short.

Expensive Economy.

The mentally afflicted child should, of course, be cared for, but the method just described seems an expensive way of doing it.

It is clear that similar demands by the authorities in other cases must produce similar results. One wonders if it ever occurs to those good people, who bewail the amount of mal-nutrition and anæmia which exists among the rising generation, to ask themselves whether these troubles are not, after all, mainly of Government manufacture? A few years

ago, the school age was raised to fourteen in London and in other large towns. Wide-spread inquiries have failed to discover a single father who gave a sixpence towards the cost of the child's additional year of dependence. Broadly speaking, its extra schooling was obtained at the cost of its younger brothers and sisters. It is, therefore, useless to declare as is often done that the present physical condition of these children is due to the women's ignorance of dietetic principles. Harley Street itself could not properly feed a child on their means. Health, happiness, and training are, or should be, the inalienable right of every child born into a civilized country. Good intentions alone, however, will not secure these essentials. Knowledge also is necessary, and this can only be acquired by calling into Council the Mother-sex.

The economic position of the father will be considered later on.

IV.

At the beginning of this pamphlet an attempt was made to set forth as clearly as the exigencies of space allowed, the position of those working married women whose husbands choose to avail themselves of their legal privileges and immunities. The second section pointed out that the various moral and economic checks on which society relies to compensate for the defects of its marriage system were demonstrably ineffective; that, even where no blame is attachable to the individual husband, these checks fail to secure for millions of wives the necessaries of civilised life. The last section showed that the existing economic relation between father and mother was making many well-intended schemes for social betterment not only abortive but positively mischievous.

Poverty's Share in the Blame.

Now it will doubtless be argued by many readers that, on the whole, the wrongs of the wife are simply a part of the general wrong of poverty, and only to be remedied by a removal of their cause; that they, therefore, constitute no special "feminist" grievance; that if, as in the instance cited above, a man out of a wage of 28s. surrenders 24s. for the maintenance

of his family, tyranny itself could not suggest he should hand over also the remaining pittance. This, indeed, does not state the case quite fairly. The man's own needs are the first charge on the housekeeping allowance; only what is left over is available for the support of his dependants. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that public opinion will never tolerate any attempt to deprive the male worker of the few personal satisfactions his scanty pocket-money secures. Be it noted, however, that this is, in practice, to declare that all additional expenses, whether arising from illness, from the size of the family, or from the demands of the Government, must be met and defrayed by the wife—the partner who is the worse fed, the worse booted, frequently the hardest worked, and who, moreover, is usually in a state of pregnancy. It has already been shown that in the case of innumerable families the sum at the disposal of the wife out of her housekeeping allowance, after she has provided for her husband's food and met her fixed charges, is round about twopence per head per day for herself and her dependent children.

But the truth is that it is the semi-slave status of the wife which is itself the main cause of the poverty in the country. Why are wages so low? Why do working-men consent to accept a share of the national dividend which is demonstrably insufficient to enable them to support their families?

The Man Who Doesn't Strike.

Now, broadly speaking, the only known cause for a rise in wages is pressure on the part of the workers to exact an increase. Considering the stupendous latent power of labour, the possessing classes must often wonder why that pressure is not more widely and continuously exercised. Trade Unionists are reckoned by the million, yet, prior to the war, real wages were steadily falling, and so great is the general indifference of working-men to their class interests that no daily Labour paper manages to exist for more than a few months. Now the explanation of this apathy of the rank and file is to be found in the home conditions of the masses. It is clear that even on deplorably low wages the male head of the house gets pretty well all he actually wants—a wife, a roof over his head, a seat by the fire in the evenings, sufficient food and clothing, and enough loose cash for his beer, tobacco, and newspaper. Of these things he is sure as long as he is at work at all, and the unimaginative, the self-centred,

the sluggish, the dissolute, the cautious, see little reason for making efforts or running risks. They leave it to "the wife" to meet all difficulties and emergencies, assume little or no responsibility for the new mouths they are constantly bringing into the world, and take as a matter of course the gradual conversion of the bonny girls they married into worn-out drudges. Did the leaders of the various sections of Labour dare to speak candidly, they would confess that this inert mass of fairly contented wage-earners is the greatest stumbling-block in the way of an effective demand for improved social conditions. It is men of this kind who constitute the handicap on those of their fellows who take a higher view of their domestic responsibilities and whose ambition it is to give their children a better chance then they had themselves. The economic position may be illustrated by imagining what would happen were the railway companies serving the suburbs of London suddenly put into the position of married women and so have no enforceable legal right to payment for services rendered. City clerks willing and anxious to pay their fares would speedily find themselves unable so to do; their salaries would inevitably fall to the level accepted by men who felt no such inward call to honest dealing. The same phenomenon, of course, is found in every quarter of the globe where workers with a low standard of life, comfort, or conduct, come into competition with those of higher ideals.

Helplessness of the Wife.

Now, the only possible lever at present conceivable for the permanent raising of wages is to insist that all men shall fulfil their marriage contracts and support their wives and children. It is certain that no workers, good, bad, or indifferent, will consent to live without homes and mates. If they cannot secure these essentials without adequately paying for them, they will take care that their wages are high enough for the purpose. The subject is too complex to be properly discussed here, but space must be found for two or three concluding observations. First, as long as the wife has virtually no claim on her husband for her own and her children's maintenance, a rise of wages for the man is by no means always an unmixed blessing. Within the last few months workmen have constantly demanded and obtained war bonuses—on the plea of the increased cost of food and of all household necessaries. The general rule seems to have been that the more conscientious

men kept half of the amounts received for their personal comforts, and gave the other half to their wives—who, however, had to bear all the increased expenses. The less conscientious kept every farthing of the bonuses for their own use. The writer, indeed, knows of one case in which the wife receives the whole amount, but she is a woman of extraordinary force of character. It is not surprising, therefore, that the dividends of certain breweries went up last year to 24 per cent., though millions of men were out of the country or under military discipline.

In the second place, suffragists must beware of any insidious proposal which would merely give the wife a claim to a certain proportion of her husband's wages. Her right to a maintenance for herself and dependent children is absolute, so long as she is discharging her share of the marriage contract, and is not dependent on her debtor's ability to pay. It is ridiculous to consider that men discharge their domestic liabilities by offering the mother the same sum for six children as was sufficient for two. It is needless to point out the important questions which at once arise from these considerations—questions of the large family, of the definition of maintenance, of the method by which the husband's responsibility shall be enforced. It is obvious, however, that not the least advantage accruing to the nation from the admission of women to citizenship will be the necessity of facing and solving these and similar vital issues instead of persistently shirking them as at present.

V.

In order to illustrate the statements of the foregoing pages the recent experiences of two working-class mothers are given below. It would be easy to furnish scores of similar cases, but space forbids.

Mrs. P—— is a woman of considerable ability and force of character. Five out of eight children are living. The eldest girl suffers from defective eyesight, and Mrs. P——, in spite of overwhelming difficulties, kept her for four years under "treatment." Last year the Education Authority proposed that Amy should enter their school for the blind at West Norwood as a resident pupil, and the mother, to whom this particular child is as the apple of her eye, was only too glad to consent. Whether from the discontinuance of the "treatment'

which Mrs. P—— had been compelled by the authorities to obtain or from the better conditions of life, Amy's eyes rapidly improved. Last January, when the mother was still upstairs from her confinement, a curt notice was received announcing that the girl was henceforth to live at home and travel backwards and forwards daily to Norwood, a season ticket being provided by the school. Mrs. P—— prayed and expostulated in vain, and at last, in despair, sent for the writer. "If I have to keep Amy in food and clothing," she declared, "all the rest of us will have to starve." Out of a 29s. wage her husband gave her 25s., and her weekly budget worked out as follows :—

	s.	d.
Rent (exceptionally low because of the badness of the premises)	5	0
Coal (all the year round)	1	0
Insurance...	1	4
Gas	1	2
Wood, soap, &c.	1	0
Boots (all the year round)	1	0
	10	6

6s. 6d. for Five Persons.

After meeting these fixed charges Mrs. P—— had next to provide for her husband's food. It is an accepted axiom in every working-class home that unless a man is fed to his satisfaction he neither can nor will work, and will betake himself to either public-house or cookshop. Mr. P——, indeed, was not unreasonable, but Englishmen are large eaters, and an analysis of his daily meals showed that his food, at present prices, could not be reckoned at a penny under 8s. a week. His wife was, therefore, left with 6s. 6d. a week to cover the cost of food and clothing for herself and four children, and, of course, had to earn herself to keep the home together at all. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that she was now handicapped by a young baby, the authorities saw no reason why they should not also thrust on her the burden of feeding and clothing a big girl of fifteen. Neither they, nor anyone else, would expect for a moment that the father should defray the cost out of his "bit"; four shillings was none too much for his clothes, boots, beer, tobacco, and clubs. Greatly daring, Mrs. P—— declared that if Amy could see to travel by rail she could see to work, and she therefore found for her a job at

5s. a week and most of her food. Then months followed of remorseless pressure, with threats of fines and imprisonment, which nearly worried Mrs. P—— into her grave, and which must have broken down a weaker woman. "The 'gentleman' said yesterday," she reported one day, "that he'd never known anyone have the cheek to stand out as I was doing, but I daren't have fought on if I had not had friends behind me."

The measures taken by Mrs. P——'s friends were indeed so vigorous that last May the Education Authority discovered the child was not blind at all, and in consequence Mrs. P—— is now permitted to keep her family's head above water. But in the case of ninety-nine poor mothers out of a hundred such a resistance to official tyranny would be impossible. They are poor, isolated, and despised, and can only helplessly stand by while their domestic apple-carts are being upset by other folks' stupidity.

. . . . . .

Mrs. R——, a small, spare woman, thirty-seven years of age, has had twelve children, ten of whom are living. Her life has been one long struggle. Alice, the eldest daughter, suffers from heart complaint, and, the doctors say, must never go to work. On her husband's enlistment Mrs. R—— received a separation allowance of £2 0s. 6d. a week, and felt herself in clover. But prices rose; the purchasing power of a sovereign fell to 12s. or 13s. She lost her milk, and it cost 3s. 6d. a week to feed her baby artificially. Her husband, moreover, had bequeathed her a liability which she was defraying at the rate of 10s. a month. In consequence week after week the woman found herself in debt, and rather than see the children deprived of necessaries she determined to leave the family in charge of the invalid daughter and go herself to work. Naturally, the lack of her personal care soon made itself felt. The children turned up at school unkempt and untidy, and when questioned as to the reason, said, "Mother was at work." Authority was roused, and one day the trembling Mrs. R—— was visited by two righteously-indignant "gentlemen," representing respectively the London County Council and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. They charged her with neglecting her offspring (for whose sake she was toiling in a factory from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.), and declared that if one of the children died they would indict her for manslaughter. As Mrs. R—— didn't see how she could keep them alive without feeding them she still persisted in her

crime of earning. A week or two later agents of the authorities above mentioned forced their way into her house in her absence, examined the premises, and expressed themselves as far from satisfied. They reported the children looked delicate, the rooms wanted cleaning, and the baby's bottle was dirty. "Of course," exclaimed a sarcastic neighbour, "gentlemen don't see any reason for children to be delicate when there's been twelve in fifteen years, or for rooms to be upset when little 'uns have been left alone in them, or for a baby's bottle to be dirty until the mother's had time to wash it."

For the Crime of Earning.

On May 17, however, Mrs. R—— was summoned before a magistrate on the charge of causing "unnecessary suffering" to her children. Fortunately she possessed a brother-in-law who chivalrously put down £5 for her defence. "I've known her from a girl," he said to the writer, "and scarce as money is, I can't see her put upon. A woman has no chance against a lawyer. She's trapped or frightened into saying something wrong, and then the case goes against her." On her counsel's advice the ten children were collected in the solicitor's office, ready to be produced in court for inspection, and formed quite a side-show for casual visitors. Expert evidence was at hand to show that after Mrs. R —— had met her fixed charges, provided the baby with its special food, paid off a weekly instalment of her husband's debt, and set aside the minimum sum possible each week for the renewel of her brood's boots and clothing, only 15s. was left for the food of herself and of nine children, and that her bread bill alone at present prices came to 11s. 3d. This estimate, moreover, allowed not a farthing for incidental expenses —such as medicine, stamps, household replacements, or tram-fares. The case really resolved itself into this: Did Mrs. R—— cause more suffering to her children by going to work and feeding them, or by staying at home and washing them? The question seemed to admit of only one answer. When the prosecution found, however, that, contrary to all precedent, the woman was actually to be professionally defended, and the case fought, they displayed that "tact" on which English administration has prided itself since the days of Dogberry. They proposed that Mrs. R—— should merely be bound over on her promise not to go to work. The woman pleaded that she must earn if the children were not to starve, and the proposal was refused.

They then applied to have the case postponed *sine die*. Mrs. R——'s counsel tried in vain to intervene, but the magistrate refused to listen, and the whole case was got rid of in five minutes.

The Voteless Mother's Position.

Mrs. R——'s troubles, however, were not over. She was still visited at intervals by an agent of the N.S.P.C.C., who took upon himself to judge whether or not she was doing her duty to her children, and she was given to understand that should her arrangements fail to meet with their official's approval she would be prosecuted on the adjourned charge. The humiliation of the position was extreme, and for many weeks Mrs. R—— lived a life of harrowing misery; she hardly dared to go out to do her necessary shopping lest her absence should be discovered and she should be charged with neglect.

Eventually the attention of the head office of the Society was called to the case, with the result that the persecution was stopped, and some effectual assistance was given to Mrs. R——. It is clearly scandalous, however, that the rights and liberties of Englishwomen should be dependent on the intervention of chance outsiders. With the best will in the world it is quite impossible for central authorities to control the hordes of officials who now-a-days draw salaries for supervising, in some form or other, the work of the mother in her home. Love of power, want of knowledge, lack of sympathy and imagination, to say nothing of the necessity of filling time-sheets, are factors which are bound to produce a plentiful crop of abuses. The only possible remedy is to render officialdom unnecessary by giving married women the chance of performing their own duties.

Nature made the mother the guardian and priestess of the race; English law, so far as lies in its power, makes her an outcast and a pariah. It is for Suffragists to see that Nature, and not the blundering of lawyers, shall determine her position in the future.

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The Married Working Woman

A STUDY

By

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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

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-

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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-halfpence. 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.

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-quartern 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

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

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-

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

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-

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-

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 schoolchildren. 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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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 underfeeding 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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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,

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

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

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

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.

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."

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.

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,

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.

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

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 harrying and harassing a voteless and voiceless class, is apparently a temptation that neither Tory nor Liberal, Labour man nor Socialist, can withstand.

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