

The Common Cause,

The Organ of the National Union of

Women's Suffrage

Societies.

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FEBRUARY 23 1911.

ONE PENNY.

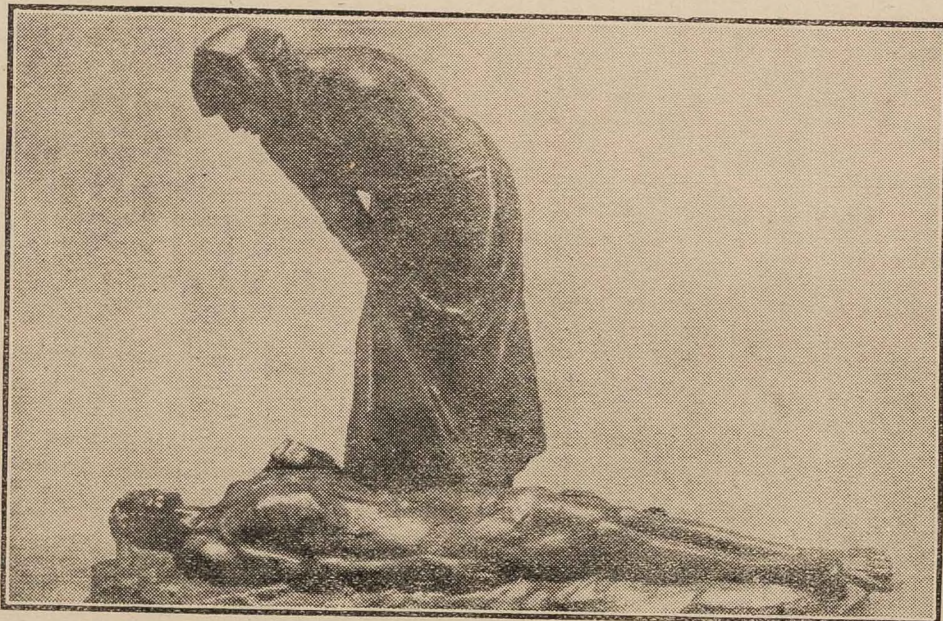
Notes and Comments.

The People's Time.

We have accepted as inevitable that the Parliament Bill would take the first place in the Government programme, but we are not going to abate our demand that other business this session shall include the enfranchisement of women, and Mr. Asquith, who told the Trade Union Deputation on the 9th that "he hoped they would be able to give effect in the course of the session which was now in progress, at any rate to that part of the reform which dealt with the payment of Members," cannot meet us either with the statement that the Parliament Bill will take all the time there is or that the Payment of Members will not affect women. In the House on the 16th, he said that he could not yet make a definite statement as to whether such a measure would

Adult Suffrage and the Conciliation Bill.

Some misconception has arisen owing to Mr. Keir Hardie's name appearing as one of the backers of the bill issued on the 16th by Mr. Byles. This bill is an Adult Suffrage Bill and refers to all elections. It is well known, of course, that Mr. Keir Hardie, like Mr. Shackleton and other good suffragists, is in favour of adult suffrage just as other good suffragists are opposed to it. The fact is that some people want a few women to have the vote and some want all and the more sensible portion of the adult suffragists (like Mr. Keir Hardie) are anxious to take all they can get *now* and leave the remainder to be dealt with if and when public opinion is ripe. Mr. Byles has secured no day for his bill, which cannot therefore pass this session; but if it remained it would block Sir George Kemp's bill and Mr. Byles is being asked to withdraw, which he will doubt-



"FIRE DAMP."

By MEUNIER (Musée de Bruxelles).

A Mother of Men.

"O feet I have held in my hand,
O hands at my heart to catch!"

be introduced this session, but when it was introduced he hoped to make it retrospective. So far he has only claimed all the time of the House up to Easter, so May 5th is our day and for that day we must work.

Home Rule Bill Next Year.

It appeared plainly in the debate which took place on the 15th that the Government has pledged itself to the Irish party to bring in a Home Rule Bill next session. Such a Bill is contentious and very much more complex than the simple Veto Bill, so it may be expected to take a lion's share of Government time. There never will really be "time" to consider the demand of a voteless class and it will have to be made. We look to our friends in the House to make it,

less do, since he has always been a firm believer in the enfranchisement of women and would not lend himself to a trick of this sort.

Law or Lunacy.

Last Friday the "Daily News" had an article by Mr. G. K. Chesterton on a police court case and on Monday 20th it gave the facts. We agree with Mr. Chesterton that the case as stated is enough to make one ask "Are we all mad?" Here are the facts as given by the "Daily News" special correspondent:—On the 10th inst. at Epping Police Court, Annie Woolmore, a young married woman, was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment in Holloway Gaol for "neglecting" her five children. The children were stated to look "exceedingly well in health"

and the woman was sober. She was, however, stated to be ill and her husband said "she starved herself to feed the kids." The husband earned 16s. a week and paid 2s. 6d. a week for rent; *there was no water supply in the cottage and it had to be fetched a distance of a quarter of a mile across fields.* With seven people to feed, warm and clothe on 13s. 6d., ill, starved and solitary (for the man is said to have left all the housework to her) the woman with no water nearer than a quarter of a mile let the house and children get dirty. For this she was sent to gaol for six weeks crying, "Oh! Lord save my soul!" *The house has just been condemned as uninhabitable!* But why was it not condemned before? Why is any landlord allowed to ask 2s. 6d. rent for a house with no water supply? A woman cannot feed, clothe and warm seven persons on 13s. 6d. and it is the most outrageous cruelty to send her to gaol when she has become too ill to struggle any more. Will someone not start a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Mothers?

Law and Administration.

We publish this week a very brief summary of the law as it affects the rights of mothers over their children. Everyone will readily call to mind instances in which the law appears not to have been correctly administered and still more cases where it is practically impossible for the injured woman to put the law in motion. This seems to point, among other things, to the urgent need for women lawyers. Suffragists will remember that Miss Pankhurst was a distinguished graduate in law at Victoria University and it is little wonder that revolt should have been originated by one who knew so well the need women have for legal advice from a fellow-woman. In New York it is a woman lawyer who has successfully rendered inoperative the most objectionable clause in the Page Law and France has long had "*avocates*." There are absolutely no grounds of public policy upon which men can continue to refuse women admission to the legal profession and we ardently hope that this may be the next door to be forced. Many good men within the profession would help women.

A Better Way.

Those who are criticising the contemplated action of certain Suffragists in vitiating the results of the census appear to us generally not to understand the situation. They point out that the census is extremely valuable,—which no one denies. They point out that it is as valuable to women as to men,—which again no one denies. Those who propose to resist the taking of the census do so not because they think it of little or no value, but because they think it of great value and resistance is a definite act of social warfare on their part. If we think the time has come when war is the only way, we shall not shrink from making havoc. The National Union has not adopted the policy of resistance either to the census or to taxation, because it is not yet of opinion that war is the only way. Those who protest against resistance should shew a better way. We hope we can. But it is incumbent on all who profess to be Suffragists, including our friends in the House, to shew this better way too.

Medical Women's Salaries.

A curious discussion took place on the 13th on the Walsall Town Council, when it was proposed, on the recommendation of the General Purposes Committee, to raise the salary of the Schools' Medical Officer, who happens to be a woman. The "*Birmingham Gazette*" reported as follows:—

Dr. Lynch said the proper way to assess the salary was to decide what her services would obtain in the open market. A lady doctor could not expect to get the same salary as a man, as two-thirds of the medical practices in the country were not open to women, who could not be expected to get up in the night and tramp lonely roads. He was not sure the department was worth the money spent on it. The lady went to her office, opened her letters and then went to look at the children, having a nurse to dance attendance on her. There was no in-

tellectual strain involved and there were no unpaid doctor's bills to worry her.

Sir E. T. Holden, in reply, protested that most of the speakers had been most unfair to Miss Sergeant. When the post was advertised she was chosen from forty applicants—both men and women—and the selection was due to her capacity. Some of the speakers thought because she was not a man they would pay her a less salary. (Cries of "No.")

The motion was rejected.

Another Town Council.

Haddington Town Council has passed a resolution in favour of Women's Suffrage.—"John o' Groats" given in the list in our issue of Feb. 9th, should have been "Thurso."

A Woman Pastor.

The Rev. Gertrud von Petzold, who was the first woman elected to a regular ministerial charge in the English Free Churches, has returned from America and once more taken the pulpit of a Unitarian Church in this country. She is now pastor of the Small Heath congregation, Birmingham. During her ministry in America she conducted the religious ceremony at the opening of the State Parliament.

A South African Woman Speaker.

We hear from Miss Dorothy Edwards, of the National Union, that Miss Nina Boyle, President of the Johannesburg Women's Suffrage Society, is in England for a few months and would be willing to speak for the National Union. She is described as a most delightful speaker, keeping her audience "enrapt by her interesting, forceful and amusing speech and her charming personality." Those who wish to secure her services should write to "The Limes," Upper Street, Fleet, Hants.

Consideration for a Liar.

A man was summoned last week for making a false statement concerning a candidate during the last election. The Bench, after a short retirement, decided that the statement complained of was made and that it was entirely false, and that defendant had no justification or reasonable grounds for believing that it was true when made. There would not be a conviction, said the Chairman, as it would involve a somewhat lengthy period of disfranchisement, but defendant would be bound over for twelve months to be of good behaviour and pay £5 towards the costs.

One would have supposed that disfranchisement was a penalty peculiarly suited to a man who lied about his political opponent. But the Bench thought the penalty altogether too great. It is pleasant for truthful women to know that they are by birth set far lower than a liar, because they are women.

Nobody's Business.

Last week an old lady died who was born in England, of English parents, but married to a German who died in 1901. She and her husband lived in St. Pancras for 50 years, paying rates to the amount of £500. Nevertheless, she was recently refused an old age pension because by English law she had become German. By German law, however, she was English. One is tempted to misquote,—

"Rattle her bones over the stones,
She's only a woman whom nobody owns!"

Our Cartoon.

Very imperfectly we show to-day a woman of the people, strong, muscular, bowed with a hard life's toil, finding her son among the victims of the mine. The field of modern industry takes its toll of life in a thousand ways, more even than the field of battle. We quote from Olive Schreiner's book, reviewed to-day in our columns: "There is no battlefield on earth, nor ever has been, howsoever covered with slain, which it has not cost the women of the race more in actual bloodshed and anguish to supply, than it has cost the men who lie there. *We pay the first cost on all human life.*"

The A. B. C. of Women's Suffrage.

- The Oldham Society for Women's Suffrage has issued a leaflet bearing on the front page the name, objects, and methods of the Society, and the names and addresses of the officers and committee, whilst inside is an historical summary of the Women's Suffrage Movement, from the Parliamentary point of view. This part of the leaflet, slightly altered, is here reproduced by kind permission of the Oldham Society:—
- 1832.—Women excluded from the new Franchise of the Reform Act.
1835. Women of England and Wales deprived of Municipal Franchise.
1867. John Stuart Mill's Amendment to substitute "person" for "man" in the Representation of the People Act rejected.
1869. Municipal Franchise restored to Women of England and Wales. (In Scotland given by the Municipal Electors Act, 1881; in Ireland given by local Acts, in Belfast, Kingston, and Blackrock. [See further 1898.]
1870. Women's Electoral Disabilities Removal Bill introduced by Mr. Jacob Bright, and PASSED SECOND READING.
1884. Mr. Woodall's Women's Amendment to Reform Bill defeated by Mr. Gladstone.
1886. Mr. Woodall's Bill PASSED SECOND READING without a division.
1892. Sir Albert Rollit introduced a Women's Suffrage Bill.
1893. Women Enfranchised in New Zealand.
1894. Women Enfranchised in South Australia.
1897. The Parliamentary Franchise Extension to Women Bill PASSED THE SECOND READING in the House of Commons by a majority of 71.
1898. The Irish Local Government Act established County and District Councils in Ireland, where women have now a better position than they hold in England as regards the local Franchises, possessing equal voting rights with men.
1900. Women Enfranchised in West Australia.
1902. On May 30, 1902, the Federated Parliament admitted women to the Federal Franchise throughout Australia.
- „ Women Enfranchised in New South Wales.
1903. Full Suffrage granted to the Women of Tasmania.
1904. On March 16 a Resolution "that the disabilities of women in respect of the Parliamentary Franchise ought to be removed by legislation" was carried in the House of Commons by 114 against 68.
1905. Full Suffrage granted to the women of Queensland.
- SECOND READING.
- „ February 28, Mr. Stanger's Women's Enfranchisement Bill PASSED SECOND READING in the House of Commons with a majority of 179, and was referred to a Committee of the whole House.
1908. Full Suffrage granted to the women of Victoria, Australia.
- SECOND READING.
1909. March 19, "Representation of the People" Bill PASSED SECOND READING in the House of Commons, an amendment to reject it having been defeated by 157 to 122, and referred to a Committee of the whole House.
- SECOND READING.
1910. July 12, Conciliation Bill to Enfranchise women occupiers PASSED THE SECOND READING in the House of Commons with a majority of 110, and was referred to a Committee of the whole House. This Bill practically proposed to grant the Parliamentary Franchise on the same terms as the Municipal Franchise to women occupiers. It was drafted by the Conciliation Committee, the members of which were chosen from all parties in the House of Commons, and consisted of 25 Liberals, 17 Unionists, 6 Nationalists, and 6 Labour, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Lytton. This Bill was the sixth Women's Suffrage Bill which passed its second reading in the House of Commons.
- THE WEEK'S MOTTO.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!!!

not properly exercising the discretion which the law vests in him for the good of the child.

As for guardianship, the Act of 1886 provides that, on the death of the father, the mother is to be guardian, either alone or, if the father has appointed a guardian, jointly with him. If the father has appointed no guardian the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint a guardian to act jointly with the mother. On the other hand, the mother may *provisionally nominate* some person to act after her death jointly with the father, and the court, if it is shown to its satisfaction that the father is *unfit to be the sole guardian*, may confirm the appointment.

There is an Act, passed in 1891, under which a parent who has abandoned or deserted his child, has to satisfy the court that, having regard to the welfare of the child, he is a fit person, before he can regain custody of it. It is to be feared that this Act often remains a dead letter. Indeed, we hear of cases in which the principles laid down in all the above series of Acts appear to be ignored, and we can well believe that many such take place. It is bad administration rather than bad law that does most mischief. You have generally the power of the purse cast against the woman. You have often sex bias, more or less unconscious, on the part of the tribunal. If anyone doubts this, how does he account for the ridiculously light sentences so often passed in the case of violence to women and girls. You have, perhaps oftenest, a natural shrinking from laying bare to the world the tragedy of the home, and the dread of worse evils, either from the husband or from an often hide-bound court, which apparently finds it impossible to assimilate and apply those newer and more humane principles which our legislature, with all its faults seems, by the above statutes, to have intended to establish.

FRANK LEIGH.

A Tuscan Contadina.

Seen only four times, yet is she a glorious memory I would like to share with others. She will not, however, please those whose ideal of woman is in the nature of a "milk-white lamb bleating for man's protection;" for she is of the type of the strong, free woman, beautiful to look at, and inspiring to know in days that are still haunted by the degenerate ideals of a dead century. There was no need to bemoan the weakness of woman or the inequality of fate in looking at her. Strength and honour were her clothing, and she rejoiced in the days that came.

The first time I saw her I was tempted to the window in an Italian villa far up in the wilds of Tuscany by shouts of hearty laughter—a man's and a woman's mingled. It was such infectious mirth that no one could resist inquiring after its cause, and in this way it was explained. Before the stable door my Italian contadina was having a tug-of-war with the family chauffeur for the possession of a broom, with which she intended to sweep her farmyard near by, and she was winning. Three times in succession she pulled him over the line in spite of his most strenuous efforts, and their laughter, broken by the fight, rang out loud and long in a full peal together. A crowd of olive-skinned, crimson-lipped, black-haired youngsters stood watching; some of them were her children. She had great beauty—a beauty quiet and reserved as that of the olive trees of her country; the beauty of intelligence and of experience, not of untried youth; an unconscious loveliness that has no arts or false graces. Black hair, like fine silk, was smoothed down on each side of her oval face, with its complexion of pure pale olive; her firm features revealed magnificence of strength, not without tenderness and womanliness; they were of classic type, and so closely resembled the woman's in Michel Angelo's Creation of the Sun and Moon that she might indeed have been the model for this figure. But it was the beauty of her eyes that most drew and held your gaze; in quietness, there was a calm, wise expression in them—without sadness or melancholy, but that seemed to bespeak a contented acceptance of life as it is,

and a power to meet its exigencies well; in laughter, all her spirited hurled itself to the surface in them, and rippled through them with a brook-like gaiety. Her body had not become irresponsible with the years, like an ill-used instrument, so that it was incapable of expressing the music in her, as the bodies of so many of our overworked or unhappy women have become; as she grew older she had not grown worn, and the subtle interplay of mind and form in her remained still a delight. She looked about thirty-five years old, but must have been more, for she had so many children that last summer in the *Sturm und Drang* of hay-making, two of them were forgotten at bedtime, and left out all night, to be discovered next morning contentedly sleeping just outside the farm-house door. She was dressed in scanty clothing that did not impede her movements nor hide the rhythmic grace of them; her skirt was short enough to show strong ankles and well-formed bare feet that strode over the ground without shrinking at its roughness.

The second time I saw her I learnt more about her. It was on the night that the "*Gran turco*" (the Indian corn) of her farmland had been stripped of its husks and made ready for the threshing; this is done in the moonlight in the hours between nine and twelve, when all the peasants—men and women, down even to the youngest children—sit round in a ring and help to tear the husks off the cones. Everyone is very happy, because this is the in-gathering of the chief food supply for the year, and there is no longer any fear that storms may come and destroy it; and when the great heap of gathered corn has given place to a pile of golden cones on one side and broken husks on the other, the company troops indoors, the concertina is brought, and the dance (destined to last till work begins at four o'clock in the morning) is struck up. In the long living-room of the house, with its red-brick floor, huge hearth, and whitewashed walls, of which the only adornment was a figure of the Madonna amid a multitude of copper pots and pans, well polished, and reflecting the light of the single oil lamp was the contadina, as head of the household, with all her children. The men sat in one long row against the wall jumping up when inclination moved them to seize the women, who, showing more originality in their choice of seats, were posed variously about the room. The hostess was one of the partners most sought after. One after another the young men seized her by the waist and spun round with her at an incredible speed, like tops; but like tops that whirled with jerks, each turn so quick that it looked like a flash of movement succeeded by an equally short suspension of turning. It was with wonder I learnt that upstairs she had an infant of four months old, whose solid sleeping no uproar could disturb, and that the beautiful woman of twenty-one years old, who sat so still in the chimney seat looking like a Madonna with the magnificent wise-eyed baby in her arms, was her eldest-born. She remained, while I watched her, untiring, well-breathed, fresh, zestful with intensity of life.

My beautiful contadina was, however, not always on holiday. The third time I saw her she was at work, and displaying in her labour the same energy and grace that she did in her play. She was a little way off on a hill-slope gathering apples in the company of two young men and two girls, one of the latter, who stood on a ladder, was handing a basket well laden with fruit down to her; she received it with uplifted arms and poised it there for an instant with the ease and grace of a Greek caryatid before she let it slide to the ground. Then she climbed the ladder and mounted into the branches with bare feet that clung to them, and, entwining her arms round them, flung the red fruit into her basket below.

One more time I saw her, and she was at a motherly task. It was morning, and she sat in her own farmyard, amid the scattered husks of the "*Gran turco*," leaning up against her quaint pink house. She had chosen a spot that was shadowed by a group of old cypresses, for the deep blue of the sky was turning to a rosy purple with the heat. A little round-eyed mortal of two years old sat on her knee, and she was performing his morning toilette—combing out his black silky hair (like hers) and tying it up with scarlet ribbons. Two little girls near by

were picking the corn from the cones, so that it could be thrown before the wind, which would whirl away the chaff like scattered silver. The youngster of four months old lay asleep on the straw. In the midst of it all, with pleasurable eyes and a brilliant smile for the stranger, sat the mother; she accepted the sunlight and the restful moment as she accepted everything else—with sweet content; and she was a blessing herself in her calmness and strength.

Whenever I saw this Tuscan contadina she gave me a glimpse of true woman, like a flash of being from the future, and an earnest of what could be. It seemed that even the Amazons of Greek story and of the Tomb of Halikarnassus might some day return again to earth, no longer in war, but with the offered hand of peace and equality.

A. M. ALLEN.

The Debate on the Conciliation Bill 1910.

We should like, when we have space, to reprint, from time to time, portions of the best speeches made by our supporters in the House on the occasion of the Second Reading of the Conciliation Bill. We gave very brief summaries at the time, and also dealt at some length with the most prominent opponents. To-day we quote from the verbatim report of the speech made on July 12th, 1910, by

THE RT. HON. A. J. BALFOUR, M.P.

My view is that a democracy, properly understood, is government by consent, broadly speaking. The idea that you can give to every citizen in this country of a given age exactly the same weight in the councils of the Empire, or that if you did give them precisely and exactly the same weight, that we should get on better than now, seems to me to be rather visionary; but I do think that whenever you get to the point that a class feels itself as a class excluded, and outraged by being excluded, then those who believe that democracy, properly understood, is the only possible government for any nation at the stage of political evolution which we have reached, must consider whether it is not his business to try to see whether the government which is by hypothesis not a government by consent, can be turned into government by consent. I do not speak of the whole class of women, because it is hard to know exactly what their views are, but I think everybody must feel that the number of ardent spirits who are doing admirable work—I am not talking of the militant section—in public life at this moment, and who think they ought to have the same rights as are given to every male occupier, is a large and growing number which can not and ought not to be ignored, and a number which, so long as you ignore it will prevent your being able to say with any truth that our government is government by consent. Do not answer me by saying "How loose is the phrase 'government by consent.' How are you going to define it? How are you going to put it in an Act of Parliament? You cannot define it; you cannot put it in an Act of Parliament; you cannot put it into any neat formula." Is it on that account worse suited to deal with conditions so complex and so difficult as those of our modern civilisation? Are we not sufficient of statesmen to refuse to reject a system because we cannot clean out every frontier of our case, and be able to say, with perfect precision, this instance falls outside our rubric and that instance falls within? Therefore, my ground, broadly speaking, is not a ground of right, and I refuse to be frightened by all these arguments used by the Prime Minister, that if you once admit a right you do not know where it will end. I do not admit the right, but I do say that when women have begun, or any large and important section of women have begun, to feel that they suffer under hereditary disability, it is your business to consider the

situation, and to see if you cannot remedy their grievance.

Therefore I end my speech with an appeal in the exact contrary sense to that of the Prime Minister. He seems to think that sex is an absolute bar, not to politics, but to the exercise of one particular kind of political function. If he said that we ought to keep women out of politics, I could understand it; but he does not say that. He says they may canvass, but they must not vote; he says they may speak, but they must not vote; he says, "urge them to agitate," but they must not vote. They may do everything connected with the active political life of a country in which political life glows in every section of society—they may do everything in connection with that life except the single formal operation of putting a cross after the name of a candidate. Talk of logic. Is that logic? Talk of the bar of sex. Is that where you wish to draw the distinction between the duties of the sexes? Talk of any change of this sort being injurious to the future of women as women; if the future of women as women is injured by their being mixed up in political life, their cause is lost already. They are mixed up with it; they are daily more and more mixed up with it. You who oppose this Bill are yourselves urging them to mix themselves up with it. In these circumstances you cannot complain if they feel that by this exclusion under the existing law there is a hereditary slur put upon their sex. That is a policy which might have been justifiable, and I think was justifiable, in times gone by, but with the development of political instincts, political institutions, and political discussions, it is tolerable no longer.

Women Voters.

In view of the statements freely made that the Conciliation Bill is "undemocratic," and of Mr. Lloyd George's statement that under the occupation franchise "hundreds of thousands of plural voters" would arise, it seemed advisable to make careful and detailed enquiry as to the status of women on the Municipal Register. Such enquiries were set on foot in Bangor and Carnarvon, in Keswick and in Dundee, and we have the figures for the first three—Bangor being a cathedral and university town and a health resort, it might be expected to have a large proportion of leisured women.

BANGOR.

In Bangor the result was as follows:—

Total number of women voters: 404.			
	Spinsters.	Widows.	Total.
Class A. Business Women	29	32	61
Class B. Earners	56	107	163
Class C. Working-class housewives	19	125	144
Class D. Middle-class housewives	12	24	36

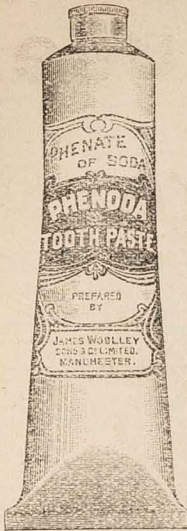
Class A: Business Women, i.e., women who are engaged in some occupation other than the management of their own homes, and who keep a regular domestic servant, or more than one. This will include lodging-house keepers, shopkeepers, teachers, etc.

Class B: Earners, i.e., women who are engaged in some occupation other than the management of their own homes, but who keep no regular servant. Shopkeepers who keep no servant; women who let their rooms to lodgers but keep no servant, as well as women engaged in any home industry, e.g., lace-makers, knitters, dress-makers, etc., should be reckoned in this class.

Class C: Working-class Housewives, i.e., women who do not work outside the home and who keep no servant.

Class D: Middle-class Housewives, i.e., women who do not work for their living and who keep one or more regular servants—"women of independent means."

N.B.—An occasional charwoman should not be reckoned as a servant.



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