

CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC
FAWCETT COLLECTION

Calcutta House
Old Castle Street
London E1 7NT

p 331.43
3900048801

MARCH, 1925.

PAYMENT OF THE MOTHER.

ADDRESS BY
ALICE HEALE
TO GATHERINGS OF WOMEN.

Many women will remember the monster demonstration, some 14 or 15 years ago, held by the Women's Social and Political Union in Hyde Park, when the militant suffragettes were fighting for the vote.

Several processions started from the different districts of London; each procession was headed by a large silk banner bearing appropriate devices, made specially for the occasion, and each procession poured its thousands into Hyde Park.

My sister and I had the joy of presenting one of these banners, and being professional women, and knowing by experience that economic independence was the *one* thing which women must fight for, the words we chose for our banner were the very material ones—"EQUAL REWARD FOR EQUAL MERIT," in other words, "Equal pay for equal work."

All women's societies had, I think, at that time, without exception, that eventual object in view, but when I chose the words "equal reward for equal merit," I always insisted that *payment of the mother* must *precede* any possibility of women obtaining equal pay for equal work with men.

But my advocacy of *payment of the mother* was then generally met with stony silence, or I was told that it was a most unpleasant and disagreeable idea, and that the ideal was to work as partners with men on an *equality* (believe me, that is exactly what men do not want), and I was made to feel generally that I was a person of distinctly anti-man ideas. So when I am speaking to-night on *payment of the mother*, you must please remember that this is no new idea with me, but that I am still riding a very old hobby-horse of mine.

That the payment of the mother *will* come, I have no doubt whatever—the pensions for widows scheme is the *thin* edge of the wedge—but what always surprised me was, and still is, that the very women who hold up their hands in horror at the very idea of *paying the mother* have no dislike *whatever* for, on the contrary they *welcome* the idea of payment or pensions for *widows*, to keep them and their children.

PAMPHLET

331.43
HEA

FAWCETT COLLECTION

At gatherings where these two subjects have been discussed, I have sometimes jokingly remarked that if you pay widows enough to make them and their children comfortable, most *wives* will want to be *widows*!

You will at once say that that remark is the result of an anti-man attitude, but just listen to this:—At a Poor Law Conference held at the Guildhall in the spring, when a scheme for granting *pensions to widows* was being put forward, no less a person than a *man*, Canon Tollington, (after dealing with the sum which the widow would receive in agricultural districts) remarked that “*you are going to give large numbers of very excellent wives considerable financial interests in the early death of their husbands.*”

Canon Tollington and the nervous gentlemen of the Poor Law Conference may have had in mind the terrible picture given by Livy, in his Book VIII, of the Roman matrons, who, in the year 330 B.C., finding their marital life quite un-supportable, were discovered in a wholesale conspiracy to poison their husbands. I need scarcely say that widows' pensions were *turned down* at that Poor Law gathering.

But, joking apart, I shall never be able to see how it can be less degrading for a mother to be paid, and be economically independent as a widow *after* her husband is *dead*, than as a wife when he is in the land of the living. It should be just the reverse, for *no* one will deny that it is the economic dependence of the wife upon the *husband* which leads to the sexual over-use and abuse to which she is subjected, and which makes for the ill-health of herself and her children, and the over-sexed condition generally of the whole race; besides which, no one who goes about with their eyes open, especially among the poor, will deny that, through the economic dependence of the wife, she becomes what I will not call *im-moral*, but rather *un-moral*, in some of the most vital matters. Take the case of the defilement of the little girl children by their fathers *in the home*—a most common occurrence!! It is a most unusual thing for a mother to expose the crime of her husband, however terrible the havoc and irretrievable harm he has caused to often more than one of her girl children!

Why should she behave so wrongly where her little girls are concerned? Do we believe for one moment that she does not *wish* to protect her girls from their father's lust? No! of course not—it is entirely a matter of *money*; if she “gives away her man,” as they call it, and has him punished and imprisoned, there *will be no money on Saturday to keep herself and her kiddies.*

Exactly the same reason, *money*, is the cause of so many women, who have been knocked about and injured by their

husbands, begging the magistrates not to punish them. Magistrates pretend to believe that this is the “divine forgiveness of women.” It is nothing of the kind! Nine times out of ten, it is the need of money and the knowledge that the day the husband goes to prison all money supplies cease automatically.

But, most of all, I consider that the economic subjection of the wife is the root cause of the degradation of *all* women, and is the *insuperable* obstacle which will *always* prevent women obtaining equal chances in the professions and labour market, or equal pay for equal work with men.

My reasons for paying the mother are these:—The service to the nation of bearing and rearing children is a *distinct and separate service from that of performing industrial work*, but in our present-day topsy-turvy scheme of things, we clump the two services together, the *wife's* service, which is the bearing and rearing of the children, and the *husband's*, which is industrial work—and pay, *not* the wife for *her* work and the husband for *his* work, but pay all to the husband! No wonder men consider it a privilege to be the bread-winner—it certainly is! He is receiving *two* salaries. This payment of *all* to husband is, of course, absurdly unfair to the mother, putting the money into the wrong pocket; but quite apart from that, *it is monstrously unjust to the un-married woman*, who wishes and, indeed, *has* to fight her way in the labour market, and she is told, until she is sick of hearing it, that she *cannot* be given equal opportunities and equal pay for equal work with men, because a *man* has to “keep” a wife and children.

That sounds very well on the surface, but as a *bachelor* is paid precisely the same as a married man with many children, *that excuse won't do!*

Some people are clamouring for what is called a *family endowment* scheme, the money for which is to be procured through insurance paid by the workman, *State*, and *employer*. But this scheme would *not* do away with the supreme difficulty now waiting to be solved (and which will be insisted upon)—of women to receive equal opportunity in the labour market, and equal pay for the same job, (*the very last trench men will yield*)—as men would demand a still comparatively higher wage than at present, owing to the extra call the insurance would make on their money, and the *un-married* woman would have a still fainter chance of receiving equal pay with men.

So this scheme of family endowment is no good for women, and it will sooner or later resolve itself into the *mother being paid a salary, like any other civil servant*, for her unique and absolutely indispensable work in the very greatest of national industries—that of life-giver, and the *father* will be paid only the wage rightfully due to him, for

his *distinct and separate task of industrial work*, whether that work be done in competition with a bachelor, spinster, or widow, who would receive equal pay with him if engaged in similar work.

By paying the *bachelor* the same wage as a *married man with children*, the community is paying for the maintenance of thousands of children yearly *who have no existence*; for the trade union wage, indeed every *salary*, is based on the scale of a man having to "keep" a wife and three children, therefore every bachelor or married man without children is being *overpaid*.

Pensions for widows with children, again, is an *excellent* thing in itself, *but* unless a widow is paid sufficient to enable her to bring up her children herself in the home in some comfort, the scheme will be the *very gravest danger possible to women's labour generally*.

1925 Churchill's scheme gives all widows 10s. a week, and to those who have children, 5s. a week for the first child, and 3s. a week for each succeeding child, so that a widow with three children would have only 21s. a week to lodge, feed, and clothe them all! As, of course, she could not *possibly* do this, she would again be thrown on the labour market to eke out her pension money, and the wretched *unmarried* woman, who has to keep herself entirely, and often others dependent upon her, would have to meet the competition of this 10s. a week on the widows' wages, besides herself having to pay 2d. a week into the fund from which the widows' subsidy of 10s. a week is *paid*, so that her wages would become even more sweated than they are to-day.

Why *is* it, that so many gifted, educated, enthusiastic, earnest women, who fought so hard and unselfishly to gain the vote (the key which would unlock the door leading to all reforms which meant *freedom* for women), remain tinkering with the situation and going round and round the matter in every way, and yet never touching the *one* subject which *has* led, and always will lead, to womanhood's subjection and degradation in the scheme of things?

One set of women demand equal guardianship and responsibility for children; another set demand a legitimacy bill; another set demand that the word "obey" should be eliminated from the marriage service; another set demand that a *man* with a family should receive extra grants for each child; others ask for widows' pensions, and so forth.

Now what factor in society has made such slavery of women possible, and made women's societies so busy asking for righting of wrongs which cannot be righted except by *one* thing?

The factor in society which has made for women's captivity, slavery, and degradation is MARRIAGE!

Marriage is an institution made by *men* for *men*, and *intended* for the subjection and abasement of womanhood, and especially designed for the taking away of woman's greatest asset (that of life-giver) from her, and giving the child into men's hands.

After the matriarchal times, marriage was by violent methods and capture (not voluntary on the woman's part). Later, the Church insinuatingly and cunningly covered the claws of captivity with a velvet glove ("sacredness of family life," "holy matrimony," "sanctity of motherhood," etc., etc.), and gradually succeeded in making the woman proud of her chains (even to-day there are some who hug them), *but the chains are there all the same*, and it is a good sign that so many women are conscious of how galling those chains are.

We must always remember that prostitution early began in the Church, and it is significant that it is the *Church* which is still most determined that the "legalised prostitution" (as Bernard Shaw called *marriage*, and which *economically dependent* marriage certainly is) of women shall not be interfered with in any way, hence their determination *not* to eliminate the word "obey" from the marriage service.

But what amazes me is that so few women *dare* openly say "WHY MARRY?"

Nowadays, nobody can actually *force* a woman to marry, although a species of force is cunningly employed by the freemasonry of men, by allowing a woman *very* few chances indeed of earning a living, except through her sex! We have often heard what the state of things in that respect is in matters theatrical, and I, personally, having been brought up for a public singer, can endorse every word, and say openly that a *woman* artist, however gifted and highly trained she may be for her profession, has *something else* to offer the man who engages her, other than her art, or she does not have much success, or go very far in her profession. I may quite plainly say that it was that state of things which decided me to abandon *public* work and to teach instead.

If anyone considers that I exaggerate, let them look around at the more thoughtful literature of the day, especially in two recent books, among many, by men, where the idea running right through is the absolute necessity of forcing marriage (or its equivalent) upon all women, and what is more sinister still, to prevent their being employed in any well-paid work, industrially or professionally.

The more thoughtful and logical writer of the two will not even allow women the refuge of the cloister to avoid marriage.

I will give you a short résumé, to give you an idea: He considers that the most precious right emancipation brings

to woman is the right of disposal of her own person! (It certainly *is*.) He thinks that the free woman will marry or remain celibate, as she wishes. (She certainly *will*.) He considers that it is precisely in ratio with a woman's *disinclination* for marriage, that she is valuable as a mother. He thinks that the average woman, born for wifehood and motherhood, only produces a very average kind of child, but that the born female celibate, who marries only *under some sort of compulsion*, leaves to her posterity gifts which make for the genius, saint, and hero.

He considers these "pious, cold, and sexually frigid women" (I don't know why "pious," unless he thinks a resolution *not* to marry is a pious thing) should be forced into *monogamous* marriage, in order that they may be "obedient" wives during their entire child-bearing period, otherwise they will refuse marriage, decide to support themselves, and so escape the net, and so avoid maternity.

Another male writer (less logical than the last) gives a very insulting, but in some respects very true, aspect of the way husbands in a general way regard the women they marry. He thinks that women are no *real* companions for men, that women are more suited as companions to women, and men to men (I think, personally, that by *nature* they are); but as he owns that by nature *men* are quite polygamous, one would imagine that he would logically suggest that, under these unpromising circumstances, it was better for people *not* to marry! But nothing of the kind—he says there *must* be monogamous marriage. *Why?* Because of the unit of the family (and listen!), and *the man must be the head of that family*.

So you see, except for giving *him* the ownership of *her* children, he has no use for marriage in the spiritual sense whatever.

It can scarcely be *chance* that these two authors (and doubtless others whom I have not come across) practically preach the identical gospel—that if civilisation is to continue to exist, it is necessary to refuse women work, and to force them all into marriage.

And what is *their* idea of civilisation? Large standing armies, ready to conquer other peoples and hold vast possessions. Conquest and empire! and a panegyric on the superiority of the races which consume alcohol!

And for *women*? *Enforced cohabitation and maternity*. That in all rising civilisation *there must be a species of tutelage which forbids women the fullest exercise of their intellectual faculties, or an education the same as men. Religion and custom must restrict their outlook on life, and limit their mental range, and their education must fit them better for the companionship of children, than for the companionship of man.*

As a *woman*, I consider this the very antithesis of true civilisation, but it is a significant thing to watch this idea creeping into modern literature: WOMAN TO LIVE BY SEX ALONE!

The consoling element in the first book is that one whole volume is devoted to rubbing-in the fact that *woman* is absolutely the race. Lester Ward does not do it better. The author shows how highly gifted, superior men *have always become fathers, but that their influence on the quality of the race has been quite negligible*, only when cold, frigid women have been forced into maternity has the race become great. So much then to show how women *have been*, and still *are* to be forced into marriage and cohabitation.

If women refuse marriage, all these bills concerning legitimacy, equal guardianship and responsibility for children, eliminating the word "obey" from the marriage service, divorce, bastardy, pensions for widows, etc., etc., would be in no way required.

All children *are* legitimate, in that they are the product of their mothers' wombs, and no one could take away the guardianship of that child from its mother, *had she not placed herself, by marriage, in the degrading position of being "kept by her husband, thus handing over her wonderful asset as life-giver to him, and placing herself in a position of sex-slavery (as I have said, disastrous to her own health and that of her offspring), which is making married women try their utmost to have the word "obey" obliterated from the marriage service.*

So DO NOT MARRY! *Do not present children to the sex which cannot produce them, and which sex uses marriage as a means to enslave mothers and daughters in their turn.*

The economic freedom of women would be ensured automatically were marriage abolished. A mother who gives healthy children to the community discharges the most valuable service a citizen *can* render to a country. Again I say, "*Why is she not worthy of a civil servant's wage?*"

Why will some women still cling to the idea of receiving "keep" from the men who subject them, and whom they are fighting against having to obey (sexually, of course), and why do they allow the man who "keeps" them to receive the wage which they, as mothers, have earned by their contribution of life to the community?

As long as women do not consider economically dependent marriage degrading to womanhood, and motherhood especially—so long may they talk about equality in vain, and so long can they *never* be given equal responsibility.

How can a woman who has to ask her husband for money to "keep" herself possibly be held responsible for the children? The situation is *absurd*, and to look on and see women wasting energy, time, and money, asking for what common sense must tell them can never be given, so long as marriage makes them economically dependent on the man who provides for them, is very pathetic to me. The *very* women who are asking for these reforms, are those who are shocked at the idea that mothers should be paid by the State for their invaluable task of giving life and rearing the family!

No divorce, legitimacy, or equal guardianship bills will help women. Only one thing will do that: REFUSE MARRIAGE.

The race is theirs, and any State which means to continue to exist will see to it that the life-givers give that life in the way *they* prefer—in a healthy, dignified way—when we shall not have the degrading spectacle of ante-natal clinics (which are mere blinds for the secret treatment of expectant mothers innocently infected with venereal disease by their husbands); nor shall we see thousands of mothers going to an early grave yearly, in performing a perfectly natural function (rendered a martyrdom through disease, over-use, and abuse), let alone the "birth control" propaganda, perhaps the most revolting of all, *which gives away the true position of wifehood, if anything can!!*

So far, only the more enlightened among women *dare* say "why marry"? Yet to refuse marriage is their *one* chance of freedom from all the ills they are seeking to alleviate, and which *cannot* be alleviated while they are economically dependent upon men.

SO TO SUM UP. As women *are* married, and still *do* marry, I hold that the payment of the mother is *an absolutely essential thing*. It is the *only* thing which will enable her to keep her body sacred to her child (the threat of her husband to go "elsewhere" would not act as the *pecuniary whip to compliance*, as it does at present), and enable her to safeguard the bodies of her girl children from desecration by the fathers in the home.

PAYMENT OF THE MOTHER is the only thing which will enable unmarried women to demand the right to work in any profession or trade they may select, and at the same rate of pay as men for the same job. *Payment of the mother* will right automatically most of our economic evils, and solve the adjustment between wages, the needs of the family (by which I mean mother and children), and equality between the sexes.