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THE CASE OF THE HELOTS.

By ELIZABETH MARTYN.

THE last class to be enfranchised in this country—last, so long as representation is based upon taxation—is that of the helots. For a quarter of a century helots have been asking for the Parliamentary vote, and they are asking for it still. They have seen class after class enfranchised, sometimes with very little trouble and after slight demand, but the time for the helots is not yet.

Why do they want the vote? The simplest answer to this question is another question; why does anyone want the vote? This sets the first questioner thinking; and thought is good.

A great statesman, speaking of another class, once used words like these: "They had no votes, and therefore they could be safely neglected." And it is a fact that grievances are not easily redressed, and usually remain unredressed, while those who suffer are unrepresented in our Parliament.

An exasperated helot sometimes says to an adversary, "Am I not a householder? do I not pay rates and taxes? have I not property of this, that, and the other kind? have I not to keep the laws as well as you? and is it not true that laws are made on purpose to arrange my affairs

for me? Why should I not have a voice in the making of them?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" hurriedly and impatiently, "I grant all that, but—oh, it would never do."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see—er—you are only a helot!"

On which the helot has much ado not to lose her temper—on some occasions, alas, she loses it—and begs to know what the fact of her helothood has to do with the question of the franchise.

"Here am I," she cries, "living next door to a man who pays exactly the same rates and taxes as myself. He has a vote; I have not. How is that?"

"Well, don't you see? It is as plain as possible. Of course he is not a helot!"

There is no other argument. Yet the men who use it are accounted sane.

Helots are scolded for wanting class-legislation. "You are making divisions in the body politic," they are told; "you are setting class against class. No one would dream of wrongs, rights, jealousies, grievances, if only you would keep quiet." Then helots humbly submit that as long as they are left out in the cold there is division, but not of their making. Some people have votes, others have none; some have rights, to others these rights are denied. And they throw the accusation of class-opposition back upon the law-makers, which, if one thinks of it, seems only reasonable.

There are at present signs that the old method of representation, based upon taxation, is coming to an end, and

that manhood suffrage is to take its place; but here comes in another inequality. An outsider might naturally consider that manhood signified humanity; but no, the helot part of humanity is still to be excluded.

Helots are in a minority, then, in this country? On the contrary, they number nearly a million more than the privileged persons. If the figures happened to be reversed we should hear them quoted continually as proof positive of the survival of the fittest.

For twenty-five years the majority has been asking for the franchise. Twenty-five years: is that all? Helots knew their grievances years, centuries ago, but they were taught to believe that they were heaven-sent, and therefore good, and good-producing. Submission was enjoined upon them, and beauteous self-abnegation. They were apt scholars, all the more apt because they could not help themselves; and they carefully impressed their beliefs upon their children. Little by little, however, one here, and another there, they began to ask, "Is it right? is it just? Why should we bear tamely all our lives what our brethren, our masters, would not bear for a day?"

The first important book written in vindication of the rights of helots appeared about a hundred years ago; a second was produced in this century by a man who was not a helot, and to whose memory, therefore, helots owe undying gratitude.

And what were the wrongs which exasperated helots at last to claim their rights?

They were many, and of various kinds. Helots who had to earn their own living knew that their work was

often harder than other people's, and never commanded the same remuneration. Some helots were teachers, others were household servants, others again, were in business; but every one of them who was employed by anyone else had to take small pay, on the one ground—so simple, so easy to comprehend—that she was a helot.

The universities were shut against them, and so were many trades, and all professions.

Preach! oh, dear no. There is something dreadful, even blasphemous, in the thought! But act, sing, recite in public, by all means; you do it so well, and it amuses Us. The ornamental and amusing is distinctly your mission in life, "O Helot, in Our hours of ease!"

As for being lawyers, helots had not brains enough; and, as for being doctors, it was so indelicate, don't you know, even if a helot desired to practise only upon other helots. It was not indelicate or out of place to be a hospital nurse. There was, and is, a great demand for helot-nurses, the more highly educated, the more perfectly refined, the better. Not forty years ago, however, the pioneer of helot-nurses was treated with contempt, and had to fight her way against great opposition. To volunteer to nurse wounded soldiers was thought to be so "unhelotic" as to argue something like depravity of nature. But the pioneer had courage and the consciousness of right, and accomplished so grand a work, that she was put upon a pedestal for all time, and praised as being "most helotic," and an example to the whole body of helots.

The way was prepared, and the pioneer's sisters began

to walk in it, and, as men blessed them more and more, to press into it in crowds. The path was widened for them, and all stones were taken out of the way. Here was an opening, here at last was something to be done, here an escape from frivolity and idleness!

Many helots were so greatly interested in their new work that they desired to go further, and be surgeons and physicians. But they found a "thus-far-and-no-farther" barrier, a dead wall of opposition. "Stay where you are," was said to them; "you are in your sphere; it would be unhelotic and indelicate in the highest degree to seek to go beyond it. Here we will shelter you in our hospital wards. You shall smooth pillows, and sit up at nights, and wash up after operations, and scrub floors, and all for twenty pounds a year, and a most becoming uniform. Your refinement is such that we could not bear to see you among things that are coarse and vile; your fragility of constitution would not stand the strain of a doctor's life. Besides, you could not do it—no helot ever did; your mental capacity is known to be inferior to ours."

The would-be doctors sat down to consider their position, and thought that they made sure of four things concerning it:—

1. The work of a nurse was harder, physically, than that of a doctor.

2. Many more "indelicate" things had to be done by a nurse than by a doctor.

3. There was little possibility, either of liberty or leisure, in hospital life.

4. And the pay was very small.

Then a gleam of light illumined the darkness of the nursing mind.

Some helots were well-to-do in the world, and had not only money, but houses and lands in their own right. When they married, however, everything that they possessed became the property of their husbands. If the marriage were a happy one the injustice was not felt, because there was love, and, therefore, unselfishness on either side; but many marriages were unhappy, and very many more were decidedly uncomfortable. It often happened that a helot was married solely for what she possessed, and then was not allowed to touch a morsel of her property, and might be left at her husband's death with nothing which she could call her own. As this was the law of the land, and as no helot had any share in law-making, there was no redress, and those who went into the law courts were told that nothing but submission was possible. The great majority of cases never came before judge and jury at all. The wrong was suffered in silence, and unquestioned.

In the case of a married helot, who had to work for her living, things were even worse. She had not even a right to her earnings. This, again, did not matter in a marriage of love and sympathy, but it acted terribly where husband and wife were pulling different ways, and especially where the husband was lazy and unprincipled. Case after case was reported in the newspapers of drunken husbands who would not work for themselves, but seized upon the earnings of their wives, spent all upon themselves, and left their families to starve; of husbands who deserted their

wives, and then came back upon them just as they had started a little shop or saved a little money, sold up everything, and left the helots once more destitute, and with the despairing conviction in their minds that, whatever they did and wherever they might hide, the persecutors would swoop down again and exact the uttermost farthing. Neither police, nor magistrate, nor judge could do anything. Most of them seemed surprised that they were expected to do anything: was it not the law of the land?

Again, a married helot had no right to her own child after the child had reached the age of seven years. It might be brought up in a form of religion which the helot disliked; it might be cruelly treated, and the helot was powerless; it might be taken away, and the helot never see it again.

Then as regarded divorce. The husband could free himself from the wife on the one charge; the wife could not be free unless she could prove besides that her husband was cruel to her in the presence of witnesses.

No wonder that many a helot said to herself, "It is bad enough to be a helot, but to be a married helot is worse than all!" No wonder that at last a few helots, both married and unmarried, banded together and said, "These things must come to an end. Those who make the laws may possibly mean well, but they clearly do not understand us, and they legislate for us from their own point of view. We must have the franchise."

A cry of horror arose from one end of the country to the other. The poor helots were argued with, shouted at, hustled and badgered. Worse than all, they were laughed at.

"What wrongs have you, my dears?" asked one.

"Ho, ho!" laughed another; "only a helot, and wanting a vote! Why, you will be wanting to sit in Parliament next!"

"I don't believe in 'Helot Rights,'" was a growl from another quarter; "all moonshine! fudge!"

They were called "strong-minded," under the impression that this was a term of reproach, and in utter obliviousness of the fact that the antithesis of "strong" is "weak."

They were told that home was their sphere, their only sphere; and they had quoted to them such sweet sayings as "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," the quoters forgetting that the world is not always in its cradle, and that many and many a helot never has a chance of rocking. There was also thrown at them that nice little poem which begins—

"The rights of helots, what are they?
The rights to labour and to pray."

"That is all very well," said one helot after another, "we are quite willing to labour, and we are thankful that we can pray; but don't you do the same? And, if you don't, why don't you? The poem has nothing to do with what we are talking about."

Their opponents drew pictures of the helots who wanted to vote, and they made them as ugly as they could, with blue spectacles and big umbrellas, so that people should laugh; and they had their reward, for the laughter was loud and long. It was so long, indeed, that some of it can be heard to this day.

And they drew beautiful pictures of the dear, sweet

helots who did not want the vote; for, unfortunately, there were some so very comfortable that they did not realise that their fellows were suffering, and so selfish that they did not care even when these sufferings were described over and over again. Some of them would say—parrot-like, for they could only repeat what they had been taught—"It is so unhelotic, don't you know, so unfashionable, too! Nobody likes a helot who goes in for helot's rights."

And people who knew them were fond of making, on platforms, such speeches as these:

"I have asked several helots whether they desired the suffrage, and they have invariably said, 'No, not on any account;' and I am quite convinced, for I know them very well, that they have no wrongs, and that, therefore, no helot has any. All the best helots are with us."

The helots whose eyes were open to see the way in which unjust and unequal legislation pressed upon them, grieved greatly over the attitude of their rich, comfortable sisters. For they were drags upon the wheels. They lived sheltered lives, and never thought of anything but themselves, their relations and friends. They talked a great deal about "their sphere," and all the men who petted and admired them talked about it too, but no one knew exactly what it meant.

So the "best" helots sat still, and came not to the help of the "shrieking sisterhood." But these worked on, worked harder and harder, and yet did not gain what they wanted—the Parliamentary franchise.

In consequence, however, of their continuous demand,

statesmen were at last driven to ask, "Why do you want the suffrage?"

The answer was the recital of a whole chapter of grievances.

"Stop!" cried the great men, putting their hands to their ears. "What shrieking this is! you deafen us."

And they retired to consult. They then agreed to redress one small grievance rather than have this clamour go on any longer: and an Act of Parliament, hedged about with many restrictions, was thrown to them as a sop. In the course of years one or two other things were bestowed upon them with a "take-this-and-be-satisfied" kind of air. Behind the scenes, grave politicians said to each other,

"If those stupid helots want the franchise because of all the things they call grievances, let us redress the 'grievances' one by one, as far, of course as is compatible with the preservation of our own interests, and then they will have nothing to complain about. Anything, anything, rather than give them the vote!"

"*The* vote" was not granted, but several lesser ones were granted as the years went on. Helots began to vote councillors into Town-Councils, and soon found that people treated them with a little respect when they complained of the state of the streets, for instance, or the way in which the rates had gone up. The franchise for the Board of Guardians was also given, and helots were allowed, besides, actually to sit upon these Boards and watch over the interests of those poorer than themselves. And when the School Boards were formed, a friend of helots managed to put a word or two into the Parliamentary Act, which

allowed helots from the first not only to vote for members of the board but to be members themselves. Then came the County Council, with a vote for householders all round, helot-householders included. But may helots sit in these Councils? Oh, no, that would be too shocking; it would be almost like going into Parliament.

It is only fair, however, to say, that the members of the greatest County Council in the kingdom would welcome helots as fellow-members if the law would but allow them to come.

But, to-day, though so much has been gained, helots are still unsatisfied, are still asking for the Parliamentary franchise. Why? For the simple reason that they are taxed exactly as their fellow subjects are taxed, and ought to have the same right as they to say how the money shall be spent. They see their money taken to build an unnecessary ironclad, or to promote an unrighteous war against barbarians; and many a helot grudges her money for such purposes, and wishes to say so with effect.

In these latter days, another and more insidious danger has arisen. Helots have come more and more to the front, and their fellow-men, speaking generally, have discovered that they really have the brains that were so long denied, and that they can, in consequence, be made of very great use. It was often said at first, when helots began to creep out into public life, "How well they get on, considering that they are only helots! It is really quite surprising!" But after a time people began to acknowledge that helots could speak on platforms, and conduct business-meetings

as admirably as themselves; and they often complimented them on their most astonishing success.

Then, when the helots turned upon them with the old demand, "Give us the suffrage," there was a look of shocked solemnity on many faces, and a sudden slipping away at side doors, and the helots were left alone to wonder why, *why*, WHY their brethren were so much afraid of them.

Both political parties are every day making more and more use of helot-labour. It is not "unhelotic" now to speak from platforms, or to canvass for votes; and helots who will do either, especially the latter, are courted and caressed. Nothing is too good for them—except the franchise.

The Conservatives will not give it because they are certain that all helots are Liberals; and the Liberals cannot see their way because they are quite sure that all helots are Conservatives. Helots often complain to both parties that this behaviour is based on mere expediency, but they complain in vain, because the average political mind rather loves expediency than otherwise, and has not yet risen to the comprehension of abstract justice.

Many helots do not see that they are engaged in merely pulling chestnuts out of the fire for other folk to eat. "We must just put in this candidate," they say, "and then the next—and the next:" and when the election is over, the new member will thank them in the most graceful and grateful way, but it will not occur to him that they, after all, have no political rights, and that he is now in a position to work for them. On the contrary, it often

happens that, if distinctly questioned on the subject he replies with the fervour of conviction that helots' suffrage is perfectly impossible; it would create a revolution, wreck the homes of England, and be disastrous in its effects on helots themselves.

When helots formed their own Conservative and Liberal associations they should, as a matter of course, have made the demand for enfranchisement the fundamental part of their programme. Was it ever known in all the history of our past that any other class of men who had no political standing banded together to help those who had, and yet forgot to ask for their own rights? The old habit of subjection has been too strong. Fear of offending "the powers that be," combined with humblest abnegation of self, have made helots again and again stand on one side till this, that, and the other measure has been passed; and so victory is still delayed. Bit by bit, after long and severe struggle, and with sad expenditure of strength, justice on several points has been gained, which would have been readily granted if the petitioners had had votes at their backs, and, thus, a recognized standing in the country.

The root-mistake which has caused helots to be treated differently from other people has been the regarding of Helothood as a special, and greatly inferior, variety of Humanity, not Humanity itself, but created to wait upon Humanity. Thus a great French writer of the last century uses words like these:

"The education of helots should always be relative to that of men. To please, to be useful to us, to make us

love and esteem them, to educate us when young*, and take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable: these are the duties of helots at all times, and what they should be taught in their infancy." And a modern German writer thus "takes up the wondrous tale": "Man desires a being that not only loves but understands him, a being whose heart not only beats for him, but whose hand smoothes his brow, a being that, wherever it appears, irradiates peace, rest, order, silent control over itself and over the thonsand trifles that make up his daily life; he desires a being that diffuses over everything that indefinable odour of helothood which is the vivifying warmth of domestic life."

These extracts may be paralleled by scores, hundreds, in ancient and modern literature. There is no thought that the helot can be "of like passions" with other men. No one is "to please, to be useful to" her, no one is to render her life "easy and agreeable"; she never wants some one "that not only loves but understands her," or, if she does, she must "go without": and where is she to procure that "peace, rest, order, and silent control" which "man," it appears, admires but cannot attain? She must manufacture them herself and then supply her masters. The masters in return do not propose to smoothe her brow or "irradiate" anything for her benefit: why should they, when they are Humanity and she only a helot, with neither feelings, nor interests, nor individuality of her own?

We often see book or lecture advertised with some such title as this: "Helot: her place and power," "Helot's

* What! trust education to inferior intellects?

Work in the Church," and so on: and people gravely discuss such subjects much as they would discuss the position of cats or cows in the social system.

The productions of intellect are discussed on their merits until an instance appears which is due to a helot. Then the laws of art, music, literature, drop out of sight; and the work is "very good for an helot," or "a striking illustration of the kind of thing a helot can be brought to do." "The defects of helotic work are here very apparent," we read; or, "we must compliment the artist on having quite surpassed her sister helots."

("Impossible to surpass Us," is not added, but is understood.)

Pope said long ago—

> "Most helots have no characters at all,
> Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
> And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair."

Poor Pope!

Condescending editors often reserve one little column in their newspapers which they call "The Helots' Column." It is supposed to suit exactly the humble range of the helotic mind. It deals almost invariably with cookery and clothes, and with the doings of the Royal Family. Many of its appointed readers peruse this column and the list of births, marriages, and deaths, and nothing else in the paper. Why meddle with matters that are known to be too high for them: politics, the state of trade, the prospects of the crops, and the election of Mr. Brown as vestryman? I cannot blame these people. The power

of thinking for themselves has been drilled out of them. Their food has been not only selected but cut up for them on their plates, and they have never yet seen the absurdity of the thing. Let us admire those helots who have dared to think for themselves (how they ever began to do it I cannot imagine), whose sense of humour and strength of originality have broken through the tradition of the elders. And let us be patient with the readers of "The Helots' Column," and do our best to enlarge their vision. Let us also remember that a very great many people who are not helots, and have never been shut up in a sphere, but have always had full liberty of thought and action, prefer *Tit-bits* and *Scraps* to politics and metaphysics, and a glass of beer and a pipe to anything else in the wide world. Yet no kind editor provides a column for these lowly minds.

Then there are sayings which are accepted without question, and passed on from mouth to mouth, in parrot fashion, generation after generation. More evil is done by unreflective, unquestioning people than can be calculated. "Helots are such talkers," "so fond of dress," "always looking at themselves in the glass," "always gossiping," "never able to keep a secret," etc. It is very seldom that anyone stops to ask, Are these sweeping assertions true? and, if they are, are they not true of humanity in general and not of one species only? There are helots who are uninterested in dress, others who rarely open their mouths, others again who will keep a secret to the death. And there are people who are not helots who look long at themselves in the glass, and are fastidious about the breadth of a hat-brim and the set of a coat. There are

also people, not helots, who sit for hours in public-houses, or stand at street-corners with their hands in their pockets, gossiping, gossiping, chattering, chattering, yet no one calls attention to their behaviour as being peculiar to one section of humanity; and no one sneers.

The very word "helotic" is a question-begging word What does it mean? Used by you, dear sir, it simply means your idea of what a helot ought to be. We do not speak of "a sheeply sheep," or "a pigly pig;" and I do not know that our conception of either sheep or pig would be enlarged if we did. Why go on talking, then, of "helotic helots"?

It may be worth while to imagine a country where only helots live, a circumscribed area—oh, most circumscribed!—which may be called, for want of a better name, Helot's Sphere. Outside the boundary line people are doing, thinking, saying anything they please. Inside, there is restriction in the air, repression, artificiality. It is not proper, for instance—though everything is being rapidly modified by self-assertion—for a helot to be out late at night alone, to go unattended to concert or theatre, to ride outside an omnibus, or to be carried about in a hansom. A young helot cannot live alone in rooms without losing caste, even though she has to earn her own living, and has no home. A well-to-do young helot is thought to be more than peculiar if she attempts to inhabit her own house alone. She is always expected to hire a "companion," or find some elderly relation, who will "play propriety." As for travelling alone, especially in "foreign parts," such a thing is shocking to the Grundy mind. Did you ever hear

a youthful helot say anything like this: "I think of running over to Paris for a few days"? did you ever see her pack her portmanteau and depart, just to look at Paris and "enjoy herself," with no protecting, chaperoning friend at her heels?

Again, a helot must dress, not so much for considerations of suitability, or convenience, but to "look nice" in the eyes of those outside the sphere. If they are pleased, all is well. Many a helot would like to be clothed so as to be able to go about easily and in all weathers. She is often taunted with not walking much, and laughed at for being easiiy fatigued, but the regulation garb is rigidly enforced, and any modifications thereof are denounced as "fast," "eccentric," "advanced"; worse than all, "unhelotic"; and the small boy laughs in the street.

It used to be the fashion in the sphere to be physically delicate. Pale faces and languid movements were cultivated, and appetites that could scarcely be seen. Outdoor exercise of any kind, riding and a little walking excepted, was not to be thought of. Perhaps the idea was that weakness of body would help to promote that gentle dependence of mind so sweet to the feelings of the governing class.

There are all sorts of curious little unwritten regulations for the decorous conduct of the helot-world. A helot must keep her hat on in church and at a public meeting. Everybody would sit and gaze at her if she took it off. She may, however, go without it to concert, theatre, or opera, if in what is called "full dress," which, being interpreted ,means less dress than usual. If in ordinary dress

the hat must be carefully kept on, as in church. At balls a helot must uncover shoulders and arms. No one can give a reason for this regulation. Other people never have to do it, and it would be thought "not quite the thing" if they did. The Lord Chamberlain would most certainly turn anyone back who came to Court in such guise—anyone, except a helot; and the rules for helots who attend Court are very severe, and are written and printed so that even she who runs may read. No helot can appear before her sovereign except with bare, exceeding bare, shoulders, neck and arms. Within the last few years, however, a slight concession has been made. If a helot will bring a medical certificate stating that her lungs or throat are likely to suffer from exposure, or if she choose to proclaim herself advanced in years, court-etiquette will grant her absolution. But the latter part of the concession accomplishes little because it is accounted somewhat disgraceful in a helot to be elderly. Curiously enough it does not greatly matter if she be married; but, if unmarried, the helot who is approaching middle age is made to feel in many ways that she is a failure and ridiculous. And so helots in general are driven to pretend that they are younger than they are, to avoid reference to birthdays, and to dread the coming of the census.

Of late the sphere has widened.

Much, very much, has been changed. But nothing would have been changed if helots themselves had not had some little originality, some perception that whatever is is not necessarily right, some love of freedom, some determination that right shall be had, and justice shall be

done, had by all, done for all, though the skies come down upon our heads.

It reminds me of nothing so much as the life in seed and tree, the life that is so strong that overlying mould, nay, even overlying stone, is pierced to make way for its coming, so strong that all the strength of gravitation cannot pull it back or hinder it from standing in uprightness; so calmly, silently, grandly triumphant that air and sunshine, and rain and dew are but its ministers. And it grows: it will not lie low upon the ground, though that mysterious forced ceases not for one instant its strain; winds shall not tear it from the earth, rain shall not beat it down, for its roots take fast hold in the darkness, and do but cling the firmer for the storm; upwards it will go, and sunwards. Breadth is gained, and all-roundness, and solidity, by this over-mastering life; branch after branch, twig after twig is put out, and, as for the leaves,—it may be that the leaves are for the healing of the nations.

ELIZABETH MARTYN.

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A REPLY

TO

MR. GLADSTONE'S LETTER

ON

WOMAN SUFFRAGE

ADDRESSED TO HIM BY

A Member of the Women's Liberal Federation.

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Price One Penny.

Sir,

I have been one of those women—perhaps altogether in the minority—who have refrained in the course of our work for a great cause, from taking sides on the question of Woman Suffrage, with the hope that some clearer light might be thrown upon it by one whom we regard as a great leader. But now that we women have received your expression of opinion upon it, I for one feel it may not be amiss to offer a reply, and on the large ground that no considerations of expediency, no temporary end, however important, should ever be allowed to lead us aside from principles which are based, not upon caprice, prejudice, or momentary conditions, but eternal justice.

Permit me, Sir, briefly to review your arguments.

"The Bill* does not include married women." The conferring of the franchise has always been progressive in character; there has been some substantial opposition to conferring the vote on married women, an opposition in which I do not share, and with which I have no sympathy, which is entirely absent in the cases for which that Bill would have provided. Moreover, the "lifelong habit of responsible action" is surely exercised by those women who are alone and have been widows for years, who have had to provide for and bring up

*Sir A. Rollit's.

families, and single women who are working for a living, and have the sole management of their property, and not infrequently the care of relatives' children.

Again, when you assert that there has been not only no assent to this reform, but no approach to it, you certainly very seriously overstate the facts. The question of Woman Suffrage has been before the nation for the last twenty-five years, and frequently before Parliament, and has been steadily supported by intelligent women and men, and by the press in an increasing degree. But for the pains taken to suppress its discussion in Parliament of late—all the more easy to arrange from the fact that *no* class of women is represented—the public education would have been far more complete even than it is. The change can hardly be termed " profound " either. Measures involving far more positive and extensive action on the part of women have been passed, and have been found to be both useful and beneficial to the community. For a striking example of a woman to whom ideas of this kind are never applied, we need only refer to our Queen.

You assert that a certain proportion of women are hostile to the franchise. Probably they are. Probably they are also excellent women in many respects, although lacking in that growing appreciation of the just and right as such, which marks the women no less than the men of a younger generation, and is one of the most hopeful signs of our day. But are they obliged to use their vote if they possess it? And should they be permitted to coerce other women by their own

narrower views? If the possession of the franchise involves what you describe as a " fundamental change in the whole social function of woman ", how is it that the women of Wyoming, in the United States, are quite as womanly as Englishwomen, and that the State in question has shown such a marked social and electoral improvement since women were nobly included among its electors, even at the risk—found to be groundless—of the State being excluded from representation in the Union?

Even if the act of voting plunged women into the " whirlpool of public life ", just as much may be said with regard to the stage, ballet-dancing, and other occupations, which not only actually do this, but bring women into direct and frequent contact with objectionable men, and publicly expose them to the gaze of those who are generally far from exalted in mind or morals. But to tell the truth, the association of which your esteemed wife herself is the President, presents aspects in its public work and meetings far more in accordance with your description than the simple exercise of the franchise. Of this you must certainly be aware. And does any thinking person consider this an objection to the valuable work of that association?

The assertion that the woman's vote carries with it the woman's seat, is pure speculation. It is outside the domain of practical politics in our day altogether, and need not even be discussed. The time may eventually come when natural capacity and high principle may count for something more than difference of sex with

regard to any office; but we are very far from such an ideal state of human life, and I might add, far below it. Using your own words in other relations, it may well be said that "nothing is more odious, nothing more untenable, than an inequality in legal privilege", which is based on the mere physical differences of man and woman, and which disregards all those higher qualities of mind and soul which both possess in common.

I take it, the aim of all politics—unfortunate term!—should be the amelioration of human life, the growth of progress and reform, the breaking down of selfish and unfraternal privileges and barriers, whether of race, caste, creed, or sex—and in this woman must share with man.

You add, Sir, in the close of your letter, that a "permanent and vast difference of type has been impressed upon women and men respectively by the Maker of both," and state that their "differences of social office" are "physical and unchangeable". But they are also temporary, and not only temporary as regards the individual, but as regards the race. Evolution clearly shows us that even physical nature is plastic, and that man himself becomes at a certain stage of his evolution creative, and that he has been at all times a creative force, and a producer of environments on our planet. Sex may embrace not only one plane, but many planes, until we ascend from the physical to the spiritual, where it ceases to operate. For the spiritual is eternal; there is no sex in soul, and therefore, "In *Christ Jesus* (or the divine nature), there is neither male nor female". And

men and women, as such, and now, possess infinitely more in common, than apart. No, Sir, it is not by depriving woman, or any portion of womanhood, of just rights, that you can preserve "her delicacy, purity and refinement", it is not by accentuating sex that you can promote the "elevation of her own nature"; it is by upholding that which makes her a human being in its full sense, free of choice, with issues as vast as those you possess yourself; a soul as divine; an immortality as profound. If "delicacy and refinement" are the results of the old system of regarding womanhood, what are we to say of our music-halls, our casinos, of such a spectacle as the Strand presents any night in London, and of the various diversions which are brought forward for the dubious amusements of men? In these sex is the supreme and central attraction, and unfortunately "the present sources of its power" are very far from being on the plane which would make man noble and woman free.

In carrying the idea of womanly dependence beyond the domain of sentiment, which is its sole legitimate expression, and converting it into a system of religious and legal oppression and moral inequality, a foul wrong has been perpetrated, not only on womanhood but on the entire race, whose excessive and perverted sexual instincts show the natural consequences. We have no quarrel with sentiments of nature expressed in *freedom;* we oppose that repressive system which deprives woman of her spiritual birthright, and is subversive of all that is exalted in life.

There remains no further argument in your letter deserving of pressing notice, and in furnishing what may be justly considered logically unanswerable rejoinders to the statements and opinions given in its pages, I earnestly trust you may be led at no distant date to remove a growing stain upon the Liberal cause, to reconsider the question of Woman Suffrage, and to look at it in the clear and simple light of Justice.

I remain, Sir,

Yours very respectfully,

S. E. G.

The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.

June, 1892.

Women's Printing Society, Limited, 21b, Great College St., Westminster, S.W.

A Blast and a Counterblast

THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

AND ITS

PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES

Being a review of "The Emancipation of Women and its probable consequences." by Adele Crepaz, *with a letter to the Authoress by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.—Swan Sonnenschein & Co.*

BY

Y. GWYR

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MR. Gladstone has much to answer for, but the champions of Women's Rights cannot be otherwise than grateful that a formal indictment against the woman's movement has been drawn up which will enable them to repeat the well known facts which they often fear are degenerating by repetition into mere truisms, but which none the less, must be repeated until the world is prepared not only to tacitly admit but also to act upon them.

The difficulty of those who argue in favour of Women's Rights is that whatever point of vantage they choose to dwell on they are assured that *that* is not in question, and whatever pamphlet they choose to reply to, they are assured that it was the ignorance or weakness of their antagonist that made their task so easy, but Mme. Crepaz' work is recommended to the world by one of the greatest of living men, who tells us that in it the woman's question has received "the most thorough treatment which I have yet seen applied to it." (See Mr. Gladstone's letter prefacing Mme. Crepaz' work.)

It is therefore the duty of all students of the question to find out what the "foundation arguments" are on which this arch opponent of woman's rights stands, as she seeks to stem the rising tide of advancing womanhood; and to discover whether these foundations are secure, or whether her position is built upon mere piles of unsound material, and cemented by mere antique and outworn prejudices.

The object of the treatise, we are told at the outset, is to point out, that

> "women, warned by hard-won experience, may be willing to desist from wresting those rights, which while they hold out to them freedom and independence, turn them from what ensures not only their own happiness and well-being, but also from that upon which the welfare of the whole human race is grounded."

Unless the authoress told us what she wanted to prove we should never have discovered it, for she herself sets forth the advantages of the Emancipation of Woman in the following paragraph, and does not bring forward a single argument throughout the book that destroys the convincing force of what she says in its favour.

"The emancipation of women, their deliverance from early prejudices and unnatural trammels, was a necessity which the development of culture and the altered condition of industrial relations was bound, by degrees, to bring about. The progress resulting from it, conducing to the well-being of thousands, cannot be denied, and demands the fullest recognition. It has opened up new possibilities for women, and by thus relieving them from the burden of empty conventional prejudices, has given work to thousands of willing hands, and afforded scope for much latent intellectual power. Work, which in former times was looked upon as a degradation to ladies of position, is now elevated to a moral power, and the gentlewoman in reduced circumstances no longer needs to earn her living with tears of humiliation and in secret. Openly she shows the world that she intends to turn her abilities to good account, and no one dreams of withholding from her the right. The independent callings which have been opened up to women of late, shelters them from the humiliation of seeking dependent positions among their more wealthy relatives, or from being forced, for the sake of a home, to the necessity of marrying against their inclinations. So far the emancipation of women has tended to the culture and ennobling of the sex, and must serve to keep it from some errors, and from the consciousness of empty, vapid lives. True, in all ages, there have been remarkable women who have endeavoured to force the narrow limits of social opinion, but it has remained to the nineteenth century to bring about the great reformation in the position of women. The position of its women is the test of a nation's culture."

She proceeds to dwell on the progress the movement has made in various countries, and we admire her magnanimity and wish to record our appreciation of it, all the more as the facts she brings forward will do more to convert unprejudiced readers to the cause of woman's advancement, than the fallacies of her incoherent conclusions will alarm or deter them.

She quotes Plato and Tacitus, and their soul stirring praises of the intellectual gifts of women; she reminds us that distinguished men, from Plutarch and Pericles down to J. Stuart Mill, have been in favour of their culture, and that gifted women, from Aspasia down to Julia Ward Howe in America and Louise Otto in Germany, have been enthusiastic advocates of their rights.

We are thus carried along in pleasant surprise at the glimpses she gives us both of the progress of women and of the high appreciation it has received in all countries, and we are beginning to think that Mr. Gladstone's approval of the book must after all be due to his happy conversion—when

suddenly we are without warning plunged into the cold water of her disapproval.

After giving us a vivid picture of the abilities and worth of the modern American woman, and quoting Mr. Welcken's declaration that "she is the pioneer of culture, the foster nurse of art and science, the most eager advocate for public instruction," Mme. Crepaz suddenly, as it were rounds on the object which she holds up to our unqualified admiration, and says

"that the American woman supplants man in those careers which of right belong to him by reason of his superior abilities without making any mark in them herself, estranging herself even further from the aim of her natural vocation."

We might flippantly enquire why the American man did not use his superior abilities to prevent himself from being supplanted, and doubt the truth after reading the foregoing description of the American woman's successes that she has "made no mark," and we would like to forestall the explanation which else might be offered to us, that the American man has left to woman the higher culture and learning because he is making money, by asking whether it is not good for the community, and a magnificent destiny for woman, that she should preserve and extend the intellectual endeavours of the race, and in herself be the learner and teacher of the sublime glories of art and literature.

We need not finish this little volume before perceiving that it is in fact the *glorification of ignorance*, and that almost every page further exemplifies this.

The advancement of women depends on, and is the inevitable result of the attainment of knowledge by women. If it be a bad thing that women supply the intellect in Russia and the culture in America; if it be bad that women hold permanent positions as instructors, and that they gain eminence in the medical profession and practice in Mahommedan harems where men may not be consulted, as Mme. Crepaz assures us they do, then ignorance *should* be glorified and the German Hausfrau, whom she represents throughout her work as the model woman, should reign supreme.

Our authoress proceeds to tell us that woman in America holds a highly "privileged position", and that she aspires to positions where she may turn her intellectual abilities to account, and she depicts the energy, knowledge, and independence of the women of the United States, and the great esteem in which they are held by men, in a candid manner and with a vigour which will no doubt convert many young Hausfraus to the very cause she seeks to warn them against, or reduce them to resign themselves with silent regret to a German sphere of domesticity and vapidity.

Even the possession of a German husband will not make the best women forego such nobly earned praises as those we have already quoted.

We now get at the pith of the argument. The final condemnation of the American woman is this,—that, with regard to marriage, "a marriage of reason is the only one she thinks of". Mme. Crepaz apparently thinks she is hurling the most terrible thunderbolt of all the weapons of her displeasure when she says

"she does not grasp the idea of life's work as woman,"

but, assuming equal rights with man, "forgets the laws of nature which assign to each sex their several tasks in life".

No wonder Mme. Crepaz is irritated if she thinks the American woman is impertinent enough to forget nature's laws; but is our authoress acquainted with these laws? and is she entirely unacquainted with the sublime law that makes every living organism tend to the highest development of which it is capable, mental, physical, and spiritual? From the time when first "God dawned on chaos" every form of life has tended to become more complex and more highly organized; and unless Mme. Crepaz has a special revelation that woman alone has reached the limit of her power of development, and that the German Hausfrau is the highest type of which the race is capable, she is using mere meaningless phrases when she says that women are going against the laws of nature by pursuing any single path in life to which their reason and the light of the "Sovereign Soul" directs them.

The law of human nature is that living things should seek the highest end, and merely declaring one end to be higher than another does not make it so. The highest one is that which is achieved by the noblest types when they use the greatest gifts, and all physical and mental powers under the best conditions. We must see that many of the ideal types of women, such as Aspasia the wife of Pericles, and in our own days such women as Mrs. Josephine Butler, Miss Florence Nightingale, Lady Aberdeen, and Lady Carlisle, are those who have preached and practised the doctrines of the emancipation of women, which in other words is the struggle for the highest development of the individual.

"The happiest marriages in America," we read, "are those contracted between American men and German women."

This is patriotic certainly, but we doubt whether it be true.

Mme. Crepaz admits that when the tyranny of the law as it affected married women was made known through J. S.

Mill's advocacy, "a cry of indignation at the white slavery of women resounded throughout Europe." And she remarks that English women are treated with great deference in their own country, and the ever-increasing Women's Rights movement is proof of their great influence; and this makes us satisfied that Mme. Crepaz is on the verge of conversion to the Woman's Suffrage movement and even inspires us with the faint suggestion of a belief that she may have converted herself by her own pamphlet, as did a celebrated American writer of the opposite sex, who having undertaken to write an article against the enfranchisement of women, became convinced in favour of it by the weakness of his own arguments and ever after was a warm champion of their cause.

The condition of married women before the passing of the Married Women's Property Act was insecure and unjust, and constant flagrant cases of abject misery resulted from it, but the passing of this Act was entirely due to the indefatigable political women, who stirred up hundreds and thousands of women and men in an outcry against it which ended in the alteration of the law.

We cannot dwell fully on the condition of women in France and Germany and Russia, but we note with satisfaction that even this staunch opponent of Woman's Suffrage is impressed by the excellence of their work. We learn from her that in the Russo-Turkish war twenty-five Russian lady medical students were solicited to give their services, and their work of self-sacrifice obtained the fullest recognition; that the Russian women supply the intellectual power, hold a prominent position as instructors, and are much employed in the service of the State; that the women of France and Switzerland excel in business and often conduct large industries with ability and circumspection. But the authoress seems to take satisfaction in the thought that in her own country no woman is ever likely to assume a prominent position in public and government offices, which she does in so many other countries. "Because," she explains,

"We have no colonies abroad, no surplus million of female population, and no lack of intellectual power among our men."

She does indeed miss the mark if she thinks that the presence of intellectual power amongst women is only due to the lack of it amongst men, and she is deluding herself with a vain hope if she thinks that the surplus millions of women who have been forced to know the blessings of freedom, the joys of knowledge, and the dignity of public and philanthropic duty by stern necessity will not teach the great lessons they

have learnt to their more comfortable but less highly developed sisters in other countries.

We pass over the argument about the relative sizes of the skulls of men and women, for if women can do good work with small skulls, the size does not matter, and if they cannot, their inability will be a stronger argument against them than the measurement of their craniums.

The inference that our authoress draws from woman's anatomical construction is

"that she is designed for the sphere of feeling, and man for that of reason."

Similar ill-considered inferences, no doubt, have prompted the man-made laws that have put women at the mercy of their physical violence, for it may have been observed that structurally man was suited to be the kicker and woman to remain the kicked.

But the world has suffered so long from unfeeling men and unreasonable women, that if each sex will partake a little of the sphere which no rights of property have yet exclusively allotted to one or the other, they may discover the useful truth, that the sphere of each human creature is the complete circle of all human life, and the qualities that will ensure success in it are not masculine nor feminine, but human, and can be trained alike in men and women.

It is this quaint prejudice that qualities have a sex, that brings about much turbid dogmatism on the woman question. Thus we learn that

women are not capable of entering successfully on 'masculine' careers,"

and the question is closed by the mere juxtaposition of the useful little adjective. This mental attitude reminds one of the savage tribe which first decided that the moon was feminine and then gave this as the sufficient ground for her constant changes.

'Two people can do the same thing and yet it is not the same," we are told by our authoress, as though this were a final demonstration of the futility of women adopting a so-called male occupation, but the true application of this proverb is, that when a woman adopts a 'masculine' calling, although she does the same thing as a man, it is not the same thing because in her hand it becomes a feminine calling.

Mere commonsense brushes away the absurdity of the statement that if a man and woman were cast away on a desert island in the nineteenth century

"the man would build a hut of a surety, and the woman would cook the dinner."

This would depend entirely on the previous training of the castaways. If he were a cook, a milliner, a dressmaker, a hairdresser, a footman, or a shop-boy, or pursued any similar manly avocation, he would probably cook the dinner in preference to the building of the house, whilst if the woman chanced to be a fish-wife, a pit-brow lass, a factory hand, or a female gymnast, she would probably prefer to erect the edifice rather than to stir the pot. Nature in fact would determine that both should use their own abilities, whatever they happened to be, to their mutual advantage; and if the man and woman were both gifted and enlightened, they would probably share the pleasures of each department, and learn the joys of true companionship—one cooking the dinner whilst the other washed the dishes, and one bringing the stones for the hut whilst the other piled them on one another.

We wade with difficulty through an increasing slush of inconsistencies and turn back again and again to Mr. Gladstone's assurance that the work is "luminous and penetrating" and at last hasten to the end to see if there we shall find a glimmer of the promised light on the subject.

We learn in the concluding paragraph that what we are to do is

"to hold fast to the highest and best that belongs to us women, the vocation of wife and mother;"

and we retrace our steps in order to learn in what way the Higher Education and wider opportunities and removal of political disabilities will interfere with these duties. We learn first, that

independence would make women worldly and would cause them to seek 'money and position' in marriage, (page 55); secondly, it would induce them "to marry for reason" and not for love, (page 26); thirdly, it would prevent their marrying at all, (page 58); and finally, it would cause many of those who are married to obtain separations or divorces from their husbands, (page 84).

With regard to the accusation of worldliness and the statement that advanced women will seek their goal in ambition and that

"in marriage, money and position will be her watchwords"

we need only point out that if education teaches *anything*, it teaches the true value of these things, and if any women cling to the chance of a home from sordid motives it is the thousands of girls who have no independent chances of livelihood.

We are told that the woman who works independently will cease to be a woman and become a "cold, calculating neuter" caring nothing for love; but this is at the same

time a condemnation of all men, for if hard work and public spirit efface love, men must all deserve the above opprobrious epithet. We are assured by our authoress that women are far more emotional than men, and yet she fears that when women are trained and well-occupied, they will exhibit a stony-heartedness that even man, whom she calls the "sterner and more unfeeling" sex, has escaped.

Mme. Crepaz tells us that one of the great objects of all good women should be to "steer clear of the non-marrying difficulty," and whilst we profoundly agree with her in all she says of the dignity and importance of the vocations of wife and mother, we should like to show very clearly why we believe that nothing but the removal of disabilities will enable her to fulfil worthily and ideally those natural and joyful positions; and why we are convinced that all the difficulties so gloomily dwelt upon arise not from the awakening of women, but from the present blindness of men to all that is, or ought to be, involved in the marriage relation.

We are told that

> "marriage confers happiness on the greatest men" and that "mediocre men" are raised thereby to "high inspirations" and therefore "it must surely be desirable for the individual."

We imagine that "for the *male* individual" must here have been intended, for why should our authoress otherwise fear, as the next sentence shows, that the moment women are educated and have the choice of other careers they will forego matrimony, if indeed, marriage is beneficial to the individual woman as well as to the individual man?

She fully recognises that there are many unhappy unions, and she fears the new condition lest it should bring about a diminution of marriages. She admits the misery of many married women, whose lives are filled with misunderstandings, and misfortunes, and unfulfilled hopes; yet she wastes the time in deploring the fact that women will prefer to abide in single blessedness, instead of seeking to discover the reason *why* cultured and thoughtful women should shrink from the "one moral, natural, proper aim in life." She seeks to cloud the issue by remarking that "single women are unhappy also", but the question she ought to ask is: "since marriage is a happier condition than single life (and few would dispute this point which she insists upon) and since, nevertheless, there is a likelihood that women will prefer the hardest independent work to matrimony,—is there not something wrong in the relation of married life?—and has not, possibly, her own theory that "true and wifely submission, self-sacrificing affection and contentment, and practical

knowledge of housekeeping constitute the sole objects of a married woman," a good deal to answer for in this direction?

Does she not see what a fearful confession as to the unsatisfactory position of married women she makes when further on she declares that there is an increasing number of women who when they have a career and means of independent subsistence will seek divorce from their husbands; for what this shews is that only the abject position of total dependence and the fear of actual starvation is keeping many unhappy wives by the sides of their faithless and unworthy husbands at the present moment. Those who wish to increase the number of happy marriages should seek to do so, not by curbing women's rights, but by seeking to remedy women's wrongs, and the champions of woman's freedom are rapidly leading to the true solution of the marriage problem.

We ourselves start with the daring proposition that a woman must be complete in herself, or as near perfection as possible, before she can be perfect in this most important relation; and on this account we differ from the old-fashioned sentimentalists who think that eighteen is the ideal age for a girl to marry, and agree with the modern scientist who thinks that twenty-five is the right age because the body has then attained its fullest development, and undivided strength can be given to the unborn babe, just as we declare that the woman is fittest to marry who has trained and developed her mind, and who enters the state of matrimony with a full knowledge of what it entails and a similar knowledge of what she foregoes.

The mistake that nearly all disputants on the marriage question make, which is here once more glaringly apparent, is that it can be solved by reference to woman alone. The very word "relation" signifies a condition dependent on more than one person, and yet it is constantly assumed that one can secure the comfort and happiness and peace of both. But just as it takes two to make a quarrel, it takes two to make an agreement, and it is just as much the function of man to be husband and father as for woman to be wife and mother.

What is the result of all education on this point being lavished on women alone?

The result is that all women's efforts are unable to secure health in their offspring and happiness in their homes, although, as Dr. B. W. Richardson tells us, were it not for the conserving fact that women form the less tainted half of the race, humanity would deteriorate to the point of failure.

It is because men are uneducated to any ideal as regards their duties as husbands and fathers that public opinion permits without condemnation the elderly man of the world

who has led a so-called "gay" life to wed a pure and noble-minded maiden.

The heroine of the remarkable novel just published, "The Heavenly Twins," asks her mother, who wishes her to be the devoted wife of a man of this type: "You would not counsel a son of yours to marry a society woman of the same character as Major Colquhoun, and neither more nor less degraded, for the purpose of reforming her, would you, mother? . . . . It seems to me such cases are for the clergy, who have both experience and authority, and not for young wives to tackle."

What Mme. Crepaz does not see is that not only is education bound to bring about a complete reform of the present evils attending marriage, but that this reform would take place all the more quickly if educated women followed her advice and limited their careers to those of wife and mother alone.

The knowledge of biology, physiology and the history of morals will teach every wife—for her children's sake, if not her own—to expect a standard of life and conduct in her husband which would ensure a prospect of health and moral proclivities in the generation that is to come.

Thousands of years of education of women by men has caused the woman who lives for her husband alone to be idealized in life and literature, and the abject self-degradation of a patient Griselda is the ultimate outcome of the teaching of a Mme. Crepaz. Nothing but a besotted desire for conventional virtue on Griselda's part could have caused her to pander to the vicious brutality of her husband.

But, as a distinguished woman writer, Lucas Malet, remarks, "upon my word, at times one is tempted to think these forbearing, long-suffering, humble-minded individuals will have a great deal to answer for some day; they give so much opportunity for sinning on the part of others"; or to quote once more that work of genius, "The Heavenly Twins": "The mistake from the beginning has been that women have practised self-sacrifice when they should have been teaching men self-control."

The women who make their children selfish by allowing them to make demands instead of teaching them to fulfil duties—in short, who *spoil* their children, are called bad mothers; and the time is fast approaching when women who spoil their husbands will be called bad wives.

"Oh," we shall be told, "but women must not attempt to educate their husbands." What then we ask about the constant acceptation of the arrangement that the man is to wed the maiden in order that she may make him turn over a new leaf?

Mme. Crepaz sees the danger that marriage will be avoided

by large numbers of women directly they have the chance of any alternative—and the only way she proposes to avoid this result is by preventing women, either by persuasion, cajolery, or coercion—she does not say which—from seeking other careers.

She does not see that there is a third course available, namely, that the marriage relation shall be made such a satisfactory one that the best educated and most gifted women will be glad to seek it; and that this great new way can only be opened by removing the special disabilities which are placed on women by laws of coverture and by condemning the coercion of domestic and public opinion, which now practically closes to most married women opportunities of public utility.

Mme. Crepaz does not see that far from being a disadvantage to the unborn generations it is a most blessed thing for humanity that women, once they know and think and live the life of reason as well as that of mere emotion, will *not* marry unless they can marry men who will be worthy fathers of their children, for there is no reason why men when they realise this—and every day they are growing to realise it more—should not raise a higher standard for themselves and be worthy companions of their wives.

The word "Help-meet" will apply not only to one, but to both the fellow workers, in the happy unions of the future.

We must not entirely pass by Mme. Crepaz' comments on the economic position of women, which she says will, under its new conditions, injuriously affect the marriage question.

She tells us that girls are more intelligent than boys, their ambitions greater, their moral consciousness more highly developed, that they are more practical, their wants more simple and that consequently their services will be increasingly sought; and she then declares that women's labour by cheapening the price of commodities will injuriously affect the community. Without going deeply into Political Economy, we can remind our readers that cheap production is a benefit to the community, when the wages paid are sufficient to keep the workers in health and strength and happiness; and if wages are injuriously affected by competition, there are other means of lessening its evils (such as Trade Unionism, and increasing the land under cultivation, etc.,) than for half the wage earners to force the other half to refrain from obtaining a livelihood.

Would any political economist venture to assert that it i for the benefit of the community that half the workers should be kept in idleness even if they are capable and willing to work? Mme. Crepaz's dogmas would lead inevitably to the ludicrous conclusion that the larger the number of idle and

unemployed persons in the community, the better it is for those who have to work and keep them.

There are over three millions of women in our country wo[e] are wage earners, and the preponderating number of th[e] female, as compared to the male population, brings about the necessity of a large number supporting themselves because they have no opportunity of marrying even if they had the wish. To rob these women of the chance of earning their daily bread would be an iniquity, and fortunately in these enlightened days of women's rights, an absolute impossibility.

With regard to the question of the labour of married women, those women who have studied the question in Factory districts declare that there is no danger that women will insist on doing hard work when they have husbands ready to do it for them, and that a very large proportion of married women have husbands who either will not or cannot work, or will not give their wives a fair share of their earnings, in many cases spending them on drink. It is well known that many men marry on purpose to be supported by their wives, and the only just remedy is not to lessen the woman's chances, but by public opinion to compel the man to a higher moral standard.

She dwells on the danger to women as mothers if they do hard work, but unintentionally herself provides the reply, for she tells us that the Empress Maria Theresa, besides being one of the cleverest women of the day, was the mother of sixteen children, and again, that amongst the poorer classes nature adapts women to child-bearing whilst following laborious occupations, but that women of the middle-classes are unfit to do regular work and to be mothers Now out of her mouth what do we learn? That the middle-class with bodies not highly trained, and minds not highly taught, ought to be kept in the condition that emphasizes the pangs of motherhood, although the mentally endowed, like Maria Theresa, or the physically inured like the poor, suffer actually less!

She admits that there seems to be some ground for giving women occupations because of the possibility of their being widowed even if they do fulfil their one proper vocation of marriage, but she hastens to refute this by saying that women may just as much be left destitute by ill-health or mental derangement, forgetting that it does not cease to be our duty to guard against preventable evils (such as destitution in widowhood by lack of a profession) because there are some evils that are unpreventable.

The usual unwarrantable commonplaces about eminent women not caring for their children hardly calls for comment, but all who like to study the question will find that the very women who have applied themselves to public or professional

work have been peculiarly tender and devoted mothers, from our gracious Queen down to the many humble widows, who, whilst striving against harsh odds for a livelihood, are as a class notable for their wise care and heroic devotion to their children.

Once more we find Mme. Crepaz agreeing with a fundamental proposition of the Woman's Rights party when she says that the education of children is one of the most important services that can be rendered to the State, and that the mothers of the nation are those who can best fulfil it. She agrees with Madame de Campan, who said "you must train us mothers to know how to educate our children", yet strangely enough she does not see that women cannot possibly give their children the best training unless they themselves are acquainted with the world, unless they themselves have precise knowledge, literary taste, mathematical precision, artistic education—in short, *culture*.

Here then, we discover an answer to the whole woman question: if you give woman the knowledge, training, education,—and with them the resulting sympathy, wisdom and judgment that will perfect her as the instructress of her own children, you will find that you have produced a human being who is not only capable of serving the State, but whose enlarged mind will not have full scope for its legitimate efforts in her own home alone,—and in order that she may receive the best training, you will have to break down many barriers which now prevent most women from obtaining a thorough education—in short, for the sake of her children you will have to emancipate her.

It does not matter from which point of view men and women approach the woman question. Whether they limit themselves to a discussion of her functions as mother, wife or spinster, artist, worker, or idler, they will ultimately reach the inevitable conclusion that the perfect human creature will be one who has had opportunity to train every gift, encouragement to develop intellectual and physical, as well as moral powers, and liberty to use them;—but the truest champion of this great and world-wide movement will for ever know that the fight is justified for freedom's sake alone, because the dignity of every human soul demands freedom, and only the sacred lamp of Liberty can light its wearer to the highest ideal life of humanity.

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WOMEN'S

EMANCIPATION UNION.

THE BITTER CRY

OF THE

VOTELESS TOILERS.

(With special reference to the Seamstresses of East London.)

BY

W. H. WILKINS,

Author of "The Alien Invasion," "The Traffic in Italian Children," "The Church and the Labour Movement," &c., &c.

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Therefore, as I said before, I must not be understood to ignore the woes of other women-workers, if to-night I bring before you only the sorrows of one particular class. I do so because I think it is better, instead of nibbling around the fringe of this vast subject, to endeavour to deal thoroughly with one especial phase. I have, therefore, chosen the needlewomen, because they represent the lowest *stratum* of woman's labour, and, also, because this is the phase of woman's work upon which I am more qualified to speak to you, both from personal knowledge and from experience.

It was in March, 1888—just five years ago—that my attention was first called to the awful condition of the isolated women-toilers in the East End of London. I was then making some inquiries in connection with the Sweating System, or, to be more accurate, in connection with a resolution moved in the House of Lords by Lord Dunraven, which led to the appointment of the Sweating Committee, of which he was chairman. Unfortunately my health broke down about that time, and I was obliged to give up active work for some time, but the state of affairs revealed to me then branded itself upon my memory, and will remain there so long as life lasts. Two years ago I was able to renew these inquiries on my own account, with what results I will endeavour to place before you now.

It is not a new story. The miseries of the East End needlewomen form no new theme. They are as old as the "Song of the Shirt"—even older. Yet in spite of all that has been done of recent years in the way of social and remedial legislation, and in the way of organised individual effort, the woes of this unfortunate class have deepened and intensified as the years rolled on. Speaking generally, there has been latterly a decided upward tendency in the wages paid for men's labour, and a corresponding rise in their habits and their scale of living generally. Even the wages of some women-workers—notably in the case of skilled factory hands—have shared in this improvement, though to a more limited extent. But the condition of what may truly be termed the *residuum*, the needlewomen employed in the cheap tailoring and millinery trade in London and some of the great provincial cities—but more especially London—has gone from bad to worse.

It is 50 years ago since Hood wrote his inspired poem which aroused such general sympathy with the class for which he pleaded. *They need that sympathy more now.* When the "Song of the Shirt" was written, these poor creatures were earning an average wage of 2½d. an hour. At the present time many of them—most of them—cannot average more than the pittance of 1½d. an hour.

Are not these figures an eloquent commentary on the degraded and downtrodden condition of women toilers? Are they not also a terrible sarcasm of that thing we call "public opinion"? I cannot remember, of course, but there are doubtless some here who can, the torrent of indignation which burst forth when the "Song of the Shirt" first rang like a tocsin through the land. From every town, from every fireside almost, there arose a cry of horror that these things were so.

And after the cry there came a great stillness: the British public had relieved its feelings, but nothing was done. Some new question arose, I forget what—something to do with Ireland, perhaps, for they had an Irish question even then—a war, perchance, or some conflict of worn-out formulæ whether a clergyman should preach in a white gown or a black one. People thought a good deal about such things in those days; but they heeded little, or seemed to heed little, of the poor woman starving in her garret, stitching her life away, underpaid, underfed, overworked. But then she was "only a woman," you see!

When we come to examine into the "sweating" in the cheap clothing trade, we find that the very weakness of women—the duties of maternity, the care of children—tell terribly against them in the industrial struggle. We are always boasting of our civilisation and our Christianity, yet humanitarian considerations here avail nothing. The commercial competition of to-day in the cheap clothing trade positively trades upon the maternity of the women-workers. Upon their weakness the sweater thrives, in that he compels them to work for terms which men—even the low-class Jew—will refuse to accept. They have no means of protecting their labour, these poor women. Physically weaker than men, women receive a smaller amount of work, and a lower rate of wages, especially in unskilled labour. That most potent weapon in the hand of men workers, combination (to which I shall have occasion to refer more fully later on), has not reached them here. Their isolated position, the long hours, the underfeeding, the scanty wage, crush all spirit out of them, and with them resistance is impossible.

Thus it comes about that all the worst features of the sweating system—unsanitary conditions, long hours, meagre wage, and uncertain employment—are especially prevalent among women workers.

Let us consider them briefly *seriatim*:

The unsanitary conditions under which the East End needlewomen are compelled to labour and to live may be described as simply appalling. From the nature of the case, their work must be done either in the small sweating workshops or at

home. It is difficult to say which is the worse alternative. In either case they labour surrounded by bad light, bad air, bad smells, bad water—by everything which depresses the vital energies, and leaves them an easy prey to disease. The small workshops have been described by a competent authority as "the most filthy, poisoning, soul and body killing places imaginable." Even to stand at the open door of one of these places, and to breathe the foul air which rushes forth, is well-nigh intolerable to people of ordinary susceptibilities. There is a great difficulty in enforcing proper sanitary arrangements in the case of these "dens," many of which are unknown to the inspector, and those which are known are so numerous that, undermanned and overworked as the staff of factory inspectors is, they cannot be inspected thoroughly.

In the case of work at home—"out-work," as it is called—the evils of overcrowding, bad ventilation, and bad drainage are, if possible, intensified. Home-work would seem to put a premium upon dirty habits. One wretched garret is all that the poor toiler can afford. Here she labours, and lives, and dies, no one heeding! In the case of a married woman, often a whole family has to share this single room. It is impossible for a woman who is always working with her needle for dear life to keep the room clean. The consequence is that, especially in hot weather, it becomes infested with vermin, which find their way into the garments in process of making. The takers-in of the work in the larger houses (it was stated by a witness before the Sweating Committee) kill the worst of these vermin with their shears as they examine the garments! There are houses, for instance, in Clerkenwell, in which five or six "businesses" are going on at the same time, and though they are filthy, the inspector is powerless to enter. Is it a wonder if under these circumstances the germs of infection are carried far and wide? For these very garments when made, be it noted, are sold in large numbers in cheap clothing shops throughout London and the provinces.

The length of the hours of labour also press unduly upon women-workers. The protection which the Factory Act endeavours to afford them in this respect has become practically *nil*. In the case of "out-work" the workroom is also the dwelling-room, and here the provisions of the Act, of course, do not apply. In the case of the small workshops, or "sweating dens," the machinery of the Act fails to meet the case. Women are kept working in these dens from six a.m. until eight p.m., ten p.m., or even midnight. A case was mentioned before the Sweating Committee, of a girl eighteen years of age, who worked from seven in the morning to 8-30 at night for wages ranging from 3s. to 8s. a week. On Fridays

she worked from six a.m. to five p.m. (eleven hours), that being considered half a day, and paid for accordingly.

All sorts of tricks are played to evade the factory inspector. His first appearance in the street is notified all along the line by a pre-arranged signal; or, perchance, when he arrives at the door, he is kept in parley for a minute or two. Meanwhile the women and girls are smuggled away, and by the time he is admitted there is not a woman to be seen. The women, poor creatures, lend themselves to this deception, because they know if they did not, plenty of others could be found who would. They are utterly at the sweaters' mercy; they come to regard the inspector who is appointed to protect them rather as an enemy than as a friend. The interval which the Act insists upon for meals is also infringed. A woman who availed herself of the full hour for dinner would be liable to instant dismissal. Even the half hour for tea is frequently denied them; the tea is put down by their side—they swallow it as they work.

Let us now glance at the prices these women are paid for their labour—the harvest reaped by a life lived under such awful conditions. Working by the piece a woman is paid 5d. for making a vest, 7½d. for making a coat. She can, by fifteen hours' work, make four coats in a day, which come to 2s. 6d., but out of this has to be deducted 3d. to a button-holer, for making button-holes, and 4d. for "trimmings"—*i.e.*, fire, ironing, soap, &c.—all necessary to her work. A boy's knicker-bocker suit is made at prices varying from 4d. to 10½d. complete, according to the amount of work put into it. The price paid by a sweater to a woman for "machining" trousers runs from 1¼d. to 3¼d. per pair. If she works at home she has frequently to pay 2s. 6d. a week for the hire of a sewing machine.

The "finishers," who press the garments, put on the tickets, and generally make them ready for sale, are paid from 2d. to 2¾d. a pair. But they lose a good deal of time in taking their work to the sweaters and getting it examined. Frequently they have to wait three or four hours at a time; and, I believe, it is a rule that no seats are provided for them. Should the examiner find the first two or three pairs of trousers faulty, he will not go through the rest, but throws the lot at the unfortunate woman, and tells her to go back and alter them. In this way much valuable time is lost.

In the shirt-making the prices run as follows:—Women who make by machine the commoner kind of shirts are paid 7d., 8d., and 9d. per dozen shirts; they can machine 1½ dozen shirts in a day by working until midnight and later. The shirt finishers, who make the button-holes by hand and sew on the buttons, get 3d. per dozen shirts, finding their own cotton. They can finish 1½ to 2 dozen in a day.

In other articles made in the cheap clothing trade by women the price of labour is correspondingly low. The commoner class of fur work is, perhaps, the worst paid of all, for as it varies with the season, work of this kind is very uncertain. For instance, I traced out the price of labour in a fur collarette of hareskin, dyed and lined—bought it at a shop for 1s. 6d. It amounted to only 1¾d. Six shillings a week is about the maximum wage in this particular industry, and out of the season it drops down to three or four shillings a week.

With other articles it is much the same. Babies' hoods are made for 9d. a dozen, the maker finding work and material; they are sold at 1s. 3¾d. each. Small stays, which bring 1s. 9d. per dozen to the maker (work and material), are sold for 3¾d. each. Large stays, which bring 6s. per dozen to the maker (work and material), are sold at 11¾d. each. "French" stays (so-called), which bring 9s. 6d. per dozen (work and material), sell at 1s. 3d. each. Children's skirts, sold at 9d., are made for 5d. (work and material). Silk mantles, selling at West End shops from 20s. to 25s., are made throughout the East End for 7½d. apiece. Commoner mantles are made by the worker for 3d. to 3½d. Bead trimmings are made by girls who, working twelve hours, earn from 8d. to 1s. 2d. per day. Cheap macintoshes are made from 10d. to 1s. each.

Such are some of the prices paid. They are eloquent enough as they stand, but they speak even more strongly when we bear in mind that these miserable wages are often irregularly paid. In the latter category of prices quoted, which belong to what may be termed the "ornamental" department of the cheap clothing trade, there are the fluctuations of fashion and season to be considered. There are slack times during the year when the workers may be idle for weeks together. Yet they must still keep body and soul together *if they can*. Many cannot, and die: the mortality among these poor women is very great. Others struggle on eking out their scanty earnings—shame that they should be forced to do so!—by means of the streets.

The problem offered to us by the contemplation of this state of affairs is a terrible one, and at first sight the difficulties besetting its solution appear well-nigh insurmountable. "But to the brave heart nothing is difficult."

Before, however, prescribing the remedies, let us, like wise physicians, look into the causes which have brought matters to the present crisis. Putting aside for the moment the one great cause to which I shall refer at the last, we find that prominent are the sub-contract and irregular home-work, which tell so fatally against women. There is another cause also which has had a marked effect in reducing

the price of labour in the industries which it affects—and especially this industry. I refer to the increase which has taken place of late years in the immigration of destitute or semi-destitute foreigners. Five or six years ago the seamstresses made much more; now the competition has become so intensified by this apparently ceaseless influx of destitute foreign labour that prices are reduced some 40 per cent. or 50 per cent. Now, I do not wish to intrude this question—though it is one on which I feel strongly—I merely wish to point out that in the cheap clothing trade, so far as the foreign Jew competes at all with the native worker, he competes not against Englishmen, but *Englishwomen*. As Mr. John Burnett has pointed out, there are not more than 250 Englishmen now employed in the cheap tailoring trade in the whole of the East End of London. But there are plenty of Englishwomen. As usual, it is the woman who pays.

In this case it is she who has to pay for the keeping up of so-called traditions with regard to the free entrance of the *residuum* of other countries. The strong man in his strength, when confronted with this alien invasion, flees before it. But the weak woman, in her weakness, what of her? She must perforce remain to feebly fight on single-handed in the unequal struggle with these foreigners, who are willing to work for any wage, for any length of hours, and amid surroundings filthy and disgusting in the extreme. And when she can fight no longer, when her weakness conquers her, when her strength fails her, she can only lie down and die; nay, there is one alternative, infinitely more terrible—she can go upon the streets.

In considering, therefore, the means whereby the conditions of this downtrodden class may be raised, it is obvious that some means should be devised of restricting, or at least sifting, the stream of alien pauper immigration. Space does not permit of my touching more fully upon this factor of the problem in the present paper; it must suffice that its presence be recognised.

Another suggestion which calls for more than passing notice is that urged by a well-known writer (Mr. J. A. Hobson), who has made this phase of poverty a study. It is that the most effective form for remedial legislation to take would be to restrict "out-work" altogether; or, to put it in other words, that all employers of women should be compelled to provide factories and workshops, and no longer give them work at home. Now, "out-work" is admittedly a great evil. It is one of the things on which "sweating" thrives. Yet it is difficult to see how legislation can interfere in this matter without bringing about evils as great or greater than that

which it would seek to dispel. Granted that "out-work" takes a woman's time from her home duties, to compel her to attend a factory would not give her any more time for them. To dictate to a woman the kind of work she may do in her own home is to interfere seriously with the liberty of the subject. To allow her to make a shirt for her husband, but to forbid her to do the same thing for a money value, would be a *reductio ad absurdum.*

It would be impossible to carry out the provisions of such an Act. The privilege that an Englishman's house is his castle holds equally good in the case of an Englishwoman; it is one jealously guarded by the poor as well as the rich. To tamper with this privilege would be a very dangerous thing. What is first wanted is that the existing Factory Act should be rigidly carried out, and its provisions firmly insisted upon. When this is done we will talk of amending it. The first thing necessary is to largely increase the number of inspectors, and to insist upon the appointment of women inspectors in all industries in which women are employed. None but a woman can know a woman's weakness. I am aware that the present Government, as a concession to much pressure, has consented grudgingly to appoint *two* women inspectors, one to be stationed in Glasgow and one in London, who at a salary of £200 a year each, rising to a maximum of £300, are to look after the tens of thousands of women factory workers of the two kingdoms. Oh! generous Government! Was there ever such a herculean task to be paid by such a wage! Why, beside it, relatively speaking, the pittance of the East End seamstress seems almost lavish. And then the absurdity of the thing—*two women!* Surely, if the principle of women factory inspectors be admitted at all, it would be better to deal with it freely and thoroughly. It is not *two* women inspectors who are wanted, but *two hundred*—I had almost said two thousand—and even then there will remain work to be done. Perhaps, however, Mr. Asquith means this as a sop to Cerberus, a bone to a dog, something to keep women quiet in the hope of better things to come. But they ask for bread, not a stone, and they mean to clamour until they get it. It is never wise to try and buy off your Danes. Or perhaps he thinks by this means to arrest the great movement towards the emancipation of women-workers, or at least stay it for a time! As well might the immortal Mrs. Partington, with her broom, endeavour to stem the Atlantic, and Mr. Asquith, like Mrs. Partington, may be very good at a puddle, but he should not venture to meddle with a tempest.

Hitherto we have only considered those remedies which can be effected by the direct intervention of the State. Now,

State intervention is a useful weapon at all times, and in this case a necessary one. Still we must not forget that experience has shown to us that the healing virtues of Acts of Parliament can be overrated. It is well, therefore, that we should consider that other great agency for good—I mean organised individual effort. It has one great merit—it can begin to work at once. And in the case of women-workers it cannot be said that organised individual effort has yet had full play.

Trade unionism, as we all know, has made very slow growth among women. It is less than twenty years ago since the first trade union was formed among women in the bookbinding trade. Since then a number of others have been formed, and in certain cases have done much to raise the price of women's labour, and to protect their interests. This has been especially the case with *skilled* factory work, and with glove-making, match-making, confectionery, etc. That admirable body, the "Women's Trade Union League," could doubtless multiply instances *ad infinitum* in which women's unions have worked signal success. But the particular class for which I plead to-night remains untouched, or practically untouched. Combination does not reach them, and, under existing circumstances, *it cannot.* I believe that certain efforts, worthy of all praise, have been made to start combinations for poor needlewomen. I believe a guild was started in Finsbury last year, but it is too young yet and too poor to have achieved any great measure of success. The great mass of needlewomen is made up of scattered individuals, who are isolated, helpless, voiceless, and *voteless.* They have no strength to combine, no time to spare, no money to spend, and *without money it is impossible to form a combination.*

The power to protest against an unfair wage, and the power to hold out after protesting, are essential to a strong combination, and neither can be done without funds. These poor women have no funds, and, therefore, any movement or organisation to better their condition must be assisted from without.

Bearing in mind what unity and combination have done to improve the condition of men-workers, bearing in mind also the task of both among the downtrodden seamstresses, the thought forcibly suggests itself that any movement towards ameliorating their lot must follow upon somewhat similar lines. Unity is the only thing. The individual strands of a rope are weak enough when taken singly, but they will resist almost any force when united. Only combination must come to the needlewoman—she cannot come to it. There is this difference between them and men-workers, or even the more skilled class of women-workers: the needlewomen *cannot* help

themselves, the others can. Some of them might perhaps be able to afford a penny or twopence a week as a subscription. Few could do more, not many so much. What, therefore, is wanted is that a committee should be formed of those who are interested in this question, and so form the nucleus of an organisation to help those who are unable to help themselves. In connection with such an organisation there might be a benefit society, which would be useful in cases of sickness, and co-operative works might be started, bringing the producer nearer the consumer, and so doing away with the middleman, or "*sweater*." It would be, of course, essential that such an organisation should be non-political in character, and it is equally essential that its committee should include the names of earnest men and women who are known as interested in charitable and philanthropic work, and who would be willing to help in a substantial manner. The influence of such an organisation in educating and forming a healthy public opinion can hardly be overrated. These are, of course, mere outlines of a scheme which, if carried out, would, I humbly submit, do much to alleviate the miseries to which this unhappy class are now subject. Who will help? "The fields are white unto the harvest, but the labourers are few."

That the existing state of affairs is hopelessly bad, and, if left alone, will go from bad to worse, must be obvious to all those who have looked below the surface. The victims of the present system—whose bitter cry goes up unceasingly, and no one heeds—may be roughly divided into two classes, the married women and the girls. The results are bad in both cases.

In the case of married women, it will generally be admitted, I think, that the home should be the mother's first care. The value of maintaining a high standard in the home-life of our people can hardly be overrated, for upon it depends, not only the present, but also the future of our race. But these poor creatures have no time to attend to the pure, tender delight of motherhood, or the many little duties which cluster around that word so sweet to English ears—"home." And then there is the physical evil. What "hope of our race" can we expect from the feeble, half-starved Englishwomen who are thus crushed down in the struggle for life? Yet they struggle on. To quote an instance: Mrs. Killick, a trousers finisher, told the Sweating Committee that she could not make more than 1s. a day, working from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. She had a sick husband and three children to maintain, and out of her earnings she paid 2s. a week for rent. She lived on tea and a bit of fish. What a glimpse of patient heroism and noble self-denial does the testimony of this poor woman afford! And

yet there are some who say that women are not brave. Surely greater bravery was never shown on the battle-fields of Waterloo or Austerlitz.

And now I come to the darkest phase of all. What of the thousands of seamstresses who are unmarried, those who stand alone, who cannot by earning an honest living keep soul and body together? How do they subsist? This brings us face to face with the most degrading aspect of our social problem. Working from dawn till eve in filth and unutterable squalor for a wage which does not suffice to buy the barest necessaries of life, hundreds, nay thousands, of young women eke out their wretched earnings by means of the streets. The Pharisee and the self-righteous pass by on the other side and condemn them; but it is not they who should be condemned, but the system which makes such a state of things possible. A well-known and much-respected East End clergyman, the Vicar of Old Ford, has testified to cases in which he knew of young girls of thirteen, workers in this cheap clothing trade, who were already leading an immoral life. In one instance two sisters, one twelve and the other ten, had already embarked on a life of shame. One of these girls had been sent out by her stepmother because the family "had to live."

Most of the English girls to be seen at night in Oxford Street and the Strand—to say nothing of their even more degraded sisters in Whitechapel—are, or have been, seamstresses. How these poor creatures manage to exist at all, even when they eke out their wretched earnings by the price paid for their dishonour, it is not easy to see. The key of the mystery is to be found in their mutual help of one another. Even among all their degradation many of them retain that divine instinct of self-sacrifice which through all ages has been the noblest part of womanhood. Dim it may be and undeveloped, but still it is there, evidenced by many little acts of kindness, many little generous deeds towards those who are more miserable, more suffering than themselves.

Under happier circumstances these poor women might have lived honest and virtuous lives. As it is, unable to earn an honest living, they are driven into vice.

I speak strongly, because I feel strongly. We must not allow false delicacy to cloak this hideous evil. I agree with St. Jerome that "if offence cometh it is better it should come from knowledge of the truth than that the truth should be concealed."

Every now and then the public conscience is startled by the news of some awful tragedy—like the Whitechapel murders, for instance, or the crimes of Neill Cream. They are but bubbles bursting on the surface, which ooze up from the black

WOMAN AND NATURAL SELECTION.

A REPRESENTATIVE of the *Daily Chronicle* lately interviewed Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the well-known scientist, who, on the subject of Natural Selection, is unequalled save by Darwin as an original thinker.

"I should like to ask your opinion, Dr. Wallace, upon the rapid change, amounting almost to a social revolution, which is taking place in the education and general development of women; what effect will it have upon human progress?"

"I reply without hesitation that the effect will be entirely beneficial to the race. Women at the present time, in all civilised countries, are showing a determination to secure their personal, social, and political freedom. The great part which they are destined to play in the future of humanity has begun to force itself upon their attention. They have within the last twenty years proceeded by leaps and bounds toward the attainment of that perfect freedom without which no human being can arrive at his or her highest development. When men and women are alike free to follow their best impulses, when both receive the best and most thorough education that the knowledge at the time will admit; when there are no false restrictions placed upon any human being because of the accident of sex, and when the standard of public opinion is set by the wisest and the best, and that standard is systematically inculcated upon the young, then we shall find that a system of human selection will come spontaneously into action which will bring about a reformed humanity."

"And are women to be the chief factors in bringing about this great reformation?"

"Yes: the hope of the future lies with women. When such social changes have been effected, then no woman will be compelled, either by hunger, isolation, or social compulsion, to sell herself either in prostitution or uncongenial wedlock; when all women alike shall feel the refining influence of a true humanising education, of beautiful and elevating surroundings, and when there is an educated public opinion—note that specially," said Dr. Wallace, leaning forward in his chair with a flushed and eager

face—"we must have an educated public opinion which shall be founded on the highest aspirations of the age and country; then the result will be a form of human selection which will bring about a continuous advance in the average status of the race. I believe that this improvement will be effected through the agency of female choice in marriage. As things are, women are constantly forced into marriage for a bare living or a comfortable home. They have practically no choice in the selection of their partners and the fathers of their children, and so long as this economic necessity for marriage presses upon the great bulk of women, men who are vicious, degraded, of feeble intellect and unsound bodies, will secure wives, and thus often perpetuate their infirmities and evil habits. But in a reformed society the vicious man, the man of degraded taste or of feeble intellect, will have little chance of finding a wife, and his bad qualities will die out with himself. On the other hand, the most perfect and beautiful in body and mind, the men of spotless character and reputation, will secure wives first, the less commendable later, and the least commendable latest of all. As a natural consequence, the best men and women will marry the earliest, and probably have the largest families. The result will be a more rapid increase of the good than of the bad, and this state of things continuing to work for successive generations, will at length bring the average man up to the level of those who are now the most advanced of the race. I hope I make it clear that women must be free to marry or not marry before there can be true natural selection in the most important relationship of life. Although many women now remain unmarried from necessity rather than from choice, there are always a considerable number who have no special inclination to marriage, but who accept husbands to secure a subsistence or a home. If all women were pecuniarily independent, and all occupied with congenial public duties or intellectual enjoyments, I believe that a large number would choose to remain unmarried. In a regenerated society it would come to be considered a degradation for any woman to marry a man she did not both love and esteem; in consequence many women would abstain from marriage altogether, or delay it until a worthy and sympathetic husband was encountered."

"There are upwards of a million more women than men in this country, Dr. Wallace, and it seems to me that it is this feminine superfluity which has, as it were, demoralised marriage?"

"Undoubtedly it has tended to weaken the selective agency of women. Still, although females are largely in excess of males in our existing population, there is good reason to believe that it will not remain a permanent feature."

"Do you mean to imply that the wear and tear of competitive industry and the physical demands of the higher education will act injuriously upon women and reduce their numbers?"

"Certainly not," replied Dr. Wallace with a laugh; "we are not going to kill off the superfluous women, but preserve the lives of men. As a matter of fact, there are more boys born into the world than girls, but boys die so much more rapidly than girls, that when we include all under the age of five the numbers are nearly equal; for the next five years the mortality is nearly the same in both sexes; then that of females preponderates up to thirty years of age; then up to sixty that of men is the larger; while for the rest of life female mortality is again greatest. The general result is that at the ages of most frequent marriage—from twenty to thirty-five—females are between eight and nine per cent. in excess of males. But during the ages from five to thirty-five we find a wonderful excess of male deaths from two preventible causes—'accident' and 'violence.' The great excess of male over female deaths, amounting in one year to over 3,000, all between the ages of five and thirty-five, is no doubt due to the greater risks run by men and boys in various industrial occupations. We are looking forward to a society in the future which will guard the lives of the workers against the effects of unhealthy employments and all preventible risks. This will further reduce the mortality of men as compared with women. It seems highly probable that in the society of the future the superior number of males at birth will be maintained throughout life, or at least through the marriageable period."

"And you would maintain, I suppose, Dr. Wallace, that the large number of women, who, in consequence of being economically independent, would elect not to marry would further decrease the present overplus of marriageable women?"

"Certainly; when no woman is compelled to marry for a bare living or a comfortable home, there will, I believe, be a large number of women who will remain single from choice. Few women will marry then except from the highest motive—pure and disinterested love. Now, with man the passion of love is stronger and more general, and, as in a reformed society women will not be driven to lives of shame for the sake of bread, but will have remunerative occupation, men will have no means of gratifying their stronger passions except through marriage. In consequence, almost every woman will receive offers, and thus a powerful selective agency will rest with the female sex. On the whole, then, it is probable that in the society of the future the mortality of males will be less, owing to preventive measures in connection with dangerous and injurious occupations, so that the number of marriageable men will be equal to that of women; add to this that there will be an increasing proportion

of women who will prefer not to marry, and it is clear that men desiring wives will be in excess of women wanting husbands. This will greatly increase the influence of women in the improvement of the race. Being in the minority, they will be more sought after, and will have a real choice in marriage, which is rarely the case now."

"You think, then, Dr. Wallace, that the women who marry will choose wisely?"

"Broadly speaking, I think we may trust the cultivated minds and pure instincts of the women of the future in the choice of partners. The idle and the selfish would be almost universally rejected. The coarse and sensual man, the diseased or the weak in intellect, those having a tendency to insanity or to hereditary disease, or who possess any congenital deformity, would rarely find partners, because the enlightened woman would know that she was committing an offence against society against humanity at large, in choosing a husband who might be the means of transmitting disease of body or of mind to his offspring. Thus it will come about that the lower types of men, morally, and the physically diseased, will remain permanently unmarried, and will leave no descendants; and the advance of the race in every good quality will be ensured. This method of improvement by the gradual elimination of the worst is the most direct method, for it is of much greater importance to get rid of the lowest types of humanity than to raise the highest a little higher. We do not need so much to have more of the great and the good as we need to have less of the weak and the bad. The method by which the animal and vegetable worlds have been improved and developed has been through weeding out. The survival of the fittest is really the extinction of the unfit. Natural selection in the world of nature is achieving this on an enormous scale, because owing to the rapid increase of most organisms a large proportion of the unfit are destroyed. In order to cleanse society of the unfit we must give to woman the power of selection in marriage, and the means by which this most important and desirable end can be attained will be brought about by giving her such training and education as shall render her economically independent."

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WHY WOMEN WANT THE SUFFRAGE.

WOMEN'S opinion is not at present represented in Parliament. Is this fair or right?

A woman may be a landed proprietor, but while every man on her estate has a voice in the government of the nation she has none. She may be a tenant farmer, but while each labourer on her farm has a vote she has none. She may be a lodging house keeper, but while the lodger in her house has a vote she has none. All these women pay taxes and have to obey the laws, yet they have no voice in questions of taxation or in the making of the laws. They are in exactly the same position as men, they have exactly the same responsibilities as men, yet they are not allowed the same privileges as men. They may vote in the School Board, in the Sanitary Board, in the Poor Law Guardian, in the Town or County Council Elections, but they are shut out from the Parliamentary polling booth. Is this just or reasonable?

Again, if "obedience to the law is a test of good citizenship," women are better citizens than men, for out of the number of men and women who are committed for trial for serious offences against the law the women are less than a fifth the number of the men; yet although thus proved to be better citizens, women are allowed no voice in the government of their country. A man may even have been in prison for breaking the laws, yet on his release he is permitted to vote, while a woman who has obeyed the laws all her life is not allowed a vote.

It is said: "If women householders and ratepayers are given the vote, married women who have property, or who are judicially separated from their husbands, or whose husbands are in an asylum, will also have a right to the vote; and if these married women have the vote, why should not all married women have it as joint occupiers of houses?" It is true. By their unpaid labour of keeping the homes of the working men, and by their bearing and rearing of children, the working man's wife is just as useful, just as necessary to the nation, as her husband, and she has therefore just as much right to a voice in its government and the making of its laws.

It is, however, impossible to attain everything at once. Things grow gradually and women will do well to remember how slow has been the extension of the suffrage among men, and so "take anything they can get and hope for more as time goes on."

Now the general idea amongst men is that women do not want the vote. Is this the case? If so, it can be only because they do not realise the power of the vote.

It is said also that women take no interest in politics. Is this true? If so, it is only because they do not realise what politics are and how they affect their everyday life. Let each woman consider this. For instance:—

Do you care about Temperance? At present you can only talk and wish for better laws, the vote would give you direct power to help in improving legislation on this subject.

Do you care about Religion? The question of the Disestablishment of the Church has arisen in Wales and may spread to England and Scotland. You may wish to keep the Church established or wish for absolute equality amongst all Denominations, but without a vote you have no decisive power in the settlement of the question.

Do you work for your own living? If so, are you content that men should regulate women's work and wages, and pass laws affecting them without your having any voice in these matters.

Do you care about your children's Education? Do you think the law just by which they belong solely to their father? Do you think it right that the divorce laws should have, as they now have, one rule for men and another for women? You may think and say what you like about all these matters, but without the vote you have no power to alter them.

It rests in your own hands. If you care about these things and wish to have direct influence in settling them and other political matters, do all you can towards getting Women's Suffrage.

CHIPCHASE. M. TAYLOR.

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, MISS GERTRUDE STEWART, Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament Street, London. S.W., at 9d. per 100, post free.

7

The Census

AND

Women's Suffrage.

BY LAURA E. MORGAN-BROWN.

THE result of the census taken in April last is now before us, to discuss and digest with profit, for the number and general status of our vast population affect many different points of political and social interest, and for those who have eyes to see the census has comprehensive lessons to teach.

A woman, and especially an English woman, turns with natural interest to the paragraph which concerns the numerical proportion of her own sex, and this is the cardinal point, the importance of which I wish to press home to every woman in the land.

We read:—"Of the total population at the census which has just been taken, **14,050,620** were males, and **14,950,398** were females. This excess of nearly **900,000** females would, of course, be considerably reduced had the army, the navy, and the merchant service abroad been included in the reckoning. The proportion of females to males has been *steadily increasing* at each census since **1851.**"

So there are **900,000** more women than men in England and Wales?

Let us consider what sized town it would be if all these women, who have no other half with which their number can be paired, were to live together in a community. A vast territory would have to be set aside for the homes of these

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unattached women, who in spite of the "protection" said to be so necessary for their sex are evidently out of court. They certainly have no male caretaker specially told off for their support, their comfort, their companionship, their credit! They are a vast concourse wholly and entirely unrepresented. They have no one man each, to seek to redress any personal wrong they may suffer. They must sow, they must spin, they must gather into barn themselves, for themselves, and by themselves. They are not the lilies of life neither do they lie on the roses, and there are 900,000! I turn to that most useful book, Whittaker's Almanack, to try to find out in imagination what kind of a city would be required to house the 900,000, and I find in the list of the population of great cities that, with the exception of London, Paris, Berlin, New York, and Philadelphia, there is not a city quoted large enough for the contingent. St. Petersburg, with a population of 842,000, falls short, whilst Vienna, which most of us know better than St. Petersburg, only houses 822,176 inhabitants.

Just conceive, then, our army of surplus women who are alone, *i.e.*, without the direct care of one special "lord and master," for whose benefit we are so often told woman was specially created, though the natural corollary that, if this be so, man was created solely to look after her, is more often left to the imagination than expressed.

The Majority Neglected.

Now, if the result of the census had shown a majority of 900,000 men I do not think I am wrong in asserting that in countless instances the fact would have been selected as a most significant one, pointing unmistakably to the natural preponderance and importance of men over women. It would be said, "Men are stronger, better in every way to fight life's battle—to govern, to rule at home and abroad. They survive, you see, in greater numbers; the women die off. They, the men, are able to get their own living and struggle upwards by force of sheer numbers. Why, *of course* it is intended they should take the lead and keep it—and they mean to, that is very clear, *for they are in the majority*, so who shall say them nay?"

But the census tells a different story. It is the men who are the fewest. The army, the navy, emigration (of those who are often the most fit to do work at home), all these causes help to reduce men to the minority, and though from the 900,000 surplus women we should make a deduction of a good percentage of wives of soldiers, sailors, and emigrants, who are left behind and nominally protected, there yet remains a vast concourse of women who may safely be neglected because they have no vote. They have no voice whatsoever in the nation. If they lived in a city or county by themselves, no matter what the wrong, the injustice, the evil that might exist in that town or county, they could not themselves, although so numerically large a part of the nation, have one direct say in the nation on any point whatsoever. Now is this fair, is it right, is it just, is it wise?

It is so easy for women who are well off to be satisfied with everything that does not interfere with their own personal comfort—the welfare of themselves and their children.

It is so much easier for a prosperous, well-dressed, amiable, school instructed woman, who is married and fairly satisfied with a fairly pleasant life, to say, "Oh! I really do not know anything about these things you mention. I leave all politics to my husband. I do not think women have the education or the time to understand things rightly." It is so much easier to say all this than to say, "Politics? Why do you ask *me* about them? You think women ought to know something about their nation and the way it is governed? Well, I suppose they ought, because, after all, the nation is only a big family, and I am sure I understand *my* part of the management of the family quite as well as my husband does *his* part. Ah! You are smiling—Well, to tell you the truth it never occurred to me in this light before. Will I join your society? No, I won't to-day, because I never do anything in a hurry, but I will tell you what I will promise to do. I will try to find out what you mean by the justice of the case—that a woman should have a vote, I mean—and I will learn all about the matter *for myself*. Yes, I promise you *I will not accept what other people tell me* is right or wrong, and when I have learned I will let you know my decision."

Why, if women would only take that amount of interest, the 900,000 surplus women would not long have to complain of the greatness of their number, which only too briefly and graphically describes the helplessness of their condition.

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Handicapped as we are, though, let us remember we are numerically the strongest. Men would think this something in their favour, and women must think so too.

Every kind of argument is used to show plainly and unmistakably the immense stake that we women have in the good of the country, and yet prejudice or ignorance blinds the eyes of women and deadens their hearts to their own interests in the most astonishing way.

Surely this result of the census will make women think of those less fortunate than themselves; those who *will* never be helped, *can* never be helped, raised and educated to a sense of their own individual responsibilities as citizens born into a State, unless women themselves help them with the right kind of help—help *to help themselves*.

Your power of good works, your power of money, your power of religious teaching, and the power of your prayers are deprived of half their efficacy because, though you are strong to *will*, you are politically powerless to *do*. Your wish to do all you can for your fellow creatures may be all that is holiest and best, but besides being a human being you are, like Paul, a citizen of "no mean city," and until you are politically recognised as such, you stultify your best efforts and you rob half its power from the inspiration to think and to do that which is right and for which you daily pray, because in spite of your education, your intention, your money, your power, or your religious zeal, you are one of the unprivileged classes—your accident of birth places you in the same category as lunatics, paupers, criminals, and children.

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, Miss Gertrude Stewart, Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament Street, London, S.W., at 1/6 per 100, post free.

REASONS WHY WOMEN WANT THE VOTE.

By MRS. MORGAN-BROWNE.

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1. Because they **pay taxes** and have to **obey the laws.**

2. Because the persons who are **deprived** of the right to vote are **Lunatics, Criminals, Paupers, WOMEN** and **Children;** and women object to being classed

with **Lunatics,** if they are **sane,**
with **Criminals,** if they **obey the laws,**
with **Paupers,** if they **pay taxes,**
with **Children,** if they are of **adult age.**

3. Because the nation is only **one family,** composed of men and women, boys and girls, and the wishes of women ought to be consulted considering how many laws are made which **specially affect their sex,** and because Parliament too often refuses to pass just laws for women which almost certainly would be passed if women had votes.

4. Because at present **the rights of Fathers and Mothers** in regard to their children **are not equal** before the law.

5. Because **men and women are different,** and therefore neither sex should be shut out from a share in the government of the country which affects both men and women.

6. Because women share the **burden** and **responsibilities** of life with men, and they should also share the **privileges** and **duties.**

7. Because women as a sex are **pure, unselfish** and **conscientious,** and by excluding them from political life, the **Nation loses** just that large amount of purity, unselfishness and conscientiousness in the conduct of public affairs which women are known to exercise in private life.

8. Because **the VOTES of WOMEN as well as the votes of men are required, if the Government is to justly and fully represent the whole of the Nation.**

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, Miss Gertrude Stewart, Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament [illegible] London, S.W., at 9d. per 100, post free.