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THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT



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Ethel Snowden.



THE
FEMINIST
MOVEMENT

by
ETHEL SNOWDEN
(MRS PHILIP SNOWDEN)



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The Feminist Movement

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF FEMINISM

THE feminist movement is not the only one to suffer from deep and widespread misunderstanding. Great movements, like great people, and those who have led forlorn causes, need the mellowing touch of time and the glory that comes from success to compel the world to recognise their worth and dignity. In the heat and clash of hot and bitter conflict, the innocent, like the guilty, become stained and spattered, and non-combatants, not knowing the meaning of it all, turn away from both in disgust; but the cry of approval, the shout of praise, the laurel-wreath, and the marble bust are their inevitable, ultimate reward, the gift of later generations, who enjoy the happiness for which those others strove. By a considerable part of the public opinion of her time Florence Nightingale was severely condemned as a woman of no refinement, who went out to the front to seek a husband: now our household goddess reigns supreme, and for ever, in myriads of British hearts and homes.

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Perhaps more has been written during the last few years on one aspect or another of feminism than upon any other subject, except Socialism; but, since Socialism is feminist in its implications, it can scarcely be considered as entirely unconnected with the subject under discussion. Socialism and the Socialist movement have always stood for equality of opportunity to men and women in every department of human activity where sex does not impose an unconquerable barrier.

Although the number of books, pamphlets, leaflets, and newspaper and magazine articles devoted to the exposition of feminist teaching is enormous, general ignorance of the subject points conclusively to the fact that these books are not commonly read. It is with the hope that it may reach one other section of the public, and fall into the hands of yet another class of readers, that this simple re-statement is made. Those who know everything there is to be known about feminism will get nothing from these chapters. Those who come fresh and uninformed to the subject may perhaps find something which will stimulate them to further investigation.

No subject could be more absorbing in its interest and fascination, and certainly no subject could be more tremendous in its implication. It is, to some at least of its preachers, the greatest thing in the world, the

whole of the law and the prophets. It has for its purpose the enrichment of life by the development of love; and neither ignorance nor vice, self-seekers nor politicians, things present nor things to come will be able to stay the onward march of womanhood in the struggle for the full and complete recognition of its humanity.

In the last phrase is contained the whole gospel of feminism—the recognition, full and complete, of the humanity of women. Surely this is no monstrous claim, that it should make good men and women afraid of the movement. Is it possible that there can be anything in this demand, which, if granted, will bring about such dire consequences as some people honestly seem to fear? It has been suggested, in all seriousness, that the secret purpose of the women's movement is the expulsion of all males from those offices and places requiring more than mere physical strength which they now hold, and their replacement by women. It ought to be sufficient to say that this is absurdly untrue.

The opening of new doors will assuredly result in the entrance of large numbers of qualified women into spheres hitherto closed to them, but if the standard of remuneration for the work be kept up there will be no serious economic disadvantage to capable men. It is only when women are permitted by law

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and custom to undersell their male competitors that the admission of women to a trade or profession becomes a serious menace to the father of a family. There are those who see in feminism something which will make for the deterioration, or for the extinction, in men, of those physical and moral qualities which have come to be regarded as purely masculine. It is suggested that the women of the future will have to maintain the men in idleness if they themselves insist on working, and that the inevitable result will be the weakening of the so-called manly qualities—strength and courage and the power of domination, with corresponding diminution in stature, brain-power, and nervous energy.

This would probably be true if the men of the future chose to live as idle parasites on the life and labour of women; exactly as it is true of many women to-day, who, from choice or compulsion, are living parasitically upon men; but the suggestion of the argument, that men are kept active and virile only because of the need to satisfy their hunger and the hunger of those dependent upon them, is a slander upon male mankind which no mother of stalwart sons will allow for a moment. Where men require compulsion to work, it is very often because they are forced to work at tasks for which they have no taste, because they are overworked, or because

their toil, by reason of the process of subdivision and the employment of machinery, has been robbed of all individuality and rendered so deadly monotonous that it has become repulsive and hateful to them. Monotony and the machine are together killing the natural love of productive, creative labour.

When the critic speaks of the extinction of male qualities in men, is he quite justified in his use of language? Custom and habit, it is true, have separated the virtues and the vices, classifying them as masculine and feminine respectively; thus strength, vigour, courage, and honesty are regarded as characteristic of the typical man, whilst tenderness, grace, softness, and modesty are the commonly allotted attributes of the natural woman. Similarly greed, lust, and cruelty are more often and more commonly attributed to men than to women; and craft, dishonesty, and dissimulation to women than to men.

Every one knows cases where the exact opposite of this has been true. Speaking generally, it would be untrue to say that there is not some warrant, so far as the common uses of life and the conveniences of speech are concerned, for this classification of qualities. The particular work and environment of each sex have tended to make moral specialists of men and women, and to develop

notably in each sex, certain tendencies and standards. Nevertheless it is a thousand pities that the world does not see in all this the natural play of cause and effect—the natural result of an unnatural artificial condition—instead of insisting that men and women are born with inherent virtues and ineradicable vices, the special and particular heritage of sex.

It is a pity, for example, that the word manly should be held to connote a certain well-defined type of man, and the word womanly a certain special type of woman—those possessing the qualities which are thoughtlessly grouped under that head in each case. Every man is manly and every woman is womanly. A man is manly in proportion as he responds to that element in woman which is different from anything he possesses. A woman is womanly to the extent that she is permeated with sex-sensitiveness. In every other respect, in the world of morals, men are as women and women are as men, or at least there is no reason why they should not be so; that is, they share, though in proportions varying as infinitely as the stars, the virtues and the vices; they are equally human.

The world has many men whose tenderness is more than the tenderness of the most loving of mothers. The immortality of the world's

greatest spiritual leaders rests more upon their divine tenderness than upon their astounding courage. And the world has known many women of exalted courage and wonderful physical strength, whose great gifts of this sort in no wise detracted from their charm as the tender mothers of little children.

Feminism does not seek the extinction of strength and courage in men, nor of beauty and softness and tenderness in women, but the recognition that these fine and lovely qualities are the heritage of men and women alike—human qualities which all human beings have in germ, and which all human beings are entitled to cultivate and to use without question or reproof.

The chief purpose of feminists through all the years, and at the present time, is the achievement of freedom for womanhood and its equality of opportunity with manhood. Or, perhaps this would be more correctly expressed if one were to say that the object of feminism is to make female human beings as free as male human beings, and both as free as it is possible for the individual to be in a complex society like that of the present. For the intelligent feminist realises two things: first, that in a highly-organised and finely-evolved human society, the individual freedom must necessarily, in the general interests, be restricted in a measure. When life was simple,

populations small, and the sole duty of man the gratification of his few elementary needs, an amount of personal liberty was available for each member of the community which is not possible in crowded cities of more or less educated people, whose wants are numerous, and whose many needs can be supplied only by the most delicately complex and intricate social machinery. In matters such as these the feminist asks that men and women should be equally restricted, or equally free, as the circumstances will allow.

Then the feminist clearly understands that, in a subtle but inevitable way, what is spoken of as 'sex' limits considerably both men and women, and, in the nature of the case, women more than men. Mrs Havelock Ellis well expressed the difference between men and women in these matters when she said: 'Man's need is woman, women's need is man's need of her.' That is to say, when a man loves a woman and the impulse of fatherhood holds him, no physical barrier interposes between them and the end of their desires. When a woman loves a man but is not loved nor wanted by him, honourable motherhood is denied to her. She depends upon his love and desire for the honourable achievement of her natural ambition. And the exercise of her special function of maternity involves a sacrifice of personal freedom from which no

human ingenuity can contrive to save her, and which it may safely be said, she scarcely desires to avoid. The father, if he be a genius, finds domestic responsibilities a clog upon his efforts, but the ordinary, average father is not so hampered as is every woman who is a mother. He is free to come and go. The current of his life is not materially altered. His daily occupations are not necessarily interfered with. These are facts of everyday observation and experience, and as natural as the rising of the sun.

The freedom for which the feminist yearns is not freedom from the cares and obligations following upon the carrying out of woman's special and particular work as woman, nor freedom from the glorious responsibilities and deep sufferings of motherhood, the greatest profession in the world, the bearing and rearing of the race. She asks for freedom for women in the exercise of those gifts and in the use of those qualities of soul and mind which are apart from the consequences of the sex-act. She objects to the forcing of woman's interests into one groove, the pressing down of woman's personality into one channel, the directing of woman's emotion, with its specially rich quality, to one end, the confinement of woman's genius to one achievement.

It is the custom amongst savage and

semi-civilised tribes to-day for the women of the tribe to keep at home and spend their lives doing hard and menial tasks and bearing children. The men roam abroad and with one another engage in various pursuits of an active sort, and discuss together the questions of interest of their own times. The last remnant of this ancient division of labour is to be found in the half-querulous, wholly resentful suggestion, the favourite retort of the anti-feminist, 'woman's place is the home.' Woman as woman, woman when she is performing the particular duties of her sex is, undoubtedly, in the best and safest place possible when she is at home—always presuming that the home is a home indeed, and that she can afford to be there. But sex duties are only a part of woman's work, only a part, indeed, of some women's work. All the rest of her is her portion in common with men, the priceless part of both of them which distinguishes them from the beast of the field. Small wonder is it that certain theologians in council assembled, debated the question of the existence of a soul in woman, if their blind eyes were fixed upon one attribute and one function of her in the belief that there was the whole woman. The wonder is that in such circumstances the vote, when taken, showed a majority in favour of the soul theory.

For the woman as a human being, and not

as an animal, the feminist demands opportunity and freedom.

In this brief introductory chapter it might be as well to specify in what directions the world of women seeks to enlarge its present opportunities, and in which ways and to what extent it wishes to increase its labours. In some countries more has been achieved for women than in others. In savage climes the women are in the thrall of the same terrible bondage as that in which our own female progenitors existed. In Oriental lands the veiled and secluded women still live—the most mournful and pitiful figures of modern times. In Latin countries less has been won for women than in the Germanic countries, though the status of women throughout the Germanic lands is not invariably high. In many respects British women are much more fortunate than German women; but within these islands there are differences, Irish and Scottish women being, in some matters, in a much better position than English women. The greatest liberty achieved for women up to the present time has been secured in the United States of America. The American woman has long held the title of queen amongst women. Whether in the near future she is to lose that title is a conjecture; but at present progress holds its way triumphant from end to end of the Western world.

The point of this brief reference to the position of women throughout the world is this: that the women's movement shares with other great vital movements based on principle, the happiness and the dignity of being a world-wide movement. There is no corner of the globe into which it has not penetrated. There is no land in existence in which there are not rebellious, aspiring women—rebellious against convention and prejudice, and aspiring towards the possibility of developing all their God-given capacities. A defeat in one part of the world makes itself sadly felt in every other land; a victory for the woman's cause, such as the great woman suffrage victories in the United States in 1912, thrills through the universe and stimulates to renewed effort all those struggling against selfishness and prejudice in its thousand hateful, ugly forms.

There is this thought to comfort and console the over-anxious citizen who fears the coming of the free woman: that no great world-tragedy has followed on the granting of a partial freedom to women. Those who fight against the hosts to-day are among the loudest in praising the women for the use they have made of opportunities formerly denied to them. Those who oppose the granting of the vote to women speak with warm approval of the scholastic accomplishments

and scientific achievements of women. Let it be remembered, then, that a hundred years ago a learned woman was esteemed a monstrous thing, a perversion of nature. When women have become as free as they may be, the world will have the grace to laugh at itself for its foolish fear of the political woman.

One other observation should be made before the specific demands of the feminist are briefly stated. The feminist movement is comparatively modern. Individual women with advanced ideas there have been in every country and in every age. There were women like Hypatia, the pupil of Plotinus, the beautiful and learned lecturer and orator of Alexandria, whose good fortune it was to have a cultured and enlightened parent. He gave his daughter the best education available, and made her the companion of his studies. She was so far in advance of her times, and had withal so wonderful an influence upon the people, that, at the instigation of the jealous Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, who worked upon the fanaticism of his half-starved followers and the sex bias of his times, she was torn in pieces by the wild monks of the desert. There have been women like Joan of Arc, who have declined to allow the supposed limitations of sex to interfere with what they considered to be their own

special mission. Women there have been like Madame Roland, who lost her life in that frightful cataclysm, the French Revolution, a woman who sought and occupied with dignity a place by the side of the men reformers. Women like Lady Mary Wortley Montague have forced on unwilling communities new ideas of a beneficent sort. The blue-stockings of the eighteenth century were the pioneers of women in literature, though individual women had contributed to literature before even their time. The anti-slavery women workers of the United States led the way in fields of social and political service hitherto little occupied by them.

But the banding together of masses of women of every race, colour, and tongue, of every age and condition, for the avowed object of persuading the male half of humanity to yield them equality of status, as half the race, is essentially a modern movement. At one time the movement in this country sought equality of educational and professional opportunity. The movement in Russia and Austria is still in that stage. In Great Britain the emphasis is at present laid on the question of the political enfranchisement of women; but the principle is the same as it was and as it will be when the army moves on to conquer new provinces.

At each success, be it noted, some of the

army drop out of the ranks contented. It would be unfair to imply, even faintly, that all the women and men in the women's movement stand for feminism full and complete. On the contrary, it is quite certain that the number of feminists of full faith in the movement is very small indeed. Women of conservative mould are allied with those of radical temperament in the British women's movement to-day, only to get something which all are agreed it is desirable that women should have. The more conservative amongst them, probably the majority, will, in all likelihood, be content with this. What is equally probable is that these women will use their new power to keep back their former colleagues, who will press for more. Their numbers will be small, and on them will rest the burden of converting to the new idea, or rather to the new application of an old idea, a number of people large enough to compel public attention and Parliamentary action.

As an example of what is meant it may be quite frankly pointed out that some feminists desire to see women made eligible for Parliament. There are not many who hold this view, but there are some, men and women; and these people will not be content with the Parliamentary vote. Then again, some members of the women's movement stand for the right of women to qualify for, and enter, all

the learned professions—not excepting the church and the law. Many who desire to see women vote for a member of Parliament would seriously object to this innovation, but the demand is, of course, pure feminism. A section of the women's movement advocates equal pay for equal work, a formula which must be read very literally and insisted upon very firmly if it is to be fair all round. Many who believe in equal educational opportunities for the two sexes would draw the line at equal pay for equal work; but it must be taken as part of the gospel of feminism.

There is very little difference of opinion amongst women to-day concerning the justice of providing an educational ladder for men and women, with its lowest rung in the elementary school and its top rung in the universities; nor about the right of women to win and wear the honours that are open to the men of the universities; neither is there much difference of opinion, amongst women at least, about the pressing necessity for the establishment of one code of morality for men and women alike. It may be hard, owing to ages of laxity and self-indulgence, for the male half of the race to observe the code of manners and morals it has imposed upon the female half; but the injury to innocent women and children which comes from the double standard of morality has become too obvious and

too dreadful to permit of two opinions about the matter. It may take generations to achieve, but the purity of men as well as the purity of women is an ideal which very few feminists will be found to reject.

But the number of feminists who support in its entirety the claim of the out-and-out feminist for the economic freedom of women is comparatively small. Most women who think are convinced of the desirability of economic independence for women, if only that they may not be driven into a loveless marriage for the sake of bread to eat and clothes to wear. But economic independence and economic freedom are not quite the same thing. Many women are economically independent to-day, or, rather they are economically dependent upon a part of the community unknown to them, which works to supply them with dividends. In the sense that their income is tolerably secure, however, and that they have not to look to another for bread, these women are economically independent; but they are not economically free. Economic freedom means absolute security from want, a security which nothing short of the annihilation of the whole community could touch. Economic freedom can be secured only through the organisation of society in such a way as to provide food and other necessaries for all, from the day of their

birth to the day of their death. This means economic change and political evolution of a vast and far-reaching character. It would involve the community in the public ownership of land and industry, which is Socialism. How else could the community secure to all a means of livelihood?

Thus the extremists amongst feminists, those who believe that the woman's problem will not be solved unless and until economic freedom is secured both to women and men, are to be found in the various Socialist movements of the world. They are small in numbers, generally aggressive in their methods, and are in no essential way connected with the world-wide woman suffrage movement.

The last and greatest demand which the thorough-going feminist will make, and which she will probably achieve last, since it is the one which apparently flies most deliberately in the face of all established order, threatening the existence of the race, is a woman's absolute right over herself after marriage. The old idea taught from the cradle, that it is the woman's part unquestioningly to obey, must be exploded if a sacred companionship between husband and wife—which is what the feminist desires—is to take the place of the ancient relationship; the latest, newest, finest chivalry will admit this unalienable right, and will take nothing that is not yielded

in love and confidence. This is at the root of many domestic problems which creed and custom seem scarcely able to solve.

For all these claims the advocate of feminism, man or woman, can give reasons which, in their eyes, appear sufficiently strong and good. They believe with the intensity of conviction that, in seeking the elevation and the freedom of women, they are securing the freedom and the elevation of men. The two are bound together in bonds which are indissoluble. Neither can move forward continuously without the other. The animal in each is the instrument through which, by divine ordination, the world is re-peopled. But sex becomes a thing gross and degrading when it is contemplated apart from the divine, human spirit, of which it is only one form of expression.

On the divinity of many-sided humanity the thoughtful feminist takes his or her stand, and claims for the woman-soul as for the man-soul as much of freedom as each can bear.

CHAPTER II

A MODERN MOVEMENT

'WHAT in the world are women coming to,' exclaimed a bewildered onlooker, as a great procession of women, fifty thousand strong, marched past with quick, firm step and banners gaily flying.

'There doesn't seem to be very much wrong with them,' replied a second citizen as he contemplated the fine physique and good clothes of the majority of the marchers, with a distinct tone of envy in his voice and envy in the glance of his eye.

'It's husbands they're after, you bet,' chuckled the lanky, anæmic youth on the edge of the pavement, turning to his neighbour with a knowing wink. And thus speculation busied itself with the meaning of it all, whilst the procession marched on, in never-ending columns, in glad and confident anticipation of the future.

The average man is not to be blamed for his feeling of wonder and mystification. He is a good husband and father, kind to all women, a respectable citizen of sober judgment and sound common sense. Though not a man

of culture, he has read or heard enough to know that the burdens which women carry and the wrongs from which they suffer, in this country at least, are not to be compared, for weight and cruelty, with the burdens and wrongs of the women of the dark ages. History does not record that any considerable number of the women of the past have organised to protest against any specific wrong to their sex. They appear to have borne with surprising equanimity the really cruel tortures they were called upon to endure. There may, of course, be sufficient reasons for this. Perhaps the physical strength of their male conquerors was too much for them. Or perhaps they were, for reasons of their own, genuinely content to suffer. Perhaps custom, tradition, and religion had too firm a hold upon them, so that, whilst they groaned, they yielded.

What the plain man cannot understand, and what he wants to know, is exactly why this century and the last have been chosen for the organisation of masses of women on their own behalf; why the women's movement should choose to emerge at a time and in a world where more freedom is enjoyed by a larger number of women than during any previous period of the history of woman.

To reply to this question is an obligation which lies upon every sincere supporter of

feminism, since it is only with the approval and by the consent of the public, of which each inquiring citizen forms a part, that reforms won by women can be retained by them.

To make clear one reason for the grave discontent amongst women it is necessary to go back in thought to the dawn of the world, and to understand the relation which men and women separately bore to that condition of their existence, human labour. It is not a misuse of language to speak of labour as one of the most precious things in the world. By many people it is still regarded as the primal curse placed upon Adam and Eve for their sin. By others it is regarded as a brand of inferiority, and the stupid boast still lingers amongst the foolishly proud that *they* never worked nor their ancestors for many generations behind them. Labour, to the healthy man and woman, is as vitally necessary as food and drink; yet some there are whose highest ambition it is to be able to try to do without it.

It must, of course, be congenial labour. The man with the brain of a Newton might reasonably curse his labour if condemned to the plough for all his waking hours. The woman with the genius of a Marian Evans might be excused for disliking to wash other people's clothes for a livelihood. Labour

physics pain, but it must be the labour we delight in. Labour brings joy and satisfaction, but it must be the labour we can do. Labour educates, elevates, and refines when blessed by public opinion and honoured with public esteem. More than all, through labour only can the race exist, through labour only can it develop. Those individuals who cease to work, either with their muscle or with their brains, either for themselves or for the community, are bringing their own doom upon their heads and upon the heads of their offspring a curse. It is with nations as with individuals, they cannot grow unless they labour. It is with a sex as with a race and with an individual, it degenerates unless it works.

Far back in the dim days of the past, farther back than the mind and imagination of most can properly travel, when the human race had just emerged from the slime in which its animal progenitors had wallowed, when the tiger and the ape were king, and when the new-born soul of man struggled with the spirit of the jungle for its earliest expression, the two halves of humanity were equally endowed. The strength of muscle, the swiftness of limb, the brightness of eye necessary for the satisfaction of their rude needs were the enjoyment of man and woman alike. Like the lioness of the African desert, the mate of the first man

was his equal partner in the game of life. Together they roamed the woods, gathering the fruits and nuts upon which they lived. Together, with flints and stones, they strove against the predatory wild beasts by which they were surrounded. She bore the child, and he, with her, fed and protected it in the way in which, at present, this responsibility is shared by the higher types of the animal creation. Life then was difficult because of its dangers, but simple because of the simplicity of its needs.

When ages of time had done their work, bringing new experiences to the awakening human spirit, teaching it new thoughts and new ways of living, developing the social instinct, and bringing men and women together in small village communities, the new life required a new social arrangement. Then came a change into the life of the woman. She began to stay in one place, the better to bear and rear her young brood, and for their protection she turned herself to various pursuits within the shadow of the home she built with her own hands. She it was who domesticated fire, up to that time the enemy of her kind, teaching it how to become a good servant, and by its means cooking the food she had prepared.

The woman of this period was the first agriculturalist, working in the fields for the

raising of crops. To the woman also belongs the beginnings of medical science, for, to restore her man or her children when in ill-health, she skilfully prepared the herbs and simple things of her own growing. Small wonder that, for a period, the man was content to be governed by the woman. During this period the family took the name of the woman, inheritance was through the female line only. Holding in their charge the health of the community, and being, as they were, its sole builders, farmers, spinners, weavers, and manufacturers, they held as high a place in the little community as they did in their individual homes. The sole, though important, work of the man was to kill the animals required for food by his family, and to protect them against the depredations of marauding tribes.

Ages passed, and again the social order changed. Not all the grown men of the village were required for fighting. Some might work, or get others to work for them. The province of agriculture was taken from the women by the men, who confined the women within the house, there to devote themselves to indoor occupations. To this confinement of women is to be attributed the real decay in the physical strength of their half of the race, and the consequent power to enslave them which was so freely and so arbitrarily used. Women

became valuable as child-bearers and slaves, and their helplessness at the child-bearing period offered the opportunity for complete domination. They became the property of the masters who had purchased, stolen, or captured them, and they lived their dull, heavily-burdened lives at the whim and pleasure of their lords.

Time passed: civilisations rose and fell. One part of the human family rose against another, and enslaved it. The development of the rich natural resources of the world, the growth of the mind of man, the use of his inventive genius in the making of tools, instruments, weapons of defence, houses, ships, public buildings; his industry in the raising of crops, the making of roads, the building of bridges, the discovery of the arts and the rudiments of science, all contributed to a state in which property took a new and large significance. Wealth meant power, the power to command other men and women; and so the slowly-developing spirit of man sought power, admiration, worship. The value of woman as property, in these days of destructive wars, lay chiefly in her power to bear children. For this she was fed and protected, for this she was permitted a certain amount of freedom, though within clearly defined limits and in strict seclusion, unless she were a slave. In the number of his slaves a man's

wealth was, in part, estimated; but the greater the number of the slaves, the less there remained for the man and his wife to do. He, however, devoted himself to public works, either as artist, soldier, or statesman. She had the direction of the work of the household slaves, who, along with their mistress, engaged in the domestic arts of spinning and weaving.

To pass swiftly from the days of Roman glory to the days of the eighteenth century in this country is a leap indeed; but it is to the events of the latter part of the eighteenth century in Great Britain that the inquirer must look most carefully for an understanding of the modern women's movement. Let it be remembered that in all ages there have been free women, free individuals. The queens of the earth have been as great as the kings thereof. Women have ruled with wisdom as abbesses and prioresses. Women had a well-known share in the promotion and guidance of the Reformation. The women of the Renaissance are as famous as the men. Women have been great landed proprietors, governors of schools and colleges, guardians of the poor, statesmen, soldiers, poets, and artists.

Women taught, trained, healed, preached, prophesied, governed, led armies to battle, and did a thousand other things long before the feminist movement made its appearance.

But let it be remembered that where this has been true in the days that are gone, it has either been true of exceptional women, whose genius and capacity would not be repressed, and who frequently had to pay with their lives for flying in the face of the conventions of their times; or it will be found that they fought by the side of men in a struggle for their common freedom. In times of peace and plenty, throughout the world and in all the ages, the position of the average normal woman has been lower than that of the average normal man.

The fact that needs to be emphasised is that, for most of them, this position was a satisfactory one; or, at least, they seldom, even as individuals, rebelled against what they believed to be a divinely ordered state of being; and never, before comparatively modern times, did they organise themselves in great numbers with the exclusive object of securing equality with men. What, then, is the reason for this?

It matters very little for the purposes of this recital when and by whom the discovery of the power of steam was made. As a matter of simple fact the man to make the discovery known in this country was James Watt, who, by watching the movement of the lid of a kettle of boiling water, came to the knowledge which has since revolutionised the whole of

industry and society. The latter part of the eighteenth century was rich in the discovery of mechanical appliances, such as the spinning-jenny, the weaving machine, the printing machine, which, by making production easier and cheaper, have brought undreamt of wealth into the country and heaped unheard of benefits upon mankind. The steamship improved the means of communication with foreign lands, and compelled the ends of the earth to contribute their share to the poor man's breakfast table. The railway train broke down the boundaries of high hill and dangerous bog, of deep river and robber-haunted heath, which had effectually separated the majority of the dwellers in small communities from one another. Large cities began to make their sombre appearance all over the land. The industrial parts of the country became covered with factories. A new era opened, and the power to produce wealth promised much for the community at large.

But these promised benefits the people did not at once receive. A time of great economic change is always a time of stress and suffering. The most ardent lover of the motor-car, bowling along in luxurious speed to his destination, cannot forget the misery of the poor cabman whom the newer invention has robbed of his work. The cheapening of production

by the introduction of machinery which could do ten, twenty, or a hundred times as much work as one man, caused widespread unemployment, with consequent starvation and misery. In their blind, ignorant rage the men smote the machines, thinking that these dumb, insensate things were the cause of all their woe. Education, gained partly in the public schools, much more in the school of life, and in particular through the realisation of the value of co-operation gained in the workshop, has taught men a much better way. Now their efforts towards the solution of the problem of the workless man are on the lines of the legal minimum wage, a shorter working day, national insurance against unemployment, and kindred measures. Along these lines will the working woman's problem also be solved.

But, in the meantime, the majority of women are not working women in the industrial sense. There were in 1901 12,500,000 women over twenty in the United Kingdom. Of these, about 5,300,000 are women industrially employed. The remainder are engaged in professional occupations and in home-making. By far the larger number of the women of this country, and it is true of the women of all other countries, are home-makers. But what, in these modern days, does the term home-maker connote. There are about 8,000,000

married women in the country, whilst every woman is a potential wife. What definition of their sphere, their work in life, their special contribution to the general good would be satisfactory to them and leave them their self-respect?

The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century was hard upon the humbler classes of men. It was doubly hard upon women, and it was, in a sense, harder upon the women of the richer classes than upon the women of the poorer part of society.

The industrial revolution was responsible for robbing women of their work, at least of all that part of their work not directly concerned with the bearing of children. In the days preceding this economic change it was the custom of women of all ranks to work, and, in most cases, to work hard. In the earlier stages of human history women worked far harder than men, and the number of their duties was infinitely greater. When it became less important for a woman of means to work so hard, she nevertheless directed the energies of the women of her household, and did not think it a sacrifice of dignity to engage in household duties herself. By her the household was fed and clothed. She baked the bread and cakes, made the jams and marmalades, brewed the beer, milked the cows, made the butter and cheese, prepared the

herbs, and dressed the game. She, with her subordinates, spun the flax and the wool, which she wove into linen for table and bed, or into warm garments for husband and child. She made the candles which lit the household, and every piece of soap used by her family was usually made by her. She tended the animals and collected the honey from the bees, and the eggs from the fowls. If she did not actually accomplish all these feats of skill and endurance herself, they were done under her direction by the women of her household, and there was not one task which the average woman of her times could not have done, and did not do, herself if and when the need arose.

Of most of these interesting and important duties the industrial revolution has robbed her, and is robbing her, for the days of profound economic change are not yet over. Those huge steam-driven machines, those ugly factories swallowed the work in which the busy wife and mother, maid and daughter, had found their happiness and their pride. Now everything is made in the workshop, in huge quantities, and by machinery. Soap, candles, beer, bread, sheets, blankets, boots, clothes, everything, apparently, that the human family requires can be made by men outside the home, where once they were made by the women of the household.

Competition for employment caused work to be given to the people who could do it for the least payment. Those women and girls without means were compelled to follow their work into the factory. By offering themselves for less money they secured work. To this extent they were in a better position than the woman of means, for whilst they worked they justified their existence, and were able to hold fast to their self-respect. The awful conditions under which they laboured, and frequently died, are another matter, to be treated later. For the present, let it be noted that their labour saved them from the deadly perils of idleness and parasitism.

In the loss of their work by women lie the roots of the modern feminist movement. Those best acquainted with the history of the movement know that the founders were women of the educated middle class, together with one or two women of aristocratic connections. At the present moment, after more than sixty years of strenuous agitation, the women's movement includes women of every class and condition, working women as well as rich, independent women. But the numbers of working women feminists form a very small proportion of the total number of working women as compared with the number of educated middle-class women actively engaged in the work of feminism. This may be due,

in part, to the limitation of the working women's opportunities, through the necessity of their earning a livelihood.

This much must be noted, that the motive which consciously or unconsciously inspires the working-woman feminist, is not the same which frequently actuates her better-off comrade. In the first case the demand is for improved conditions of labour, and the vote is sought as a means to that end. In the second case it is for labour itself that she cries, new openings, new spheres of labour, to fill her half-emptied life. She does not ask to go back to the conditions in which her great-grandmother lived her useful, fruitful life. She realises that the present method of producing necessaries is the most economical one, a vast saving of human energy for better ends. She does not cry for wifedom and motherhood, or, as the vulgar youth expressed it, she is not 'after a husband,' though there would be no shame in desiring to obey the law of her being. She asks that, in exchange for the domestic life stolen from her—the happy, busy productive life of the homes of her ancestors—she may have new activities given to her, in which she may minister to the common good as her forebears ministered to their families and their village communities. She would be doctor or lawyer, teacher or preacher. She would take an active part in

local and national government. If she may not have children of her own, she would have the power to look after the motherless, suffering, outcast children.

It is as necessary to the modern thinking woman as the sunlight is to the flower that she should find her place in the scheme of things, and be able by her deeds to develop her own character and justify her existence to herself and to the world. The busy working wife, with her limited means, her large brood, her vision frequently limited by the harassing cares and worries of her life, feels little sympathy with the feminist, whose gospel she has never understood. But she too will be a better and a happier woman when the worth of her work is acknowledged and her life has room left for some joy.

CHAPTER III

ORIENTAL AND SLAVONIC WOMEN

WHEREVER feminism has appeared as an organised force, it has concentrated upon some particular item of its programme and has not proclaimed the full gospel of feminism. There has been no dishonesty in this. It simply points to the fact that few people have

favoured the complete freedom of women, but that many were able to unite for a partial enfranchisement or a specific demand. It is to the unmeasured language, to the passionate and unwisely expressed enthusiasm of the extremist and the fanatic that the critical outsider's suspicion of the larger, more temperate, movement is due. Let the timid console himself with the knowledge that the world has no room for fanatics. One is born now and then, to shake the sleepy world and rouse it to action; but he dies, and the world resumes its jog-trot pace.

The women's movement has everywhere evolved along certain definite lines, and these are very much the same wherever the movement has presented itself. First has come the struggle for educational opportunity; then, as an inevitable corollary, women have striven to qualify themselves for callings, up to that time the special preserve of men, in which to apply their newly gained knowledge. They have sought to enter the learned professions. Side by side with these activities, women have endeavoured to fit themselves by special training for philanthropic work on a larger scale than the baronial household or the village community afforded. These endeavours developed naturally and inevitably into a demand for more public authority and the power to elect local representatives. In this country,

for reasons which will be forthcoming later, the movement is placing its emphasis at present upon the political enfranchisement of women. This does not mean that everything has been acquired which the leaders of the other sectional movements demanded. There are still educational opportunities and rewards granted to British men and denied to British women. Women are still excluded from many of the learned professions on account of their sex. The number of women who may vote for local governing bodies and sit on local councils is still very small, and the qualifications necessary for the woman voter for town and district councils are very restrictive.

The United States of America, and Great Britain, with her colonies on the other side of the world, are the countries in which most liberty for women has been won. The Germanic countries generally have permitted their women to achieve more liberty and opportunity than the other great groups of countries. The Romance countries are far behind the Teutonic communities in their treatment of women, whilst the Slavic and Oriental races are still in the earlier stages of development in this particular. It will not be possible, and it certainly is not necessary, to give a detailed account of the position and the activities of the women in each of the

countries which fall under one or another of these denominations. A broad statement of the general position of the women in typical and important countries at the present time, taken from each of these convenient divisions of the human family, will be sufficiently interesting and illuminating.

Let China, the latest to rouse herself from the slumber of ages, be the first to give an account of the way in which she treats her women in these present days. The general facts about the position of the Chinese woman up to quite recent times are very well known. Every little learner of geography in the public elementary schools remembers the thrill of horror which ran through her whole body as she listened to the story of the cruel mothers who left their girl babies to die on doorsteps, or who threw them into the rivers for the sharks and crocodiles to eat. The bandaged foot of the poor little Chinese girl has been a scandal and an outrage for centuries.

By an edict of 1908, the bandaging of their girl children's feet was forbidden to Chinese parents, but Mrs Chapman Catt, the President of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, who recently travelled in China with the object of gleaning information about the women of that vast Republic, informs us that the custom, though illegal, is still practised. She may be permitted to speak in

her own words of the scene of which she and her friends were eye-witnesses. She says: 'We saw these small-footed creatures, coming up and going down the gang-planks of ships, and although the custom is now illegal, the majority of women here still have bound feet. All such women hobble as though the leg below the knee were wooden. Many cannot walk without steadying themselves by taking hold of something. The poorer women have been obliged to labour, feet or no feet, but they cannot do it in a normal way, and we often see them creeping on their knees or sitting down and hitching themselves along in an attempt to do their work. We have seen thousands of women at work in cigar and silk factories, all with bound and useless feet. But this is not the worst part of the story. Women with bound feet are obliged to walk on their heels, and this throws the body out of its true position, with the result that the pelvis becomes misshapen and motherhood rendered exceedingly difficult and perilous.'

Mrs Catt tells us that one effect of this cruel practice, and of the lack of proper physical exercise for which it is responsible, is to be seen in the uniformly smaller stature of the Chinese women when compared with the Chinese men.

One is given to understand that the education of the wealthier Chinese women has been

going on for more than a generation, and that education of a sort is becoming more and more general. This has not yet led to the abolition of forced and early marriages, with the right of the husband to take any number of concubines should the legal wife fail to produce an heir. Nor has the destruction of girl babies ceased. The earnings of the Chinese wife still belong to her husband; but, as the law requires that the husband should be the bread-winner, no court, it is said, would enforce the husband's claim on the earnings of the wife.

The Chinese woman can own property only when she is a widow. Until that time she is the thrall of her father, husband, and mother-in-law; but, contrary to the custom in India, the Chinese widow may remarry. Suicides amongst the lower orders of Chinese women are very common indeed, and travellers report that the sufferings of these women are unbelievable.

In response to the demand of the newly-educated women, there are several newspapers devoted to the special interests of women. When preparations for the revolution were being made, the Chinese women, for the first time in their history, were asked to help with the work and share the risk involved in this stupendous upheaval, with its proposed change of government. The women responded in great numbers, for it was the first call ever

made to their humanity, and the first demand upon their patriotism. They became indefatigable workers, many of them losing their lives in the work. They organised clubs which they called 'Dare to die' clubs. They smuggled ammunition into the country for the use of the rebels. They fought by the side of the men in many an encounter, and mounted the scaffold with them when taken prisoners. They organised the hospital work and nursed the sick and the wounded.

Their revolutionary clubs they have since converted into woman suffrage clubs, of which there are several with more than two hundred members each. The popular vote has not been given to the women by the successful Republicans, but the women of the Canton Province voted for their Provisional Assembly, and the Assembly itself, a law-making body, contained nine women members. Of their deliberations, Mrs Chapman Catt was on one occasion an interested and delighted spectator.

The wealthier women in China fill in their time making garments for their families, and in working at all kinds of beautiful embroideries. The women who must earn their living are employed much as are the women of Western lands, though, in Great Britain, one never sees women dock labourers, a common occupation for women in China. Their wages are anything from a half to two-thirds of the

wages paid to men for the same kind and quality of work.

The world will hear from China yet if she develops her new powers along the lines of her own natural evolution. She will surely fail if she tries to graft on to an ancient plant new and entirely alien shoots. Whatever is of the essence of true progress she must necessarily absorb; whatever makes for the elevation of human character and the raising of the value of individual human life and the preservation of human liberty she will be wise to acquire; but let her never strive to adopt, down to the last detail, the manners, customs, and habits of the Western world, nor its devastating vices, spirit-drinking and the like. The problem of China and of all these awakening Eastern empires, is to blend the Western spirit of liberty with the native Eastern habit and practice, to take what is good from the West and so to assimilate it, that, while being in no way destructive of the native genius of the people, it will become, in very truth, a part of itself. That way lies greatness unimaginable for the teeming millions of the Orient; and towards that greatness no step that they may take could be safer and surer than the education, enlightenment, and emancipation of the future mothers.

India is frequently spoken of as 'the brightest jewel in the Imperial crown'; and so it

may be some day, when the Indian feminist movement has done its perfect work. India has three hundred millions of people, of many races and of many tongues, of different religions and of various castes. These facts make the solution of the woman question, as of all questions in India, a highly complex and exceedingly difficult matter. Many thousands of women, who might otherwise strive for a larger opportunity and a wider outlook for themselves than the zenana affords, are kept humble and bound by those interested in keeping them so, who threaten them with loss of caste and consequent loss of future happiness if they come into contact with infidels and aliens.

Others, notably the Parsee women, upon whom this fear does not rest, are appalled at the difficulty of the task in front of them. Nevertheless, Indian women of culture, who have gained the necessary qualifications, can enter a profession which is entirely closed to the women of this country. The habit of secluding their women and forbidding all strange men from entering the women's quarters, or the zenana, has made it difficult for women to engage the services of a lawyer in their interests; and for this reason it has been permitted to women to become lawyers that they may act on behalf of their own sex.

The British Government has forbidden the

cruel practice, until quite recent times a matter of common occurrence, of throwing girl babies into rivers. It has also forbidden human sacrifices, either of human creatures to their deities or of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The abolition of *suttee* has accomplished only half the work necessary for making life tolerable to the unhappy Indian widow. Child marriages are still universal, little girls of five and six being engaged by their parents to youths of like tender age or to grown men, as the case may be. English women physicians tell harrowing stories of these poor little child-wives and mothers, how they beg, with tears streaming from their eyes, that the good ladies will 'make them die.' The report they give is too horrible to read, but it makes the care of Indian women and children a burden upon the heart and conscience of every thinking woman of the governing nation.

Widows may not remarry, and as women are looked upon simply as adjuncts of their husbands, they have to excuse themselves continually for being alive. Only the birth of a son can give the wife any status in the eyes of family and community; then the sole joy that lies in front of her is in the prospect of some day being able to govern that son's house, and heap upon his wife, or wives, the suffering she herself has endured.

There are high schools for girls in all the great cities of India. Progressive Indian women have made use of the education they have been fortunate enough to secure in these schools to have themselves trained as teachers and doctors, nurses and missionaries. They visit the zenanas, and endeavour to show the poor ignorant inmates how to live hygienic lives. In most of the Native States there is elementary education in the vernacular for both sexes up to a certain age. Many of the best educated women of India are women of known immoral behaviour, according to Western standards, beautiful dancing women, probably women who have deliberately chosen that life, as did many of the most famous of the Greek *Hetairæ*, because of the larger opportunity of culture that it offered. It is less their fault than the fault of others that they are forced to employ in the offices of passion the intellectual gifts and acquirements that might, with fair opportunity, have given them a place on the scroll of the world's famous women. The most active women for the emancipation of their sex are the Parsee women, whilst many highly-endowed Indian women are engaged in the Nationalist movement which seeks to establish self-government for India.

India has had many splendid and distinguished women in the days of her departed

glory, women who were queens, ruling over great States, and women who fought by the side of men in the wars between the various native princes of pre-British days. There is a woman ruler at the present time, the Begum of Bhopal, who attended the coronation of our present King. She preserved her Eastern attire during her visit to this country, wearing in public the thick veil which it is decreed all virtuous Mohammedan women shall use.

India is truly Britain's brightest jewel—and her greatest responsibility. Some day it will become a self-governing part of the great Federation of which Australia and New Zealand, Canada and South Africa are parts. No single other thing will make more for the stability and humanity of that government of the future than the complete enfranchisement of India's women.

The recent war between the Turks and the Christian peoples of the Balkans makes the consideration of the position of Turkey's women interesting and opportune. As in all Mohammedan countries, these women are bound by their Koran. The Bible of Mohammed allows, in theory at any rate, a much better status to women and much larger opportunities than certain existing codes of supposedly progressive Christian peoples—witness the Code Napoleon. The inferiority of

woman is, of course, insisted upon, and if she would reach heaven, it must be through her husband! In these circumstances it is, perhaps, supposed to be a charity to women to permit polygamy, and allow each husband to marry four wives if he chooses. The Koran permits to the wife the position of a person in the eyes of the law, and recognises the title of the wife to the separate ownership of her own property, to dispose of or to control as she pleases; but the habit of seclusion makes these provisions little more than a theory, seldom taken advantage of by the women of the harem.

Mohammedan women of rank and wealth must never appear in public unveiled, and their part of the house, the harem, must never see the presence of strange men. During the revolution carried out by the Young Turks, the educated and advanced women of Turkey appealed to the revolutionaries for help towards their own enfranchisement. Many women of rank walked the streets without veils in those wonderful days, a thing hitherto unprecedented; they even made speeches at meetings of women, and supported a programme of reforms to which the leaders of the new movement gave, at that time, their consent and approval. This list of reforms included the prohibition by law of polygamy; freedom for the woman to choose her own husband;

the right of a woman to file a petition for divorce; education for women and the training of them to act on their own initiative and to take upon themselves responsibilities. The Young Turk has, however, disappointed the watching world, and in nothing so much as in his throwing over the women and closing upon them the door of the harem.

The Mohammedan woman of the lower classes is free to come and go as she pleases; but she is the chattel of her husband, and the hard and sustained labour which fills her days has made her, in many respects, little better in intelligence and capacity than a four-footed beast of burden. English and American women are actively interesting themselves in the Mohammedan women, and seeking to let some rays of light into the thickly curtained chambers of the harem. The freeing of Turkish women is only a matter of time. When once the charm of freedom has been felt by individuals and by nations, every misfortune, every relapse, every backward step for which the unseeing, unthinking majority is responsible, acts to those of quickened intelligence as a spur to attempt greater and still greater things. Turkish fathers should never have sent their daughters to the schools of Western Europe if they did not mean the new ideas there gained to find expression in the national life. Turkish

women are becoming educated every year in larger and still larger numbers; Turkish women have died to bring light into the lives of their fellow-women. Can any serious person think that these efforts and these sacrifices shall be in vain, and that Turkey and Egypt alone, amongst the nations of the world, shall keep their daughters in chains?

The sudden emergence of Japan from a comparatively lowly position to that of a great world-power has caused mankind to gasp with astonishment. The defeat of Russia was a nine-days' wonder to a gaping world. One very naturally begins to inquire what causes have made this possible, and how far the character of the Japanese women may have contributed to these unexpected achievements.

The hard law of Confucius still controls, to a very great extent, the lives of Japanese women. They have no status of equality with the men. Their virtues are generally of the passive variety, for the habit of unquestioning obedience is inculcated from their youth up. They have no political status whatever, and owing to the influence of Chinese customs and Chinese teachings upon their own countrymen, they have lost a great many powers and privileges which were undoubtedly theirs in the early days of their country's history.

The Japanese woman has a dominant

position in the industry of the country. She is miserably paid, her average wages amounting to about sixpence-halfpenny a day; but she is engaged in industry in greater numbers than Japanese men. Children in Japan are, unhappily, in very much the same position as British children were in the early days of the nineteenth century. The country has provided education for its women, and all the cities and small towns have an excellent system of schools. There are also secondary schools for girls, and institutions in which women may qualify in medicine and pharmacy. Many Japanese women are authors and journalist writers of excellent prose. There are two political associations of women, and many other organisations exist for the promotion of special causes.

When the Japanese women have secured some measure of real freedom for themselves they will probably turn their attention to the women of their dependency—Korea—who are in a condition of amazing servitude, not being permitted to use even their own names. They are spoken of as either the daughters of their fathers or the wives of their husbands or the sisters of their brothers, but never by their own name. This happens in more civilised countries, when the wife is possessed of a particularly famous husband, but it is also true of the husband when his

glory is outshone by that of his wife. He then becomes 'the husband of Mrs So-and-so.' In Korea it is the invariable custom, and, though a small thing in itself, it becomes wholly deplorable when the custom is but the symbol of the spirit that lies behind it.

The Oriental idea about women and the Mohammedan conception of the place of woman in the scheme of things have largely influenced those Slavonic countries lying on their borders, several of which have, at various times, been under the heel of the Mussulman. Such countries are Bulgaria, Servia, Roumania, and Galicia. In these lands the feminist movement is of the most rudimentary kind, and confines its energies to the improvement of the truly awful conditions of the working woman. The feminist element works for this end chiefly through the Social-Democratic movement. When one realises that the makers of ready-made garments in Galicia earn less than sixteen shillings a month, that servant girls are able to command only tenpence to elevenpence a day, and that a skilled needlewoman, working sixteen hours a day, can, by this labour, earn a sum which is equal to not more than eighteen pence of British money, one can readily understand the need for the organisation of working women.

The feminist sentiment works, too, towards

the improvement of the education of girls in these countries, well knowing that education is the beginning of better things, and the most effective stimulus to self-respect and lawful ambition. The better-educated women flock into the teaching profession. The women of leisure and culture have founded women's clubs which, in Servia, it is said, have nearly twenty thousand members. The position of the women of Bulgaria is much better than that of the Galician women. They are so far advanced as to recognise the value of the vote, and have organised themselves into woman suffrage associations. In this country fifty-six women are practising as fully-qualified physicians.

The condition of women in Bohemia compares very favourably with the position of women in other parts of Eastern Europe. At one time, indeed as late as 1906, a limited number of property-owning Bohemian women held votes for the Imperial Parliament, but with the extension of the franchise to all adult males in that year, this much-prized voting power of a minority of women was withdrawn. This was a challenge to the free-spirited women of Bohemia, who are now patiently waiting the fulfilment of the Government's promise to bring in a woman's suffrage measure. The tax-paying women of Bohemia vote, by proxy it is true, for the provincial

Bohemian legislature, the Landtag, and the same is true of women municipal voters except in the city of Prague, where no woman suffrage of any sort exists.

Of all the Slavonic countries, the enormous empire of the Czars is perhaps the one in which Europe takes the liveliest interest. The struggles and sufferings of the revolutionaries against despotism and bureaucracy have marked Russia for universal interest. In these struggles the women have proved themselves as devoted and courageous as the men, and have suffered horrors even greater than those endured by the men. Russia now has a professedly constitutional government; but those who know best about this unhappy country's affairs say that constitutionalism in Russia is of the letter only and not of the spirit. The hangings and imprisonments go on as ever, and the great white road to Siberia has its sad processions as of yore.

The men and women of Russia are united in sympathy and understanding, because of sufferings borne in common, in a way in which they could not be bound in countries whose men have accepted freedom for themselves and left the women out. That is why the demand was made by Russia's best men, when the Duma was formed, for the equal enfranchisement of women and men. This has not been conceded. But women and men

students, either at home with the eye of the Government on them, or abroad at foreign universities, starve and struggle together; their eyes on a common goal.

There is ample room for the devotion and the talents of women in the huge territories of the Czar. We are told that there is only one doctor for every 200,000 of the population, and only 13 women public school teachers for every 1000 women inhabitants. Only 650,000 of the total number of 2,000,000 school children in Russia are girls, and the number of illiterates in the empire is about 75 per cent.

Women in Russia have a wide field in which to exercise their labour. There are nearly 600 women doctors, 400 women druggists, a number of university professors, and about 30,000 public school teachers. Altogether there are about 126,000 women occupied in the liberal professions. Women may enter commercial callings of almost every kind. This engages about 300,000, whilst agriculture and fisheries employ 2,086,169. There are 982,098 women engaged in industry and mining, and domestic service employs 1,673,605. In 1900 the women formed 44 per cent. of the working population of Russia. For these interesting figures the writer is indebted to the careful research of Dr Kathe Shirmacher, whose book on the modern woman's movement

is full of just such illuminating facts as these.

The legal status of Russian women is not so low as in other Slavonic countries. They may own their property and keep for themselves their own earnings. Here and there the wife may vote, in small communities, if the husband is dead. In large cities the qualified woman votes by proxy.

The woman suffrage movement has a precarious existence, but it is there, and is doing its work in educating the women to a sense of their rights and needs. The chief difficulty which dwellers in a huge empire have to face is the infinite variety of people, language, custom, tradition and point of view, which have to be sufficiently blended to make a working whole. The vast distances that have to be travelled; the superstition that has to be overcome; the strange, blind worship of authority by the ignorant peasant; the unequal development in citizens of the same land; the censorship of the press and the difficulties of propaganda; the suspicion of the Government and the tyranny of the official—all these things, added to the native, instinctive idea, the product of generations of domination, of the inferiority of women, make the solution of the woman's question in Russia one of the gravest complications. But the spirit of freedom knows nothing of the boundaries which

nations and clans have set up between one another. It leaps all obstacles, and throws open all doors, calling upon men and women alike to be free.

CHAPTER IV

LATIN AND GERMANIC WOMEN

FOR several reasons the feminist movement among Latin peoples is not so advanced as in Teutonic countries. The women of France and Italy have never been denied entrance to the universities of their respective countries, and the European feminist movement was actually born in France; but owing to the almost undivided opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, the progress of the movement has been checked in those lands where that church flourishes. But the early history and tradition of the Romance countries has also had its effect. In German and Scandinavian territory, in Great Britain and the Dutch Netherlands, women have been accustomed to more freedom and independence from the very beginning. At present, in proportion to the general population, far more women are engaged in occupations other than domestic in these countries than in Spain and Italy, Portugal and Sicily. The proportion of women

to men in the fore-named countries is larger than in Romance lands, and that may have something to do with it; but whatever the reason, the training in self-reliance has had its effect in the stimulation of self-respect, the result being a more widespread and insistent demand for the opening of new doors for women.

It is an interesting but saddening fact that the French Revolution, which brought in its terrible train so much freedom to the world at large, was the cause of the revocation of rights up to that time held by French women of rank. Before the Revolution women landowners might do whatever it was in the province of the landowner of the times to do—levy taxes, raise armies, and administer justice. The Revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man applied only to men, and every effort of the leaders of the women to secure a corresponding measure of freedom for their own sex met with stern repulse by the men of the Revolution, who evidently thought that what was good for them was not good for their wives and daughters. Although women took a prominent part in all the activities of the Revolution, and sacrificed themselves with as much zeal as any of the men, their clubs were ruthlessly closed by the Committee of Public Safety, in the alleged interests of the public peace,

but really because the women were becoming too insistent in their demands for themselves.

The seed of feminism was sown during this stormy period, and although the Code Napoleon—the product of a period of raging militarism and despotism—lowered the status of women, those seeds were not destroyed, but are struggling upwards even now towards a perfect fruitfulness. The British women's movement owes much to the splendid courage of these French heroines of the Revolution, inasmuch as they were the instigators of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which, though it did not rouse British women at once to organise themselves, is now one of the text-books of the woman suffrage movement in this country.

Napoleon's opinion of women is too well known to need repetition, but it will be remembered as long as Napoleon's name is remembered; and in the age that is to come, when conquest and glory won through human bloodshed will seem to belong to the dark ages, and when the worth of the individual, man or woman, and the beauty of purity will be recognised by all, the memory of parts of this Code will make it difficult to regard this emperor as other than a selfish savage.

This Code provided, amongst other things of equal horror, that a husband might slay his wife for adultery, and that it would not

be regarded as a crime; that no mother of an illegitimate child might make any claim for maintenance from its father. The Code also established the State regulation of prostitution. With the help of the Socialists some alterations in the Code have from time to time been wrung from the Government by the women. Frenchwomen are now entitled to the absolute control of their own earnings; they may now be witnesses to civil contracts; the father of an illegitimate child may now be compelled to pay towards its maintenance. In these particulars the law has been amended; but the *legal* position of Frenchwomen is still deplorably low. It is as low as, if indeed (as defined in the Code Napoleon) it is not lower than, in the least progressive of this group of countries, although France has the reputation of being the herald of freedom and of the rights of humanity.

Towards her women France has been liberal in educational matters; and Frenchwomen are known the world over for their excellent business ability. In all conscript countries, where men in large numbers are continually being drawn away from useful and productive labour in order to be taught their trade of soldiering, heavier burdens and responsibilities have fallen upon the women, who take up the threads of the disorganised business, or who, to prevent disorganisation, become partners

or sole organisers of the business from the beginning. Women may enter most of the gainful occupations in France. More than five millions of them are employed in industrial, agricultural, professional, and other work. They may be doctors, lawyers, factory inspectors, education inspectors. They are teachers in the public schools, and lecturers in the universities. Madame Curie, the Russian lady who married a French professor, and who, with him, discovered radium, the wonderful new element, holds the chair of Physics in the Sorbonne. Women are employed in the Government service as telegraphists and telephonists. They are railway officials of the lower orders, and they may, if they choose, be cab-drivers.

As the old custom of keeping a woman in complete subordination has a strong hold on the minds, not only of the majority of Italian men, but of the women also, Italy is not so advanced in these matters as France. The Church is largely responsible for keeping the women in a condition of humility and of mental enslavement to these hurtful ideas. So it is in Spain. Although both Italy and Spain can boast of a host of great women who distinguished themselves in the spheres of education and literature, the world generally has moved on, leaving most of its intellectual sediment in these creed-bound lands. A

woman in Italy, who would be respected, may not walk along the street without an escort. This is more strictly true, of course, of Southern Italy and Sicily than of the Plains of Lombardy, and it is, of course, a rule more strictly adhered to amongst the upper classes than amongst the lower, where conditions of life and labour make its observance difficult.

The poorer women in Latin countries have a fearfully hard life. The housewife is a drudge who has not only to rear children and do the household work, but must work also in the fields and vineyards by the side of her husband. The woman worker is miserably paid. In France the average wage of the industrial woman is about 1s. 8d. a day. This, comparatively speaking, is not so bad. In Italy the average for the million and a half women labourers is from 8d. to 10d. a day! The straw-plait workers sometimes receive as little as 2d. for twelve hours' work. Small wonder that the intelligent men and women of this land are turning their attention to the problem of organising women workers. There is a woman suffrage movement in Italy, as in France, affiliated to the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, and, on half-a-dozen different occasions, efforts have been made to secure the partial enfranchisement of women.

As in France, women of means have excellent educational opportunities, and Italy now has some very distinguished professional women. One is lecturer in the Philosophy of Law, another in Anatomy. Dr Maria Montessori, a physician in the Roman hospitals, and specialist in the treatment of weak-minded and imbecile people, is exciting much interesting controversy in this country at present relative to the Bill for the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded which is now before the British Parliament. Neither in Belgium nor in Italy could women be admitted to the Bar until recently; but one woman in Turin has succeeded in attaining this ambition.

The women of Spain are in a deplorably bad position. In the lower classes they receive no training for any special work in life; consequently they receive miserably inadequate wages when absolutely driven to work, which, however, they avoid as long as they can. Driven back upon themselves, confined to one interest—the interest in themselves and their sex—they use their sex as a weapon to win what they want, thus degrading both themselves and their men. In the higher walks of Spanish life, the women may be educated, and a number of famous Spanish women have brilliantly distinguished themselves in literature.

Portugal has recently overthrown its King.

and established a Republic, and, as far as women are concerned, one of the interesting by-products of the Revolution has been their receipt of a limited suffrage. Now all women of twenty-five years of age, who have received a secondary school education, may vote for political candidates. The education qualification was the thought of astute men, for so few women in Portugal possess it that the number enfranchised is too small to constitute a serious menace to the interests of any party. This was probably their greatest fear, as it is undoubtedly the greatest obstacle to the enfranchisement of women in this country.

A somewhat briefer statement of the condition of women in the other civilised countries of the world must be made in order that time and space may be devoted to the movement in Great Britain, which is, for various reasons, the present storm-centre of the world's feminist movement. It may be said broadly of all those lands which come under the denomination Germanic, that the position of women is better and happier than in those countries already discussed. A higher idea of the value of the individual appears to possess the peoples of new countries like the United States of America and the British Colonies; or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that the blood in the veins of the pioneers of these new lands was the blood of the free men and

women of the ancient North, of the Vikings and their descendants, of the land-owning Saxon and his sons; or the children of those religionists who, in a new clime, sought freedom to worship God. On the other hand, the higher status of women in the new lands is, perhaps, due to none of these things, but rather to the plain prose of a business principle. Where a thing is plentiful it becomes cheap, where it is scarce it becomes dear. In the early days of colonisation and for many generations afterwards, women colonists were in the minority. The number who emigrated was small in comparison with the number of men; for it required no little courage to face the dangers of the sea in a sailing vessel, and the terrors of a new land in which savage Indians roved at will.

The effect on the status of women made itself felt in the ordinary way of business. Women being scarce, became more precious. It is perfectly true that the common law of England, with its relatively low position for women, was carried over to the new world. It is quite true that there were witch-burnings in New England as in Old England. It is certain that the power of government was withheld from the Pilgrim Mothers and monopolised by the Pilgrim Fathers. But for all that, the atmosphere created by the colonial scarcity of women was probably more

responsible than any other thing for the present privileges of women in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. In these countries, too, many of the hampering traditions which have so long bound the women of Great Britain and Northern Europe have been lacking. Both Houses of Parliament in all these countries are elected. In none of them is one religious denomination elevated by the State at the expense of all the others, as in this country. There is no territorial-magnate class, whose families have held the land for generations, and, incidentally, the human souls upon the land.

To this extent, therefore, the battle for women's freedom has been easier, for the atmosphere has been of the very breath of freedom, and no foolish respect for outworn theories and institutions has had the power to stop the onward march of progress.

Again the stern fight with savage nature, whether in the form of hard soil, or cruel drought, or native tribes, has drawn men and women nearer to each other in the bonds of a common need, and given a chance of growth to the sense of fairplay and justice, which is present, in however rudimentary a form, in the breasts of most.

Hence it is not surprising to learn that the women of Australia and New Zealand share with the men all voting powers.

The women of New Zealand were enfranchised in 1893, of South Australia in 1894, of West Australia in 1899, of New South Wales in 1902, of Tasmania in 1903, of Queensland in 1905, and of Victoria in 1908. In these countries there is full and equal adult suffrage, with the power that this implies of being elected to their respective Parliaments. In 1902 the Australian Commonwealth gave the women the vote for the Federal Government, thus completing the excellent work.

It is worth while here to recount the action of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament, which, in 1910, gave testimony to the good effect of woman suffrage upon the fortune of the Commonwealth, in the terms of the following resolution: 'That this House (and Senate) is of the opinion that the extension of the suffrage to the women of Australia for States and Commonwealth Parliaments, on the same terms as men, has had the most beneficial results. It has led to the more orderly conduct of elections, and at the last Federal elections, the women's vote in a majority of the States showed a greater proportionate increase than that cast by men. It has given a greater prominence to legislation, particularly affecting women and children, although the women have not taken up such questions to the exclusion of others of wider significance. In matters of defence

and Imperial concern, they have proved themselves as far-seeing and discriminating as men. Because the reform has brought nothing but good, though disaster was freely prophesied, we respectfully urge that all nations enjoying representative government would be well advised in granting votes to women.'

The equal voting rights which these States enjoy must not be held to imply that the status of women in Australia is equal in all respects to that of men. The divorce laws are unequal in some States, and are inimical to women. Although most of the occupations are open to women, the better-paid ones are almost a male monopoly. But an atmosphere has been created and a power bestowed which will make a response to the organised and clearly-expressed wishes of the women an easy thing to secure as compared with the struggles of the past. These, while they never were so hard and so hopeless as in the old countries, had still to be waged against instinctive male prejudice and the conservatism of organised religion.

The women of New Zealand were enfranchised politically in 1893, and since that event they have secured amongst other reforms, equal divorce laws; a legal claim upon the property of the husband by wife and child; the opening of the profession of the law to

women; Local Veto of the liquor traffic and the closing of saloons on election day; the raising of the age of consent to seventeen. The Australian States have each and all accomplished a number of similar reforms with the help of the women's vote, and with consequent benefit to the country at large.

Of the forty-eight States of America, ten have complete woman suffrage; but in no country in the world has woman, as woman, so much liberty as in this great Republic. Every profession is open to her, not excluding that of the preacher. She may enter every business. Industry is an open field, and agriculture her sphere by right. The average American woman has more money to spend than the average woman of any other nation, more leisure in which to spend it, and more beautiful things on which to spend it. The accumulation of wealth as a result of economical production has caused the things which only wealth can command to be poured into this fortunate land. The American woman would have long since been completely ruined by her good fortune had it not been for her native good sense, her kindly heart, her ready intellect, and her passion for doing something. It is fortunate for the well-placed American woman, as it is a calamity for the others, that the competitive system of industry, by playing havoc with

the lives of America's alien citizen, should have stirred the warm hearts of America's cultured womanhood as it has done, and shown them the way to help their less fortunate fellow-creatures. The campaign for the political franchise in those still voteless States is only part of a great wave of passion for humanity and of aspiration and idealism which is passing over the United States and which promises to make it a new world indeed.

The State of Wyoming granted the franchise to women in 1869, Colorado in 1893, Utah and Idaho in 1896, Washington in 1910, California in 1911, and Kansas, Oregon, and Arizona in 1912. It is a significant fact that the last Presidential election campaign, for the first time in the history of politics, drew great hosts of women into the service of the several candidates for the high office of President. Ex-president Roosevelt, the nominee of the new Progressive Party, and a one-time opponent of votes for women, made woman suffrage a part of his party's programme, and was supported by a host of splendid women, headed by America's most famous woman citizen, Miss Jane Addams, of Chicago.

Nothing would excuse the dismissal of this great Republic with a few words only about the position of its women, except the confession that the task of describing the feminist movement in each of the forty-eight States

which go to compose it is too big. Let it suffice to say that woman suffrage would certainly have been the law of the land to-day in every single State of the Union but for the fact that the general condition of women, from the purely material point of view, has in time past been so easy, as compared with that of the women of other countries. Their men have been so eager to give them everything for which they asked that the spirit of discontent has not invaded them sufficiently, nor taken a strong enough hold upon most of those whom it has invaded.

Now, however, women are becoming cheaper over there. In the Eastern States they outnumber the men; and the native American, with his higher ideals about women, is fast becoming submerged by the hordes of aliens, more than a million a year, who seek citizenship in 'the land of the brave and the home of the free,' bringing with them their half-savage notions of the inferiority of women. It was said at the time of the campaign for political equality in California, that there were enough Italians in San Francisco (most of this nationality being opposed to feminism) to veto woman suffrage over the heads of all the more enlightened citizens of that town, and that it was the country districts, in which there were fewer aliens, which carried the suffrage for the Californian women. Be this

as it may, it is a warning signal to American women to lose no time in having their position secured through the vote, the symbol of citizenship, lest their task become wellnigh impossible by this lowering in the voting quality of the present citizens.

It is astonishing that any American man or woman of culture can be found to oppose this reform; but the stock argument in the United States is, that there, politics is corrupt and degrading, and that women would lose something if they entered the political arena; but the new hope and the new idealism which is abroad has little room for this argument of selfishness, which has this demerit, that it is simply not true.

To leap back again to the old world. Full citizenship on equal terms with men is at present enjoyed by the little country of Finland. Since 1906 the Finnish women have exercised their powers. All adults of twenty-four years of age have the right to vote for, and be elected to, the Finnish Parliament. Nineteen women were elected to the Finnish Parliament in 1907. To the Parliament of 1908 twenty-five women were elected. Of these, nine are married women. The women members belong to all parties and are of all classes. Their special work has been the introduction to the House of a variety of measures for improving the status of women

and children. They have tried to secure equal guardianship of children by both parents; the raising of the condition of illegitimate children; the abolition of the regulation of prostitution and the raising of the age of consent. Amongst the things they have accomplished has been the total prohibition of the manufacture, importation, sale or storage of alcoholic liquor in any form. This, be it noted, has not created a revolution, nor have the men of Finland risen and turned the women out of Parliament and revoked the suffrage law. Finland is, unhappily, concerned with the question of Russian aggression, and, in the near future, will probably need all the unity and the strength which comes from the unity of its patriotic men and women, to fight against the enemy of their ancient liberties.

In 1907 the franchise was extended to all Norwegian women who pay income tax, or whose husbands pay income tax on an annual income of twelve pounds in cities and sixteen pounds ten shillings in country districts. Though Sweden is not yet in an equal position in this respect, the feeling in favour of equal suffrage is so strong that this reform cannot long be resisted. In 1912 it was carried by the Lower and rejected by the Upper House; but two parties in the state—Liberal and Labour—have put woman suffrage into their

programmes, and, as the vote against was considerably less than on the previous occasion, it is hoped that, three years hence, success will be sure. In the meantime, women may sit on municipal bodies; they may labour in all State institutions; they may be teachers, professors, doctors; but not yet preachers. They may hold property, and the daughter's right of inheritance is equal to that of the son.

In the last month of 1912 a Bill for the political enfranchisement of women passed the Lower House in Denmark by a majority of six to one.

In all the countries of the world the tendency is to pay women less than men for the same work, for reasons which will be discussed later. In Scandinavia, as elsewhere, the industrial woman is not well paid, but as Scandinavia is mainly agricultural, she has fewer women of this kind than other countries.

Perhaps in no other country in the world has the struggle of women for some measure of independence and equality with men been so severe as in Germany. Militarism is ever and always the enemy of the progress of mankind, and particularly of the female half of mankind. Dr Schirmacher, one of the founders, in 1902, of the Woman's Suffrage Society, may be permitted to speak in her own words of the opinion she has formed as

to the progress of feminism in Germany. She says: 'In no European country has the woman's rights movement been confronted with more unfavourable conditions; nowhere has it been more persistently opposed. In recent times the women of no other country have lived through conditions of war such as the German women underwent during the Thirty Years War and from 1807 to 1812. Such violence leaves a deep imprint on the character of a nation. Moreover, it has been the fate of no other civilised nation to owe its political existence to a war triumphantly fought out in less than one generation. Every war, every accentuation and promotion of militarism, is a weakening of the forces of civilisation, and of woman's influence. . . . A reinforcement of the women's rights movement by a large Liberal majority in the national assemblies . . . is not to be thought of in Germany. The theories of the rights of man and of citizens were never applied by German Liberalism to woman in a broad sense, and the Socialist Party is not yet in a majority. The political training of the German man has not yet, in many respects, been extended to include the principles of the American Declaration of Independence or the French Declaration of the Rights of Man; his respect for individual liberty has not been developed as in England; therefore he is much

harder to win over to the cause of "woman's rights."'

As an instance of what she means, this distinguished German woman says that the campaign against the legalisation of vice has had to be conducted entirely by women, unsupported by physicians, lawyers, and members of Parliament as in Great Britain. Similarly with the struggle for education, the way has been long and bitter. Only within recent years have the German Universities been thrown open to women. Only recently, too, the law permitted them to associate for political purposes. Industrial training for women has been partly won only with tremendous effort, and yet only half of Germany's adult women are married. The German women are organised in women's clubs, and make their demands known through these organisations, but there is a growing feeling of the need of political power. In some of the German States there is a municipal suffrage for women, under which they vote by proxy; but the general status of women in the Fatherland is low when compared with that of British women. The German Emperor appears to express the national ideal for women, that they are made for children, kitchen, and church.

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION

GREAT BRITAIN is the present storm-centre of the modern feminist movement. For this reason the history of the movement in this country is of peculiar interest at the present time, and particularly to British readers. The foundation of the movement for sex-equality in this country was laid when Mary Wollstonecraft published her famous book, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in 1792. This book might well be used, possibly is widely used, as a text-book by the woman suffrage movement, so well does the argument used more than a century ago fit the present situation. Mary Wollstonecraft spent some time in Paris during the most stormy period of French history, and drew her ideas in part from the leaders of the French Revolution. Being a woman of understanding she was able to strip the Revolution of all its terrible, but, in the circumstances, perfectly natural excrescences, and to lay hold upon the glorious idealism, the essential spirit of this great upheaval—the spirit of human freedom. The ideas thus gained she gave to her country in the form of a book.

The book was not well received. On the contrary, it was very severely handled by the critics, and its author doubly execrated. One statesman and writer of the times spoke of her as a 'hyena in petticoats,' and she was much abused, even by those more advanced members of her own sex from whom she had a right to expect better usage.

It must be remembered, however, that the women of those times were only emerging from the condition of degradation into which they had been thrust at the Restoration period. Probably the women of the period immediately following the overthrow of Puritan domination in this country, and for a couple of generations afterwards, suffered from the most complete degradation that has ever befallen the sex in this country through all its history. Acts of the grossest cruelty had, frequently before this time, been perpetrated upon women, stupid disabilities had hampered them, and unfair laws had disfigured the Statute Book before the days of Charles II.; but in no other period was the popular estimate so clearly in harmony with the basest laws, and at no other time did so many public men express in speech, verse, and prose, and through infamous cartoon, the general contempt felt for women. Out of this slough the women of the country had been slowly rising. At the time of Mary

Wollstonecraft's publication, the *blue-stockings* had demonstrated the ability of women to write well. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, blessed with a parent who had the sense to give her a sound, private education, had pleased the world with her letters nearly half a century before the *Rights of Women* appeared. These famous letters sparkle with wit and humour, and occupy a position in the esteem of men of letters not lower than those of her brilliant contemporary, Horace Walpole. Hannah More, Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Montague, and Mrs Thrale are amongst the best-known women who wrote books and pamphlets and earned the invidious title of *blue-stocking* for daring so far to intrude upon the province of men, and, forgetting the native delicacy and modesty of woman, to appear before the public as authors, unrepentant and unashamed!

Contemporary with the *blue-stockings* were the pioneers of the education of women. It was wisely understood by the women reformers of the period that a sound education was a necessary preliminary to the opening of fresh spheres for women. It was realised that opposition is almost always more easily broken down by demonstration than by argument. It was of little use to claim that women could do this and that unless they received the training necessary to fit them for the work.

Not half a century ago the education of girls in this country was little less than a disgrace. A century ago education for girls was scarcely thought to be necessary. It is quite true that there were educated women even in those horrible days of the Stuart régime. There have always been, even in the blackest periods of history, numbers of women as highly educated as, and sometimes better educated than the men of their time. The women of rank of pre-Reformation days were by no means second to the men in the number and excellence of their accomplishments. The Reformation itself owed almost as much to the sympathetic help of cultured women as to that of the men—to such women as Margaret of Navarre and Jeanne d'Albert. Lady Jane Grey was only sixteen years of age when she perished on the scaffold, the victim of family ambition. She spoke fluently in several tongues, and was able to argue with the gray-bearded theologians of her time on their own subjects and in language more in harmony with their years than her own. Women who could command private tuition through their private means, or whose enlightened parents or guardians provided them with the opportunity, took rank with the men of their times as learned and accomplished people.

But, compared with the whole number of

women, these were exceptional. Most women were almost entirely uneducated until well into the nineteenth century. When their condition of ignorance was shared by the men the evil was not felt so keenly. As educational opportunity widened for boys and men, but not for women, the inevitable effect was the development of arrogance on the one side with a false humility on the other. Such girls' schools as existed in the eighteenth century were poor things indeed—'Academies for Young Ladies,' in which only those subjects were taught which would enhance their physical charms and win for them suitable husbands. Half the energy of unwedded girls and young women was devoted to 'plying' the sampler and teasing the housewife's wool. Dancing and deportment were the staples of most of these abodes of learning. To faint with grace at the sight of a mouse, and blush becomingly at the slightest provocation, were considered more womanly accomplishments than to figure correctly or read with intelligence. Witness the words of a learned divine of the period, who wrote to his daughters in the following absurd strain: 'When a girl ceases to blush she has lost the most powerful charm of beauty. That extreme sensibility and weakness which it indicates may be a weakness and encumbrance in our sex, as I have too often felt; but in yours it is peculiarly

engaging. Pedants, who think themselves philosophers, ask why a woman should blush when she is conscious of no crime. It is sufficient to answer, that nature has made you to blush when you are guilty of no fault, and has forced us to love you because you do so.'

This same Dr Gregory probably represented very much the spirit of his times when he asserted in his dogmatic way that 'nothing is more fatal to a woman than to attempt to influence a man by reason or by anything but caresses.' One need not wonder, then, that educational facilities for women, and the opportunity such facilities offer for the development of the reasoning powers were of the scantiest description.

Broadly put, the argument of the anti-feminist of the Georgian and early Victorian periods was that the main purpose of woman (some declared the sole purpose) being the bearing of children, nothing was necessary that did not contribute to that end, and everything was harmful which might conceivably detract, either from the quantity or the quality of this work. It was assumed that education of the higher sort would be harmful, for it would put upon the future mothers of the race a strain greater than they could possibly bear. Moreover, it was feared that the charms of knowledge would prove a serious rival to those of a lover, that learning

would make women esteem themselves too highly, and that the vocation of motherhood and home-making would thereby suffer. All these fears have been disproved; but it was the work of the pioneer women to win the opportunity of demonstrating their folly.

The earliest amongst the educational reformers was Mary Anstell, who sought in the seventeenth century to establish a school for poor girls and women. Her work was much misunderstood and abused, as was the work of each pioneer in turn; but it had the effect of first introducing the new idea of female public-school education to the nation. Of the individuals who have laboured to promote the well-being of the poor through education, mention ought to be made of Elizabeth Fry to raise the condition of the women prisoners of Newgate, and of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell, who, through their respective religious agencies, were the means of bringing a certain amount of education within the reach of poorer boys and girls, and who were the pioneers of the great national scheme of education in England which had its beginning in the Education Act of 1870.

Meantime the struggle for the higher education of women went on. Controversy had raged for a century round the question of the exact kind of learning suitable for women. Step by step the *young ladies*,

academies enlarged their sphere of work, and secured the services of visiting masters to teach extra subjects such as elementary geography, history, music, arithmetic, and the like. Since those days the visiting master has become a declining quantity in our educational scheme, his services being requisitioned chiefly by private schools for foreign languages, advanced science, or mathematics, and even these subjects are by no means his monopoly. The teaching profession in elementary schools shows a tendency at present to fall into the hands of women, and women teachers in Higher Grade and Secondary Schools and Colleges take unquestioned rank with the masters in the same circumstances, though the amount of their remuneration is not yet the same. There are 172,000 Elementary School teachers, 43,000 men and 129,000 women. The number of teachers in Secondary Schools is 13,000, of which 6300 are women and 6700 men. Women are also University Professors and Science Demonstrators. The nation has been won at last to a belief in the value to women of an equal educational opportunity with men, and the capacity of women to teach what they have learned has been proved a thousand times over. But to return to the story.

The first famous school for girls was founded by Miss Buss in 1850, and called the North

London Collegiate School for Girls. Bedford and Queen's Colleges, it is true, had been founded two years before this in 1848, but their purpose was the training of governesses and the granting of the opportunity to those who desired it of a course of study supplementary to the ordinary school course. The school established by Miss Frances Buss has become the model for many of the girls' High Schools which have since sprung up all over the country. The Ladies' College at Cheltenham was founded in 1854, and owes everything to its first distinguished head, Miss Dorothea Beale. This college is famous all over the country, and indeed beyond the bounds of this land, for the excellence of its training, the high proficiency of its staff, and the magnificence of its appointment and general equipment.

In 1867 was held a Schools Inquiry Commission to inquire amongst other things into the condition of female higher education in Great Britain. The Commissioners found a woeful state of affairs on which to report. Some of the faults discovered were 'a want of system; a lack of thoroughness and foundation; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; too much attention paid to accomplishments, and those not taught thoroughly nor in a scientific manner; and a complete absence of proper organisation.'

The need for improvement having been demonstrated, the next thing was to secure it. The Endowed Schools Act of 1869 contained a Clause which provided that 'In framing schemes under this Act provision shall be made, as far as conveniently may be, for extending to girls the benefits of endowments.' The immediate result of this was a widespread activity in the direction of the extension of educational facilities of a higher order to girls, and the establishment of a higher type of school than had previously existed, with the exception, of course, of those already named.

The most distinctive landmark in the progress of women in regard to education was furnished by the Universities. In 1867 and in 1871 attempts were made to found colleges for women which should be of University rank. The first was established at Hitchin, but removed to new premises at Girton in 1873. Miss Emily Davis, the aged woman suffrage leader, was one of the founders of Girton College, and Miss Anna Clough was the founder of the other, which, beginning in 1871 in a humble way to prepare young women for University examinations, is now world-famous as Newnham College. Both colleges made application to the University of Cambridge for the admission of women to the examinations for University degrees.

With the utmost courtesy the University examiners undertook to test the women students in order that the excellence of their training might be demonstrated and certified. But in spite of all that can be done to prove their ability to win, and their fitness to wear, the honours that the University conferred on deserving students, it is still impossible for women to take their ordinary degrees at Cambridge. Similarly at Oxford. Three colleges for women were established at Oxford, and women who studied there have brilliantly distinguished themselves from time to time; but in the matter of conferring ordinary degrees upon women this University, like Cambridge, remains obdurate. The attempt to secure equality of treatment in respect of ordinary degree examinations was renewed in 1907, but with no effect. It was conceded as desirable that women should have all the opportunities of study and that they should be granted certificates of proficiency, but it was said that 'the advantage of allowing women to enter the General and Special Examination for the ordinary degree are less obvious.' What the exact difference is between the ordinary degree and the higher examinations open to women has never been clearly shown. The great Universities of England stand alone in their sex-prejudice, amongst the Universities of Great Britain.

Probably they do not mind this inglorious distinction. It is quite conceivable that they are proud of it! But to the average Briton no less than to the intelligent foreigner it is a source of complete mystification, not to say of amused contempt. The Universities of London, Wales, Liverpool, St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and Dublin—in short, all the great centres of learning except Oxford and Cambridge have granted equality to women and men in the matter of taking degrees.

Women have still to gain the right to enter the various theological colleges to receive special training for the ministry of the gospel. At present the office of preacher, which is occupied by thousands of women in the Salvation Army and by a few in the Unitarian and Congregational Churches, does not command the laying-on of hands which is supposed to be the sign and symbol of divine ordination. It will be necessary to show to the satisfaction of the various churches that women may have the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, and, more than all, a divine commission to preach the gospel, ere they are allowed to enter those special schools where preparation for the ministry of religion is made.

Women may study law and take the necessary examinations, but they may not be called to the Bar. The profession of medicine

is now open to women, but the story of the forcing open of that door is one which, for its cruelties, would appear incredible, if similar cruelties were not being practised against women reformers at the present time. When Elizabeth Blackwell was refused admission to the British Medical Schools, she went to America, and there took her degree as Doctor of Medicine. When a register of medical practitioners was prepared in 1858, it became necessary to include her name.

In 1865 Elizabeth Garrett applied for admission to the medical schools, and, being refused, passed the examination of the Society of Apothecaries. She had secured her training privately and by acting as a nurse in the hospitals—all this at considerable expense to herself; but having made herself competent she tried and passed. The rules of the Society of Apothecaries did not definitely provide for the exclusion of women who passed the tests they themselves had fixed, but this was a defect they speedily remedied. Dr Garrett thus became the first woman physician to practise in this country.

In 1869 Miss Jex-Blake endeavoured to obtain a doctor's degree at Edinburgh University. She along with others asked to be admitted to the medical schools there. It passes the wit of modern man to understand how there could possibly be any objection

to this profession for women when more than half the patients of doctors are women, and when the profession of nursing had become one of honour and esteem. Yet the objections urged against the admission of Miss Jex-Blake and her colleagues were considered to be insuperable. Of most of these arguments it may at once be said that they cut both ways. If it were indecent for a woman-doctor to attend a man, it must also be indecent for a man-doctor to attend a woman. If it were thought improper for a woman-doctor to attend a man-patient it must be considered improper for a woman to nurse him. If the study of anatomy were regarded as indelicate for women, it was urged that it was no less indelicate for men. These brave pioneers of the medical women were subjected to unbelievable insults. They were accused of lewdness and indecent curiosity; they were taunted with choosing this way of getting husbands for themselves; they were suspected of wishing to carry on improper intrigues with men students. Objections of another class were those that sprang from professional exclusiveness and jealousy. The profession was already overcrowded, it was said, and the admission of women would tend to make things worse. This argument scarcely fitted in with the contention that women would never be able to qualify themselves for this work, since

the examinations and tests were too severe and the standard too high for a feminine brain.

The women had a ready reply to all these objections. They pointed out very respectfully that they were not asking for any favouritism, but only for the opportunity of putting themselves to the same test as the men. If they failed, so much the worse for them; but if they succeeded they demanded the right to enjoy their success and to work at their chosen profession.

At first the Edinburgh University was tolerant, and, although no professor was compelled to give the women instruction, they were permitted to attend the classes in the ordinary subjects, and to pass the matriculation examination. There was little or no trouble until Miss Pechy passed an examination in chemistry which would have entitled her to a scholarship if she had been a regular member of the class. Miss Jex-Blake as leader of the women, demanded that Miss Pechy should have the prize, and thus raised the question of the equal treatment of men and women. The controversy raged with exceeding bitterness in both University and City for more than two years. There arose two factions, the one for and the other against the women. The professors of the University were forbidden to instruct the women. The students subjected them to every insult,

actually throwing stones and filth at them in the public streets. Every woman was excluded from the Medical Schools and even the governing body of the infirmary for a long time excluded them from the wards.

On making her appeal to the law, Miss Jex-Blake secured the decision of Lord Gifford in the Court of First Instance, that the University was bound to admit the women to both classes and degrees, but this decision was reversed by a higher court, and the women were compelled to go abroad to more enlightened seats of learning to obtain the necessary qualifications.

The opinion of the medical profession for a long time lagged behind parliamentary and even public opinion on this question of the admission of women to their ranks. The London School of Medicine, including on its staff both men and women, was founded in 1874. In 1876 Parliament passed a law which permitted the Universities to grant medical degrees to women, and several colleges at once admitted women. In 1877 the British Medical Association declared women to be ineligible for membership, and it was many years later that this last rock of medical conservatism was shivered into atoms. There were in 1912 553 women physicians in Great Britain, and it is significant and worthy of note that, of this number, 518 have recently set their names

to a petition claiming the parliamentary vote for women.

The admission of women to the medical profession has been one of the greatest possible boons to women. It may readily be believed that tens of thousands of women have neglected to consult a physician when there was real need for such a consultation because of their natural shrinking from exposing their weaknesses to a male doctor. There are those who laugh at this notion, and imply that indelicacy and not refinement is responsible for this reluctance. This is not so. It is with a very real sense of relief that many women turn to one of their own sex, specially qualified to treat their several complaints. An effect of the admission of women to this great order of public servants—and this is probably responsible for the large proportion of medical women who are on the side of woman suffrage—is the discovery of how large an evil the double standard of morality is in its effects upon the physical lives of women and their offspring. Medical etiquette forbids certain disclosures of the nature of their sufferings to be made to women; but nothing can be hidden from the doctor who comes to cure, and the awful extent to which depravity has poisoned the health of innocent human beings has so shocked the sensibility and stirred the conscience of women physicians, that they are

to be found everywhere lifting up their voices against the social system that permits the creation of a class of slave-women for the selfish indulgence of the worst vices of men; and still more against the false teaching of the past, which has sought to excuse the failings of uncontrolled men by the false doctrine of physical needs. The woman-doctor stands for purity and self-control, whether in man or woman, for she knows that only in that way lies the health of the generations unborn.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN AND SOCIAL SERVICE

CONTEMPORARY with the struggle for education and for the opening of the liberal professions to women, there has been a large increase in the number and kind of their philanthropic and social activities. British women have the reputation, on the Continent and elsewhere, of being the first, amongst European women at least, to recognise their obligations to the poor and needy. If this be true it is an honourable distinction, and one of which they are justly entitled to be proud; but whether it be true or not that British women were the first women social reformers, it is

certainly true that they have produced from amongst themselves a long line of women whose services to the State have proved invaluable.

The public activities of women during the last century and a half, may, for the purposes of a brief summary, be classified in the following manner. First come the women who have accomplished their deeds through personal influence upon the authorities, and who, through their own initiative, have contrived to have some glaring evil removed by those in power. To this class belong Mrs Elizabeth Fry and Miss Florence Nightingale. In the days of these two women, notably of Elizabeth Fry, Parliament was not elected by a popular vote. In 1793, when the little Quakeress was thirteen years of age, 160 persons returned 306 members, an absolute majority, to the House of Commons. She was fifty-two when, by the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, the middle-class element in the country received its enfranchisement, and she had been dead twenty-one years when the first real measure of working-class enfranchisement was passed in 1867. In this same year, 1867, Florence Nightingale attained her forty-seventh year and had already accomplished her mighty work for the nation. Partly because politicians were not dependent upon large numbers of votes for their election, and

partly because public opinion counted for less with them than it does to-day, it was possible for a clever, earnest woman to have her appeal listened to by statesmen and to accomplish more through her own personality than to-day, when every politician weighs his actions with a view to retaining the votes of his constituents.

The democratic franchise, then, was responsible more than anything else for the creation of a new class of reformers, women who now seek to influence authority by creating organisations which, in their turn, help to form the public opinion upon which reform depends. The work of these women may be looked for in the organisations which stand for temperance, purity, and peace; and in those which are against sweating, bad housing, unemployment, and under-feeding. Typical women reformers of this class, most of whom are alive to-day, are the Countess Dowager of Carlisle, President of the British Women's Temperance Association; Miss Octavia Hill, whose work for the slum-dweller is so widely-known and appreciated; the Duchess of Marlboro', advocate of lodging-houses for women; and the Hon. Mrs Bertrand Russell, whose Schools for Mothers (she was one of the pioneers of the idea) have been such a boon to thousands of ignorant and helpless young mothers amongst the poor. But to

select any names in this connection is almost invidious, since the host of women workers of this sort is legion, and all are equally praiseworthy.

The third class of women social reformers includes all those who, on such public bodies as Boards of Guardians, School Boards (in Scotland), Education Authorities, Parish, Borough, and County Councils, for all of which women are eligible at the present time, have sought to represent as elected members the opinion of their constituents. It will be obvious that these three classes frequently overlap, that the propagandist and organiser is frequently the elected representative also, and that there is no necessary antagonism between the work of the elected person and the woman who prefers to use her private influence on behalf of social reform. A few words about some of Great Britain's most famous women reformers will not be out of place in an essay on feminism, though perhaps the connection between the work of these pioneers and the principle of sex-equality is not obvious. These words will at least demonstrate the inherent fitness of women to concern themselves with those matters which touch the race, and will for ever destroy the argument maintained only by the foolish, that women are devoid of public spirit, incapable of turning their minds to anything beyond the petty

interests and concerns of ordinary everyday existence.

Elizabeth Gurney was born in Norwich in the year 1780 of a well-known and highly-respected Quaker family. She was always a serious-minded child, much given to introspection, an idealist by every instinct of her being. When very young she came under the influence of a much-esteemed friend of the family who belonged to the strictest sect of the Society of Friends, wearing more sober garments, and observing a sterner code of manners than the parents of Elizabeth felt called upon to adopt. Like wise parents, however, they put no obstacles in the way of their child, who was permitted to follow her heart and conscience, and who voluntarily adopted the stern life of the more rigid Quakers. Her husband, Joseph Fry, whom she married when twenty years of age, agreed beforehand never to interfere with the free movements of her spirit, nor to step into the way of the accomplishment of whatever work she might feel called upon to do.

Although children were born to her in rapid succession, she found time for many pious works amongst the poor, providing them with food, clothing, and even education, for she founded a school on her country estate, to which many came to be taught. So divinely serene and pure was her character, that

men and women of very different religious persuasions came together and worked in common, without bitterness, under her gracious influence.

Her good works were so many and so various that it is impossible to record them all; but the great work of her life, and that by which she is best known, she accomplished for the women prisoners of Newgate. She had heard in her own house, from people who had visited them, of the terrible conditions in which the women prisoners were kept, and she made up her mind then and there to go to the prison and to see if these things were true. She went, and found things worse than she had conceived in her worst imaginings. The stimulus given to the work of prison reform by the sainted John Howard had been exhausted, and the condition of British gaols at the time of Mrs Fry's visit to Newgate was everywhere a scandal and a disgrace to the community.

In Newgate prison Mrs Fry discovered the women prisoners crowded into two narrow wards and two small cells, the innocent and the guilty alike, those who had been tried and condemned, and those awaiting judgment—women of all ages and of every degree of depravity, and tender, innocent children and babes amongst them all. The following quotation tells the story:—‘The prisoners were destitute of sufficient clothing, for there

was not provision; in rags and dirt they slept upon the floor. In the same rooms they lived, cooked and washed. With the proceeds of their clamorous begging when any stranger appeared among them they purchased liquor from a tap in the prison. Spirits were openly drunk, and the ear was assailed by the most terrible language. Beyond the necessity for safe custody there was little restraint upon their communication with the world outside. Although military sentinels were posted on the leads of the prison, such was the lawlessness prevailing that the Governor always entered this portion of it with reluctance.'

Mrs Fry was horror-struck with what she saw. A domestic calamity prevented her from taking immediate action, but at a later date she paid a second visit to the prison, and made a suggestion to the women which they received with alacrity. She suggested that they should form a school for the children and select a teacher for them from amongst their number. This they did, appointing a gifted young Irishwoman to this curious post. Such was the success of this scheme that the women themselves clamoured for instruction and sought permission to enter the class with the children. This led to the formation of an Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate. Rules for the government of this society were drawn up

and submitted to the women for them to adopt or reject as they thought fit. The rules forbade swearing, drinking, lying, and abuse; but the women accepted them, and undertook to keep them and to see that they were kept. With the help of the authorities, who gave her permission to experiment, and of those good men and women who helped her in the work, Mrs Fry secured good clothing for the women, and appointed them to some useful work. An old disused laundry was granted to her for a workroom, and a matron was appointed to assist. For many weeks Mrs Fry and her devoted band of helpers almost lived in the prison, but the revolution they were the means of bringing about in the behaviour of those poor, unfortunate souls more than paid them for the temporary discomfort they endured. The women became quiet and orderly, decent and restrained to a degree that no man living had believed it possible for them to become. Triumphant Mrs Fry pointed to the improvement a little easy employment had effected in the character of the women, and begged that this might be made a part of the ordinary prison scheme.

In time this was granted; as were other improvements which Mrs Fry suggested—more light, air, space, and privacy. Doubtless much remains to be done before this country equals the United States in its treatment of

prisoners, but enough has been done through the efforts of a good woman to constitute a revolution in the management of prisoners.

But this was not all Mrs Fry accomplished, for her country's good. Convict-ships came in for a share of her sympathetic attention. The earliest institutions for the training of nurses were founded by her. She did more than any other individual to create the public opinion against hanging for offences against property ; for it is well known that up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, to steal five shillings' worth of goods was an offence which was punishable by death. She was a pioneer of old-age pensions for worn-out servants. She was ever interested in the advancement of education, and provided lonely coastguardsmen with books.

Nobody was too insignificant, and nothing was too small for her that had for its object the improvement of a human being. The number of her activities would soon have daunted a woman of spiritual gifts fewer and less fine than her own. She spent herself freely and gave of her best. Nor did her deep interest in humanity at large cause her to forget the little circle at home of which she was the centre and the sun. She gave twelve children to her country and was a devoted mother to them all. The secret of it all lay in the depth and strength of her religious

conviction, her grand faith in humanity, and a calm confidence in the ultimate good, which kept her as humble when crowned with honour as it kept her strong to bear the sights and sounds of human misery which she was so frequently called upon to witness.

Inevitably associated with Mrs Fry, since they attained to an equal glory of achievement, is Miss Florence Nightingale, the idol of so many British homes. She had the good fortune to possess a father who had no half-savage notion about the inferiority of women, and who gave to his daughter the best education at his command. He wisely left her free to adopt the life she liked, and did not compel her against her wish to live the useless, foolish life of the average early-Victorian maiden of means, stitching samplers or knitting woollen antimacassars. When Mr Nightingale returned from Italy to live on his Derbyshire estates, it became the daily delight of his daughter to minister to the sick and suffering who came within her circle of influence. She had a perfect passion for nursing, and, unhampered by parental disapproval, she gave herself during those years of young womanhood to studying, at home and abroad, the art and science of her chosen profession. It was whilst she pursued this study that she made the acquaintance of Mr Sydney Herbert, a friendship afterwards fraught with deepest

consequence to them both; for when Mr Herbert became the head of the War Department, charged with the duty of removing the scandal created by the unhappy condition in which our wounded soldiers were permitted to lie during the Crimean war, it was to his friend Florence Nightingale that his thoughts turned when needing just the kind of help he knew she could give. It is pleasant to know that the same thought struck each of them at the same time, and that a letter from the War Minister to Miss Nightingale asking her to go to the Crimea, crossed in the post one from her to him offering her services. These services were accepted, and in 1854 she and her band of assistants set sail.

Can it be believed that this devoted woman was actually slandered and abused without mercy by a large part of the British public? and that even a portion of the Press lent itself to insulting suggestions? The idea of a woman of position and refinement turning nurse to rough soldiers appeared to many as an unthinkable and intolerable degradation of womanhood. Others, more coarse, loudly accused her of seeking a husband. This is always said of women who take any individual line in public work, and the thought that it has been said of the world's best women should console lesser ones of whom it is said, and help them to shoulder their burden bravely. It

never seems to occur to these coarse-minded and ignorant critics that there are women in the world who set so high a price upon themselves that few men are qualified to claim them; or that a woman can put aside domestic happiness for herself in order to help to achieve the conditions of domestic happiness for other people.

When Miss Nightingale arrived at the scene of her duties, she discovered that the rumours of the sufferings of our men had not been exaggerated and that Britain did well to be angry. Our poor soldiers in those long hospital corridors at Scutari lay in filth and misery too bad for description. They were without the barest necessaries of comfort, hungry and cold, and having little care and attention paid to their wounds and their sickness. But these brave women, undaunted, got to work at once, and after some time brought order out of chaos, and some measure of comfort to the sufferers.

It is not possible to tell the splendid story in detail, but this much may be said: That it is to Florence Nightingale's great gifts as a leader, a commander, an organiser, that this country owes even more than to her work as a nurse. The sentimental figure of the Lady with the Lamp, created by poet and painter to be a household goddess for British homes, has obscured for many the more valuable part

of her work. When her name is mentioned to-day, visions of a tender woman bending over the sick-bed, binding the broken limb or closing the dying eyes, a woman whose name soldiers breathe with their last breath, whose shadow on the wall they kiss, whose every movement they follow with their eyes, are what is seen in the mind's eye. But to other gifts, also, of hers the nation owes a debt—to her royal impatience of red-tape, stupid officialism, and lordly ignorance and incapacity, and to her wonderful powers as an organiser. Out of her way, whenever she could, she swept the follies that blocked it, and brought order, comfort, and efficiency, where before their opposites had made death and desolation supreme.

The saintly Josephine Butler could not be left out of any account of those women who have in a very special way served the best interests of society, though the nature of her work makes her story somewhat difficult to tell. Never a woman lived less fitted to endure without suffering the cruelties which a pioneer of public opinion must ever be prepared to endure, and which must inevitably be more than doubled when the cause is such as the one she chose to champion. This wife of a Liverpool professor was a beautiful creature, delicate and sensitive, cultivated and refined, driven by an inward prompting to take up the cause

of humanity's castaways, the women of the streets. For seventeen years she toiled to have removed from our Statute Book certain Acts of Parliament which legalised vice. By these Acts of Parliament, known as the Contagious Diseases Acts, which were passed in 1866 and 1869, the authorities were empowered to imprison any of these women who refused to undergo an examination as to their physical condition. The first refusal meant imprisonment for a month with hard labour. The second offence was punished with three months' hard labour in prison. It was further provided that where a woman was wrongfully arrested and imprisoned, she could not recover damages if the official responsible for the wrongful arrest had offered a sum of money which, in the opinion of the magistrate, was sufficient to make due amends. It will readily be seen that many wrongful arrests would probably be made. It may not be so readily realised that many of the women preferred imprisonment with hard labour rather than submission to a degrading law.

It was to fight this horror, the creation by law of white slaves, the lowering of women to the status of chattels, things, that Mrs Josephine Butler gave the best years of her life. For seventeen years this magnificent heroine toiled, at home and abroad, before she won her reward. Often her life was in danger from

the mob. More than once the building in which she spoke was attacked. Every insult that the mind of vicious man could conceive was hurled at her. Even those she sought to save from the most complete degradation often misunderstood her. But the working-men were mainly on her side—were not their daughters the victims of those terrible laws?—and in 1886 the Acts were repealed. The passing through the House of Commons this year, by an enormous majority, of an Act of Parliament to make it more difficult for the White Slave trader to carry on his infamous work of entrapping young girls for immoral purposes, and inflicting heavy penalties, including the lash, upon every one convicted of a first offence of this sort, is evidence of a rapid advance in public opinion against this class of crime, which may be due to the strenuous and devoted work of Mrs Josephine Butler and her associates.

The example of these three great women has been followed by many others, though in a smaller, quieter way. To Mrs Fry's initiative is owing the large number of consecrated women who devote themselves to the service of prisoners, either as police court missionaries and probation officers, or through such organisations as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society. To Miss Nightingale is owing the opening of a new profession for educated

women and the raising of the status of nurses to a position for which the *Sairey Gamps* of the past could not have qualified. To Mrs Josephine Butler praise must be paid for a new attitude towards old offences, a growing conviction on the part of most that purity should be a masculine as well as a feminine virtue.

Throw a stone into a pool and circle after circle in ever-widening radius reveals the place where it struck the water. The social conscience which these women succeeded in developing has extended far beyond the limits that their special work prescribed. Never was any age, and certainly never was any country, so rich in workers for the common good as this age and this country. The number of associations for human betterment is legion. The British Women's Temperance Association is not the only women's Temperance Society, but it is typical. It is an association of women who are all pledged to abstain from the use of intoxicating beverages and to persuade others to do the same. Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle, is their head, and the number of their members is 155,000. The mainspring of their activity is the knowledge that women are the greatest sufferers from the drink habit, the conviction that the solution of every other problem is complicated by this question of intemperance, and the determination to save their children from the perils of

a practice which, more than anything else, spoils the peace of households, and brings men and women to poverty and despair.

Thousands of women are labouring amongst the poor in one way or another. University women of the greatest gifts are giving up time and comfort to live amongst them in Settlements, seeking to bring a little joy into their bleak lives. Others, like the women of the Salvation Army, themselves frequently very poor, are seeking through religious channels to lift up the fallen and the despairing. These women are not afraid to go into the filthiest attics in the most dangerous neighbourhoods if they may do something to help and save the lost and degraded, and no words are too strong in which to express one's admiration for the unselfishness and tirelessness of these sisters of mercy. Other women are seeking to organise working girls and women into Trade Unions. Miss Mary M'Arthur is secretary of the Women's Trade Union League, and from her comes the news that there are now over 300,000 organised working girls in the country out of the total of 5,500,000 women and girls engaged in industrial occupations. Out of the powerlessness of the individual to command a decent standard of life for herself has grown this tremendous organisation, of which more must be said later. The Schools for Mothers which are now, happily, becoming

so common, and the Women's League of Service, founded by Dr Willey, are seeking to prevent the awful infantile mortality so prevalent in crowded cities, by feeding half-starved prospective mothers and teaching them how to feed, clothe, wash, and dress their babies.

These are only a few of the social activities in which large numbers of women are engaged; but they are typical, and a knowledge of their existence will help people to understand one, at least, of the motives behind the conscious feminist: the imperative demand that all those weapons may be placed in her hand, and all those opportunities given to her, by which she may the better and the sooner save and succour the unfortunate.

CHAPTER VII

WOMEN IN PUBLIC SERVICE

THE Women's Local Government Society exists to promote the election of women to all those public bodies for which they are at present eligible, and to secure their appointment as officials wherever their work would be of value to the public. It thus seeks to enlarge the class of women social workers

which comes third in the classification made in the previous chapter. By educating public opinion through meetings and pamphlets, by promoting Bills in Parliament, and by watching carefully Bills promoted by others, the society seeks to justify the feminist legislation already achieved and to remove the anomalies in the law respecting the status of women in local government.

The history of the progress of women in the matter of local government is an extremely interesting part of a very complicated subject. The law is not the same for every part of the British Islands. In some respects the electoral law for Ireland is more advanced than that of either England and Wales or Scotland. In other particulars Scotland has the advantage. London government differs from them all. And so a proper understanding of the position of the local government voter, male or female, is not very easy.

Prior to the passing of the Municipal Corporation Act in 1836, the local government of the country was conducted in a haphazard way, as the circumstances and conditions of time and place determined. This Act, which deprived women of the Municipal Franchise, was amended many times subsequently, the whole force and intention of these amendments being collected and expressed in the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882, which was further

amended by the Local Government Act of 1894. In the meantime, the Municipal Franchise had been granted to the women of England and Wales in 1869, to the women of Scotland in 1881, and to the women of Ireland in 1898. The English Act provides that a woman claiming to be registered as an elector must be qualified as an occupier, either as owner or tenant, must be over twenty-one years of age, must not be an alien, and must not have received poor-law relief within the preceding twelve months. Married women may not vote as joint-occupiers with their husbands for Borough Council elections, but may vote for Urban and Rural District Councils, Parish Councils, Poor Law Guardians, Metropolitan Borough Councils, and the London County Council, but not in respect of the same property. No woman is entitled to vote in any election in virtue of her ownership. Previous to the Local Government Act of 1894 a woman might vote in virtue of ownership for Poor Law Guardians, but that right has now ceased to exist.

The women of Ireland, by virtue of the Act of 1898, exercise the local government vote on exactly the same terms as men. All Parliamentary electors, and all those women who, but for their sex, would be Parliamentary electors, are Irish Local Government electors. There is no disability on married women as

such, but they may not vote in respect of the same property as their husbands.

In Scotland women may vote for School Boards, Parish Councils, Town Councils, and County Councils. They are entitled to vote for County Councils if they are owners or occupiers of property of the annual value of £4 and upwards; if they are householders (any value); if they occupy dwelling-houses as servants voting on a service qualification; or as lodgers if their unfurnished rooms are of £10 yearly rental. They may vote for Borough Councils on all the foregoing qualifications, but the property they own or occupy must be heritable property of at least £10 yearly rental. It will thus be seen that Scotland and Ireland are in advance of England in this matter.

So much for the woman voter. The vote does not, however, invariably carry the right of election. The women electors of England and Wales have the right of election to Boards of Guardians and Parish, Rural, and Urban District Councils, but are disqualified by marriage from election to Town and County Councils, except in London. A Bill is before the House of Commons at the present time which seeks to amend the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882 and the County Electors Act of 1888, by providing a

residential qualification for candidates, to be alternative with the present electoral qualification, and so to widen the area of selection of candidates by bringing in married women. Women may not vote nor be elected to the City of London Council. The number of women in England and Wales who, on March 1, 1912, occupied seats as elected persons of the various local governing bodies was 3 on County Councils, 17 on Town Councils, 9 on Metropolitan Borough Councils, 5 on Urban District Councils, 145 on Rural District Councils (acting also as Poor Law Guardians for the Unions in which their districts lie), 1175 Poor Law Guardians who are elected as such (1320 counting the Rural District Councillors), and a large number of Parish Councillors.

By the Qualifications of Women's Act of 1907, the right to stand for all those public bodies for which they may vote was extended to Scottish women. Previous to this Act they could only sit on Parish Councils and School Boards. Marriage is no disqualification for the woman candidate in Scotland, though she can neither vote nor qualify as a candidate on the same property as her husband.

In Ireland, women are not eligible as County Councillors, but they may stand for Rural and Urban District Councils, provided

they are Local Government electors, or have lived for twelve months in the district, and will continue to do so. Ireland has 3 women Town Councillors, 44 Rural District Councillors, 4 Urban District Councillors, and 66 Poor Law Guardians. Scotland has 2 Town Councillors and 44 Parish Councillors.

The story of the struggle of women to secure places on the London County Council is interesting. The London County Councils Act was passed in 1888, and, believing themselves to be eligible for election to the newly-created governing body, three distinguished women, Lady Sandhurst, Miss Cobden, and Miss Cons, submitted themselves for election, and were successful. The candidate in Brixton whom Lady Sandhurst defeated—Mr Beresford Hope—petitioned against her return on the sole ground that she was a woman. He begged that her election should be declared null and void and that he might be declared the elected person. The case was taken before the Court of Queen's Bench and judgment was given for Mr Beresford Hope on both counts. Leave was given to appeal against the judgment, and the case was taken into the full Court of Appeal. The presiding judge was the late Lord Coleridge, with whom sat five colleagues.

The women based their case on three Acts of Parliament—Lord Brougham's Act, of 1851,

which provided that in the interpretation of Acts of Parliament 'words importing the masculine gender shall be held to include the feminine unless the contrary is expressly provided'; the Municipal Corporations Act, of 1882, which contained the following clauses : Sec. 63. 'For all purposes connected with and having reference to the right to vote at Municipal Elections, words in this Act imputing the masculine gender include women.' Sec. 11. 3. 'Every person shall be qualified to be elected and to be a councillor who is at the time of election qualified to elect to the office of councillor.' In 1888, the County Councils Act incorporated these two sections of the Municipal Corporations Act.

The appeal of the women was dismissed, all the judges agreeing that the Municipal Corporations Act, by specifically stating that 'feminine' applied only in regard to the right to vote, implied that, in the matter of being voted for, women were not eligible. The Lord Brougham Act was thus contemptuously tossed aside, making it, unhappily, of non-effect for the future. It is only since the Qualifying Act of 1907 that the right to be elected to a County Council as well as to vote has been held by women.

Another curious thing happened in 1899 which was responsible for a great deal of new-born enthusiasm for woman suffrage. It was

felt by many at the time to be simple folly to win powers and privileges for women when at any time, by the careless act of men in Parliament not responsible to women, one or another of those powers might be taken away. This is what happened in 1899 and again in 1902. In 1899 was passed the London Government Act, which created a number of Boroughs in London to take the place of the Vestries. Up to that time women had been doing excellent work on the London Vestries, but they were ineligible for Borough Councils at the time the new Act was passed, and thus they were automatically turned off by the operation of this Act. In 1902, by the abolition of School Boards in England, and the substitution of Education Authorities, which were to be Committees of the County or Borough Councils, women, being eligible for School Boards, but ineligible for the new Education Authorities, were put out of positions in which they, also, were confessedly making themselves exceeding useful. These matters have, of course, been put right by the Act of 1907, but they illustrate how easily a hard-won privilege may be lost when direct representation in Parliament is denied to those concerned.

Very few people of intelligence in this country to-day would deny the usefulness of the woman on public administrative bodies.

The work of local governing bodies is in the nature of collective house-keeping. Children and education, health and sanitation, the provision of food and medicine, the care and control of the sick, have always been held to be within the province of the woman. These matters are all included in the work of District, Borough, and County Councils. A few words in detail about the powers and duties of the various public bodies to which women are eligible will show with distinctness the desirability of having women representatives to help in the administration of local affairs.

One of the most important of a County Council's duties is the provision of lunatic asylums for pauper lunatics within their area. In 1911 there were 70,000 female lunatics controlled by the County Councils of the country. In some County Council areas there are homes for inebriate women. Obviously women councillors could be of the greatest service in looking after not only the pauper women lunatics and the poor women victims of the drink habit who come under the public care, but also the female attendants who have to look after them. Pauper lunatics are under the charge of eight paid and four unpaid Lunacy Commissioners. There is nothing in the law to prevent the appointment of a woman to the post of either paid or unpaid Commissioner, but at the present moment

there is no woman on the Commission. A clever woman doctor might, with profit to the female lunatics, be appointed to such a position. It would also be a good thing if County Councils would appoint visiting committees of women, for a proper supervision of the unfortunate people who have to be controlled is better carried out for women by women.

The County Council is also the Education Authority for its area. It needs no words of eloquence and no deep wisdom to establish the case for a woman representative where the education of small children is in question. Moreover, it is an advantage to the women teachers to have an educated woman to consult on matters pertaining to the health and environment as well as the work of their charges.

In the administration of Acts of Parliament relating to foods, drugs, pure milk, and weights and measures, the County Council has most important work which is obviously quite closely related to the every-day vocation of the majority of women. The Council has likewise to carry out in part the Children's Act of 1908. Those who take charge of children under five years of age in return for money must report to the Local Authority within twenty-four hours of so doing, and come under the control of the inspectors of

the Council. The supervision of the administration of the Midwives Act is also a part of the work of the County Council; all of which duties are an extended application of the work women have been doing for ages. The looking after roads, rivers, bridges, traffic, and the like might, if it were thought necessary, be dealt with by men's committees; though even here a woman's knowledge of detail and of economical expenditure might assist in saving the rates in directions in which such saving is desirable; but from committees dealing with housing and town planning, isolation hospitals for infectious diseases, old age pensions, amusements, and public health, the absence of women is a mistake. Of course one would not suggest for a moment that every woman would be equally useful on a local governing body, nor that it is desirable that a woman should be elected because she is a woman. It is little less than a calamity when a woman is elected who is foolish and incapable; but the necessity of facing the public and explaining her views will generally operate to prevent the stupid and unintelligent woman from aspiring to public office, though it does not always have such a deterrent effect on men.

The work of Municipal Boroughs is very much like that of County Councils in many respects. The Borough Council, or County

Borough Council, which differs from the Borough Council in that it controls the interests of a population of 50,000 or more inhabitants and enjoys more powers than an ordinary Municipal Council, holds and manages the property of the town, and may, with the consent of the Local Government Board, acquire fresh property. This property includes one or more of the great services, such as water, gas, electricity, street-cars, telephones, libraries, parks, schools, milk-depots, slaughter-houses, wash-houses. It controls and supplies adequate drainage, collects refuse, provides hospitals, cemeteries, crematoriums, and inspects factories. It has the power to build houses for working-people and to close insanitary dwellings. It may adopt the Notification of Births Act, 1907, a most important piece of legislation for the nation's infant life. When a Borough is large and has its own police force, a special committee—the Watch Committee—is formed to control it, under whose authority is placed the Chief Constable, who is appointed by the Council. The number of committees is determined by the size of the town, the needs of the locality, and the number of enterprises in which the Council, on behalf of the people, is engaged; but a rapid glance along the list of these common public duties bears out again the contention that a good capable

woman can find plenty of suitable work to her hands on the Council as the elected representative of a town ward.

It is a thousand pities that the number of eligible women in England is so restricted. Capable married women are the very people to sit upon the Health, Education, Midwives, Lunacy, and Housing Committees of Town Councils; but because of their marriage these women are barred, except in London. This must be borne in mind when the critic of woman suffrage complains that so few women have come forward for public service in this way. Few women are qualified, and, to a very large extent, they belong to the class of wage earners who have no leisure for public service of this sort; and are elderly women whose days of activity are over; widows, and spinsters who have lived in their fathers' houses without responsibilities of a public sort until well advanced in years, and who come to their new duties as voters and their new powers as potential representatives with extreme reluctance and vague misgiving.

Parish Councils in England and Wales are usually looked upon as quite insignificant public bodies, engaged chiefly in taking care of the village pump. It is true that the Parish Council area is small, and that the provision of a water-supply comes within the scope of its duties; but there are other duties of a very

important character, particularly to the people affected by them. These include the appointment of overseers, who collect the rate for the poor, look after the voting registers, levy rates for education purposes, and give relief to the poor. A woman is eligible as an overseer of the poor. Under certain conditions the Parish Council has power to buy or hire land for allotments and kindred purposes. The public health, or at least the prevention of disease by the removal of nuisances, is a part of its work. The building of a village hall, and the protection of rights-of-way and village greens, as well as the repairing of foot-paths, are matters within its jurisdiction. It has power to adopt certain permissive Acts of Parliament, such as the Burial Acts, the Public Improvements Act, the Public Libraries Act, the Lighting and Watching, and Baths and Wash-houses Acts; and if these are adopted, it is the duty of the Parish Council to see that they are carried out. Parish Councils are very largely in the hands of local farmers, good and worthy men indeed, but men who customarily weigh every penny many times before they spend it, and whose natural conservatism permits them to wait until long after a public need has been felt before they begin to think of gratifying it. A business-like woman on a Parish Council would act as a spur to the activities of

these worthy representatives of the rural inhabitants.

Parish Councils have the power, also, to compel neglectful higher authorities to do their duties as the Sanitary Authorities for the district in which the areas of the Parish Councils lie. Miss Jane Escombe, of the Parish Council of Penshurst, illustrates this in her own interesting experience. Through this lady's initiative the Parish Council of which she was a member took steps to compel the District Council to provide an Isolation Hospital which was very much needed. Appeals to the Council, the local Sanitary Authority, had been in vain; but the County Council found that the District Council had failed in its obvious duty, and appointed a special committee to look into the matter, with the result that the Hospital was eventually provided. Miss Escombe was also instrumental in securing a pure and untainted water-supply for her village, and was the pioneer of decent, cheap, sanitary cottages for country workpeople. In the experience of this woman councillor, women are needed on boards of administration most because of their knowledge of detail, their tendency to economy in expenditure, and their intimate acquaintance with the needs of ordinary everyday life.

Few will dispute the title of women to

serve as Guardians of the Poor. It is recognised that a workhouse is simply a large household, with all the ordinary, average household's needs. Every workhouse contains young children and old people, all of whom require the tender care of efficient, sensible women. Every workhouse has sick people in it, and often imbeciles. These, when women and girls, should be in the care of women. The maternity wards are essentially the charge of the women Guardians. But the story here is the same as before and need not be repeated. A woman who has effected more for the improvement of Poor Law administration than any one man is Miss Twining. Mr and Mrs Sydney Webb would have done more if public opinion and Parliament would have supported them with sufficient enthusiasm, but their proposals for the abolition of the workhouse as at present constituted and the introduction of a new scheme for dealing with the poor were apparently too drastic, and the old order continues. But Miss Twining effected a number of reforms of great worth. It is recorded of her that she was the admiration of the matron of the workhouse controlled by her Board of Guardians, for she left nothing untended, and 'ferreted everything out.' She secured the appointment of visiting committees of ladies. She was instrumental in the formation of the

Workhouse Infirmary Association ; before that time, ignorant pauper women had, with deplorable results, acted as nurses to the poor patients. It was largely due to Miss Twining that the Local Government Board appointed the first woman Poor Law Inspector in 1871. Amid all her other activities she found time to write forty tracts and pamphlets for the guidance of those who would, she hoped, follow in the way she had taken, and advance the cause of the poor by serving them as their Guardians.

One of the most useful works to which women can turn their attention is education and the education system. Women in Scotland are eligible to serve on School Boards. Miss Flora Stevenson was the woman chairman of the Edinburgh School Board, and her name is affectionately remembered by her fellow-citizens for the work she accomplished. Councillor Margaret Ashton, member of the Manchester City Council, is one of the most effective and devoted members of any public body. Her chief concern is education. She is a woman of great gifts and widest sympathies, and the special interests of women and girls always command her undivided attention. She is actively interested, too, in the provision of municipal lodging-houses for women, the housing of the poor, and the payment to municipal women servants of a living wage.

The concerns of the school children and the women school teachers touch her most deeply perhaps—and the severest critic of feminism would scarcely dare to risk his reputation for ordinary intelligence by saying that this sphere was not a suitable one for a woman. Lighting, ventilation, the provision of suitable apparatus, the appointment of suitable teachers, the hearing of those teachers' complaints, suggestions, and plans for their scholars; schools for defective children, higher education, syllabuses, wages and salaries—all these things make up the concern of a member of the Education Committee; and since the majority of school children are girls and the majority of elementary school teachers are women, the Education Committee of every Education Authority should never be without women members. The law, indeed, provides that a certain proportion shall be women.

A new sphere of work has been opened to women by the creation of public positions under Parliament and the local executives. Women Inspectors of Factories have been appointed by the Home Office to examine the conditions of work in the nation's workshops and factories. They are required to travel about the country and pay visits to the factories to discover if the machinery is tended with due regard to the safety of the

worker, to see that the ventilation and sanitary provisions are good, that the hours of work and the holidays are in accordance with Government requirements, and that the special provisions for children and young persons are carried out. No young person (boy or girl under eighteen) may work at night, nor for more than 55½ hours a week in a textile factory. The salary for the ordinary Factory Inspector is £200, rising by annual instalments to £300. The Senior Inspectors begin with £300 and rise to £400. Travelling expenses also are allowed. There are seventeen women Factory Inspectors, of whom the distinguished head is Miss A. M. Anderson, a clever, capable woman of great tact and firmness, with the saving sense of humour and the fine knowledge of human nature so absolutely indispensable in a calling of this sort.

The Home Office has appointed a Lady Inspector of Prisons and a Lady Sub-inspector of Industrial Schools. There are also six women Probation Officers who work in connection with the Juvenile Courts in London, under the Probation of Offenders Act of 1907. Under the Education Office there are twenty-five women Inspectors of Education, their Chief being the Hon. Maude Lawrence. These Inspectors look after the education of children and the training of teachers in

schools and colleges receiving Government grants.

For the inspection of infirmaries, nurseries, maternity wards, and pauper schools, six women have been appointed by the Local Government Board. Sixteen women hold posts as Relieving Officers, and it is believed that more may be appointed at an early date. It is said that the Local Government Board does not favour the appointment of women by Boards of Guardians to the post of Relieving Officer, because the duty includes the painful and disagreeable task of superintending the removal of pauper lunatics to the asylum. Poor Law Authorities have in some cases appointed women as Medical Officers.

The London County Council has appointed women to serve as Inspectors under its Education, Public Health, and Public Control Departments. Under the Education Department there are ten women Inspectors serving as assistants to Divisional and District Inspectors who are, at present, all men. Eight of these women inspect in special subjects, such as needlework and domestic science. Miss Philippa Fawcett holds a unique position under the County Council as Principal Director in the Higher Education Branch of the Education Department. Two women hold posts as Inspectors under the Midwives Act. They must be unmarried or widowed, and

their maximum salary is £300. The midwives are under their charge, and are required by them to be sober, clean, and careful. Seven women Inspectors are appointed under the Infant Life Protection Act. The purpose of this Act is to secure public control of those people who make a livelihood out of the care of young children. Those who look after these children under five and keep them longer than forty-eight hours from their parents must be registered. The business of discovering those who evade registration is done by men Inspectors. The women Inspectors control those who are registered. The average number of visits which one of these women Inspectors makes in a year is 1300, and the results they gain are very encouraging. Under the Shops Act there are three women Inspectors of the London County Council. The duty of these women is to see that no young person under eighteen is employed for more than 74 hours a week, that seats are provided at the rate of one for each three assistants, that sanitation, lighting, etc., are good.

Women Sanitary Inspectors are employed in twenty-three out of the twenty-seven Metropolitan Boroughs, and a considerable number by the towns in the provinces. In the latter cases the salaries are much smaller than in London, but, fortunately, the cost of living is smaller also. A considerable impetus

was given to the appointment of women to posts of this sort by the London County Council Act of 1909, which granted to Sanitary Authorities the power to appoint Health Visitors 'for the purpose of giving to persons in poor circumstances advice as to the proper nurture, care, and management of young children, and of promoting cleanliness and discharging such other duties as may be assigned to them in accordance with the provisions of this section.' In view of the pressing question of infant mortality it is gratifying to know that the number of qualified women appointed to take up this important work is increasing. There are four Health Visitors in Durham, working under the Durham County Council, six in Warwickshire, four in Worcestershire, and four in Leicestershire. It is important that the work should be extended, and that the qualifications for this important work should be maintained at such a height as to attract women of education and refinement, as well as of tact and patience.

The post of School Attendance Officer is open to women, but at present this work is done by only four women in London.

Under the recently-enacted Insurance Act, women hold positions as Insurance Commissioners at a salary of £1000 per annum. This is the only case of equal pay for equal

work in any department of Government where women and men are engaged on the same work, and as these appointments are of recent date, it may perhaps be taken as a gratifying instance of the advance of educated official opinion in the direction of equity.

Women have from time to time served their country as members of Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees. These are not salaried posts; but they are offices of very high honour, to which people are appointed by the King and the Secretary of State. Women sat on the Commission of Inquiry into the condition of Education in 1867; Mrs Fawcett was appointed a member of the Royal Commission which went to South Africa to inquire into conditions in the Concentration Camps during the Boer War; Mrs Sydney Webb and Mrs Bosanquet were members of the important Poor Law Commission; Lady Frances Balfour and Mrs Tennant were members of the Royal Commission on Divorce; and Mrs Streatfeild and Miss Haldane sit at present on the Royal Commission to inquire into Civil Service appointments.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

IT would be as well to forestall criticism and say with great clearness that feminism and woman suffrage are not the same thing, though both, admittedly, are the offspring of the same idea. Feminism seeks to remove all barriers which oppose the perfect freedom of women as human beings, conventional, social, political, and economic. Woman suffrage would break down one of these barriers only—the political barrier. The difference between woman suffrage and feminism is one of degree rather than kind, but there are differences of degree that constitute almost a difference in kind, and this is a case in point. The supporters of the woman suffrage movement would very much like to see man's monopoly of the voting broken down, but would, in the main, shrink from still further enlarging feminine opportunities. On the other hand, the true feminist regards woman suffrage as a step, and only a very short step, in the direction of woman's freedom.

Nor is it true to say, as is frequently said, that the woman suffrage movement is identical

with the Socialist movement, and that woman suffragists are invariably Socialists. Many woman suffragists are Socialists, but it is also true that many Socialists are anti-suffragists. Mr Belfort Bax is one of the foremost Socialists of his time, but he is a bitter and uncompromising opponent of feminism in all its branches. Woman suffrage might be established by law next week, but the system of society known as Socialism would still be far away. Many Socialists believe that the establishment of woman suffrage would actually put back the cause of Socialism for generations, and for that reason give only a reluctant support to the woman suffrage movement. Socialism stands for the public ownership of public necessities and the organisation of these for the uses of the people. Socialists are to be found everywhere, though, no doubt, in fewer numbers than in other political movements, who, when it comes to be a question of State privileges and not State duties, are as diffident about including women in the term *people* as any capitalist opponent of woman suffrage might be.

The reason for the common confusion of thought in relation to the movements—Socialism and Woman Suffrage—is to be found in the fact that Socialism, as a democratic movement, is bound in the very nature

of things to support the demand of women for their enfranchisement. But it is not recognised that the women of the suffrage movement are not bound to accept the teaching and the political principles of the Socialist or any other political party. The woman suffrage movement stands solely for woman suffrage, and supports or opposes a party according as it thinks its action will gain or lose support for its own object.

The woman suffrage movement is undoubtedly one of the great movements for human freedom of which the French Revolution was the progenitor. Men and women have not yet come to a real understanding of the value to humanity at large of the gift which it received from the French Revolution. The horrors and excesses with which the Revolution was accompanied, and by which it was disgraced, have obscured for the average man and woman the real and inward significance of the great cataclysm. The comparative freedom that the people of this land enjoy to-day is in no small measure due to the new thought and the new idealism which came to birth during the sorrowful days of that stormy period. Mary Wollstonecraft was the messenger of the new thought to this country, in so far as its application to women was concerned; and with the appearance of her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* began the

sowing which has brought forth so bountiful a harvest for the womanhood of Great Britain.

The modern woman suffrage movement in this country apparently dates back to the year 1867, but its real beginnings were in 1819. In that year occurred the great event of the campaign for the extension of the franchise, conducted by the Radicals. A meeting was held in St Peter's Fields in Manchester to demand adult suffrage. A large and orderly crowd collected from every part of the county to hear the great leader of the people, Orator Hunt. Those responsible for law and order, fearing a riot, had sent down the Lancashire and Cheshire Yeomanry with orders to stop the meeting and arrest the speaker. The soldiers lost their heads, and charged the unresisting people, with the unhappy result that many men and women were seriously wounded by the soldiers' bayonets, or trampled upon by the feet of the crowd. Six or seven people were actually killed. In the Manchester Reform Club is to be seen to-day a picture of the scene of the massacre, which is dedicated to 'Henry Hunt, Esq., and the Female Reformers of Manchester and the adjacent towns.' The picture shows women exposed to every risk, and suffering the same horrors as their male colleagues.

In response to this wild and strenuous agitation for electoral reform, the Reform Act of

1832 was passed. By the wording of that Act statutory disability was first placed upon women through the insertion of the words 'male person.' Before 1832 women were not prevented by any definite statement of an Act of Parliament from taking part in an election, if properly qualified. There is considerable doubt as to whether any woman did actually vote as a matter of right before this period. In the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century the number of male electors was very small, and the difficulties of an election, carried out openly and without the protection the Ballot Act has since afforded, was enough to disconcert all but the very boldest, and make them timid about using their privilege as electors.

In the year 1850 an Act of Parliament known as Lord Brougham's Act was passed, which provided that in all Acts of Parliament 'words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed to include the feminine unless the contrary is expressly provided.' When a further extension of the franchise took place in 1867, the word 'man' was employed in the Act, instead of the words 'male person' used in the wording of the Act of 1832. This gave heart to the woman suffragists, who interpreted the new Reform Act in the light of Lord Brougham's liberal measure. Thousands of women all over the country, but notably

in Manchester and Salford, where they were organised and led by that stalwart suffragist, Miss Lydia Becker, sought to have their names registered as Parliamentary electors. Most of the Revising Barristers to whom they made application refused to put their names upon the register. Others interpreted the new legislation as did the women themselves. In order to settle the question a legal decision was sought, and four selected cases were tried before the Court of Common Pleas. Judgment was given against the women, Lord Chief Justice Bovill and his colleagues deciding that, although for all ordinary purposes the word 'man,' when employed in an Act of Parliament, must be held to include women, this did not apply when State privileges were in question. By this ruling it became established that a woman must pay taxes when these are imposed by the State, and suffer the penalty of the law when she breaks the laws made by Parliament, but that she may not vote for the men who assess those taxes and make those laws.

This famous decision, known as the *Chorlton v. Lings* decision, had the effect of stimulating the woman suffragists of the country in a very remarkable degree, as it revealed the strength of masculine prejudice, and showed quite clearly that the fight for the vote would be a long, uphill struggle.

The passing of the Divorce Act of 1857 also contributed to the strength of the demand for the political emancipation of women, for by that Act the double standard of morality was established by law, making it impossible for a woman to divorce her husband for the grossest infidelities unaccompanied with cruelty or desertion, whilst it permitted relief for a husband for one offence of this sort by his wife.

The great nineteenth century champion of the rights of women was John Stuart Mill, whose book, *The Subjection of Women*, has been of the greatest value in creating an enlightened public opinion on the whole woman question. John Stuart Mill was first sent to Parliament as a known woman suffragist, for he made no secret of his views on the subject when asked by a delegation to contest the seat for the city of Westminster in the Radical interests in 1865. He was elected, and became the champion of the woman suffrage cause on the floor of the House of Commons. He moved an amendment to the Reform Bill of 1867, and by his eloquence commanded the attention of the House from the beginning to the end of his speech. The amendment was lost by 73 to 186, but the result was far better than the supporters of the cause outside imagined it would be. For the first and last time in his

life, John Bright voted for woman suffrage, moved thereto by the sincerity and earnestness as well as the eloquence of Mill. His well-known objection to woman suffrage was his fear that the power to vote would carry the power to sit, and he disliked the thought of the woman Member of Parliament. Mill also presented to the House the first woman suffrage petition, which contained 1499 names, some of them the names of the most distinguished women of the times, Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Mary Somerville, and Mrs Josephine Butler.

Though the women were defeated in the Commons in 1867, and in the Law Courts in 1868, the discussion which arose out of these two events resulted in the creation of a more enlightened public opinion upon the question of the status of women. Many doors were opened to them, not without much effort on their part, which were previously closed. In 1869 the Municipal Franchise was restored to women, and in 1870, by the passing of the Education Act of that year, they were made eligible for membership of School Boards, to which several brilliant women were at once elected. The first Married Woman's Property Act, which gave a married woman the right to her own earnings, was passed in the same year, 1870. In 1867 and 1871 University education was made possible for women, and

in 1876 the medical profession was, by Act of Parliament, thrown open to them.

There is little doubt in the minds of those familiar with the history of events in the women's movement of the last century that these great measures of justice were largely the outcome of the woman suffrage propaganda. They were in the nature of sopas, thrown to the women to induce them to forgo the larger privileges. It was hoped by a partial recognition of grievances and a partial removal of disabilities to make the demand for the Parliamentary vote less justifiable than it otherwise would appear in the eyes of the public. This behaviour on the part of politicians might, and does, effectively deceive the average citizen, who, seeing Parliament interesting itself in women's questions, feels his sense of justice satisfied. But not so those who have worked in the political women's movement. They have never felt tempted to give up their demand for full citizenship; partly because they know how hard it is for an unrepresented class to wring beneficial legislation from those not answerable to it; partly because they know that the privileges and rights they have won are not secure without the power which the vote carries to protect them; but most of all, because they look upon the vote as a symbol of deep spiritual

things and the hall-mark of their individuality.

Between 1867 and 1884 the suffragists had conducted a strenuous campaign all over the country, for they foresaw that the country would not remain content with the enfranchisement of the working-men in the boroughs. An agitation for the widening of the County Franchise led up to the election of 1880, and the new Liberal Government was returned pledged to deal with the electoral laws at the earliest opportunity. A new hope came into the hearts of the women, and they worked untiringly to secure their enfranchisement in the new Parliament. About this time was formed the first women's organisation of a political party character. The Primrose League was established on the initiative of certain well-known Conservative politicians, including Lord Randolph Churchill, with the object of training women to serve the interests of Conservative political candidates during the elections. The women were taught to canvass, bring in voters, look up removals, sit in committee-rooms and give advice, make speeches, and do any number of hard, political duties for those men with whose ideas they sympathised. Similarly, the Women's Liberal Federation was formed in 1886, with the object of doing for their side in politics what the Primrose League had done

so admirably for the Conservatives. It is laughable to note that the necessity for bringing in women to assist arose from the fact that sufficient men could not be found to do the necessary work after the passing of the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, which made the payment of canvassers illegal. The women have since done this hard and thankless work for the men without reward of any kind, and it is fully admitted by politicians of all sorts that the political party which cannot command the work of intelligent women is in a most unfortunate and disadvantageous position. The admission of women to this kind of work has considerably weakened, if it has not utterly destroyed, the favourite argument of politicians against the proposal to enfranchise women, that women ought not to be allowed to engage in the dirty and disagreeable work of politics. It would be too stupidly illogical to accept the work of women and then, on the ground that the work was unsuitable for them, deny them the opportunity of doing what they were instructed to persuade men to do.

Not all Liberal women are in favour of woman suffrage. For many years after the formation of the Federation, woman suffrage was rejected by the Annual Meeting when it was brought up for discussion. Perhaps this was very largely due to the influence of its

first president, Mrs Gladstone, who was an anti-suffragist. It was certainly due to the influence of the wives of politicians who saw in the Liberal Federation only an organisation for helping Liberal men. Many enlightened Liberal women members held the view that, if they were good enough to work for Liberal men they were good enough to vote as Liberal women for Liberal measures, and proceeded to educate their organisation on these lines; with the result that in 1883 there was a split in the Women's Liberal Federation, the National Women's Liberal Association being formed. This body differs from its parent in that it declines to make woman suffrage a test question for Liberal candidates, but supports all candidates satisfactory to the Party Caucus. The present President of the Women's Liberal Federation is Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle, a strong and stalwart supporter of woman suffrage.

Since the year 1869, fourteen Bills and a number of resolutions in favour of woman suffrage have been before the House of Commons, and seven have passed their second reading. Since 1886 there has been a majority in the House of Commons pledged to woman suffrage. This satisfactory state of things is due in a large measure to the hard and patient work of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. This Society

was formed by the amalgamation in 1868 of five suffrage societies in the cities of Manchester, London, Edinburgh, Bristol, and Birmingham respectively. At the present time (1913) the National Union comprises 402 affiliated organisations, and new ones are springing up every week. This is the oldest and largest of the many woman suffrage societies in existence, though other societies have made themselves more widely known by the use of unusual methods. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies has proceeded along educational lines, and by means of peaceful propaganda has sought to win public opinion to its side, believing that in public opinion lies the most effective weapon.

In size and importance, the only rival to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies is the Women's Social and Political Union, founded in 1903, by Mrs Pankhurst. This organisation has become notorious for the use of violence in the prosecution of its campaign; but it did not begin its existence in this way. When first the 'militant' suffrage movement came into being it was the proud boast of its leader and founder that its members cheerfully offered themselves to the violence of others, but committed no violence upon other people. They made martyrs from amongst themselves, but declined to make victims of other people. When in 1906

they and others, who formed a large and important delegation to the then Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, were told that no pledge could be made on behalf of the Liberal Government that a measure for woman suffrage would be introduced by it during its lifetime, the members of the Social and Political Union determined on open warfare against the Government. They were fortified in their decision by the Prime Minister, himself a sympathiser with the aims of the women, who recommended them to 'pester' those responsible for the opposition to this question. The first acts of militancy took the form of questioning Cabinet Ministers at their public meetings. Sometimes these questions were courteously answered, but generally they were tossed aside by the chairman with laughter, or with words calculated to wound or enrage the questioner. Frequently the women who questioned were roughly put out of the meetings. Then when they found they could get no serious answers to their questions the women turned to heckling the Ministers, and interjected, after the fashion of men, more or less relevant observations. For this they were brutally handled by enraged stewards, and suffered every indignity at their hands. Some were charged, sentenced, and imprisoned for creating disturbances for which they were really not responsible.

The new Prime Minister, Mr Asquith, declined to receive a deputation from this body of women, whereupon began the series of deputations to the House, witnessed by tens of thousands of people, in which the women came into conflict with the police, and by them and the mob suffered the rudest violence. Hundreds have been imprisoned for refusing to obey the police. Attempts to treat them as common criminals have been steadily resisted from the first, and to gain the first-class treatment, granted to certain male political prisoners, the women adopted the hunger-strike, which a baffled Government met with the filthy practice of forcible-feeding.

The reversal of the early policy of the Union, and the substitution of a policy of attack upon property, both Government property and that of private citizens, was made in 1911, when Mr Asquith's proposal to enfranchise more men whilst ignoring the long-standing claims of the women was made. It was felt by thousands of women that no more might reliance be placed upon the fair-mindedness and the honour of politicians, ever ready to promise, but willing always to break the spirit, if not the letter, of their promises to women. The Prime Minister engaged to accept a woman suffrage amendment to the promised Reform Bill, if carried by the Commons, and to make it an integral

part of the Bill, having all the Government machinery at its command; but the Women's Social and Political Union was not able to believe that there was any value in such an offer, and their policy of relentless opposition to the members of the Government continued, accompanied by ever-increasing acts of law-breaking and disorder.

The argument which the militant suffragists use in defence of their behaviour is that nearly fifty years of lawful methods have produced no result; that Governments are amenable only to pressure; that men have always adopted methods of violence and destruction before each Reform Bill was enacted; that the public, through its indifference, ought to be roused by attacks on its property, which is the thing it cherishes the most; that for whatever is done by the militants, the Government is responsible, and that the end, in this case, justifies the means.

The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies has repeatedly dissociated itself from this method of propaganda. It does not approve of the use of violence. It believes the injury of innocent people is wrong and indefensible, and that it can do no good to the cause. In reply to the argument of the militants, it says that fifty years of lawful agitation have produced very great results in those improvements in the status of women

recounted on previous pages; that the pressure to which Governments are amenable need not be the pressure of physical violence, but may be supplied by the pressure which the defeat of their candidates at by-elections constitutes, and by the withdrawal of active help and money support from the Government's party.

The argument that because men have used violence in the past for the accomplishment of their purpose women should use it in the present is not a good one. Those methods were used by unlettered men, hungry men with starving wives and families, in hot moments of terrible indignation, and what was pardonable in these circumstances is not pardonable in educated women with every facility for education and with the enormous weapon of passive resistance at their command with which to bring men and Governments to reason. The indifference of the general public is unquestioned, but this is an argument for further propaganda and not for stone-throwing. Quite half the public is composed of women, and these women must be converted. The Government cannot be held responsible for the acts of sane people, endowed with free-will, and no end is justified which involves the sacrifice of innocent people against their wills by arbitrary, self-elected judges.

The two large suffrage organisations make the same demand, as does every suffrage society in existence, including the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, the Church of England Suffrage Society, the Free Church Suffrage League, the Catholic Suffrage Society, the Women's Freedom League, the Women Writers' Suffrage League, the Actresses' Suffrage Society, and the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association. This demand is, and has consistently been, votes for women on the same terms as men. They say in effect to the present voters: 'Make your qualifications for the franchise precisely what you choose, but we ask for equality of treatment. If Manhood Suffrage should become law, the fullness of our demand is Womanhood Suffrage. If the present qualifications be retained we shall be satisfied to come in on the same basis.'

The difficulty of the situation in the House lies in the fact that the woman suffrage supporters there are not united on any specific form of woman suffrage. The Conciliation Committee, composed of members of all parties, was formed to devise some measure which would secure the support of the largest number of woman suffragists. The Conciliation Bill was a proposal to give votes to women householders. The first time this Bill came before the House it was carried on

second reading by a very large majority, 255 voting for and 88 against. This was in 1911. In 1912 practically the same Bill was defeated by 222 to 208—a majority of 14 against the Bill. This was due to the absence of fourteen Labour members who were away on business connected with the coal strike, to the solid opposition of the Irish Party, who feared, in the interests of Home Rule, to embarrass the Government, and to the unprincipled behaviour of certain members of Parliament, former supporters, who voted against the Bill to annoy the militant society, which had broken a number of plate-glass windows as a protest, thereby punishing the innocent with the guilty.

The present position of the suffrage movement is this: Those who are militant, or who sympathise with militancy, demand a Government measure of full Adult Suffrage, and will rest content with nothing less. To this end they pester Cabinet Ministers at public meetings, destroy property, oppose Liberal candidates and all those who, by their support in the House, help to keep the Government in power. This includes a systematic attack upon the Labour Party and its candidates, although the Labour Party's record upon this question has been excellent. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies stands for equal suffrage also; but it will accept as

an instalment anything that the House might choose to give. After the loss of the opportunity which had been promised on the Reform Bill of 1912, the Union decided to reject the offer of facilities for the private Bill, and to demand a Government measure. The present by-election policy of the National Union, whereby satisfactory Labour candidates are helped before all others, is simply an extension of their old policy of helping their best friends. Now, the attitude of the party to which the candidate belongs, as well as the individual opinions of the candidate, is taken into consideration; and since woman suffrage is a part of the Labour Party's programme, and no other party has yet adopted it, the Labour candidate receives the support of the National Union if his personal views and promises are deemed sufficiently satisfactory.

Amongst suffrage societies, the Men's League for Women's Suffrage deserves cordial mention. It was founded in 1907 to give an opportunity to those men in sympathy with the women's claims to do something to help them. Its honoured president is the Earl of Lytton, and amongst its vice-presidents are the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, Earl Russell, Dr Clifford, Sir John Cockburn, Izrael Zangwill, Sir Alfred Mond, M.P., Forbes Robertson, the Rev. John Hunter, and Philip Snowden, M.P.

By means of meetings, publications, and petitions it seeks, as an independent society, to advance the women's cause, and is ready at any moment to lend a hand to the women whenever speakers are wanted for their platforms or stewards for their meetings. The Men's League is held in high esteem by the various woman suffrage societies, and has engaged public interest by allying itself with other Leagues in the formation of an International Men's League for Woman Suffrage, thus emphasising the world-wide character of the cause for which they are striving.

The woman suffrage question in this country now occupies a position from which time cannot dislodge it, except to settle it in a way satisfactory to the woman suffragists. It has become a question of very practical politics. No Parliament of the future will dare to play with it as it has done in the past. Nothing but the granting of their prayer will allay the agitation in the country. Public opinion is very rapidly coming to the side of the unenfranchised sex. During the last few years numerous societies not strictly suffrage have petitioned Parliament for this reform. These include the British Women's Temperance Association (155,000 members), the Scottish Temperance Union (42,000), the Women's Liberal Federation, the National

Union of Women Workers, the Headmistresses' Association, the University Teachers, the Assistant Mistresses, the Registered Nurses, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Manchester Women's Trades and Labour Council.

Resolutions in favour of the Conciliation Bill, which proposed to give votes to women householders, were passed by 149 County, Borough, or District Councils, 49 Trades Councils, and 36 Trade Unions. In addition, the Annual Congress of the Labour Party, which has made woman suffrage a part of its programme, passed a resolution in which it declared that the Reform Bill would not be acceptable if, on the third reading, it did not include women. The Independent Labour Party went further, and, at its Annual Congress, directed its Parliamentary representatives to vote against the third reading of the Reform Bill if it did not include women. The Co-operative movement, which has two millions and a half of members, has also declared for equal suffrage for men and women.

Since 1851 nearly two thousand woman suffrage petitions, containing the names of more than one million petitioners, have been presented to the House of Commons. These include an Appeal in 1896, signed by 257,000 women, and a Declaration signed by 52,000 working and professional women in 1906.

But the most remarkable petitions were those presented in 1909 and 1910, which were signed by 280,000 men who were all Parliamentary voters. In Barnsley 7550 voters signed the women's petition, and in Blackburn 6463 Parliamentary electors petitioned for woman suffrage. Perhaps the most striking petition presented was one from Sheffield, signed by 5020 men, all voters, in a constituency which is represented by a member who was returned by only 3521 votes. These signatures of voters were secured by workers in 250 out of a total of 670 Parliamentary divisions, so that it is obvious that the number of petitioners would have been much greater had the work been carried into every constituency. In 1911, 1800 electors of the University of London signed a Memorial to the Prime Minister protesting against the exclusion of women members of the University from the Parliamentary franchise.

The number of meetings that have been held during the last six years on behalf of woman suffrage is incalculable, but more than 5000 indoor meetings are known to have taken place, including a large number of Albert Hall demonstrations—in addition to a Hyde Park meeting attended by half a million people. During the same period nearly £250,000 have been raised for their work by the various suffrage societies.

No other cause and no other movement has made such progress in so short a time as the movement for the political enfranchisement of women. The chief stumbling-block in the way of Parliamentary success is the fear of politicians that their respective parties may suffer at the hands of the new voters, and that they themselves may be the first to be called upon to endure defeat at the polls when women vote. This fear, and masculine prejudice, are the two great obstacles which have to be overcome, but history reveals the fact that prejudice has been strong before, and that it has had to go down before the onslaught of enlightened public opinion.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANTI-SUFFRAGISTS

A CAUSE which approaches the consummation of its hopes invariably rouses to the highest pitch of effort the forces which are against it. The battle is frequently the fiercest just before the victory is won. It is thus with the woman suffrage movement. Until the year 1908 the opposition to the political enfranchisement of women had been feeble and entirely unorganised. The most important protest was made in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1889, by

three brilliant Englishwomen—Mrs Humphry Ward, Mrs Creighton, and Miss Beatrice Potter (now Mrs Sydney Webb)—who declared that ‘the emancipating process has now reached the limits fixed by the physical constitution of women.’ Since that time two of these ladies have found reason to change their views and have publicly declared themselves in favour of woman suffrage. No words of admiration of their courage could embellish an act so fine and courageous as this, but it was entirely in harmony with the known character of these two distinguished women, who showed by their action their belief that ‘a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.’

The organisation of anti-suffrage sentiment began in 1908 with the formation of a women’s anti-suffrage society headed by Mrs Humphry Ward. A similar men’s society, formed immediately afterwards, was amalgamated with the women’s in 1910, under the presidency of the Earl of Cromer. The National League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage began its career with the single ostensible object of rigorously opposing the extension of the Parliamentary suffrage to women; but on discovering that a merely negative programme and policy win little sympathy with the majority of people, they added to their object that of encouraging the activities of women in connection with local government, and of

increasing the number of women representatives on those public bodies which deal with the domestic and social affairs of the community. It is simple truth to say that the latter half of the anti-suffragist programme receives but scant attention, whilst all attention is given to the campaign against votes for women.

The methods of the anti-suffragists have been copied from the non-militant suffragists. With a fine disdain of logic they have proclaimed that the sphere of woman is the home, and have come out of the home to prove it ! They have even urged the formation of classes in which women may be taught to combat the argument of the suffrage antagonists. They publish a monthly magazine and write letters to the newspapers. They hold public meetings and demonstrations, to which, however, only known sympathisers usually are welcomed. They approach members of Parliament, and seek through personal influence to win support in the House of Commons. They have taken a canvass of women municipal voters in several provincial towns, and declare that they have demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt that the majority of women do not want the vote. The suffragists have canvassed many of the same towns, with totally different results. Sometimes the canvass was made by post card and sometimes by

visitors, some paid and others voluntary, to the houses of the women voters; but whatever the method of approach, the wise person will not allow herself to be greatly influenced by either result. In making a canvass everything depends upon the wording of the question as to what result is obtained. It is well known that many women signed the anti-suffragist petition under the impression that they were being asked to protest against lawlessness. Others signed it because they were invited to say if they thought the government of the country ought to be handed over to women. It is plain that a negative answer to this question might reasonably be given by one who is in absolute sympathy with granting the vote to tax-paying women.

The coming into being of an organisation to oppose woman suffrage might be thought by the superficial observer to be a catastrophe to the woman suffrage movement. On the contrary, the suffrage has made its most remarkable progress since the inauguration of the anti-suffrage campaign. Opposition is not the most serious fact in any struggle based upon principle. The most deadly thing in the prosecution of a political or moral cause is the indifference of the people most concerned. The general indifference of women to their own enfranchisement is used as an argument against woman suffrage by the anti-suffragists.

They are never weary of pointing out that the opposition of the class it is proposed to enfranchise is the unique feature of the present campaign which warrants the withholding of the vote. The argument is not a good one. It might be admitted that a very large proportion of women are either against the suffrage or entirely indifferent about it. But the question is not whether women are against the suffrage for themselves or not: it is, rather, *why* should women be against their own enfranchisement.

It is probably true that, in the past, no men of any class it was sought to enfranchise organised themselves to defeat this object. This may be accounted for by the fact that they were invited to do what had been done by men, in smaller or larger numbers, from the days of Simon de Montfort. It was no new idea to them, but simply the application to a larger number of people of an established principle, the right of men to govern themselves. It is false to say that those who were not free have never fought against their own enfranchisement. Thousands of black men fought against the North in the American Civil War, preferring a life of pampered slavery to the unknown joys and terrors of freedom. The analogy, unflattering though it may appear, is not to be drawn between the men and the women of Great Britain, but between

the white women of this country and the black men of the United States in the days of the Civil War.

Of course, it is not suggested for a moment that the parallel is perfect. It is sound only in this one particular, viz., that those who have never known freedom must not be expected to know the value of freedom. The worst feature of black slavery was not the physical cruelty, but the soul-hurt of it. A slave is not a slave when he hates his chains and seeks to cast them aside; but he is a slave indeed when he loves his slavery and declines to be free when freedom is offered him. The argument that, because some women do not want the vote all women should be denied it, is both foolish and unfair. It is unfair to the women who want the vote; but it is much more cruel to the women who do not want the vote. The women who want the vote, which is the symbol to them of eternal things, are, by their aspirations, saved from the spiritual decay that comes to souls that sleep; but, for their own sakes, the women who do not want the vote ought to be compelled to have it, with all that it implies, in order that they may learn through its possession and its use a deeper self-respect than many of them have hitherto developed.

If the argument that men and women ought not to have what they do not want is a sound

one, then all social legislation should cease. It is safe to say that most of the far-reaching measures of social reform on the Statute Book at the present time were hateful to large numbers of men, probably the majority in most cases, before they were enacted. The fear of increasing rates and taxes operates frequently to prevent much-needed legislation or administration. People can live in slums until they come to like them better than clean streets and good houses. Men can be out of work until they begin to hate work. A wise community will not say in these cases that, because certain individuals will not work, like to live in insanitary dwellings, or object to paying rates for beneficent purposes, they shall not work, nor be compelled to live in good houses, nor to subscribe in proportion to their means to measures for the common good.

Women who do not want the vote, object because they have been taught to object. For many generations women have been told that politics was not their sphere, that public questions were not their concern, that to be actively interested in matters outside the home was undignified and unwomanly; and they have believed these things, and do believe them. They are afraid, too, of losing the esteem and affection of those dear to them if they interest themselves in public

questions. A very beautiful and tender sentiment prevents some of them from helping the cause of woman suffrage. They are afraid of sacrificing something of their finer essence, some quality of softness, some refinement, some power to heal and help and soothe which has been their crowning glory and their gift to their kind. Others, more selfish, fear the new duties and responsibilities that will come upon them, and prefer the life of luxurious ease which is theirs to enjoy without the vote. But whatever the personal reason for their reluctance to endorse woman suffrage, or their positive opposition to the enfranchisement of their sex, they are only responding to their environment, an environment which has never favoured, as a natural right, the opening of new doors to women.

It is difficult to understand the opposition of highly-cultured women to this reform. They, above all, are qualified by training for the exercise of this responsibility. It is satisfactory to know that very few women of this sort are on the anti-suffrage side, but there are some, and their position is difficult to comprehend. They are able to command for themselves by their special ability or social position almost unlimited influence over legislators. Through their books and their speeches they have the power to persuade, and the opportunity to influence, denied to

the great mass of womankind. It is painful to have to believe that such women are moved to opposition by a spirit of selfishness, pursuing a dog-in-the-manger policy for some narrow and selfish end. But it is exceedingly difficult for the average person to come to any other conclusion. One does not envy their treatment at the hands of posterity.

The stock argument of the anti-suffragists, and, judging from the number of occasions on which it is used, the one upon which they appear to rely the most, is the physical force argument; the argument that women cannot fight and, therefore, should not vote. It is, of course, a matter of common knowledge that the political vote in this country does not go along with fighting capacity. Not one in ten of the men who vote can fight, or would be of any use if called upon to fight. Old men may vote, and lame and sick men, but they could in no circumstances be expected to fight; and the State could not spare from its service in other ways the accumulated wisdom of its veterans, or the gifts of other sorts of its physically disabled citizens. In the last resort they would try to fight, but only in the same way that every woman in similar straits would try, and they would be even less qualified to do so than strong and healthy women.

When this argument is used it is imagined

that, in certain circumstances, the will of a majority of the men of the country will be opposed by the will of the majority of women, as expressed through the vote; that the men will not tolerate a state of things like that; that physical force would be employed by the men to compel the women to disfranchise themselves, and the last state of the women would be worse than the first. This is the latest and most blatant preaching of the doctrine of the necessary dominion of might over right. The argument is fallacious in the extreme. Such circumstances as are feared will probably never arise. The drink question and the purity question are the two questions which would offer some sort of opportunity for such a division of the voting strength of the country as has been conceived; but the overwhelming support in the country, both of men and women, for the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the enormous growth during recent years of Temperance sentiment amongst men should reassure those who fear sex-antagonism of an extreme sort in the political relations of men and women.

The physical force argument is based upon the unwarranted assumption that, in the event of a majority of women voting against the majority of men, the men will not accept this legislation; or that they will necessarily oppose it with physical force. All life

and experience point to the contrary. Women are not so strong physically as men, but where, in individual cases, the wishes of women have been clearly and definitely expressed, the men have yielded their own. When, through the vote, the women express their political desires with clearness, giving reasons for their action, the men of good character will probably take the part of the women, for they will recognise that great bodies of women voting heavily on one side must mean a massing of those instinctive feminine forces which make for the protection of the race. There is at least as much ground for this assumption as for that of the physical force anti-suffragists, that men will use violence to compel women to yield up their political power in the improbable event of sex opposing sex.

It is true that women do not fight, but not true that they could not fight if properly trained. Modern warfare is not a matter of muscle but depends upon science, intelligence, and the finer mental qualities. The small hand of a child could set working a piece of mechanism which would deal death to scores or hundreds of people. Men and women equally trained in the use of weapons of warfare would attain the same average of skill. Women have many times fought in battle with distinction, and their sex was not discovered till their death. If the power to fight

were made the condition of the franchise, women would be prepared to qualify, though they would then carry a double burden, for they have their own special work for the State—the giving of life—which is at least of equal value with that of the soldier.

This idea meets with the shocked disapproval of certain anti-suffragists who have developed their argument to include the impossibility of women being fought. Women, they say, not only cannot fight, but they cannot be fought. No civilised nation would ever dream of placing its women in the firing line. The laws of chivalry forbid it. This, they say, is why it would be giving a position of positive superiority to women if they were enfranchised. They would be in a position to compel men to fight whilst they themselves not only would not have to fight but could not be fought.

If it is true that civilised nations do not make their women fight, the reason given for this is not true. Women are fought in every other battle-field. They are fought with great cruelty in the labour world, beaten down to a bare subsistence wage in the battle for a living. They have had to fight every inch of the way to business, professional, and educational opportunity. The laws of chivalry do not operate in that underworld of men and women where women are bought like cattle,

and for purposes which degrade no creature below the human. The reason why women are not sent to the front to fight is purely one of expediency. They are too valuable as child-bearers to be risked in this way. One man may be the father of an almost unlimited number of children. A woman is rarely the mother of twenty. If the race is to be preserved, its women must not be used too recklessly. Not chivalry, but race-expediency has been the deciding factor in this matter. There is little chivalry shown towards women when nations come to grips with one another. If the leaders of soldiers were not prevented by loyalty to their caste from making disclosures, they could all tell stories of the deeds of men towards women which would make the civilian shudder with horror.

The sweated woman, the half-starved mother of children, the social outcast, and the deserted wife are the images summoned to confound the dreamers who talk of chivalry towards women. These women occupy no lofty pedestal surrounded with prostrate worshippers, from which they are to be dragged against their will into the dusty arena of politics. They are thankful when they can earn enough money to buy bread. All their poor lives they have met with the coldest and cruellest unchivalry, and this fact alone entitles them to the one thing which might do

something to make life brighter and happier for them.

It is insisted by some that women can get everything they want for their sex by using their womanly influence upon men; that the legislation of the past has been secured in this way, and that this is the only legitimate method for women, who cannot understand the grave and complex questions which compose the interests of politicians. In the days that are gone the personal influence of a clever woman counted for much in politics. It counts for something to-day. But in all those questions touching the lives of the people, bread and butter questions, questions in which the interests of human beings and the interests of property clash, the influence of the individual counts for very little. Moreover, the gifted, clever woman of social position who can command this influence is very often the last person in the world to know the real condition of the lives of the women workers, and the last person to whom they would apply for help. And personal influence in the world of business, when a girl employee seeks to gain an improvement in her condition, either fails outright, or is of such a sort as necessitates her degradation.

Excellent legislation for women has been effected without women's votes, but never without a great struggle and the waste of

much time and energy that might have been used more profitably in some constructive work; and what has been wrung from a reluctant Legislature is not to be compared, for weight and importance, with the work that remains to be done, and which will be accomplished in half the time when women have political power. Another point escapes the critic on these lines: that it is much better for women to do these things for themselves than to have them done for them by other people. It is a sound educational principle which insists that learning comes by doing. Women are deprived of opportunities of self-education when their affairs are regulated for them without their knowledge and consent. In a sense it is true that a large number of women are not yet fitted to vote, since they have never voted; but nothing will make them so fit as the vote itself. Responsibility is the great educator, and political responsibility will quickly effect a change in the attitude of women towards public questions and will speedily develop their public spirit. All the machinery of politics will be at the disposal of the new voters, canvassers will wait upon them, public meetings will be open to them, literature will be conveyed to them, and all parties will make every effort to see that no misapprehensions are permitted to cloud their minds. Every

possible attention will be paid to the new voters.

The anti-suffragist objects to this education and experimenting at the expense of the State. The anti-suffragist is a timid soul. Almost all his arguments are based upon fears. He proves very little. He tells you that homes will be broken up when women vote. He does not prove it. When he points to the heavy divorce statistics of the United States he is obliged to admit that the number of divorces in certain States where there is no woman suffrage is very much higher than in certain other States enjoying woman suffrage. He asserts that children will be neglected for politics. He does not prove it. The good homes and happy children of Australia and New Zealand supply him with his answer. He is sure that woman suffrage will be a blow at religion and morality. The social legislation, including laws against intemperance and impurity, of all those countries where women vote, give the lie to this assertion. He trembles lest the unconsidered votes of women should bring the Empire tottering about his head, but he supplies not the slightest piece of evidence with which to support his fears.

His great lament is that India will rise in rebellion if British women are given the vote. The position of women in India is very

inferior, and women, he alleges, are held in contempt by the men of India. If the men of India once realise that they are governed by a Parliament elected partly by women, their rage will be ungovernable, they will revolt, and we shall lose the best part of our Empire ! The implication of this argument is beyond all words distasteful to honourable and fair-minded British men. It implies that, because the men of India think lightly of women, the men of Great Britain are to lower their own standard for the sake of the material profit that India represents. It is an argument that is intolerable to women, especially in view of the fact that no evidence is supplied to indicate that this catastrophe would follow. The men of India honoured their queen, the great white queen, Victoria. They have women rulers amongst themselves; and the wise men of India know that upon the development of their own women depends very largely their future position in the world.

‘But,’ says the mournful anti-suffragist, ‘the affairs with which a great State is concerned are grave and complex, too grave and too complex for the feminine understanding. The modern State depends upon those things in which women can take no active part and about which they can know nothing, questions of diplomacy, high finance, naval and military matters, peace and war.’ One

famous anti-suffragist, a woman (Mrs Humphry Ward), has asserted in so many words that the experience of the average woman 'does not and never can provide them with such material to form a sound judgment on political affairs as men possess.' At a later date she declared that 'the political ignorance of women is irreparable, and is imposed by nature.' If this be true, it was very unfair to innocent and trusting voters to hurl amongst them a number of her own writings, *Letters to My Neighbours*—political pamphlets with which she sought to secure the return to Parliament of her son. And it ought to be gravely pointed out that these letters, written by one whose political ignorance is irreparable and imposed by nature, must be mischievous and unreliable documents, which ought not to be allowed to form the political judgment of sensible men!

It is too late in the day to argue that women cannot form a sound political judgment when, at election times, every political candidate clamours for the assistance of women in the work of persuading men to vote for him and the views he represents. It is, of course, the mass of women who come under this condemnation of Mrs Humphry Ward. It is inconceivable that the anti-suffragists include themselves when they say that 'the political ignorance of women is

irreparable and imposed upon them by nature.' They are the great exceptions that prove the rule. But the plain fact of the matter is that the poorest working-woman is quite capable of forming a common-sense judgment on any one of the questions that come before a Parliament to-day when the facts of the case are put before her simply. And, as has already been pointed out, the facts will be put before her with alacrity when she becomes worthy of political education, *i.e.* when she is a voter.

It is not suggested that women should have a voice in the settlement of those questions which properly belong to the Committee-room, or which lie in the province of the expert to solve. The present voters have no powers of this sort. Diplomacy is not within the sphere of the present electors. The average citizen knows little about the complications arising out of foreign relationships. High finance does not come within his province. Neither is he asked whether the country shall go to war or remain at peace. These things are managed for him by the Press, or by the Cabinet, or by those experts who are chosen to act for him. The Referendum is not a part of the British Constitution. The voter is not asked to say *yes* or *no* on a variety of delicate and complicated questions. He is not required to form a political judgment in thousands of

matters of the very gravest importance to himself and his country. No individual outside Parliament has the power directly to initiate legislation. The one method open to the electors at present of showing their disapproval of legislation is to vote one party out and another party in.

This is all that the women claim for themselves. They know perfectly well that they are as little fit as the majority of men to decide questions of policy when the whole of the facts are not at their disposal. Under a system of representative government it is not considered necessary to make the man in the street acquainted with the details of foreign and financial transactions of the gravest complication. By some this is regretted. But it is deemed inadvisable in a country like this, with its crowded populace composed very largely of very poor and hard-worked people, with little time and energy for thought, and with so much in their poor lives to render them easy victims of the corrupter. More than all, in a land where vested interests still hold so many minds in thrall, to alter the present system whereby men choose those who shall make political judgments for them is thought by men of radical temper to be an unwise proposal.

Upon no question is there greater confusion of thought than the confusion which clouds

the minds of many people as to the legitimate business of a democracy. It must be remembered that the springs of political knowledge are not accessible to every political unit. The fountains of political information are dry for most, as far as matters of detail are concerned. It is not true, either, that every man is as good as every other man for every purpose in life. Men and women are equal in essence, in the fundamental fact of their being; but in their qualities of mind and body they differ from one another immeasurably. One is good for one service and another for another. A committee of the whole electorate upon a fine issue would be a clumsy thing. The real business of a democracy under a system of representative government is to select from amongst a number of candidates those they think best fitted to reflect their opinions and express their needs, whilst at the same time acting for them and in their interests on all those questions regarding which they have felt themselves unable to form opinions. The democracy reserves to itself the right, of course, to change its representatives if they fail in their duty, or if they cease to represent the views they were elected to support.

The representatives of the people in the House of Commons hear the debates, weigh and sift the evidence, study the blue-books,

and possess themselves of information in a variety of ways not open to those who elect them, and then vote as their considered judgment directs. In the work of selecting these representatives, who claim to be political experts, the women claim a part.

When a critic of woman suffrage asserts that women are radically incapable of forming a sound political judgment on political matters, what, precisely, does he mean? Every member of the Conservative Party probably holds the view that the supporters of the present Government are quite incapable of forming a sound judgment on a large variety of political questions. The Tariff Reformer undoubtedly thinks that the man who supports Free Trade has formed a very erroneous judgment on one of the most important economic questions of the day. The opponents of Home Rule for Ireland have clearly demonstrated their unflattering judgment of Home Rulers. Those who hate the proposal to disestablish the English Church in Wales believe that those responsible for the proposal are either mad or bad—probably both. Similarly with the other parties. The average Liberal is quite certain that the average Conservative is not a person of competent understanding. And the average Socialist heartily despises them both.

What is really meant by those who use

this argument is, that women, as a whole, will not form the same judgment as they would themselves. Voting intelligently to them would mean voting as they vote. Orthodoxy is their doxy. Egotism, pure and simple, is the bottom fact of most of the opposition to the political emancipation of women—egotism, when it is not prejudice. If it were possible to demonstrate beyond all shadow of a doubt that the majority of the new voters would vote for either of the two dominant political parties, that party would enfranchise women at the earliest possible moment.

It is frequently suggested by anti-suffragists that those countries where women vote can well afford to take the risk involved, because they have no difficult questions to solve such as lie within the province of the statesmen who govern a vast Empire like this. It is shown that the population of Australia is not so large as that of the County of London, that the combined populations of all the countries where women vote is not as large as the total population of Great Britain and Ireland, and it is inferred from this fact that these countries are of complete insignificance. It is forgotten that the Western States of America are much bigger than Great Britain, that they and our own Colonies hold the future in their hands, and may be States

with vast populations when European countries have decayed.

But it is untrue to say that, even now, these new countries have no grave problems to solve and no heavy responsibilities to bear. All new countries have their special problems, about which old countries know nothing. The United States of America is faced with at least three problems of the gravest character, and infinitely complex. The colour question is one before which the wisest heads in Christendom bow in deepest humility and prayerfulness, for they fear what the future may bring forth. The alien immigration question is one that would have destroyed the nerve and broken the heart of any nation less young and less splendidly vigorous and courageous than America, which enlarges her sympathies to the extent of adopting more than a million sons and daughters from foreign lands every year. The problem of the trust and the monopoly, with all that these imply of power to grind the faces of the poor and promote revolutions, is one which has never troubled the old countries to the extent that it must vex the new. In the solution of all these tremendous problems, which are as difficult and as complicated as any which come before the House of Commons for solution, the women of nine States of America will now take their part.

One thought strikes the careful reader who pursues this question of woman suffrage to its deepest depths, and that is, the singular and suggestive fact that the bad and vicious elements are invariably against votes for women. It has almost invariably been a combination of the saloon, the brothel, and the race-course which has defeated woman suffrage in those States where it has been submitted and defeated. The thought suggests itself: if woman suffrage is the portentous and terrible thing it is said to be, why do all the elements of selfishness and corruption combine in the effort to defeat it whenever it is proposed?

CHAPTER X

THE CASE FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

IN one part of his magnificent biography of Mr Gladstone, Lord Morley points out at some length the change which has taken place in the character of politics during recent years. A hundred years ago Parliament concerned itself primarily with questions remote from the lives of the common people. It is not so to-day. The overwhelming majority of the questions with which modern Parliaments deal are questions which touch the lives and the interests of the great masses

of the people. Political parties vie with one another to produce the programme which shall promise most to the toiling millions of the country. Three principal causes have contributed to this condition. Two generations have lived under a system of compulsory education, and, as a natural consequence, their standard of life is higher and the number of their material wants greater than the standard of life and the daily wants of their predecessors. Seven millions of adult men now exercise political power, where in the early days of last century less than a million voted. The sight of inordinate wealth side by side with disgraceful poverty, the sufferings of women and children, and the hard conditions of labour in many of the occupations and trades of the country have combined to develop in all classes of the community a social conscience and a social spirit unmatched in any previous period of British history.

The result of the working of these three things—education, the popular vote, and the social spirit—is seen in the popular institutions of the country. It has reflected itself most clearly perhaps in legislation and administration. Since the enactment of the Municipal Corporations Act, and of kindred Acts of Parliament, the increase in municipal enterprise, with its corresponding and inevitable

development of public spirit and the sense of public responsibility, has been little short of marvellous. The co-operative principle has been established as the working principle of life by the large majority of the thinking people of the country. A sense of the responsibility of each for all and of all for each has seized the minds and hearts of the better sort of people. Hence the legislation of the country has largely ceased to be in the material interests of the private individual. Of all the great interests of land and capital which were vested in a comparatively small number of the population, not one, unless the Press be excepted, retains the power, and the strength to maintain the power, it once had. Privilege is rapidly breaking down before the advance of a rational and humane public opinion. The legislation of Great Britain to-day concerns itself far less with the ends of the earth and far more with the homes of its people than it previously did. Legislation to-day is social and domestic.

In this fact lies one of the arguments for the political enfranchisement of women. Domestic affairs are the special concern of women. In olden times the argument that because woman's special sphere was the home she ought not to be concerned with politics had in it some weight and authority. To-day, the same argument is on the other

side; because the special sphere of woman is the home, women ought to have the vote.

The time will never come when women will cease to regard the home and children as their special concern. A God-implanted instinct has taught them this truth. The granting or the withholding of the vote will make no difference here. Those who fear that the enfranchisement of women will mean an interference with the laws of God and nature pay a poor compliment to their Creator. The laws of God and nature are not so easily interfered with; they can safely be left to take care of themselves. As the face of a flower turns naturally towards the sun, so the heart of a woman turns towards a little child. The most rampant feminism would never accomplish the destruction of this natural and beautiful instinct towards life-giving and life-protecting inherent in all women. The pity of it is that so many women, for various reasons, some of them preventable, cannot with honour achieve the sphere towards which every instinct of their being calls them. Poverty so abounds that thousands of men dare not marry and take upon themselves new and unknown responsibilities. More than one-fourth of the working people of the country are so poor that they have to live in houses which do not conform

to the requirements of the law in such matters as air-space and sanitary arrangements. The thinking woman is wise to hesitate before condemning herself and her children to the doubtful happiness provided by such surroundings and such homes. There are over a million more women than men in the kingdom, and this means that the natural instinct towards home-making, of which the anti-suffragist prates so much, must starve, and in its starving, stunt mind and spirit, unless it is permitted to project itself into the sphere of corporate home-making which local and national politics now offer.

Every Act of Parliament involves the interests of women, either directly or indirectly; but the legislation of the last few years has interfered in a very notable manner with the recognised sphere of women—home and children. To work backwards: It cannot be maintained by any sensible person that the new Criminal Law Amendment Act is not supremely a measure in which women are interested. It will most certainly be maintained that this Act has been placed upon the Statute-book without the women's vote, but it must be remembered that practically the same measure was rejected scores of times before the public opinion created by the suffrage agitation made further rejection dangerous to legislators. The Insurance Act

was one which touched the women of the country very nearly, yet they were never consulted about it. Education, Temperance, Old Age Pensions, Feeding of School Children, Medical Inspection of School Children, Child Protection, Housing and Land Reform, Wages Boards, Factory and Mines Acts—these and a hundred other measures of reform enacted during the last few years concern the women of the country quite as intimately as the men. And the signs of the times are all in favour of an increase in this kind of legislation. It is unthinkable that Parliament can much longer continue to interfere with the special province of women in these ways without giving them equal rights with men to say whether such legislation is acceptable to them or not.

Not only has there been a remarkable change in the character of politics, but, during the same period, there has been an important change in the lives of women. The industrial revolution wrought this change, which has already been described in a previous chapter. More than five millions of girls and women are engaged in occupations of an industrial, professional, or commercial character in the United Kingdom. They have entered spheres formerly closed to them. They are the competitors of men in the world's labour market, seeking to earn their own living. Legislation is necessary for the protection of their labour

and the improvement of their labour conditions. Working men have demonstrated how valuable the vote may be in these respects when wisely used. By means of collective bargaining working men have won a host of reforms of their working conditions—Workmen's Compensation, Legalisation of Trade Unions, the Miners' Eight Hours Day, Factory Legislation, Unemployment Insurance, Wages Boards, Fair Wages Clauses, and the like. It is significant that the Fair Wages Clause demanded in all Government contracts does not, practically, include women within its operation, and that many women workers in Government employ are badly sweated. The anti-suffrage remedy for industrial suffering is Trade Unionism. But Trade Unionism without political power is of very little use in these days. A prominent Trade Unionist, who was asked why he did not favour the admission of women to his Union, insisting on their forming a Union of their own, is known to have replied that the status of his Union would suffer in the eyes of politicians if it were known that it contained a large percentage of non-political, non-voting members, and that, as women could not be voters, they had better form Unions of their own. It is to be feared that a women's Trade Union would have little effect upon Parliament unless it were supported by a large body of voters.

The difference in the treatment of voters and non-voters was illustrated in the case of a well-known member of the present Government, an anti-suffragist, who was asked by a deputation of working women in his constituency to support the Conciliation Bill. When he was invited to say why he was against woman suffrage, he replied, very scornfully: 'Oh, I am, because I am.' It is unthinkable that an answer like that could have been given to a deputation of working men from the same constituency; or if such an answer were to be given, it is certain the working men would know how to express their resentment when the time and the occasion offered.

There is no argument in favour of the enfranchisement of men which does not apply with equal truth to the enfranchisement of women. There is no argument against the enfranchisement of women which does not apply equally to the case of men. All the old political mottoes which were inscribed on the banners of the Chartists are the truth for women as well as men. Though the argument is not a weighty one, the claim that taxation and representation should go together applies to men and women alike. There are nearly a million women householders in the country, paying rates and taxes, who come within this definition of the voter. The magnificent

peroration to the most perfect short speech which was ever made, that made by Abraham Lincoln on the battle-field of Gettysburg, which Liberal politicians are for ever quoting in their election leaflets, 'Government of the people by the people for the people shall not perish from the earth,' includes women, for, notwithstanding the law, women are people. That fine phrase contained in the American Constitution, 'Government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed,' might be the text for every feminist appeal.

Herein lies the distinction between the suffragist and the anti-suffragist. The suffragist wishes to be enfranchised, but does not seek to compel those who prefer to be governed by others from being so. Anti-suffragists do not wish to be enfranchised, they consent to be governed, but they would prevent those people from governing themselves who do not consent to be governed. There is no power to compel a woman to vote if she should have conscientious scruples about the rightness of voting. No police officer will arrest her, no summons be served upon her for not doing so. Then why should she object to the power of governing themselves being granted to those women of independent spirit who desire it? The right to say who shall govern her and how she shall be governed belongs to every grown woman of good

understanding by the divine right of her humanity with its sense of responsibility to her kind.

Though the spirit of democracy bears witness to the justness of the women's claim, it is urged that, on grounds of expediency, and in the interests both of the women themselves and of the State, a thing which is just in itself must necessarily be withheld. 'It would not be good either for the women or for the State' said a famous politician in the House of Commons quite recently. If this be true the claim of the women ought to be withdrawn. If there is something in the exercise of the franchise which spells damage both to women and the community, and, consequently, to the generations unborn, that fact would justify a refusal of the suffrage to women. Justice, like most of the virtues and all of the vices, is a relative term. A whole view of life would reveal as unjust many things which have been masquerading as the purest justice. Nothing could make it just for women or men to have and hold that which would ultimately prove a curse to humanity. There is no such thing as an absolute right and title, an inborn and inalienable right and title to anything in the world. There is no such thing as the inborn and inalienable right of a man to the vote. The only right that the woman can establish is

the right to have what the man in the same circumstances and with the same qualifications enjoys. Men and women lunatics and criminals are equally without the right to inflict on the community the consequences of their insanity or their criminality. Men and women of good character and sound understanding have equally the right, as human beings, to share in the government of their native land, provided that neither is to suffer so radically and so completely by the exercise of these rights as to endanger the whole of the community and blight the prospects of the next generation. Race-expediency is a legitimate argument, but its use must be proved to be justifiable before it should be accepted.

Those who use the argument have not proved that they are justified. They have not proved anything. Millions of women have been living in the exercise of every franchise enjoyed by their men. The women of this country have exercised a partial franchise for forty-two years. Nobody could say that a radical alteration for the worse had taken place in the character of voting British women. Those who know the colonial women voters, or the women voters of Norway and Finland, would never dare to assert that the women of these countries are one whit less womanly, even in the narrow sense of that term, less fond of their

homes and children, less capable as housewives, less women in short, than the women of any other country. Their behaviour is as modest, their conversation as intelligent, their dress and manners as attractive, and their charm as patent as in the women of any one of the lands where women do not vote. Most certainly it has not been shown that women, by voting at intervals for Parliamentary candidates, have lost anything that goes to make up the special and distinctive charm of womanhood. Neither has their use of the vote been discovered to be harmful to any of the States where they vote. The opinion of the Australian Commonwealth has been quoted. Evidence in abundance is to hand from American statesmen of every degree of responsibility to prove that, so far as the suffrage States of America are concerned, there will be no going back to the old state of affairs when half their citizens were without the symbol of citizenship.

The legislation of all the countries where women vote reveals the fact that woman may be trusted to follow the line of political evolution. There have been no violent political changes, no embarrassing excesses, no promises of revolution, no extravagances, no flooding of the public offices with women, no wild rush into the realms of statecraft by women; neither the sudden overturning of old

institutions nor the violent putting back of causes and questions that had matured. The women have voted in almost the same numbers, in proportion, as the men; and in the last New Zealand elections the women voted quite as heavily as the men. While their legislation has been along well-marked lines, their influence, as is natural, has been felt most in questions of purely domestic concern; but they have not been unmindful of larger interests, as the Commonwealth resolution points out.

It is good to reflect that a large number of eminent men all over the world are holding out friendly hands to the women and bidding them welcome as comrades. In this country the number of great men who support the claim of the women is exceedingly large—men in every rank and station of life. The names of some of these have been quoted, but the names of only a very few. The suffrage question cuts through the ordinary political party divisions, and so the grateful spectacle is presented of leaders in politics, in every quarter of the House of Commons, supporting woman suffrage.

Mr Asquith is a well-known opponent, but Mr Lloyd George is a stalwart friend. He has said in his own eloquent fashion: 'About half the students who come up to receive their degrees won in science and in

art, some of them with distinction, are young women. Yet these brilliant and cultured women are deemed more unfit for the franchise than a sandwichman in the streets. This is irrational, it is indefensible, and it must end. A drunken illiterate, staggering to the poll, can record his vote against a name which he could not read even if he were sober. He is considered by the law of the land to be fit to give a decision on issues upon which the fate of the Empire may depend. But an able woman who may be keeping together a business, a business which, perhaps, finds employment for that privileged inebriate, is not regarded as fit to choose the best man to represent her in Parliament. There is nothing that exceeds the stupidity of such a position except its arrogance.'

Mr Winston Churchill, speaking in Manchester in 1908, said : 'I will try my best, when occasion offers, to get women the Parliamentary suffrage, because I do think sincerely that the women have always had a logical case, and they have now got behind them a great popular demand among women.' Lord Haldane believes that 'the time will come, and I believe it will come soon, when it will be seen not only that those who are already bearing a distinguished share of the political activity of the nation cannot any longer be shut out, but that their admission

to the full rights of citizenship is for the advantage of every one concerned.' Lord Morley of Blackburn, Lord Courtney of Penwith, Sir Edward Grey, and Sir John Simon are well-known and distinguished advocates of the principle of woman suffrage.

On the other side in politics the most famous supporters are Mr Balfour and Mr Bonar Law. Mr Balfour, speaking in the House of Commons, in 1892, made short work of the argument that politics is degrading for women. He said: 'We have been told that to encourage women to take an active part in politics is degrading to the sex. . . . It has received the assent of almost every speaker to-day. I should think myself grossly inconsistent and most ungrateful if I supported that argument in this House, for I have myself taken the chair at Primrose League meetings, and urged to the best of my ability the women of this country to take a share in politics, and to do their best in their various localities to support the principles which I believe to be sound in the interests of the country. After that, to come down to the House and say I have asked these women to do that which degrades them appears to me to be most absurd. . . . I think I may take it that every section in this House is only too glad to use the services of women when they think they can profit by them, and

it does not lie in the mouths of any of us to say that taking part in the framing of the policy of the Empire is degrading to the sex. In any other department of human thought than politics such an argument would be described by no milder word than "cant." Cant it undoubtedly is.' Lord Salisbury, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, and Lord Beaconsfield were amongst the sincere friends of the women's cause.

The fear that possesses some timid people is the idea that women want to sit in Parliament. It is quite conceivable that some women may aspire to such a position, and equally certain that some would do good work there. This would come within the demands of the feminist. It is pure feminism. But this must be remembered by those who dislike the idea of the woman legislator, that women will never be able to go to Parliament because they want to go there. They will only be able to go through the same doors as men. They will have to persuade some constituency to elect them. They will have to submit to tests far more severe than any man would have to face, for women candidates would have to face not only the prejudice of the male elector but the hostile criticism of the average woman elector, who will certainly not be inclined to favour one of her own sex. The standards which women set

up for each other are much higher than the standards which men set up for women, except for their own women. That is why women are sometimes accused by men of cruelty to one another. Cruelty it is not meant to be, but excess of virtue it is which frequently makes one woman harsh with another. Her standard is high, and the other does not come up to it.

When the world ceases to be obsessed with sex and takes a cleaner, finer, broader outlook upon life and humankind, it will be seen that the best interests of the world and the State are served when the individual, man or woman, is doing that work which he or she can best do. The question to the feminist is not : Ought women or men to do this and that? It is, rather : Can women do this with advantage to themselves and the community? If women show evidences of breaking down under the work they have themselves elected to do, or if that work be badly done, the keen eyes of their sisters will note it, and with democratic fervour they will hasten to enact those regulations, whether social or political, which shall veto, in the wider interests of the community, the ambitions of the minority. The common sense of the majority of women may be safely trusted to guide and control the eccentricities of the few.

CHAPTER XI

THE ECONOMICS OF FEMINISM

MUCH of the opposition to woman suffrage on the part of wage-earning and professional men is born of the instinctive fear that it threatens in some mysterious way their means of living. Numerous inventions of labour-saving machinery of every variety have reduced the number of workers, the competition of the dispossessed has caused wages to fall, and life has become so hazardous for the workers that many of them, quite naturally, shrink from increasing the risks and difficulties of their position by encouraging an increase in the number of women competitors for their work. If it is true that woman suffrage will have the effect of robbing large numbers of men of their employment, and replacing them with women, one must look sympathetically at the opposition which arises from the fact. It is the firm belief of woman suffragists that the direct opposite of this will be the case, and that men will gain rather than lose from the improvement in the wages and general labour conditions which they hope to see as a result of the political enfranchisement of women.

No person who thinks at all can fail to be touched by any plea from labour for an improvement in its condition. When it is realised that the wealthiest country in the world pays over two millions of its male workers less than 25s. a week, that twelve millions of the working classes do not get enough of the ordinary necessaries of life to maintain a decently comfortable existence, that more than one-fourth of the working people of the country live in houses that do not conform to the requirements of the law in matters pertaining to sanitation and the provision of air-space, and that six millions of infants have died during the last fifty years, most of whom should have been living men and women to-day, it is quite impossible to be averse from doing anything or supporting any cause which would make the hard lot and heavy burden of the toilers harder and heavier to bear. The question of the labour of women cannot be considered apart from a number of grave considerations bearing upon the welfare of the race; but its consideration involves the recognition at the outset of the following hard facts.

The destiny of the normal woman is undoubtedly marriage and motherhood. This, under any form of government and in any system of society, is the life that the normal woman will choose. It is amazing folly to

talk and write as though the natural work of women was so repugnant to them that only the compulsion of slavery could induce them to do it. Most women have been trained to believe that marriage, with all that it implies, is the end and aim of every woman's existence, the most honourable calling they could pursue. Most of them desire it; but what of the facts? There are considerably over a million more females than males in the country, so that, to begin with, at least a million women will not be able to follow their natural and desired vocation. The special danger of many male callings, such callings as fighting, fishing, mining, and chemical working, reduces still further the number of men. The fearful struggle for a living wage and the precariousness of employment prevent many of the more thoughtful from undertaking the duties which matrimony brings in its train. The higher standard of living, and the love of comfort, makes others equally reluctant to take upon themselves heavy responsibilities. In addition to all these obstacles to marriage for women there is the poverty which necessitates their entering the labour market. This poverty compels a working-class father to send his daughters to the shop or the factory as soon as they leave school; and the wisdom of the better-off parent, who seeks to fit his daughters for any emergency

which may arise by giving them a trade or a profession, saves them from the horrors of helpless dependency.

All these causes have combined to make the work of women a necessity, and time has made of it a fact which has to be reckoned with. Between five and six millions of women are to-day earning their own living. If in the future this number becomes larger it will be because the need for it is greater. Large considerations of the effect of her work here and there, on this person and on that, will not enter into the thought of the workgirl wanting food and shelter. She will do what she can and take what she can get. The problem for earnest-minded men and women, feminists and others, is not whether or not women should work outside their homes, but rather, how may women be properly equipped for the duty of supporting themselves, without injury to their special work as actual or prospective mothers, and with the minimum of injury and inconvenience to those men who have families to support. The unmarried men may take their chance in the open market with their unmarried, self-supporting sisters.

On the question of the economic position of woman, suffragists are divided. In the opinion of a considerable section the number of women's occupations should be strictly

limited, their hours and conditions of labour should be regulated by Parliament, and their wages should not be the same as those of men for the same work. Others hold the contrary view on each of these points. Most of them are agreed that, whatever restrictions are established, and whatever regulations are enforced, women themselves should be partners to them, and should not be governed in these matters of intimate concern to themselves without their knowledge and consent.

The out-and-out feminist has very definite views on the subject of women's labour. She is in favour of throwing open to women all professions and occupations which are open to men. She is opposed to all legal restrictions and regulations of women's work which do not govern the work of their male associates, and she is emphatically in favour of equal pay for equal work, a formula which may mean something or nothing, as the case may be.

The admission of women to every profession, business, and trade is an idea very repugnant to a great many people. The untrained and half-trained human mind, with its extraordinary facility for leaping to the extremes of imagination, pictures a country defended by women soldiers, whose ships are manned by women sailors, whose streets are patrolled by women policemen, whose Benches are filled with women magistrates, and whose

Parliamentary Chambers are filled with women politicians. It is assumed in the most inconsequential manner and without any relation to the possibilities of the case, that women are only waiting for the opportunity, to leap into all these exceptional offices and drive men out of them. Paris has a number of women cab-drivers; San Francisco has women jurors; Finland has women members of Parliament; Minneapolis has a woman policeman, doing excellent work in the dance-halls of the city; but there is no evidence to show that there is more than a handful of women in the whole wide world occupying positions and doing work which the common sense of women would say was best done in the main by men.

The feminist would throw open the work to women, and afterwards would rely on the common sense of her sex, a quality which may safely be trusted if one may judge from the past, to save women from entering those walks of life which, for natural reasons, they cannot fill with credit to themselves and profit to the general community. Such occupations as involve the use, on occasion, of enormous physical strength, the common sense of women would save them from the folly and impropriety of entering. Though women have been soldiers and sailors, it is safe to assume that these two spheres at

least will be the preserves of the male half of humanity.

An examination of the statistics bearing on the problem of women's labour reveals the fact that there are really very few occupations of any sort now which women may not enter. In the industrial world they are co-workers with their fathers and brothers. Sometimes there is a difference in the actual process of manufacture which occupies them, the work requiring more muscle being given to the men, whilst that requiring a finer touch is done by the women; but the outstanding and important fact is that there is the industrial woman as well as the industrial man. Most of the professions are now open to women. Their struggle to win an entry into the medical profession has been already described, and their fight for education also. Now, in addition to doctors and teachers, women are lecturers, editors, architects, accountants, house decorators, dentists, and chemists. There are about two hundred women chemists in the country. Many women are making plans and designing buildings after having been articleed to such architects as were willing to receive them into their offices. Two women recently passed the very difficult examination set by the Royal Institute of British Architects, and one of these ladies won the silver medal for the prize essay

in architecture. The Architectural Association of London declines to admit women either as members or as students. Probably this is due to the fact that the profession is terribly overcrowded, and the young architects it trains have great difficulty in securing work on account of the already tremendous competition.

Although neither the Institute of Chartered Accountants nor the Society of Incorporated Accountants and Auditors admits women, and thus precludes their getting the best-paid work, women are practising Accountancy, and it is generally agreed that this profession is particularly suitable for the clever, hard-working woman. The two great professions entirely closed to women at present are those of the Law and the Church. The feminist would open both these, admitting women to the Bar and the pulpit on the same terms and conditions as men.

The opposition to the woman lawyer is much the same as that which the woman doctor had to fight—prejudice and professional jealousy. The real argument is hidden in a cloud of words meant to convince the world of the natural disability of women, their sensitiveness, their delicacy, their utter lack of the logical faculty, all of which objections have been proved baseless by the thousand practising women lawyers of the

United States of America. Great Britain is one of the very few great nations of the world where women may not practise law after having properly qualified; but no doubt it will be put down, amongst other similar things, as evidence of the national lack of a sense of humour! In January, 1913, by an overwhelming majority, the Council of the English Bar rejected a proposal to admit women.

The opposition of the Church to the ordination of the woman preacher is of the same sort, but differently cloaked. In this case the sacred teachings are summoned to the aid of the prejudiced ones, and the dead hand is made to strangle the living thought. This is particularly true of the Roman Catholic Church and the Established Churches of England and Scotland, in whose pulpits no woman is permitted to speak to the congregation. It is less true of the Nonconformist Churches, which permit women to preach sermons, as lay persons, on occasion. The Unitarian Church has one properly ordained woman minister in Dr Gertrud von Petzold, and the Congregational Church recognises the Rev. Hattie Baker. The Society of Friends makes no distinction between its men and women in the matter of public speech on sacred themes, nor do the Theosophists, Christian Scientists, and the promoters of

Higher Thought. In the great Ethical Movement women speakers are recognised as of equal value with their men speakers when they have a message to deliver; Swedenborgianism gives a high place to the woman prophet. There are thousands of women preachers in the Salvation Army and women missionaries in every part of the country.

Thus the argument that women should keep silent in the Churches is no longer of any potency, seeing that women are constantly speaking there, except in those sections of the Universal Church already named, the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, and the Presbyterian.

A rigid interpretation of the letter of Christian teaching is here made to exclude gifted women from the high offices of the Church. Even the Nonconformists, who in practice are less official, generally decline to ordain women to the ministry and to provide them with opportunities of studying for this important office.

One would almost rather believe that prejudice and not professional jealousy was the chief cause of this behaviour. It is not a pleasant thought that, for the sake of incomes to be drawn, and by the competition of women to be endangered, clergy and ministers oppose the pulpit for women. It surely cannot be that Paul, the strict upholder of the customs, good and bad, of his

country and of his times, holds higher place in the opinion of Christian leaders than the holy Founder of their Faith, who knew nothing of sex discrimination, and whose gentle spirit and teaching reveal nothing which warrants the prohibition of the woman who is moved to proclaim His truth.

The overwhelming majority of the people attending the Churches of every denomination are women. The hardest Church-workers are women. The finances of the Free Churches are kept up chiefly by the efforts of women. The lower offices of the Churches are filled by women. Women are Sunday School Teachers, Class Leaders, Missioners, Singers, Band of Hope Workers, Sisters of Mercy, District Visitors, Deacons, Trustees, Delegates to Conference in one or more of the various Churches of the land. Why not fully trained and ordained ministers, if qualified by natural gifts, character, and training for the high and holy office? One effect of the woman preacher would most certainly be an improvement in the quality of preaching. There is scarcely room for a doubt that the fact of having so many women in his congregation, joined to the unconscious but real feeling that the high intellectual appeal would be lost on them, is responsible for very much of the nonsense that flows so easily from the lips of many a pulpit orator.

The woman preacher would bring to the new work the conscientiousness and zeal which the woman has brought to every new work she has undertaken. The gift of intuition, the instinctive passion for the giving of herself, the mother spirit, all of which make for a readier recognition of the inwardness of things and for the awakening of cosmic consciousness, would make of the woman preacher a competitor in higher things worth striving against. Moreover, it is quite sure that the women in the pews would not tolerate from the lips of a woman in the pulpit the kind of preaching they are frequently compelled to listen to to-day because it is the best that may be had. It is certain that there would be no great rush of women to the pulpit, but how mistaken, from the point of view of the community, to close the lips of those who have been touched with the live coal from the altar for no better reason than that they are women.

John Stuart Mill has said, in relation to this question of women's work: 'Is there so great a superfluity of men fit for high duties that society can afford to reject the service of any competent person? Are we so certain of always finding a man made to our hands for any duty or function of social importance which falls vacant, that we lose nothing by putting a ban upon one-half of mankind, and

refusing beforehand to make their faculties available, however distinguished they may be? And even if we could do without them, would it be consistent with justice to refuse to them their fair share of honour and distinction, or to deny to them the equal moral right of all human beings to choose their occupation (short of injury to others) according to their own preferences, at their own risk? Nor is the injustice confined to them: it is shared by those who are in a position to benefit by their services. To ordain that any kind of person shall not be physicians, or shall not be advocates, or shall not be members of Parliament, is to injure not them only, but all who employ physicians and advocates, or elect members of Parliament, and who are deprived of the stimulating effect of greater competition on the exertions of the competitors, as well as restricted to a narrower range of choice.'

These words of wisdom apply also to the great offices of the Church.

With regard to the second point in the feminist's economic code, her objection to the regulation of women's labour: her chief objection to this is simply that it puts women at a disadvantage in the competition for work and makes it more difficult for them to earn a living. This is sometimes true, and if it were possible to improve the condition of

one set of workers without damaging in some measure another set, one would like to do it. It does not seem to be possible. Trade, industry, commerce, finance are so intricately intertwined, so delicately balanced, that a movement in one quarter sets up a corresponding movement in the whole fabric, and hundreds, sometimes thousands, are affected who never dreamt of being brought within the sphere of its influence. The guiding rule here as in all things should be the greatest good of the greatest number, the true interests of society as a whole; and measured by this standard, all but the most anarchistic spirits, those who object to regulation in any and every form, must protest against the slackening of certain regulations of women's labour.

Every woman is a potential mother. This means more than the potential fatherhood of every man, for the woman's body may be requisitioned for a special work. This fact is the justification for the regulation of women's work more than men's, the sufficient reason for establishing a minimum of conditions which no employer shall be permitted to violate. It is good, on the whole, that women should not work in factories at night. It is good that the number of hours young persons of eighteen shall work per week should be limited. It is good that a woman shall not be permitted to return to work too soon after

the birth of a child. It would be an altogether beneficial thing if the prospective mother could be kept at home six months before and six months after the birth of a child. It would be better still if women could be kept at home altogether until their children themselves are working for money. This, of course, presupposes some scheme of State Aid or Maintenance of Mothers, the provision by society of some independent means during the child-bearing period, provided the children were well cared for, which should be sufficient in amount to compensate for the giving up of the ordinary vocation, and which should be secured for the uses of the mother as her personal, private income. If this were done, public opinion would soon condemn the woman who neglected her young children for gainful pursuits. As things are at present, public opinion is aware that poverty drives many mothers to work to provide their children with the things which they need, and which the husband's wages are inadequate to provide.

Until some scheme of compensation to mothers for the giving up of their independent work is devised, the feminist opinion of the country will be needed to control the well-meaning philanthropist, who, deploring the evils of infant mortality, is seeking by legislation to prohibit altogether the labour of

married women. Such legislation would be a terrible step backward, and a lowering of the married status which would effectively reduce the number of satisfactory marriages. The other way is the better one. Let the child-bearing woman be suitably maintained for her important work, and allow the childless married woman or the married woman with grown-up children to pursue her calling; it will be better for her and better for society as a whole that she should do so.

The competition of the married woman teacher with the single woman teacher has given rise to an interesting controversy on the question of married women's labour. There are interesting and effective arguments on both sides. It is certainly hard on a girl who has, at some cost, and at great toil, secured her training, to find herself unable to get a post, especially when she knows that many teachers who are employed are married. On the other hand, the married woman is frequently an excellent teacher, with very special qualifications for her work, especially amongst infants, and is much more usefully employed teaching than in dusting rooms and boiling potatoes, which others less intellectual can do. Moreover, she frequently has some one at home to maintain. The matter, seemingly, is not one for legislation but for local arrangement. A fixed rule, closing the

doors to all married women, would be very unwise, from the point of view of the public. Each case is one to be taken on its merits, and the best thing in the circumstances should be done; at the same time, it is only fair to point out that, as regards this particular profession, there need be no dearth of posts for teachers. If the ratepayer could forget the amount of his rates in the contemplation of the common good, or if education could become a national charge, the enormous classes of most elementary schools might be reduced, in which case the supply of teachers would be considerably below the demand.

It is difficult, in writing on the question of wages, to advocate anything which may not react injuriously upon some other section of the workers. The largest factor, though by no means the only one, in the regulation of wages is supply and demand. The demand for weavers in the cotton industry is, at the moment of writing, greater than the supply, so prosperous is that particular industry. The case of the elementary school teachers is of the opposite sort: there the supply exceeds the demand. The wages of domestic servants are relatively high because the supply of trained domestics is much smaller than the demand. On the other hand, the appallingly low wages which women receive in a hundred sweated industries are the natural fruits of

an over-supply of women who can do those kinds of work.

The feminist maintains, and not only the feminist but humane people of every class and of every political party, that there are points at which the law must be set in motion to control the law of supply and demand; that limit must be set to the exploiting power of the employer of labour. Quite recently Wages Boards were established, which have fixed the legal minimum, below which no employer may go, in four of the country's most sweated industries—lace-making, tailoring, chain-making, and box-making.

Those interested in the sweated woman worker are endeavouring to bring certain other disreputable and badly-paid work under the Wages Boards Act, such for instance as the hollow ware makers, who have just won the princely wage of twopence an hour after a prolonged strike involving hideous sufferings. Those poor creatures who make a dozen blouses for ninepence, a dozen shirts for the same sum, finding their own thread and machine, ought to be protected by law. So ought the cigarette makers, the paper-flower makers, the hook-and-eye carders, and a score of other kinds of workers whose miserable wages vary from one penny to threepence an hour. Even the Government of the country is not guiltless of exploiting its defenceless, voteless

women citizens. Women are working for the Government, making army clothing and mail-bags for wages which would disgrace the private employer. Quite recently a poor woman who was charged with trying to commit suicide told the magistrates that she was engaged in making trousers for the police and clothing for soldiers, and that, by working nearly eleven hours a day, she could scarcely make a shilling a day. For making a pair of Territorial riding breeches she received eightpence, and she found it to be utterly impossible to make two pairs in one day.

Women receive no advantage from the Fair Wages Clause, which, by law, is supposed to secure fair rates of pay to all employed in Government work. 'Having regard to wages current in the district' is the phrase employed in the Fair Wages Clause, and, as women are very badly paid in most districts outside Lancashire, the inevitable result appears, and the Government takes no steps to remedy it. In every case, the women employees of the Government are paid less than the men, even when the work is the same, with the single very modern exception of the Insurance Commissioners, who were given the same salaries as the men because it would have been a valuable argument for the woman suffragists if this had not been done. In

Australia, where women have the vote, the Government has fixed a minimum wage for State employees, the same for women as for men.

It is believed by all qualified to express an opinion that one of the inevitable and speedy results of woman suffrage would be the establishment of the principle of equal pay for equal work in all Government workrooms. It is important that it should be so, since there is no doubt that the standard set by the Government, the greatest employer of labour in the land, has a considerable influence upon the private employers all over the country. These cannot be expected to take all the risks which the private employer in competition with his fellows must take, and pay better wages than the Government with all the resources of the country at its command. By fixing a legal minimum, appointing factory inspectors, shortening hours, safeguarding machinery, protecting Trade Unions, and in a hundred other ways improving labour conditions, the Government of the country is really raising the wages of its people, since it is providing more leisure, safety, and security, for the same money that was available before the legislation was enacted.

The feminist principle of equal pay for equal work meets with a considerable amount

of opposition, not only from men moved by professional jealousy, but from the very people it is hoped to benefit by the establishment of the principle. Men argue that the work of women is not in any circumstances as good as their own. They point out that the effect of such a demand by the women would probably mean a reduction in their own wages or salaries. This, it is pointed out, has happened again and again, notably in New York quite recently, where the wages of the men teachers have been slightly lowered to equal the women teachers' salaries, which have been raised. It is maintained by the men that their salaries are calculated on a family basis, and that single women ought to be content with less.

Women who argue this point lose no self-respect by admitting the truth of much of the objection. The unit of calculation is probably the family, and it is not fair to seek to get over the difficulty by suggesting an additional grant to the man for every member of the family he is called upon to support. The effect of such a rule would be that single men would be engaged and would probably be dismissed when they married. Similarly with the women with dependants, who would come under the same rule. Those women without encumbrances would have preference over those with dependants. A slight lowering of the salaries of men by a mean-spirited

public body anxious to cut down expenses is to be deplored, as all decreases in wages are to be deplored where none are very high; but looking at the thing broadly and without sex-bias, it is better that all should be paid moderately well than that some should have more than others for precisely the same work. A strong Trade Union or Professional Union might command for its workers any reasonable rate of pay it chose to demand, and the difficulty might be obviated in this way.

There appears to be no way satisfactory to the father of a family who rightly thinks he deserves more for the additional service he is rendering society; but if he will bear in mind this one great fact, he will probably become reconciled to his position. If the principle of equality of payment be established in every trade and industry in the country, a much greater number of men will probably find work than at present. The reason for the employment of women in such enormous numbers is not that their work is so much better than that of the men, but because they have been, and are, willing to work for less money. No business man with any common sense is going to employ a man at thirty shillings a week when he can get the work done nearly, if not quite, as well for fifteen shillings. Men have permitted women

to undersell them in this way to such an extent that thousands of men are tramping the streets looking for work, whilst their daughters, for half the money they could command, are doing the work which should have been theirs. It is the business of the Trade Unions to organise the women and compel them to demand the same wage for the same work. Then men will be employed, except in those occupations where women are obviously more fitted for the work than men. It is quite certain that if the Lancashire Textile Unions had not brought the women into their Unions the whole of the Lancashire cotton trade might have passed into the hands of women. As it is, there are more women engaged in this industry than men.

The argument just put forward to persuade men to accept the principle is the argument which women opponents of the proposal use against it. They do not want to lose their work. They cannot afford to lose it, and this is precisely what they fear from the equalisation of the rate of pay.

Of course, equal pay for equal work must mean what it says. If women permit themselves privileges which are denied to the men workers in the same business or trade, regular days off for sickness, shorter hours, less responsibility, they must not call it 'equal work.' If women work hard and fit themselves

for their work, and by their power to do it clearly demonstrate to an employer that it is to his interest to employ them, they will not be in such sore straits as they imagine. It will be a spur to their effort to do excellent work, and much more dignified than to be employed because they are cheap; and society is the gainer. One argument for the equalisation of remuneration for men and women is that the community will get the best work, for there will be no temptation to employ bad workers simply because their work is cheap.

It is feared by many that the unemployment of women consequent upon the equal pay principle being accepted will crowd a few occupations and bring down wages to starvation point in work previously well paid, such, for example, as skilled domestic service. The equal pay principle will not be accepted by every industry simultaneously, but gradually, as public opinion demands it, and the industry affected will have time to adjust itself to the new conditions. Trade Unionism is the immediate remedy for the too serious lowering of wages, and the enfranchisement of women would probably do more for the enactment of a legal minimum wage in all low-paid employments than any other one thing.

This question of wages is an extremely complicated one, and one which the lay mind can scarcely hope to handle with intelligence.

Economic problems have largely to work themselves out, legislators combining with the public to improve conditions as special problems and special issues arise. In this way has this country moved from the day of the first Factory Act. In this way shall we continue to move. Meantime, it is necessary to understand the feeling of irritation produced in the minds of women when they see themselves paid for their good work half the price that is paid to men for the same work, and when they know that the white slave market and the dreadful profession of the streets are supplied from the women victims of commercialism, the sweated slaves of industry.

The attempt of women to enter the professions has met, and is meeting, with the bitterest opposition. Appeals are made to their woman's delicacy and refinement and their constitutional unfitness for hard work. But these arguments are seldom heard of the poor women workers whose occupations are badly paid. Their work is not thought by the same people to be unwomanly and degrading; it is only the better-paid work that is supposed to be unsexing and degrading. This kind of reasoning makes very determined feminists, men and women who hate cant, and who want a human life, a fair field and no favour, for every woman and every man.

CHAPTER XII

WOMEN BEFORE THE LAW

THE publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on Divorce, at the time of writing these lines, is a reminder of the invidious position women at present hold under the law, a position which the majority recommend shall be abolished. The present law is based upon the conception, old as the hills, of the right of the husband to a position of privilege, and the proposals of a majority of the Commissioners, two of whom were women—the Lady Frances Balfour and Mrs H. J. Tennant—are all the more remarkable when it is remembered how strong is tradition and how powerful is custom. Should these recommendations be embodied in an Act of Parliament, England will at last take her place with all the other great nations of the world, and more particularly with her Colonies and the United States of America, as sufficiently awake to the needs of the age to put behind her an ancient and worn-out tradition and law.

Scotland is ahead of England, in that her law provides divorce facilities for husband

and wife on equal terms. England shares with Greece the unenviable distinction amongst European countries of permitting to the man offences against the wife which he is not expected to tolerate in his partner against himself. The Roman Catholic Church recognises no divorce except under special dispensation, so that Ireland is greatly behind both England and Scotland in her divorce law practice.

The present English law provides that the husband may have a divorce if he can show one cause, the adultery of his wife. When the wife petitions, the adultery of her husband is not sufficient. She must prove cruelty in addition, or desertion for two years without reasonable cause. The reason given for this discrimination is, that the husband may have foisted upon him the child of some other man which he would be compelled to maintain. Here is an example of the tender regard for property interests which has shown itself all through the legislation of the past, whilst the moral point is conveniently set aside. It cannot seriously be debated that, considerations of property entirely aside, the unfaithful behaviour of the one partner is any less a moral offence than the unfaithfulness of the other.

The majority of the Commissioners recommend the establishment of the equality of

the sexes in the causes of divorce, and even the minority of three—the Archbishop of York, Sir William Anson, and Sir Lewis Dibdin—are agreed upon the essentially Christian character of the equality principle.

But the Majority Report goes much further, and here comes the division between it and the distinguished churchmen who form the minority. The number of the causes of divorce is recommended to be increased. In addition to adultery, desertion for a period of three years and upwards, cruelty, hopeless insanity, incurable drunkenness, and imprisonment under a commuted death sentence are to constitute cause of divorce, should either party desire it. In all probability tens of thousands of people justly entitled to take advantage of one or more of these causes will decline to do so on religious, sentimental, or economic grounds. Experience in Scotland has not shown that there is a rush of injured wives to the Divorce Court because it has been placed within their power to divorce a faithless husband. Family ties and money considerations have probably exerted their restraining influence, and will continue to do so. Nor will those wishful of observing the canon law, who hold deep convictions concerning the indissolubility of marriage, be under any obligation to spare themselves one atom of suffering which may arise from an unhappy

union. But those to whom a union has, for any one of these reasons become intolerable, will be able, should these recommendations become law, to free themselves from a bondage in some cases worse than death. To thousands of thoughtful Christian people it is more a sin against the gospel of love, more degrading to the human spirit, more destructive of self-respect to live in closest union and intimacy with one who has ceased to command either affection or respect, than to break the ancient law of the Church and accept the relief the civil law provides.

The Commission makes several other very important recommendations, including one for cheapening divorce and bringing it within the reach of people of limited means by making it possible for the High Court to hear cases locally. This is interesting as a measure of much-needed social justice. What is right for the rich man is equally right for the poor man or woman, and this proposal, if at any time proceeded with in Parliament, will give relief to many unhappy people of humble means, now tied for life to hopeless lunatics or incurable drunkards, and will provide for the thousands of unhappy deserted wives in the country some hope of a brighter future.

The special interest of the Report from the point of view of feminism is, of course, the proposed equality of treatment of men and

women. Feminists have long felt that the unequal treatment of men and women under the law supplies the most disastrous and harmful object lesson in the inferiority of the position of women which the growing youth of the country could possibly witness. To know that the law permitted to his father conduct for which his mother would be divorced, and to note that this conduct carried with it no public censure for the man whilst it covered the woman with shame, was and is the finest instigator to similar practices that the young man could have.

The divorce law of England has long been a scandal; but not the divorce law alone. England is one of the very few countries in the world in which the husband may, if he chooses, will away all his property to strangers, leaving his wife penniless and without redress. Englishmen are much better than their laws, but many cases have actually occurred where, on the death of a husband, the wife has discovered herself to be penniless, he having willed away to his mistress and her children all the fortune he possessed. If a husband should die without making a will the widow is entitled to the whole of the property, realty and personalty, if together the value is not more than £500. If the fortune left exceed this sum, she is entitled to one-third of the rents of the remaining realty after her share

of £500 has been deducted. She is also entitled to half the personalty. The remainder goes to relatives in order of kinship, and in the absence of any relatives, to the Crown. If a wife die intestate the whole of the personalty goes to the husband, and the rents of the realty for the period of his life. The inheritance of freehold property is by way of the eldest son, who takes the whole; or if he should leave no son to inherit after him, the land is divided equally amongst his daughters.

The feminist view about all these things is opposed to laws based upon the feudal idea, with its supreme value of fighting capacity. Believing that a man and a woman are equally valuable parts of humanity, she would have no favouritism shown by the law. As in Sweden the property, when no will is made to the contrary, should be divided equally amongst the members of the family, the girls inheriting equally with the boys. In individual cases different arrangements might very properly be made with the consent of all the grown-up family; but in no circumstances should it be possible for a husband to leave his wife and family penniless; nor should the law of intestacy be so different for husband and wife. It should not be possible for the husband to appropriate all the money left by his wife if there are children to inherit. It is not safe to presume that the

father will invariably live up to his responsibilities to his children and provide them with the things to which their mother's wealth entitles them.

Under the English law the mother of a legitimate infant is not entitled to its guardianship. Although to her has belonged the sufferings of motherhood and the long, weary days of caring for the child's welfare, she is not a full parent in the eyes of the law, unless her child be without legal father. Then, indeed, the responsibility is entirely borne by her, and society demands of her every duty which it places upon the father whose union is regular. The Guardianship of Infants Act of 1886 sought to remedy somewhat the injustice of shutting out the mother from the control of her child. The Act provides that the mother may be the guardian of her unmarried children if she should survive her husband, but she must share her power with another if her husband so appoint in his will. On the other hand, if by deed or will the mother appoint a guardian to act for her children in the event of her death, the Courts do not recognise such a guardian if the father is living unless it is demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that the father is not a fit and proper person to take care of young children. The father has the sole right to have his children educated in his religious

faith. No heed is given to the wishes of the mother in this particular. Even if the husband dies, having expressed no particular wish in the matter, or even if there has been an antenuptial arrangement by which the children, or some of them, were to be brought up in the faith of the mother, and which the husband seeks to set aside, the father's faith is the one selected, and the agreement can be made ineffective.

It is placing women in a very low position indeed to treat pledges, secured before marriage and as a condition of marriage, as so much waste paper. It is a grievous wrong to command, in the absence of any expression of his wishes, that the father's faith must be taught the children against the expressed desire to the contrary of the living parent. It is to be feared that these and kindred facts, when known, will have the effect of promoting irregular unions amongst the more thoughtful girls who are able by their own work to maintain themselves. Why should it be so difficult, for instance, for a mother who does not approve of vaccination to get an exemption order to prevent the vaccination of her baby? Why should she have to prove with such exactness that she is acting for her husband, as though he alone were the parent of the child? Why should some magistrates decline altogether to give the

order to any but the husband? The inconvenience to him is frequently very great, but not to be compared with the indignity to her. Surely in matters affecting her own baby the mother's opinion is worthy of an independent consideration. The English law says no. The feminist insists, yes.

The obligation to maintain a wife is not directly recognised by English law, though there are indirect ways of effecting this result. The wife may either pledge her husband's credit, which she is lawfully entitled to do, or she may go into the workhouse and become a public charge, and the husband may be sued by the Guardians for money for her support. If a married woman earn money the Married Woman's Property Act of 1870 has secured her earnings to her; but such money as she manages to save, by dint of care and thrift, out of the housekeeping money, may be claimed by a drunken or worthless husband for his own purposes. The Married Woman's Property Act of 1882 was a fine piece of legislation which placed married women with property in the same position as propertied single women, giving them the right to use and control all their present or future property and endowing them with all the responsibilities and obligations contracted by them in respect of their separate estate. The Act is not perfect, however, for it still leaves

the woman in the position of chattel in one or two important respects. By the wording of the Act the wife who breaks a contract made with a third person cannot be proceeded against except in respect of her separate estate. If she has no separate estate she cannot be imprisoned for her behaviour, because to imprison her would be to rob the husband unlawfully of his property, *i.e.* of her person. No self-respecting woman would claim a privilege of this sort, but would urge with the feminists that the woman be punished with the man for the same offence against commercial honour. It should be made possible for a married woman to be proceeded against on a Bankruptcy notice as in the case of men; she should also be made responsible for the payment of her own income-tax. The spectacle recently presented to the amused world of a poor husband imprisoned because a rich wife declined to pay her income-tax as a protest against her continued disfranchisement illustrates the present unsatisfactory condition of the law.

The law should be amended to make husband and wife equal in regard to a loan with which either may supply the other. A bankrupt husband whose wife has lent him money is not obliged to pay her before his other creditors have been paid, which probably the wife would approve. The man whose

wife has become bankrupt, and who has lent her some money, is entitled before all the other creditors to take what belongs to him. This is unfair to the other creditors, and is using the wife's dependence and inferiority of legal position for an unworthy end. A husband should not be legally responsible for the libellous statements made or the assaults committed by his wife. She is a grown person and should bear the responsibility of her own misdeeds. In these ways and others should the principle of equal treatment and equal status be established.

The present apparent favouritism is not desirable for women, for it is based upon the assumption that they are the property of the men they marry, unreasoning and unreasonable beings for whom their men must be held responsible. It presupposes the absence of the moral sense in women and makes men the guardians of their infirmity. All this is ridiculous and out of date. The feminist idea that every human being should stand on his or her own feet, recognised by the law as a competent individual, recognised in the married state as one of two equal partners contracting to live together for a common end, each contributing to that end what each is specially designed to contribute, and each honouring the other for his or her share in the accomplishment of their common purpose, is more

honouring to women and less harmful to men.

Feminists there are who would like to see the principle of equality so rigidly carried out in the letter that the spirit of equality would be practically defeated. The spirit is the important thing, and if that be safeguarded there can be no objection to social arrangements which, on the surface, appear to bear somewhat unfairly upon women. For instance, it is certainly desirable that a married woman should be in a position to command the means of life for herself independently of another individual. It should not be possible for a woman to have to wring every penny she spends upon herself or her children from a mean and reluctant husband. Nor should she be permitted to starve if an idle husband declines to support her or runs away from his responsibilities. Economic independence for married women is of the utmost importance; but is the best way of securing this an equal division of the husband's weekly wage, as some feminists suggest? The best working men, and they are not a few, give the whole of their scanty earnings to their wives for the needs of the household. The women could get no more from them in any circumstances. The best men realise that their wives are as much entitled to that weekly wage as they themselves, for they work at

home to earn it as they themselves work at the mill or the workshop.

In the absence of children it would be the best thing possible for married women to earn their own living; and no clamour for equality of status with men is worthy of a moment's attention if the request be not based upon a self-respecting demand for the opportunity to maintain themselves. Why should power and privilege be conferred upon women who are content to be fed and clothed by their men without their making any contribution whatever to the productive enterprises of the country? Women must cease to be consumers only and must be producers: in other words, they must work, if their demands are not to be regarded as seriously unjust. Married women who have the misfortune to be childless are not for that reason entitled to be maintained without work. Married women with children justify their existence by working and caring for them. A scheme of maternity benefits on a scale sufficient to maintain them honourably during the child-bearing period, to which every man and every unmarried woman should contribute in proportion to their means and their responsibilities, offers an alternative to the proposal to divide the already scanty income of the poorer fathers.

This proposal is often criticised by tender-

hearted women, generally the fortunate wives of thoughtful husbands, who shrink from even appearing to doubt the readiness of the fathers of the country to treat their wives with generosity in their periods of utter dependence. No feminist would wish to reflect for a moment upon the well-known fatherliness of a vast number of fathers, nor upon their genuine tenderness for the well-being of their wives. The sin against the helpless wife, when committed, is usually one of thoughtlessness. It has never occurred to the husband that there could be anything valuable to a woman in having money of her own. Up to the limit of his means he has been willing to provide her with the things she wanted; he has always cheerfully paid the bills. What more could she ask for? And the feminist replies: 'The glorious privilege of being independent'; of having some little sum which she may regard as her very own, either to spend on herself or on her family, but for the spending of which she cannot be called to account; of being saved the bitter necessity of asking for every halfpenny.

There is one feature very noticeable in the administration of British law, and that is the extraordinary respect paid to property in all its forms, and the lesser importance attached to human honour, especially the honour of women. Cases are as common as may be of

prisoners sentenced heavily for the most trivial offences against property, whilst others have been leniently treated for crimes against flesh and blood. Some time ago the country was outraged by the passing of a sentence of several months imprisonment upon a boy for stealing a few pennyworth of coal. At the same time a man was fined ten shillings for having criminally assaulted the wife of a neighbour. It is not suggested that this behaviour on the part of magistrates is invariable, but the tendency is always there. Only a few days ago a man was dismissed by the courts because he swore on oath that he thought the girl he had wronged was more than sixteen years of age. Wife-beating is a crime which generally meets with very lenient treatment in this country when compared with an offence against property.

The age at which a girl becomes responsible for her property is twenty-one; but long before that time she is held to be fully responsible for the care of her own person. She may consent to her own moral ruin at the tender age of sixteen. It is well to know in this connection that, in many of the States where women vote, the age of consent is eighteen, and even twenty-one. All feminists are in favour of raising this age; but no feminist would urge this proposal without at the same time taking steps to protect the

sons of women from the temptations of light women. Soliciting in the streets by women is now punishable by law. This principle might be extended in some way to bring within the serious condemnation of the law those girls and women who seek to entrap simple youths into marriage, or who, by light behaviour, provoke young men to acts of immorality. It is an extremely difficult question; but girls above the age of fourteen, who bring to the Courts complaints of the behaviour of youths under eighteen, should have their cases dismissed with contempt if it can be demonstrated quite clearly that they have contributed to their own undoing.

The law has been described by a great writer as an ass; but, interpreted in the light of common sense, the law can do much to improve public morals and at the same time protect boys and girls from the devastating consequences of their own uncontrolled passions. Let the Courts set up a sufficiently high standard of morality by protecting girls at the most difficult and impressionable period of their lives; but, in the interpretation of the law, let the justices and magistrates remember that there is only one thing as dear to the heart of a mother as the honour and well-being of her daughter, and that is the well-being and honour of her son.

If the profession of the law be thrown open

to women it goes without saying that time will prove the fitness of some gifted women of the future to occupy the high offices of the law. A woman judge in a woman's or children's court does not appear to be so very extraordinary and objectionable. In some countries of the world there are both women judges and jurors, with no greatly disturbing results to the countries in question. It is frequently said that it would not be to the advantage of women prisoners to be tried by women; that they receive better treatment at the hands of men. Women are supposed to be so terribly hard on their own sex that it would be impossible for them to be just to them, whilst, on the contrary, the handsome young male villain would get off with a light sentence.

This is the kind of flippant argument which has always been used against the admission of women to new powers and responsibilities. They are supposed to bring with them an extraordinary bias against their own sex, particularly the handsome and attractive members of their sex. The lie is very old. The sex-influence is in the Courts at present. It is not good for the State that offences should be condoned because of a jury's admiration of a pair of blue eyes or a magistrate's appreciation of a well-cut gown. The poor drunken creatures who so frequently

appear in Court have no reason to believe their present judges so perfect that no change for the better could possibly be effected. The exclusion of women from the office of judge and juror makes it quite impossible for women to be tried by their peers in the complete sense of that expression, and doubtless many times injustice is done because the woman prefers to be misunderstood and to suffer rather than explain to a company of men, with no woman present, all the details of her case.

One thing is quite certain : that women on the bench and in the jury-box would use the last syllable of the law to aid them in more justly apportioning the blame in all those cases of immorality and its consequences in which one partner to the act of both seems to get off so lightly. It is true that the utmost the law can do is not much, but when the deserted unmarried wife appeared before the Court for some means of support, the women magistrates would surely show more interest in the whereabouts of the father than seems to move those in authority to-day. The circumstances of the lives of women being more intimately known to them than to men, they would be able better to measure the strength of the temptation to wrongdoing which has brought their unfortunate sisters within the clutches of the law. In

brief, they would introduce into the administration of the law an emphasis upon the rights of human beings to balance the present too heavy emphasis upon the rights of property.

Touching upon questions of morals reminds one that feminism is frequently, by its critics, associated with the completest immorality. No charge is more often levelled against the feminist by uninformed critics than the charge of immoral teachings, if not immoral conduct. The supporter of feminism is supposed by some to be involved in an acceptance of the doctrine of free love, and to be bound to oppose the marriage laws, whether of Church or State. Nothing could be more false than this idea of the feminist. The doctrine of free love with all that it implies is held by many people, sick of the living lies that so many people are, and utterly weary of the sight of human suffering consequent upon unhappy marriage bonds, who would strongly disavow any connection with the feminist movement. At the same time this same doctrine is roundly repudiated by thousands who believe in feminism. The one central fact of feminism is equality, the equality of men and women in all those affairs of life which women can occupy without injury to their essential femininity, the equality of men and women as human beings in all those spheres of activity into which sex

does not necessarily intrude and to which sex is no essential.

It is true also that feminists believe in freedom, but the freedom that the feminist stands for is not freedom of passion, better called licence, but freedom to develop, freedom to achieve, freedom to serve. Anarchists there are who do not believe in law at all for any purpose. These people are the free lovers in the sense in which this language is used. Neither are they necessarily immoral people, for selfishness only is real immorality. Many mistake freedom of passion for the real freedom which ennobles and dignifies, and wreck themselves on the rock of self-indulgence before they discover that freedom is of the spirit and of the intellect rather than of the flesh. This is the freedom for which the feminist yearns.

Although feminism does not stand for the abolition of the marriage laws, but for the equality of man and woman in the married state, the supporters of the movement realise that, with communities as with individuals, there is no standing still; that laws which were useful in the past are of little use and of much harm to-day, and that the laws of to-day will not reflect the public opinion of the future. Thus she is in sympathy with the majority of the Divorce Commissioners in wishing to see the divorce law altered, not

because she regards it as a step in the direction of free love, but because the alterations proposed will meet the requirements of the time, and are in harmony with the development of both thought and feeling on this grave question. Marriage as it is known to-day will not always be the same in form, but will change from time to time; though it is to be sincerely hoped that the essential spirit of real marriage, the holy ideal of two people joined in love, and through care and suffering, joy and prosperity, living out their lives together, will never be lost.

CHAPTER XIII

FEMINISM AND MORALITY

FEMINISM has something to say upon the most intimate of human relationships, but it is not easy to express it, and when said it is liable to be much misunderstood. When a man and a woman decide to live together as husband and wife an equal partnership is formed, one in which each partner is necessary for the building up of the perfect home; but in that part of their lives in which they only, and no others, are concerned, a position of natural equality does not exist. No Act of Parliament can make any difference to that outstanding and important fact. The equality

in sex-relations for which the collective sense of women yearns must be yielded to them as an act of delicacy, consideration, and high chivalry.

There is nothing in the feminist programme about which the feminist feels so keenly as about the double standard of morality which governs the lives of men and women. The inevitable effect of it is the sad procession of women who nightly prowl about the public streets of every large city in the world. It is variously estimated that there are fifty to eighty thousand of such women in London alone. Probably twenty-five per cent. of these poor creatures can find no other way of earning a living. In times of great trade depression, when competition for work becomes keener, the number of unfortunates increases, thus proving the point, that bad social and industrial conditions drive many to this life. Thousands of others have sunk into the underworld because in a moment of passion or thoughtlessness they did that which society declined to pardon. A large proportion of girls are drawn from a most respectable class—domestic servants, many of whom have been betrayed by their young masters.

The significant fact for the woman who thinks is that the men responsible appear to be able to escape public censure altogether, whilst their victims are permitted to fall

lower and lower into a life of infamy. In considering the question of the fallen woman little is ever said or heard about the equally fallen man with whom she fell, though such men as these are a source of grave social danger. A woman need not be a feminist to want to make life cleaner for her sons and safer for her daughters; and she could not do better than begin by refusing to condone this kind of offence in a man as steadily as she has declined to pardon it in a woman.

Pessimists allege that the social problem, as it is called, will never be solved so long as time lasts; but to say this and believe it is to deny the whole gospel of Christianity. To assert that, from the foundations of the world, it was intended that men should tempt and destroy women, and that women, in return, should prey upon and destroy men, and that there is no remedy under the sun, is to convict oneself of atheism of the most practical and terrible sort. All things are possible, and of purity and goodness nothing is impossible which the minds of the best men and women in their most exalted moments have been able to conceive. The pessimists are wrong. The problem will be solved ultimately, but never by dwelling with mournful and wearisome reiteration upon the truly stupendous difficulties in the way.

An enormous step forward will have been

taken (one which was never tried before in the history of the struggles to solve this vexed problem) when the women of the world are called in to help by their practical citizenship, and when, by means of their votes, they have removed some of the causes of the evil. A noteworthy and entirely relevant fact which cannot too often be repeated or too strongly impressed, is the plain, unvarnished truth that the work open to women is not sufficient in amount nor sufficiently well-paid to enable them to live in a condition of ordinary comfort and decency. And the sad part of the rescue worker's toil is this: that she cannot point to any solid social advantage the virtuous poor girl enjoys which is not enjoyed by the wicked rich woman. Money appears to cover a multitude of sins, and it is only too patent that without it the most virtuous of girls can go but a very little distance in social spheres.

Parliamentary action and the votes of women could scarcely alter this. Human nature must have its snobbishness eliminated before the doors of the great and wealthy are thrown open to merit and goodness without consideration of worldly power; but Parliament, through the votes of good women and men, can secure a legal minimum wage for every girl and woman worker, a minimum sufficient to procure food and clothing and

a moderate amount of simple pleasure. A trade or a business which cannot maintain its workers in a condition of simple decency has no right or title to an existence. Parliament might become the instrument by which the equality of women before the law could be secured—a necessary reform if the value of women in the eyes of men is to be raised. The drink traffic should be seriously dealt with by those in earnest about the social problem, for there is the most intimate connection between it and impurity; and if the price to be paid for a pure womanhood and a clean, strong manhood is the total abstinence of every individual, the price is not too big for a nation of patriots and Christian people. Citizenship should be summoned to clear out the gambling dens and brothels and all such places as contribute to the contamination of youth. It is not suggested that enfranchised women will at once accomplish what men have for so long tried and failed to accomplish; but it is quite certain that this class of question will receive closer attention and deeper scrutiny by the admission of women to political opportunity.

In the meantime the women of the country have power in their hands to do much towards the solution of the moral problem without the aid of the vote, much that the vote most wisely used is powerless to accomplish, and which it

would be neither possible nor desirable to embody in an Act of Parliament. It cannot be denied that women have been vastly to blame in the past for the present state of affairs in the world of morals. Their one substantial excuse is that they were kept ignorant, and taught to endure what they were led to believe was in the natural order of Providence.

One thing is obvious to the most casual observer of the city streets—to teach girls the need for self-respect. The things that girls will say and do to attract attention and win a reputation for smartness, presumably with the hope of attaching some young man to themselves, are appalling in their cheapness and vulgarity. Possibly the girls themselves are not to blame so much as those responsible for their early training, who have led them to believe that the end and aim of a woman's existence is to marry. This teaching used to run through all grades of society, and was responsible for many unfortunate marriages and incalculable misery. The right kind of men do not marry the girls of unconventional behaviour who laugh and joke coarsely with them. It matters not what kind of freedom and unconventionality a man permits himself and encourages his woman companion to indulge in, in his heart he dislikes the same kind of behaviour in the woman; and though

this is unfair and unreasonable, it is a fact with which the woman must reckon who desires to be the wife of a worthy man.

Will the mothers of the future be wiser than many mothers of the past generation, so foolishly eager to establish their daughters that they paid little heed to the character of the men who proposed to marry them? The hope of the feminist is that they will; that they will refuse to admit to the intimacy of their homes men of doubtful character, who hold themselves free to indulge in vice. By shutting the door on such men and declining to meet them in the houses of other people, women might do more to equalise the moral standard than the best designed Act of Parliament could possibly accomplish. Knowledge is opening the hitherto fast-closed eyes of women; medical science in the hands of women has taught them many sad and sorry things, unrevealed before, of the grave damage to children which comes of moral laxity in either sex. An intelligent concern for the welfare of the race is bringing good men to the side of good women in a common endeavour to erect a new and better standard of conduct for both. These men, under the banner of a newer, finer chivalry, are no longer willing to accept the low standard thought good enough for their sex in the days that are rapidly passing away, but are cheerfully

accepting the higher plane of life, and the same standard for the governance of their own lives which through all the ages have been set up for the guidance of women.

It would be an excellent thing if notions of sex antagonism could be banished from the nurseries, and such phrases as 'only a girl' forbidden. Why should restrictions be placed upon the childish actions of the girl-child which are not forbidden to the boy. Each should be permitted to run, jump, skip, climb, tumble, and tear about in the abandoned way that all young creatures have. It is a pity to have dolls for girls and footballs for boys. The maternal instinct has no business to appear in a small girl-child more than in a boy; it surely should not be encouraged in either during very tender years. The game of life has to be played by both boys and girls in later years; but girls, because they are girls and must be petted, indulged, excused, and controlled, are seldom taught the rules of the game. Thus is sex-consciousness ripened in the girl, making her either the victim or the martyr of some one whom she meets and touches at one point of thought and feeling only.

It is greatly to be hoped that women will be prepared in the future more readily to hold out a helping hand when one of themselves takes a false step instead of turning the

cold shoulder and leaving her to drift still deeper into the social abyss. Until every woman is assured of a decent livelihood by honourable work, the so-called fallen woman is not a proper subject for sharp criticism and harsh judgment. Who is to say how far she is responsible for her plight? In all probability her temptation was great and bore no fair proportion to the strength with which she was endowed nor the experience of life she had had. The hand of pity is the fair portion of those who do not wilfully and deliberately choose a life of shame, and everything possible ought to be done by women to save their fallen sisters.

To assure the means of life to all: this is the objective of every social reformer and feminist. The need for this complicates every other problem. Until this is settled, very little can be done to ameliorate suffering, or eliminate selfishness and sin. And until this is done it is impossible to neglect helping those whose need is apparent, however blameworthy they may have been. It is idle to reproach tender-hearted people for their casual and misplaced charity unless they know that poverty is of the unfortunate's own deliberate choice. The unemployed tramp who knocks at the kitchen door may be a thorough scoundrel who would not work in any circumstances; but one is not certain, and he is

helped. The beggar in the streets may have neglected to avail himself of many opportunities, or may have brought himself to beggary through drink, but the first cause is unknown and he ought to be helped. The fallen women may be at heart an impure woman who has chosen her own life, but nobody can be sure of this, so she has a claim upon the regard of all. The last word in the feminist programme is the first essential of real progress in any cause—how to reconstruct society so that all who will work may have work and be honourably remunerated for it. Individuals here and there have risen above their circumstances and have climbed to the greatest heights, but they are comparatively few in number. The bulk of their associates have gone down to their graves after lives of half-famished obscurity, and the relentless machine of a grinding commercialism is for ever supplying more and more of these poor victims.

The feminist understands this thing right down to its depths. It is this fact which distinguishes her from the suffragist. The suffragist demands only equality in politics; though she desires to use her vote to help the poor, she has not always, nor even generally, a clear idea of how this is to be done. The feminist knows both what she wants to see accomplished, and the way in which it has

to be done. Liberty for women to develop all the perfection of which they are capable, she desires supremely. Equality for men and women she aspires to, in all those matters of their common humanity where sex does not enter and impose an impassable barrier; but she is well aware that neither liberty nor equality, either for men or for women, is possible under the present system of society, and her goal is the establishment of a great co-operative commonwealth in which the good gifts of the earth shall be enjoyed by all the sons and daughters of humanity.

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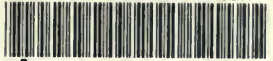
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