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# THE WOMEN OF TO-DAY

By THE HON.  
MRS. DIGHTON POLLOCK

Introduction by  
The Rt. Hon. LORD BUCKMASTER

**W**OMEN in this country have achieved  
a freedom they never had before.  
What use should be made of this freedom  
is the question to which an answer is here  
attempted.



# WOMEN OF TO-DAY

BY

The Hon. Mrs. DIGHTON POLLOCK

INTRODUCTION BY

The Rt. Hon. LORD BUCKMASTER

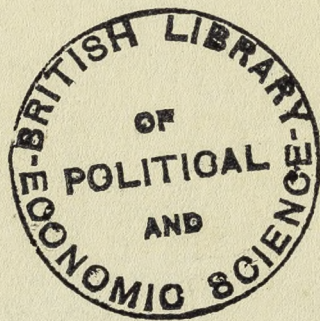
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### EDITORIAL NOTE

OWING to the much to be regretted death of Mrs. Pollock while this book was in the press, the correction of the proofs has been undertaken by Miss H. E. Wiltshire and the General Editor.

## INTRODUCTION

BY THE RT. HON. LORD BUCKMASTER

IN his preface to *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* Mr. Shaw uses these words: "I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units, should organise itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections or their convictions."

This book is based upon that principle and it begins by showing the long struggle through which women won the right to work for their own maintenance.

The right to work on equal terms with men has not yet been won. The sex of the person who produces, rather than the quality of the thing produced, still influences the payment made, and until this is altered, to speak of the equality of opportunity between men and women is to use a misleading phrase.

Mrs. Pollock points out that even when this has been attained the end is not reached. "The achievement of freedom, though a matter of justice, is not the end of the journey." It is the use and not



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the possession that determines the value of any right. It is interesting to follow in the pages of this book what that use is likely to be, a prospect which must be considered apart from the old traditions as to woman's place in the world.

The young women of to-day are saying "We are our own traditions," and it may well be that these will be nobler than those which are dead.

It is no use for an older generation to complain of the things the younger generation do not do. The real service we can render is to see what it is they want to do and to help them along the lines they choose for themselves instead of trying to insist on their following lines they hate.

The idea that a woman's interests and activities are limited by the four walls of the house in which she lives has gone.

The explosion which accompanied the demand for the suffrage blew down the walls of the house and the world has slowly begun to welcome the consequent liberation of expanding power.

This book is full of suggestion as to how that power may be well employed and also, what is equally important, how leisure may be used. In Mrs. Pollock's words, if people would "realise that to be tied by obligations voluntarily incurred is not to lose freedom but to add significance to life, leisure might be a priceless possession." The right to leisure is the corollary to the right to work and the knowledge of its right use is the secret of happiness.

This world offers endless opportunities for improvement ; it is hardly possible to walk a yard

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without seeing something that could be profitably changed. One of the greatest of the achievements of the last fifteen years is that we have united the powers of men and women and called them together into one great council for the common good.

Together they can surely realise the idea that underlies the words already quoted, divided, they will surely fail. The parts they play need not be the same ; that which women can especially perform is shewn and discussed in these following pages and I commend them to all who wish to lend their aid to the great enterprise of the world.



## PREFACE

A SUBJECT as wide as that of the Women of To-day can only be considered within certain limits, and it is as well to define at the outset what those limits are and what is the scope of the book.

The first limit is that of Race. Though there is probably a greater similarity between young women of different nationalities to-day than ever before, none the less it would be quite beyond the compass of this book to deal with the difficulties and ideals which are exercising the minds of women in other parts of the world.

The second limit is that of age. By the Women of To-day are meant women who did not grow up in a pre-war world, or at any rate, were not old enough in 1914 to have found for themselves any place in the structure of society as it then existed—that is women who are roughly between the ages of twenty and thirty-five at the present time.

Limitation of class there will be none.

So much for the principal and well-defined limitations. What, then, of the scope of the book? This will, I fear, sound alarmingly pretentious, being nothing less than an attempt to discover what should be the directive aims of women to-day in setting out upon the adventure of life.



## PREFACE

No small task, indeed ! and one from which the most self-confident and dogmatic might well shrink. I am very far from being self-confident. Indeed, it is in the spirit of the greatest humility that I approach the subject at all ; and I do so rather as one who is herself still seeking a pathway, than as a guide to a generation of women which in candour, independence and courage I consider greatly superior to my own.

In a book of this kind, which makes no pretence of originality, it is impossible adequately to acknowledge the help received. I am, however, particularly grateful to the following friends, who though they may have differed with the opinions expressed, have helped me very much, both by suggestions and by criticism: Mrs. H. M. Swanwick, Miss Evelyn Sharp, Mrs. Barbara Drake, Mrs. Margaret Lloyd, Miss Mary Phillips, and my sister, Mrs. Barbara Miller.

I have received also much help from publications of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, 15 Dean's Yard, Westminster, and the London and National Society for Women's Service, 35-37 Marsham Street, S.W.1.

In preparing the Bibliography, I am greatly indebted to the Book Hunters, 192 Church Street, Kensington.

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## CHAPTER I

### WOMEN AND FREEDOM

It is well to remember that the freedom which is enjoyed as a matter of course to-day was not easily won. It was the result of a revolt which had been gathering force for over half a century. The War, no doubt, hastened the work. None the less, it is to those who worked in the unpromising years before the War that the credit rightly belongs; and it is sad to find young women who are reaping the benefit hardly conscious that a struggle took place.

The most important part of the fight is over, but there are still obstacles to be overcome before equality is complete. Some of these will be dealt with in later chapters of this book. Though the removal of these obstacles is a matter of vital importance, yet now that so much has been gained, it is not necessary to concentrate exclusively on that; it is well also to pause and consider what direction to take, and what use may be made of the freedom that has been acquired.

Some would say that this presents no problem,



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and that when women are once on an equality with men they will make the same use of freedom that men do. This attitude is due to a lack of imagination. Women have for a long time been the spectators of men enjoying a considerable amount of both personal and political freedom, and judging by some of the results—wars, slums, and syphilis, to take a few examples—a rather irresponsible use. Women, having acquired freedom much more suddenly, have a better chance of appreciating both its value and the responsibility attaching to its use. They have, moreover, gained it at a moment when public opinion is in a fluid state. Is it not, then, reasonable to suggest that they should make an attempt to mould this opinion before it once more becomes set?

At first it is but natural that many things should be done solely to demonstrate the power to do them—just as thirty years ago “advanced” women smoked on principle, whether they liked it or not. This is perfectly comprehensible and usually perfectly harmless; but the time comes when a decision should be made as to which things are valuable as gestures and which things are valuable in themselves. That time has now arrived.

The achievement of freedom, though a matter of justice, is not the end of the journey. It may be used to gain more freedom, as money is used to gain more money; but the ultimate use of money is exchange, and the ultimate use of freedom is to exercise the power of choice.

The rest of this book, then, will be devoted to a

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consideration of the ways in which that choice may best be made in various spheres of women's life. Do not let this word “sphere” upset anybody. It is not used here in the sense that implies a special limitation, but rather as a field for activity. Indeed, I look forward to a time when we cease to have “Women's Spheres” in the old restricted sense of the word, or, indeed, Women's Societies, Women's Questions or Women's Points of View, the need for such having vanished when men and women, less jealous of each other and less conscious of the difference of sex, have learnt to work together for the general good.

## CHAPTER II

### WOMEN AND MEN

THE question of the relation of the sexes is one which is much discussed at the present time. On what, then, does all this discussion turn? Apparently on this—that a great number of people, especially the young, are dissatisfied with what they call the Old Morality and seek to found a New Morality to take its place.

By the OLD MORALITY is usually meant nothing older than the morality common in England during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It has no very precise meaning, but roughly speaking it may be divided into Christian morality, which received lip-



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service, and Victorian morality, which in practice had more adherents. Then, as at all times, there were in addition those who supported no morality.

(a) *Christian Morality* stood for monogamous marriage, that is the marriage of one man with one woman, with no sex relations outside the marriage tie, either for men or for women. This morality had, and still has, many followers outside the Churches. I call it Christian morality because Christians, though not possessing a definite authority for this view claim that it is plainly in accordance with the teaching of Christ and are its chief exponents.

(b) *Victorian Morality* stood for monogamous marriage and pre-marital chastity for "respectable" women but not for men. After marriage, fidelity, though considered desirable for both, was not, in fact, held to be nearly as important for the husband as the wife. This unequal moral standard was only made possible in practice by accepting the service of a large number of women who were not "respectable," and whose existence the rest were supposed to ignore.

It was this falsity—this closing of the eyes to so much that was cruel and so much that was wrong, provided it did not obtrude itself, that merits the harshest things that can be said about Victorian morality. It is necessary, however, to keep a sense of proportion, and not, in the eager desire for spring-cleaning, to make no distinction between rubbish and the things that are worth preserving. Because Victorian society had its foundation in hypocrisy,

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it does not follow that every idea then held was wrong. Such consistency is rare. Nor again, because a high value was set on marriage and the home as necessary to the existence of society, and for the sake of their preservation it was thought necessary to imprison one set of women and to degrade others, does it follow that marriage and the home are wrong, or even that women should not be chaste.

The NEW MORALITY is difficult to discuss because it has not yet been formed and there are many opinions as to what it should be. The limits of space make it impossible to deal with the subject fully, but I will put down briefly two different attitudes towards the problem that I have heard expressed.

(a) *The New Moral Standard* finds expression in a letter signed Mildred Carter, which appeared in the *New Leader* on December 21st, 1928. It is too long to quote in full. The writer says:

"There is no concealing the fact that a large number of young people of the present time have a different moral standard from the older generation. But that does not mean that we are without a moral standard or that it is a lower standard . . . because these young people think naturally and speak frankly about sex that does not mean that they have a lower conception of it than the older generation. . . . They are revolted by prostitution. Nor do they seek promiscuous relationships based merely on physical desire.

But they do not believe that this experience is made moral by a legal ceremony and that it is immoral without it. They do not believe that it should necessarily be



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postponed until after marriage, or that unmarried people should necessarily be without it. The morality of the act depends upon the reality of the mutual sense of unity and not upon a legal contract."

This attitude certainly shows an advance upon Victorian morality; for the sale and purchase of sex relationships is a thing utterly abhorrent. The system of prostitution, moreover, is so cruel and evil in its social effects that, whatever the moral standard, its abolition must be desirable.

The view that the morality of the act does not depend upon a legal ceremony is one which can well be held by those who yet believe that in monogamy and fidelity alone can the greatest happiness be found. The actual law is obviously only a matter of social expediency, though even so it may have its value. The real distinction is not between marriage (meaning a ceremony) and no marriage, but between fidelity and its reverse, and this distinction the writer does not make. Therein lies the real weakness of her position.

Under this same heading may be considered a slightly different point of view put forward with equal seriousness. It is the view that marriage with one partner only is the ideal relationship; but that the difficulty of attaining success in this relationship lies in the fact that women are bound for life before they have had any sexual experience.

This view is based, I think, upon two fallacies—the one, that women who have had more than one lover before marriage are the most likely to

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form permanent attachments in the end; and the other that experience with one person necessarily helps with another. The first is very far from being the case, and one has not to look far to see that the habit of changing partners when once formed is not easily broken. Again, the idea that love-making is an art which it requires practice with more than one lover to perfect, can make no appeal to those who care above all for sincerity and prefer even blundering impulses to over-polished perfection. Love-making is, of course, capable of infinite development with one partner which is precisely one of the reasons why marriage need never grow stale.

If these trial marriages were undertaken seriously with a view to forming a lasting union, no harm, and possibly even good, might result; but if, as is far more probable, they would in most cases quickly degenerate into "affairs," the effect would only be to lessen rather than increase the sense of responsibility, and the sex act would come to be as lightly regarded as it is now by those who hold the second view.

(b) *The Right to Experience.* This view is held chiefly by "intellectuals" with a passion for self-analysis. Unlike Miss Carter they do not seek to establish any particular justification for the sexual act. On the contrary, they consider it as a somewhat trivial affair like a handshake, and (bereft of its natural consequences) of no deeper significance. For them the great duty to themselves and society—especially to themselves—is to keep fresh and alive, and they regard each new lover as a vitalising experience which keeps the emotional life from growing stale.



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Two things about those who hold this view are inconsistent. The one is their attitude to freedom, and the other to repression.

They consider freedom above all desirable, and yet they appear to depend for their full development upon a variety of sexual experience. Such dependence is enslaving. Moreover, they talk and write of the subject perpetually, and an obsession is certainly not liberating to the human spirit.

Repression they naturally consider as evil as freedom is good. But if to subdue nature be in fact injurious, why is not the repression of jealousy just as likely to produce a complex as the repression of desire? But unless these intellectuals succeed in abolishing love, they must, if there is to be any happiness, overcome this desire for exclusive possession which is a deep-rooted instinct in all lovers. To do these theorists justice they have made it abundantly clear that they do wish to abolish jealousy—and perhaps they have succeeded in doing so themselves. Even if this be the case, does it not mean either that they are suffering from a new repression, or that in freeing themselves from the dominance of jealousy they have at the same time freed themselves from the dominance of love? The latter is the more probable conclusion and it is one to which other facts also point. For if they are willing to sacrifice for a number of trivial experiences the one supreme experience, it can only be that they have no knowledge of what it is they so lightly reject.

There is, of course, a form of jealousy which

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is merely distrust, suspicion, and unwillingness to share companionship. This is thoroughly evil and has no association with love in the sense that it is used here, for complete and absolute confidence is at the very root of all lasting affection. Such petty jealousy is enslaving and needs to be conquered; but the cure is not to make love between man and woman more superficial in the hope that each will come to regard fidelity in the other as a matter of indifference; but a much deeper thing, so that disloyalty and the suspicion of disloyalty become alike impossible.

The number of people who hold these different views cannot be gauged with any degree of accuracy. It is probable that a larger proportion of people in all classes adhere to the old morality—Christian or Victorian—than is commonly supposed. None the less, this is plainly a period of transition, when rigid principles are suspect and freedom is the order of the day.

It is a difficult time, particularly so for young women, because a new field of choice is open to them at a moment when public opinion gives neither guidance nor support. Outwardly, no doubt, they are extremely self-confident, but one cannot talk long to young people of either sex without realising that many of them are profoundly unhappy. Nor is it surprising.

A generation ago it was possible to accept the current standards of judgment and go on living in the light of them. To-day there are very few current



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standards to accept. The result is that those who feel the need of standards are driven to think out things for themselves and the process is usually a difficult and a painful one. Others blindly strive to drown all questioning in a rush of excitement—some alternate between the two extremes. All this is very wearing to the nervous system and has both its physical and mental reaction. Again, both those who do and those who do not think tend to make experiments with life—partly out of curiosity and the desire for experience, partly to show that they are free to do so and partly because this is felt to be a testing time. Many of these experiments, especially those in the matter of sex, excite and disturb, but contribute nothing to that inner serenity which is essential to happiness.

There is another reason why young people are more unhappy than those of the last generation—it is that they expect more of life. They feel they have a "right" to express or fulfil their personalities, and in a crowded, jostling country that is a difficult thing to do. When they fail, they consider themselves defrauded. This tends to a further temptation to experiment with sex, for the sexual act is a form of self-expression and many who, neither in work nor in play, find anything to satisfy their emotional or creative instincts, rush to this as a form of fulfilment—something that will give them a sense of freedom, of power, of life.

But they are making a grave mistake. Far from being free, they are gradually becoming enslaved by a fresh public opinion which they are

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helping to manufacture. Just as the old outlook had its origin in certain Puritanical views as to the value of self-denial, so the new outlook has its origin in the theories of Freud and Jung as to the dangers of repression. Many people to-day are as afraid of getting a complex through inhibiting natural desires as ever their grandmothers were afraid of being burnt in Hell-fire if they gave these desires free rein. The one fear is as foolish and as crippling as the other, and can be carried to an even more dangerous absurdity.

The word repression has become a catchword which burkes thought. In truth, like most other things, it can be both good and bad. To refuse to look facts in the face; to be unable to call a spade a spade; to disown, and so hope to destroy, the impulses, desires, and hopes that urge our being, is a form of repression that is thoroughly to be condemned. But in its wider sense what is repression but self-mastery, without which human beings are the most enslaved of creatures, the victims of mere chance desire?

Successfully to drive the human machine is an art that requires patience and skill. It certainly cannot be done by refusing to look inside or understand the mechanism for fear it be unclean; but equally foolish, indeed disastrous, would it be to remove the brakes and the steering gear as unnecessary impedimenta on the journey.

Without effective control, energy is not merely dangerous, but, which is worse, it is horribly wasteful. For example, a river dammed and compressed into



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a channel may possess sufficient force to drive a generating station. Left to flow as it will through soft sand that offers no resistance it forms a multitude of streams, powerless to do more than dig shallow channels whose course will be deflected by the next fall of rain.

Human beings are far more complicated than either rivers or machines, and to obtain from them the maximum amount of effective power they require at least as much understanding and control. Granted, then, that control be necessary, the question remains what form should it take? Is there some principle at stake, or is it purely a matter of expediency? The problem to-day is no way different from that which has exercised the mind of ethical thinkers throughout the ages—is an action (a) right because it is demanded by authority, legal, ecclesiastical, parental, etc.; (b) right because of its consequences; or (c) right in itself?

(a) The easiest line to follow is to accept authority. But it is not a guide that appeals to young and independent minds, and at best it gives but a limited security, seeing that the authorities are often in conflict and inevitably change their utterances through the course of time. Even those people who think it right to accept authority cannot completely avoid thought; for it is still necessary to choose which authority to follow.

(b) To determine whether an action be right or wrong because of its results is an equally difficult matter, for many consequences cannot be foreseen. Those that can, are hard to measure as they may

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be both immediate and ultimate, direct and indirect, personal and social. In any case, even if the consequences could be both measured and foreseen, the problem has only been moved a step further off, as it then becomes necessary to consider what consequences are good and what are bad.

(c) Inevitably, then, we are driven to the conclusion that the ultimate sanction for conduct lies in some inner sense by whose aid alone the relative value of things is determined. This inner sense—call it what you will—is a strange thing, certainly, and defies analysis. However much its origin may be traced to public opinion, educational influences, secretions of the ductless glands or diet, its power can never be completely destroyed.

Because then this sense, which is the ultimate guide, varies greatly in different individuals, it is impossible to assert definitely what is right or what is wrong or even to imagine a goal or purpose that shall apply equally to all. Two principles, however, have received almost universal acceptance—the one that an action which aims at promoting the welfare of others, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, is to be preferred to an action which seeks only individual satisfaction; and the other that certain qualities such as love, beauty, and truth are sacred, and though the perception of these qualities may be dim and uncertain, yet, in so far as they are perceived, they must never be betrayed.

These two principles, unselfishness and reverence, the second no less than the first, arise, I believe, from the fact that we exist for some purpose outside



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ourselves—that is the only conception that gives any meaning to life.

This may appear a cold and impersonal view to some people, but it is not so. "Fellowship is life," said Morris, "and lack of fellowship is death," and he was right. To live to oneself alone is not to be fully alive.

In the light of this view, what then is our duty to the community, to other individuals and to ourselves in this matter of sex relationships?

It is impossible to speak dogmatically. Those who think as I do that monogamy is the best form of union, both for the sake of the parents and the children, will seek to avoid action that shall make happy married life more difficult of attainment. Those who wish to abolish marriage or alter its significance are under an obligation to consider what exactly they intend shall take its place, and have no right to pursue their own wishes without consideration of the social consequences. Again, to inflict grievous pain on others requires a higher justification than mere personal satisfaction. Lastly, with regard to ourselves there must surely be some standard apart from pleasure or pain. Owing to the growth of scientific knowledge most of the dreaded consequences of promiscuity can be avoided, and this is all to the good. Abstinence based on fear could never be anything but a sham morality. But is there not a stronger check? To cheapen sex experience so that it has no significance, to rob it of its beauty and its intimacy, is that not a betrayal—a thing to be shunned whatever may be

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gained of immediate satisfaction without injury to others?

### CHAPTER III

#### WOMEN AND MEN (*contd.*)

It is easy enough to accept certain general principles; the difficulty lies in their application. I cannot, then, pass on without some consideration of the actual problems that arise in connection with the relationships to-day existing between men and women. These I shall deal with under four headings: (*a*) the completely happily married; (*b*) the indifferently happily married; (*c*) the unhappily married; (*d*) the unmarried.

#### (*a*) *The Completely Happily Married.*

Those who are fortunate enough to come under this heading—they are admittedly only a minority—do not present any grave problem either to themselves or to society.

There is, of course, no recipe for happiness—married or other—but one thing at least is necessary, and that is a belief that such happiness is possible. Those who start with the idea that any fixed relationship is bound in time to pall can never hope to make of it a success. It is obviously impossible, and in any case would be undesirable, to remain for ever in exactly the same mood that existed on the wedding-day. But the alternative



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is not to drift into a dull state of unresponsive torpor, but to go forward to something much richer and more satisfying. This is exactly what so many people fail to do, because it never occurs to them that it can be done. Instead, they try to hold on to the passing moment and prolong the excitement which they first experienced, and when eventually they suffer disappointment, marriage is declared a failure.

Absolute loyalty is also a necessary condition of a completely happy marriage. Indeed, where two people care for each other deeply, any breach of faith on the part of either would not merely be intolerable but unthinkable.

When all is said, however, happiness defies analysis. Living together is an art, and those who are most successful in its practice are not bound by rules any more than are the greatest poets and painters. Yet the capacity to be an artist in marriage exists, I believe, in most men and women if they would but recognise the fact and not allow it to be crushed out of them by the worldly-wise who reiterate that "men are naturally polygamous," that "familiarity destroys passion," or that "women need outside romance to brighten humdrum domesticity." These cynical people may have had a wide experience of life, but happy marriage—an experience which of necessity excludes so many others—has lain outside its range.

### *(b) The Indifferently Happily Married.*

The really happy do not live by rule; but marriage for the majority is not completely happy and can

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only be made so by a certain amount of effort and adjustment. It is impossible to escape from platitudes in this connection; for the whole matter rests upon the self-evident truth—that in order to smooth human relationships the chief need is for imaginative sympathy. Any suggestions that can be put forward—whether they deal with physical and emotional response, or merely with such practical matters as the undesirability of becoming immersed in domestic cares—are but elaborations of this idea.

To put oneself in another's place—for that is what sympathy means—is not easy; and I will give three examples of the way in which many of us fail to do so.

1. The inclination to try and alter the character of the person we care for in conformity with our own ideal. This is simple arrogance. Fortunately it is not often successful, for, were similarity of outlook achieved, marriage could hardly fail to be dull.

2. The tendency to be offended. So many people think that being "hurt" is a sign of sensitiveness: whereas most often it is merely the result of intense egotism. Whatever the cause of grievance, the attempt to enlist the support of friends or relations cannot be too strongly deprecated—nothing is more likely to cause a final breach between husband and wife.

3. The desire to have a flirtation because marriage appears to have lost its original emotion. There is no greater mistake than to imagine that to arouse jealousy is a method of retaining affection. In any



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case no one who was sensitive to another's pain would dream of adopting such a plan.

Apart from the wish to arouse jealousy, however, there often exists the desire to be stirred by a lover other than the husband, and where this is so situations tend to arise which destroy married happiness.

The case where a woman wishes to make an end of her marriage and really falls in love with somebody else comes within a different category. Where a marriage has ceased to be a marriage it had better be openly ended.

There are, of course, many other matters which vitally affect the success of marriage—the question of women's economic independence, the question of birth control, housing, and so on. These will be dealt with in the next chapter. But however favourable conditions may be and however well-intentioned the partners to a union, there can be no escape from the fact that a large number of married people are physically, morally, or mentally unsuited to each other, and the question arises: What then?

### *(c) The Unhappily Married.*

When a marriage is unhappy beyond repair dissolution is, I believe, the only moral course. If the quality of home life and the enrichment of human personality are held to be matters of value, it cannot be right for two people to live together whose temperaments jar to such an extent that they are never at their best with each other. People sometimes stay together "for the sake of the children." In the majority of cases there can be no greater mistake.

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Children are exceedingly sensitive to atmosphere and suffer from the effects of tension more than is realised. If it be admitted that it is bad for people to live together under conditions of acute disharmony, bad not only for themselves, but for others too, let us consider the only two possible alternatives. They are (a) separation (either legal or by mutual arrangement) and (b) divorce.

### *Separation.*

The existence of married people living apart, whether legally separated or not, is by no means socially desirable. Neither married nor unmarried, their position is an exceedingly difficult one, and, if young, both parties are liable to form illicit relationships. Those who regard the home not only as a source of strength and happiness to individuals, but also an essential element in our social structure, can hardly contemplate with equanimity the existence of the large number of separated people that there are in this country to-day. Yet it is in the name of the sanctity of the home that divorce is so often opposed. Could inconsistency go further?

### *Divorce.*

As the law now stands in England divorce proceedings can be brought by either party to a marriage against the other on the grounds of adultery only. But if both can be proved to have offended in this respect there is no redress! Lord Buckmaster's bill which has twice passed the House of Lords embodied the Majority Report of the Royal Com-



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mission and would have permitted divorce for desertion, incurable insanity, habitual drunkenness, and imprisonment under a commuted death sentence.

I confess I should like to see the grounds for divorce much further extended, not because I regard marriage lightly, but because I hate its travesty just as one dislikes a bad copy of a beautiful picture. To impose unnecessary suffering upon numbers of people seems to me unpardonably wrong, while no one can deny that the existence of men and women bound to each other by law, but by nothing else, is one of the most obvious causes of immorality.

Profound incompatibility, i.e. the incapacity to live together in harmony, should, above all, be made a ground for divorce, and as long as that condition be left completely untouched no solution of our marriage problem can be held to have been found. A woman may love a husband who is both faithless and drunken and not wish the union dissolved, but where there is deep-rooted antagonism she will hate the sight of him though he may be an example of all the virtues.

It is hardly possible as long as legalised marriage exists to make incompatibility an immediate ground for divorce, but it is worth considering whether one, or at the outside two years' separation (not necessarily desertion) might not with the agreement of both parties be made a valid ground.

### *(d) The Unmarried.*

There are at the moment of writing nearly two million more women than men in the country, and

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it is clear therefore that rather more than this number will not marry. Are they, therefore, many are asking, to be denied all sexual experience. It may as well be recognised at the outset that we are very far from having reached a state of society where everyone can develop his or her personality to the fullest extent without at the same time causing injury to others. Let us, however, consider this question from the point of view of the individual, of her personal circle and of the community.

Purely from the point of view of the woman herself, it may well be doubted if she gains as much as she loses. A temporary love affair cannot be expected to give the same experience as marriage. It may indeed only arouse longings which it will be impossible to satisfy; for most women do, in fact, want a home, companionship and children just as much as, if not more than, they want sexual experience. But, again, if such experience be the one aim it is certainly harder to live without it when once it has formed part of life. This is common knowledge and may partly explain why a woman who does not form a permanent union so often has a succession of lovers if once she has yielded. The effect of this is usually to make her regard the whole matter lightly with infinite loss to herself. Again, the fear of having a child (for no method of contraception is absolutely safe), frequently produces neurosis. That is chiefly a matter for herself, but how far will her action affect others? Her first lover will probably be a married man—if not, the particular problem due to the fact that women outnumber



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men does not arise. If he be married, is she not acting unfairly, indeed cruelly, towards the wife and doing a great deal to make the existing marriage unhappy? If the marriage be already unhappy, then is not the right course to seek its dissolution?

With regard to the community the question is different. If it be believed that no better method than that of the family has been devised for launching the next generation into the world, and that monogamy, when happy, is the best form of relationship between the parents, it follows that any action which tends to make happy marriage more difficult of attainment is socially undesirable. If every unmarried woman held the view that she was at perfect liberty to form relationships with whom she desired, can anyone deny that there would be a tremendous disturbance of family life, and almost certainly a net balance of unhappiness? Legalised polygamy would be distinctly preferable, for, in that case, when a woman married, she would not expect to be the only wife and consequently would not suffer the pains of disillusionment.

That the pre-marital chastity of men is no less desirable than that of women no impartial person would deny. In fact, unless prostitution be tolerated the one can hardly exist without the other. An unequal standard in the matter is intolerable; but it would be an unfortunate thing if equality of the sexes should merely mean the extension to women of the licence hitherto allowed to men, rather than a mutual effort at restraint. So long as we are slaves to the idea that self-control is bad, so

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long will little progress be made. As a matter of fact emotions that immediately receive an easy and obvious outlet tend to exhaust themselves, whereas, restrained, they are recognised factors in producing achievement.

Although I do not deny that for the majority of women marriage offers the greatest opportunity for happiness, I can honestly say that I have found more wisdom, unselfishness—yes, and more creative achievement among unmarried women than the married, and it is nearly always to an unmarried woman that I go if I want help. It is true that the unmarried are not so tied and are usually less preoccupied, but the explanation, I think, lies deeper than that. May it not be that when life is not easy for a woman she is compelled to generate a certain amount of force to carry her forward over obstacles and this force once produced can remain with her for life? If these women had spent their emotions on transient love affairs this force might have been lost.

This is, of course, mere speculation. Others argue that sexual experience makes women more understanding and tolerant. This, to say the least of it, is unproven. Married women are not as a class particularly tolerant. Indeed, most of the opposition to extended Divorce and Birth Control information comes from the Mothers' Union. Not infrequently also married women—specially among the well-to-do—develop an exasperating complacency as if marriage were in itself an accomplishment. If illicit rather than marriage relationships are necessary for



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tolerance, why not extend the argument to every kind of behaviour? It is only those of a very limited imagination who cannot sympathise with actions they do not practise. Promiscuity, indeed, sometimes produces an absolutely perverted narrow-mindedness as in the case of Catherine the Great, who, having had innumerable lovers, came to consider even botany a subject unsuited to the young, because it dealt with the fertilisation of flowers.

I can only repeat that no one can live for herself alone. All actions, even those that are most secret, have their social effects, and those who wish to free themselves from conventions which appear irksome, should consider what would be the result if their chosen line of conduct were followed by all.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOMEN AND THE HOME

So much sentiment has been woven around women by those who wished to deny them every other vocation than that of home-maker, that it is not surprising if suspicion should be aroused by any association of the two words which head this chapter.

But such suspicion, though natural, is unnecessary. Freedom if it is to be a reality must include the right to do voluntarily what was formerly done from compulsion, and women who choose to remain at

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home should not feel that they are forfeiting any hard-won privilege thereby. To have life in one's grasp—that alone is independence; and to realise this fully there is no need for demonstration. Freedom that consisted in having no ties would at best be a barren thing, and the price of it futility.

Unless our social structure be reorganised so that children are brought up in institutions or in some form of community life, the family must form the unit of which society is composed, and where the family live together there is (or should be) a home. The real need to-day is not to abolish domestic life, but to make it a freer, happier, more joyous thing than it usually is.

It is a delusion to think that it is the woman alone who makes the home happy or miserable, or even that it is her special responsibility. Still, like a man, she has a definite part to play and one which cannot well be delegated, and it is her part that we have to consider here.

In the past it has been the custom, while throwing the entire responsibility for running a home on the shoulders of the woman, not to regard her services as "work," in the same sense as industrial employment; and even if she gave her entire time to it, she was not held to be entitled to any direct remuneration. Work in the home should be recognised at its true value so that whoever does it may feel self-supporting. And what work is of greater importance? For it follows that if a free and happy home life be the best background for a child's early development, the establishment of conditions where such a life is



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possible is one of the greatest services that can be rendered to the community. But this service, though receiving the blessings of poets, gets very little encouragement. The ordinary working woman's house is worse equipped with the proper tools for her domestic business than any workshop, and conditions of labour exist there which would not be tolerated by the most negligent factory inspector for a week. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many young women do not regard home-making as a career which offers the same advantages as other occupations.

When I speak of this work as a career let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean that it should occupy the entire day. Far from it. Those who are most successful at the work are not those who stay in their homes all the time.

Both for her own sake and for the sake of the home, a woman ought to get out of it for some hours every day. But it is open to question whether a mother with young children can carry on a full-time occupation outside without neglecting domestic responsibilities. Plainly, no law can be laid down on the subject. It is a matter which the woman must decide for herself, and it is certainly a gross interference with personal liberty that she should be forced to give up employment on marriage, as she is at present in many instances compelled to do.

As a matter of fact, the working woman does not as a rule wish to remain in industrial employment after marriage purely for the love of the work. If

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she does so, it is usually for one of the following reasons:

(1) She wants to earn money because her husband's wages are insufficient.

(2) She wants to earn money whether her husband's wages are sufficient or not, in order to have some economic independence.

(3) She likes to get out of her own home (often a dreary enough place) and have a change of surroundings.

All these reasons are quite natural, though the first ought not to exist. The second could be removed by securing direct remuneration for work in the home. The third should be capable of wider application. It seems pitiable that the best kind of change a woman can get is to labour long hours at manual work, often, as in the case of charring and washing, not unlike that which she has been doing for herself.

The position of a professional woman is different. Firstly, her work being more interesting than scrubbing and also unlike what she does at home, she is more likely to enjoy it for its own sake. Secondly, she may have spent some years in training and not wish to lose the ground that she has gained. Thirdly, she may feel that when the children are older it is important to have some other occupation than that of wife and mother, and that if she lets her profession drop it will be a difficult thing to resume again.

The desire to increase the family income, the wish for economic independence and the need to get



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out of her home for part of the day, are also motives here, as in the case of the working woman; but the professional worker is in a better position to realise her wish; for, being more highly remunerated, she will be able to pay for any additional domestic help which her absence from home may necessitate. Even here the position is not easy, and, with very few exceptions, I have not met any woman who found it possible while the children were small to manage more than half-time work, if the hours were rigidly fixed.

It must be admitted that in spite of much progress towards equality, life remains, and will probably always remain, more difficult for a woman than for a man. But there are certain reforms which would do much to remove some of these difficulties and make home life a happier and an easier thing. I shall deal principally with the problems of working-women because their difficulties are more obvious and more easily attacked, but the world cannot be divided into rich and poor. Things are not so simple; and undoubtedly much that would help one class of women would help all others as well.

### (1) *Need for Economic Independence.*

The first great need of women in the home is economic independence. In an ideally happy marriage any economic arrangement can be made to work; but such marriages are rare. In other cases the fact that the husband has the power to veto his wife's wishes by withholding the means of gratifying them, while she has no control over his expenditure,

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is an immense source of irritation. The daughter who stays at home is sometimes in an even worse position than the wife in this matter, because she possesses no authority and is subordinate as well as dependent.

How can women's economic position be improved? The answer is not easily found. Either a woman should receive payment for her work at home or she should be set free to work outside: at present wages are too low to permit of most women receiving proper remuneration out of the husband's earnings, but at least the income might be regarded as the joint property of both and the balance, after providing for household needs, be equally divided. One method of securing to women some remuneration or payment would be by the establishment of

### (a) *Family Allowances.*

These being paid direct to the mother would afford a public recognition of her services to the community in that capacity, and would give her some economic independence, even though the amount received be limited to the children's needs (see p. 64).

### (b) *Nursery Schools.*

By looking after the children during part of the day nursery schools would give the mother a chance to earn if she so desired. The idea of these schools offends some people who imagine that little children are better looked after by their mothers the entire time, but consider for a moment the



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average working-class home. In the morning there is all the cleaning and cooking to be done, and, at least one day a week, washing and ironing as well. The mother, whose children are not of school age, is obliged to put them in the street or else to keep them beside her as she works—an exceedingly difficult thing to do which all who have tried it will admit. Her nerves suffer in consequence. The children also suffer because they are deprived of fresh air, breathe in all the dust or steam as the case may be, and are told every moment that they are in the way. The only other alternative for most women, for gardens are still scarce, is to put the children into the street. This, for children under five, whether in the country or the town, is to take a great risk. If the mother should, in fact, find a friend to keep an eye upon the "toddler" the argument against nursery schools disappears; for if the child is to be cared for by some other person than the mother, why not a fully trained worker in the best possible surroundings?

Without waiting for economic independence, however, there is much that can be done to make home life more successful.

### (2) *The Feeding of School Children.*

A great help to the working-class mother would be the general provision of dinners for children at elementary schools—free or at cost price. If this were done, not only would the children be better fed, but the mother would not be compelled to cook a dinner in the middle of the day.

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She could instead cook one meal for herself and her husband when he returned from work. As it is she has either to cook two dinners with a consequent waste of time and fuel, or else keep back part of the midday meal and heat it up for her husband on his return. This takes most of the vitamins out of the food and also makes it indigestible.

### (3) *Housing.*

In dealing with the question how to make home life happier it would be absurd to pass over the matter of housing. For bad housing is one of the greatest causes of misery that exist.

There is no space to dilate upon it here, but it is to be hoped that now that women are fully enfranchised they will no longer tolerate the tinkering efforts at helping only those who are easy to help, while neglecting the needs of those who require assistance most.

### (4) *Birth Control.*

The removal of the veto which at present exists upon Welfare Centres, in receipt of a Government grant, giving information upon birth control to all women who desire it, would do much to help the happiness of home life. In spite of the existence of a certain number of voluntary clinics, the knowledge of contraception has not reached many who are most in need of it, so that the fear of pregnancy still destroys happiness in many marriage relationships, and not infrequently leads to forms of birth control that are



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injurious to health, or efforts to procure abortion that increase the risk of maternal mortality.

### (5) *Less Battle with Dirt.*

In spite of all the talk about smoke abatement, few people even now realise how different life would be in our great cities were there not a continual stream of soot being poured into the atmosphere.

The provision of baths for all industrial workers whose occupation is of a peculiarly dirty nature, should be compulsory, and in the case of dust-men, overalls should be provided which are left at the place of work. The better disposal of refuse is a crying need. In most of the boroughs of London<sup>1</sup> it is simply loaded on to barges, shipped down the river and then dumped on some open space to pollute the atmosphere during its slow decay. In the country often enough there is no method of disposal at all, and tins, fish-guts and refuse of all kinds are merely thrown into a field or ditch.

Municipal laundries carrying on their work at a nominal price would remove a heavy burden, and a slight charge on the rates for this purpose would be more than justified. Now that washing can be done so well by machinery it is tragic to think of the hours of labour devoted to scrubbing and rinsing, mangling and ironing by women already over-worked and not infrequently suffering from varicose

<sup>1</sup> The Boroughs of Marylebone and Bermondsey are notable exceptions, and provide examples of the way refuse can be dealt with on scientific lines. The benefit to the community if their methods were generally adopted is incalculable.

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veins, dropped viscera or lumbago. It can hardly be denied that the frequent necessity of strings of damp clothes across the only living-room adds nothing to the amenities of home life.

### (6) *Health.*

The extension of the National Health Insurance to cover the wife and family of all insured men would do a great deal to improve the health and consequently the happiness of the working woman. At present, unless she is herself insured, she usually neglects her own ailments until it is impossible longer to do so.

The retention of women in hospitals for three weeks after childbirth; the opportunity, now almost universally denied to the poor, of receiving anæsthetics at that time; the provision of Home Helps and the increase of Maternity Benefit would all do much to lighten the lot of the working mother.

I have said very little about the home life of middle-class women. The need for economic independence is as great here as in the working-class. Nursery Schools would certainly help, and legislation is not needed for their establishment as they would be self-supporting. One, indeed, has already been started in London by Mrs. Bicknell, 41 West End Lane, N.W., and is proving a great success. At present, the fact that the Government insists upon the dismissal on marriage of women who hold official posts as doctors, teachers and in the Civil Service seriously prejudices their economic position.



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That a man should not, except in special circumstances, be entitled to leave all his money away from his wife if she be without other means of support is a much needed reform. It is but just, seeing that her capacity to earn her own living has probably been diminished by the years of service at home.

The demand that a wife's income should be separately assessed from that of her husband is also just and reasonable. That the man should pay the tax for both is but a relic of the tradition that in marriage the woman's identity was merged in that of the man. This is plainly wrong. Marriage should be a partnership between equals. Only so can the man and the woman be in a position to contribute their full share towards the welfare and happiness of the home.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN AND WORK

WOMEN'S work to-day extends over so wide a field that it is difficult to make any remarks that shall be capable of universal application.

Apart from the general condition of the Labour Market, however, the two things which most affect women's employment are (1) the attitude of women towards their work, and (2) the attitude of the public towards women as workers.

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### (1) THE ATTITUDE OF WOMEN TOWARDS THEIR WORK

There is always a tendency greatly to over-emphasize the difference between the sexes. The average woman's attitude towards her work is probably not very different from that of the average man. She works to earn money and chooses her occupation—as far as any choice is open to her—not for the sake of the work itself, but for the conditions attaching to it, e.g. status, pay, hours, holidays, surroundings, companionship, future prospects and accessibility. Only a minority of either sex are fortunate enough to be engaged in work which gives them a definite sense of satisfaction. In that case, for men and women alike, the interest of the work largely dominates other considerations.

The statement, however, is commonly made that a difference of attitude towards work does exist between men and women, and that the latter tend to take their work less seriously.

Though by no means generally true this criticism is not without some foundation. Where it is justified the explanation may possibly be traced to one or more of the following causes:

#### (a) *Temporary Nature of Women's Employment.*

Many women regard their employment as a temporary affair which they will give up on marriage, and those who hold this view do not tend to be greatly interested nor to press for improved con-



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ditions. This attitude needs to be sternly fought; for whether a woman gives up her work on marriage or not (and many, it must be remembered, will not marry), as long as she is working she is in a position of responsibility towards others besides herself—to her fellow-workers, to her employers and to the community.

### *(b) Lack of Opportunity for Promotion.*

It is true that at present most of the important posts are given to men and that women consequently lack the spur of ambition. This fact, however, will not be altered if women are half-hearted about their employment. On the contrary the necessary change can only be brought about by an increased effort on the part of women to qualify for promotion; and willingness on the part of parents to allow their daughters to become trained, though it may involve a temporary loss of earning capacity. Ability, and the power to accept responsibility, are not so common that employers can afford permanently to overlook such valuable assets, even when they are found in women.

### *(c) The Fact that many Women do not depend wholly upon their Work for Support.*

The tendency of women to set a low value upon their services because they are living at home cannot be too strongly condemned. To work for less than the current rate of wages is not merely to injure those who depend on the same work for

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support, but is also lowering the status of women as workers.

### *(d) Little Pay, Little Service.*

Where wages are low, as they usually are, women do not feel compelled to give much service in return. In addition those who are underpaid are frequently under-nourished and this reduces their efficiency. The only remedy lies in combination with the object of securing better payment, and making a point of being worth the higher wage. Inefficiency will never improve the position.

### *(e) The Existence of Domestic Claims.*

Nearly all women, whether married or single, have a certain amount of domestic responsibility which makes it difficult for them always to put their work first. Long ago, men wisely decided that domestic drudgery was not for them, and consequently few are expected to lead the kind of double life which is the lot of so many women. The position could be eased if, in households where no outside domestic help was available, men took their share of household duties. This is not always possible, of course, and there is a great need for an established service of Home Helps. Occasions, however, are bound to arise where the claim of work must be subordinated to the claim of home. This difficulty is met in the Cotton Industry by the existence of a number of "sick workers" who take the place of women who, for domestic reasons, are obliged to be absent from work, so that



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the latter do not run the risk of losing their employment.

Though for one or another of the reasons set out above a number of women do not take their work as seriously as men, this is not true in a general sense. Where fresh trades or professions have been opened to women, they have shown themselves eager to excel and in many cases they have excelled. It is chiefly in relation to the older forms of manual work that such indifference exists.

In the professions, on the other hand—law, architecture, teaching, and medicine, for example—there is marked keenness on the part of women, and the same applies to public work. Women Magistrates, Women Councillors, and Women Members of Parliament often take their responsibilities more seriously than men.

There remain, however, a large number of unthinking women who, though personally demanding latch-keys and liberty, are still willing to accept for their sex a position of natural inferiority. These it is necessary to rouse to a sense of responsibility, for their existence delays the removal of those obstacles against which women as workers and as citizens have still to contend. What are these obstacles? For the most part they are not legal disabilities or even Trade Union restrictions, though both exist; but are the result of the attitude which the general public, women as well as men, take up towards women's employment. The Legal and Trade Union restrictions are, in a sense, only the expression of this attitude. This brings me to the second heading.

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### (2) THE ATTITUDE OF THE PUBLIC TOWARDS WOMEN AS WORKERS

#### (a) *That Man is the Natural Breadwinner.*

It is still quite a common view that women who work are depriving men of employment.

This is, of course, nothing less than the unashamed assertion that women have no right to compete on equal terms with men, and that consequently they should always be in a dependent or semi-dependent position. Apart from the obvious injustice of such a view one wonders whether men really wish to support their sisters, cousins and aunts as well as their wives, and if not, what is supposed to happen to the two million women who will not marry?

#### (b) *That Women who Work are less Ready to Marry.*

A wealthy middle-aged bachelor remarked to me not long ago that it was a bad thing for women to have so much greater opportunities of being self-supporting, as it made them less ready to "settle down." He saw nothing outrageous in the implication of his remark that women should be forced to marry for the sake of support. This attitude is not at all uncommon. One only wishes more women were self-supporting; for it would be a very salutary thing for men to feel that in order to get married they must offer a woman attractions greater than could be found in independence.

#### (c) *That Women should be Paid less than Men.*

The whole system of differential pay is based upon the conception that the man has a family to



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support while the woman has only herself. There is no justice in this view, for a great number of men have no dependents, while many women support others besides themselves. According to the last census (1921) 26.6 per cent of men over twenty were single and 34 per cent were married or widowers with no children. The most obvious method of getting over the difficulty would be to institute some form of family endowment where the money paid for the support of dependents would be assessed separately from the money that the man or woman earned as an individual. There could be no excuse then for paying a man more than a woman, unless the value of his work was proportionately greater. The slogan of equal pay for equal work is rather loosely used, but it does roughly express the sound maxim that sex should have nothing to do with estimating the value of work done. In the Civil Service and the teaching profession the principle of unequal pay is definitely recognised; but in many forms of business, though men and women do not do identical work, the result is much the same; for, where variety exists, the less skilled and lower-paid jobs are invariably given to women. The Report of the London University Committee on the Medical Education of Women Students, which was issued on January 26th, 1929, may do something to improve the position through its effect upon public opinion. The Committee definitely assert the principle that co-education is the best method of training both women and men, but as no pressure on the hospitals by the

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University is advocated, no immediate result can be expected.

### *(d) That Women are Unsuitable for Certain Kinds of Work.*

Women are still not admitted to the Diplomatic Service or to the Church of England, and they are not placed upon the same footing as men in various services, e.g. the police. They are also excluded from several trades because of the opposition of men's organisations or by legislation. This leads on to the vexed question of "protective legislation," and how far the legal restrictions that at present exist are prejudicial to women's interests.

### *(e) That Women need Special Protection.*

The natural view for a feminist to take of this matter is indignantly to repudiate any form of restriction on women's employment which does not apply equally to men. All restrictions, it is argued, such as forbidding women to use lead paint, prohibiting night-work, or imposing regulations as to weight lifting, etc., have the effect of prejudicing women's power to support themselves in the labour market. Reasonable as this view may be in theory, the opposite one needs consideration; more particularly as it is put forward by those who have practical knowledge of factory conditions and who are closely in touch with women's industrial organisations. They argue that to reject the restrictions as to hours of work, conditions of labour, etc., is but to play into the hands of bad employers, and that whereas protection for



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women has often been the forerunner of protection for men, where the first has been refused, the latter has usually been indefinitely postponed.

Those who speak for the women actually engaged in industrial work<sup>1</sup> are presumably better judges of the position than the strict feminists who, it must be remembered, belong almost exclusively to the professional classes.

The future of women lies with women themselves. If they adopt the right attitude towards their work, the public, of which they form the larger part, must come to adopt that attitude too. It is lack of organisation, and bad traditions rather than legislative restrictions that are hampering them in their march. If women are content to lag behind now that the way of advance has to a large extent been cleared, it is their own fault. When the struggle is less hard and opposition has diminished, effort tends to slacken; but then, above all, is the time to push.

In conclusion, a word must be said about the woman of independent means. The idea that it is more "ladylike" not to work than to do so has happily passed away. Slowly dying, too, is the notion that if a woman could afford not to earn her living, she was wrong to make the attempt, as she was competing with those who were in greater need of money. This view, which has never been applied to men, is based upon the assumption that work is a

<sup>1</sup> See the letter which appeared on this subject in *The Times*, February 1st, 1929.

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fixed quantity and that there may not be enough to go round.

It is surely more than plain that all who do not work are supported by those who do. The idle are burdens, be they rich or poor, which the workers of all classes have to carry. But things are not quite so simply settled, and though no one could deny that work is better than idleness, where independent means enables a wider choice to be exercised, it is surely better for a woman to acquire a special training than to compete for unskilled work against those who have no opportunity of getting qualified. A really skilled person is never superfluous. There is always a large demand for voluntary work in connection with political and philanthropic organisations and this opens a very wide field of activity to women who are in a position to enter it. It should, however, be clear that if a woman works for money she should not accept less than the current rate of pay, and that if she works voluntarily she should do so as regularly and efficiently as if she were paid.

## CHAPTER VI

### WOMEN AND LEISURE

ALTHOUGH leisure is widely desired its full value is rarely appreciated. Thousands of people do not know what to do with themselves when they are free, and either waste their time in dreary boredom,



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or spend it in definitely undesirable pursuits such as drinking and betting. But this fact is not an argument against the shortening of working hours. On the contrary, the possession of leisure must precede, it cannot follow, the skill to use time to the best advantage. The overworked, like the idle, rarely develop this skill. Those who possess unlimited leisure never know the joy of extracting from time the full measure of its value. They also lack the sense of contrast which alone gives life its flavour, and consequently are driven to use every expedient in order to overcome the resultant insipidity.

The people with too much leisure, however, are a small minority in contrast with those who have too little (if we exclude those suffering the enforced idleness of unemployment); but both have their difficulties.

A working woman with a family, for instance, rarely gets much time at her disposal, and when she does, she usually needs rest. Nevertheless, overdriven as most of them are, working women have begun to appreciate the value of leisure and continue to get it more often than in the past. Many thousands of them now take a share in the activities of such organisations as the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Women's Section of the Labour Party, the Women's Adult Schools, etc. The Women's Institutes, too, although excluding political and religious questions from discussion, and therefore severely limiting their field of activity, have done much to interest women in the country in matters outside the home and have

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encouraged handicrafts, acting, gardening, bee-keeping, etc.

But between the working-class mother with too little leisure and the society woman with too much, there exists a large number of young women engaged in industry, business, professions, etc., who, leaving off work about six, have anything from two to four hours free each day according to the distance they have to travel and the demands made upon them at home. Even two hours' regular leisure offers many possibilities; and the object of this chapter is to consider some of the ways in which these leisure hours may be most happily and fruitfully employed—not an easy thing to do, for fully to understand the use of leisure would be to understand the art of life.

Before any suggestions can be made, however, it is necessary to consider certain difficulties.

### (I) DIFFICULTIES

#### (a) *Housing.*

Conditions of overcrowding make many kinds of occupation an impossibility at home. Reading, writing, or even reasonable conversation cannot be carried on in a room where there is clatter and disturbance. It is not surprising if young women returning to homes such as these seek to leave them again at the first opportunity. There is, I think, a great need, not merely of better housing, which is obvious, but also of more mixed clubs where young men and women can meet freely and can carry on some interesting pursuit or hobby or read if they so



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desire. Nearly all clubs run for working people appear to be for one sex only, and consequently those who desire mixed society avoid them. At technical and art schools, evening institutes, etc., the classes are open to both sexes, but a school only appeals to those who are really keen on education. The others want something a little more recreational with opportunities for conversation.

### *(b) Unwillingness or Inability to keep Fixed Hours.*

It is difficult for those whose free time is irregular to make any systematic plan for its use, and consequently unexpected leisure usually finds them without resource. Many people, however, even when able to do so, dislike making arrangements ahead. They do not want to be tied. This desire to follow the impulse of the moment, though comprehensible in the case of those whose working day is strictly regulated, makes any purposive use of leisure impossible.

### *(c) Inclination to Succumb to Suggestion.*

A vast trade exists whose sole purpose lies in suggesting to people that they want certain kinds of amusements and persuading them to spend money upon them. Many of these amusements, though exhausting, expensive and futile, have no definitely anti-social effects; the position is different in the case of those occupations which degrade. There are many unscrupulous people who, possessing a shrewd knowledge of human frailty, grow rich by stimulating men's and women's sexual passions; their

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love of getting something for nothing and the wish through artificial exhilaration to forget immediate worries.

It is well to realise how immense is this power of suggestion and to be on guard against the allurements presented by those who care nothing for human welfare, but grow rich by trading on human weakness.

### *(d) Loneliness Leading to Association with the Wrong Group.*

There are many to whom solitude is unbearable, and who seek any companionship rather than none, with the consequent waste of leisure hours. Those who can find friends suited to their own nature are fortunate, for the desire for companionship is natural, but to become attached to *any* person or group through inability to stand alone is to confess both weakness and dependence, and may lead to a distortion of personality.

### *(e) Lack of Resolution.*

A great deal of leisure is spent in doing things we do not want to do for fear of being "out of it." The well-to-do and the poor alike show this same lack of resolution, and are apt to be swept away by the dictates of prevailing fashion, which is responsible for so much futility.

These are some of the difficulties arising from outward circumstances or from human nature which make it hard to use leisure fruitfully. None



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of them are insuperable. The trouble with most of us is that we do not know what we really want: we have no aim, no ambition, no lasting enthusiasm; and leisure is consequently regarded as a means of escaping from life rather than as an opportunity for living more fully.

Lasting happiness, however, cannot be found in flight: it must depend upon establishing harmony between ourselves and our environment. If our outward life be at discord with our inward nature there can be no peace; but to establish harmony between the two we must relate our ideals to the world in which we live and this can only be done in quietness. At least some fraction of time, then, should be given to thought, even though this be of all pursuits the most difficult and unpopular.

### (2) SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF LEISURE

There are many ways in which occupations can be classified, but for the sake of simplicity I will put them under three heads: (i) Receptive; (ii) Expressive; (iii) Passive.

#### (i) RECEPTIVE

By the receptive use of leisure I wish to convey those means by which the mind and spirit are nourished. Those whose power of interpretation and response are unawakened have ignored their heritage, for it is just this power which gives human life its distinction.

The born lover of the beautiful needs no persuasion

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to seek that which he loves, but the instinctive recognition of beauty and of quality is rare. Discernment is nearly always the result of training. Why then should not more people use their leisure in training the perception and thus adding an increased source of pleasure to their lives?

### (a) *Art.*

Under this heading I class the enjoyment of music, drama, painting, architecture, etc. The pleasure and refreshment that these can give are among the greatest that human beings can enjoy. Unfortunately, most people make no attempt to develop their capacity to enjoy art and lose an immeasurable amount thereby.

Lectures that are regularly given at museums, picture-galleries, etc., may help; but it seems as if for the most part we care very little about beauty in art or nature, or we should not tolerate the steady destruction of our countryside, the defilement of our woods and parks and the defacement of buildings with glaring advertisements.

### (b) *Literature.*

"Literary study," says Arnold Bennett,<sup>1</sup> "is not to amuse the hours of leisure; it is to awake oneself, to be alive, to intensify one's capacity for sympathy and for comprehension. It is not to affect one hour, but twenty-four hours; it is to change utterly one's relations with the world."

Pleasure in reading is certainly a thing to be

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Taste*, p. 7.



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cultivated, if it be not inborn; for not only can it be adapted to every mood, but it can be enjoyed independently of people, weather, time, or place. What other occupation is there that can be pursued on the top of an omnibus, in bed, stretched upon the grass, or curled up in an arm-chair by the fire, and even, though I do not recommend this to book-lovers as distinct from readers only, in the bath? No special preparation is needed and, in comparison with most other pleasures, very little expense. Books, moreover, are companions which possess the special advantages that they can be exchanged without offence when they grow tedious or have ceased to charm.

### (c) *Conversation.*

Conversation, which can be made to fulfil all the three functions of leisure, should perhaps be included here. It is an art which the English, unlike the Latins and the Slavs, are slow to develop, for we are a reserved people, not at all analytical, and for the most part possess a very limited vocabulary; yet it deserves cultivation, for few things can afford so much delight and stimulation as conversation at its best.

### (d) *Travel.*

I include travel among the receptive occupations for, though it may be active as in the case of those who travel in connection with some work, or again passive as it is for thousands of wealthy people who drift from hotel to hotel observant of little but

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food, clothes, and weather, yet in its essence it is receptive.

Travel is still beyond the reach of most women, but is becoming easier and cheaper each year. The Regent Street Polytechnic and the Workers' Travel Association are providing splendid opportunities for those who can afford £4 or £5 for a 10-days' holiday. But a great deal of travelling is possible in England, and much of it can be done on foot. Walking-tours and holiday camps are becoming increasingly popular, though not to the same extent as in Germany, where members of the Youth Movement sleep in the open and wander all over the Continent with a knapsack.

### (e) *Nature.*

Art, Literature, Conversation, Travel—these are to some extent the products of civilisation—but it was by observation of the world of Nature that man's spirit was first stirred. The sun and moon; the changing seasons; the mystery of night; the winds; the restless and unfathomable sea, these first aroused his curiosity and his reverence. And still to-day Nature holds her lovers and whispers to them of wonder and of beauty. To understand something of her secrets—to feel akin to the life that everywhere surrounds us, whether of bird or beast, or tiniest jelly speck, is to receive a message that can nowhere else be heard. But to know Nature we must leave the motor-car and char-à-banc, the highway, now tarred instead of dusty, the first-class tea garden, the "Beauty Spot" and the petrol station



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and wander silently by the banks of streams, through woods, ploughed fields or empty moors. But why say more—except that to the lover of Nature leisure is never sufficiently long.

Though I have placed reception first, it alone is not enough. There should follow a need for expression, for it is in expression that human beings find their fulfilment.

### (ii) EXPRESSIVE

#### (a) *Music, Painting, etc.*

Many who do not find much pleasure in contemplating Nature or works of art or in listening to music can yet derive considerable enjoyment from the attempt to express their own individuality through one or other of these forms. Painting, drawing, playing, singing can be a real joy and delight even to those who possess no remarkable talent. Children and primitive peoples nearly always delight in colour and sound of their own production, but there is a tendency in a civilised community to leave all such things to experts, which is unfortunate. If for no other reason the attempt to create is valuable in that it leads to more intelligent appreciation of the work of others.

#### (b) *Care of Animals, Gardening, etc.*

The training and breeding of animals can be a pursuit of great interest, whether undertaken commercially or not. Poultry-keeping is too exacting to be considered a leisure occupation, but the breed-

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ing of Angora or Chinchilla rabbits can be both amusing and profitable. Moreover, any humane attempt to produce fur which does away with the unspeakable cruelty of trapping deserves encouragement.

Again, those who care little for natural beauty may yet take a keen delight in cultivating flowers. Indeed, care of a garden, large or small, is a pleasure that sometimes grows so intense as to become an obsession. As a pursuit there is much to be said for it. It is creative and healthy, and moreover adds to the beauty of the world, which so many pleasures tend to destroy.

#### (c) *Crafts.*

This joy in creating things of beauty by the work of our hands in a world where so much is ugly is a taste to be encouraged. There are throughout the country Art and Craft Schools where in the evenings men and women may study design, cabinet-making, pottery, wood-carving, etc., for a very small fee (about 15s. a session of two terms). In London, the Central School of Arts and Crafts, Southampton Row, has a very wide syllabus which will be sent to anyone on application. There are also some very excellent books and leaflets published by the Dryad Handicrafts, 17 Duke Street, W.1, giving instruction in every kind of craft, such as bookbinding, cane-work, lacquer-work, metal-work, toymaking, weaving, etc. I was recently reading of a young engaged couple who, finding that their money slipped away on cinemas and bus-rides, decided to



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join a Central School, and here in the evening they made by degrees all the furniture for their future home.

Needlework—at one time the chief occupation of women's leisure hours—must be included amongst the arts. Undertaken solely from a sense of virtue there is nothing to recommend it as a leisure pursuit, but for those with a gift for design it may give real scope for the creative instinct.

### (d) *Study.*

In many large towns there are study circles, courses at Evening Institutes; Adult Schools; W.E.A. Classes (of which particulars can be obtained from the Headquarters, 15 Harpur Street, W.C.), or similar methods of studying almost any subject at a very moderate fee. Such classes can do much to open the eyes to new interests in life. Some slight knowledge of physics and biology, moreover, is absolutely necessary if any attempt is to be made to understand the meaning and wonder of the universe of which we form a part. If classes are out of reach it is possible to study through the means of correspondence courses such as the U.C.C., Burlington House, Cambridge, though this is more expensive and less amusing.

### (e) *Acting, Dancing, etc.*

The formation of amateur dramatic groups throughout the country is an extremely interesting growth of recent years. The British Drama League

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(8 Adelphi Terrace, London) possesses a library and reading-room, and members are given every possible help in the matter of the choice and production of plays. Choral societies and Folk-Dance clubs also give opportunities for expression as a member of a group. The popularity of folk-dancing appears to be growing. Apart from the appeal of tradition, it is a very sociable and happy form of entertainment, as well as being exceedingly good exercise. The same can hardly be said of modern ballroom dancing, which is steadily becoming both less energetic and less sociable. Among all classes, however, it is intensely popular. Indeed, I am inclined to think it is overdone, and that the desire to dance three or four nights a week is part of the continual craving for colour, light, crowds, and emotional excitement which is often a symptom of inner dissatisfaction.

### (f) *Games and Athletics and Sport.*

For the sedentary worker games, or some form of outdoor exercise, such as bicycling, boating, walking, etc., represent a need which must not be overlooked. Moreover, the acquisition of skill in almost any field is a matter of great satisfaction and entirely different from the kind of pleasure to be derived from watching the skill of others.

When all has been said about culture and self-expression and the rest, the question arises: What is it all for? As one of Galsworthy's characters remarked to a young man who was at immense pains to keep himself fit—"Fit for what?" Unless



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we believe that our existence has some purpose all these activities become futile.

### (g) *Work for a Cause.*

The life devoted solely to the satisfaction of personal desires be they high or low can never be anything but starved and incomplete. There is an important part of human nature which above all needs expression—it is the part which seeks to be of service to the world. To have faith in a Cause that extends beyond the range of personal interests and to work with a group that shares that faith is to find happiness. The sense of futility and the sense of loneliness then become unknown; for to subordinate self to something greater than the self is to give purpose to life; and, in the consciousness of a common ideal and the willingness to make a common sacrifice, fellowship is found.

### (iii) PASSIVE

About the passive uses of leisure there is less to be said. They consist of rest, which few people know how to take; in reading light and amusing books; in watching sport, cinemas, and plays that require no thought; in being driven in motor-cars, chars-à-bancs, or on omnibuses; in shop-gazing or in quietly watching the panorama of life. It is well to learn to relax, to stand aloof for a while and be a spectator of others' activity, but to use leisure for recreation alone is to miss some of the greatest forms of experience.

If people would realise more of the endless

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possibilities of existence; take a few moments' quiet to examine their real needs, physical, mental, and spiritual, instead of being led away by fashion; above all, if they would realise that to be tied by obligations voluntarily incurred is not to lose freedom but to add significance to life, leisure might be a priceless possession. Instead, it is often a time for the use of which only two alternatives are thought possible—the one to rush out and spend money on being entertained, the other to sit idle at home, apathetic, bored and glum.

## CHAPTER VII

### WOMEN AND THE VOTE

“OH, I'm not going to vote. They're all alike, promise everything and do nothing. It's six of one and half a dozen of the other. I've not got time for such things. A vote's no good to me.”

How often have such words been flung at me when canvassing down some dreary street at an election!

Sympathising with the speaker—a woman, perhaps, for whom life's battle has been too hard—overworked, ill-fed, and disillusioned, I have been forced to consider why I am convinced that it is worth while to vote, and I have to come to the conclusion that this conviction rests upon two things:



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(1) That through the medium of Parliament, reforms of lasting value *have* been achieved, and

(2) That drastic changes are still needed, while no better method than that of the Vote exists for bringing such changes to pass. The alternatives to Representative Government lead ultimately either to tyranny or anarchy.

(1) It is not necessary to go far back in history in order to realise the truth of the first assertion. Even the most reactionary to-day do not propose to wipe off the Statute Book all the social legislation of the last century and to return to the conditions of 1829, when the working day was commonly twelve hours or more, and children of five and six laboured in factory and mine. Yet none of the reforms, for which both of the older parties now like to take credit, was brought about without struggle.

It may be true that laws cannot of themselves make people either good or happy, but unjust laws can create many evils and much misery. If any woman needs to be convinced that legislation can result in changes which are wholly beneficial, she would do well to contrast the position of women to-day with what it was in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

(2) In order to realise the social needs of one's own times it is a useful thing to try and imagine one's self living a century hence and looking back, as an historian might do, upon the present age. Freed from all personal considerations, what would be our point of view about the conditions existing in this country to-day? Certain facts would immediately

<sup>1</sup> See *The Cause*, by Ray Strachey.

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be apparent—over a million and a quarter unemployed; acute distress over large parts of England, especially in the mining areas; slum conditions, which, according to a reliable authority, are worse to-day than at the end of the War;<sup>1</sup> deterioration in the health of country children; hospitals, which from lack of funds refuse radium treatment to cancer patients, and from lack of staff deny anæsthetics to poor women in childbirth: and side by side with this a vast expenditure on alcohol, betting, entertainment, sport, fashionable clothes, and motoring.

We have probably succeeded in making up our minds whether we would rather have been on the side of Christ or the Pharisees, of Galileo or his torturers, of Shaftesbury or the Factory employers. Whatever may be our particular bias—and there is a tendency to-day to make the villains and heroes of history exchange parts in the drama—yet there is one thing which no person can wish to be, and that is one of the vast mass of people only half alert, who never realise that a drama is being enacted at all. It is necessary to-day as much as at any time in history to take our stand on one side or the other; for, upon the solution of such problems as International Peace, Unemployment, Housing, Education, Taxation, and the distribution of the National Income, the opportunities, the health, and the happiness of future generations will largely depend.

It is by arguments of this kind that I have combated the feeling of cynicism, which, in a climate like ours, assaults even the most fanatical. If, in

<sup>1</sup> *How to Abolish the Slums*, by E. D. Simon, p. 1.



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fact, progress be not possible; if muddle, and cruelty, and oppression are to be the lot of mankind for ever, then it would be as well if the human race should come rapidly to an end. Yet, oddly enough, those who have least belief in progress are usually most keen about an increased population!

If, on the other hand, we believe that progress, though uncertain, is always possible, it becomes a matter of urgent importance to secure that our own particular push shall be given in the desired direction, and that as individuals we should represent momentum, and not mass alone without velocity.

In judging of any political party, there are four principal things to be considered: (1) its ultimate ideals; (2) its immediate programme; (3) its past record; (4) the character of its leaders (i.e. their capacity and their honesty).

This is not a political book and I shall make no attempt to draw comparisons between the three parties on the matters set out above, but I should like to issue some warnings.

(1) *Distrust* those politicians who base their appeal solely on the ground of the voters' personal interest. If they are going to consider only the wishes of one group regardless of the needs of the rest of the community, they are not fit representatives of the people. It is an insult to appeal to the new voters chiefly on what are known as "Women's Questions," meaning thereby not such questions as Peace, Education, and security of Employment, but relatively petty matters, such as the price of artificial silk stockings; implying that they will judge the whole question of Protective

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Tariffs according to whether the result would be to raise the price of articles they themselves consume, and unrelated to all broader issues.

Suspect then all window-dressing calculated to catch the eye of women voters. Selfishness requires no encouragement. There is very little danger of forgetting one's personal wishes, but a very great danger of attaching too much importance to them, to the distortion of judgment. It is a sign that politics have sunk to a low level when politicians have no belief in human nobility.

(2) *Distrust* those who use abuse. A good case should carry conviction and not require to be supported by sensational misrepresentation or personal attack upon political opponents.

(3) *Distrust* those "who want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means." It is no good lamenting that many children are under-nourished and lack resistance to disease, if, in the interests of economy, politicians are willing that the provision of meals for necessitous school-children should be cut down; nor is it any use to deplore the continued existence of slums unless they are prepared to face the cost of their abolition and their replacement by good buildings at rentals which the poor can afford; nor, finally, can anything be achieved by sympathising with the unemployed as long as it is found cheaper to give inadequate doles than to pay people full wages for work of national value.

Though it is well to be on our guard against the appeal to selfishness, against misrepresentation and against the refusal to face the question of the neces-



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sary means to attain ends that are desired, it is for positive rather than for negative reasons that the vote should be given. One of the most important of these reasons is to ensure International Peace.

### (1) PEACE

There is no subject that can compare in importance with this question of war and peace. What is the good of laboriously building up a desired form of civilisation if war can be let loose upon the world, destroying the labour of generations at a stroke? No one who has reflected for a second upon the immense power which is placed in the hands of the Government in this matter of foreign relations can ever think again that "politics do not matter."

All candidates will probably say they want peace, but it is necessary to scrutinise their policy and find out how far it accords with the views they profess. For instance, are they in favour of disarmament in general terms, *but not* if it involves renouncing or limiting a particular type of war-vessel upon which this country relies? Or do they approve of arbitration, *and yet* are unwilling for the Government to sign the Optional Clause pledging this country to submit certain classes of legal disputes to the International Court of Justice? Or do they agree with the Outlawry of War, *only* if it admits wars of defence where each Nation shall determine for itself whether or no defence is needed? If so, is such a qualified adherence to principle of value?

What, again, are their views about the League of Nations, and the International Labour Office?

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Do they approve of Secret Diplomacy? On what do they think that National Security depends?

Women who feel keenly on this subject would do well to join some organisation such as the Women's International League, 55 Gower Street, W.C.1; the No More War Movement, 11 Doughty Street, W.C.1; the National Council for Prevention of War, 39 Victoria Street, S.W.1; as well as the local branch of the League of Nations Union. Any one of these bodies will supply literature and give advice on the matter of a *questionnaire* to Parliamentary candidates.

The second most crying need is

### (2) EDUCATION

Education is the first real step in progress. That children in their thousands should leave school at fourteen, the time when education is first beginning to bear fruit, and be left idle or thrown often enough into blind-alley occupation, from which they are dismissed when they become of insurable age, is nothing short of criminal. Three things at least we should try to secure:

1. The general establishment of Nursery Schools.
2. The general raising of the School-leaving age to sixteen—the break between primary and secondary education coming at eleven (as proposed in the Hadow Report) and Maintenance allowances, so that the added years of education do not throw a greater burden upon parents than they can afford.
3. Reduction in the size of the classes and the improvement of school buildings.

On many other reforms, affecting Housing,



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Health Insurance, Family Endowment, Divorce, etc., I have already touched, but I cannot omit to mention the question of disinterested control of the Drink Traffic which would, I believe, remove many evils besides the obvious ones.

Those who are particularly interested in legislation affecting women should join the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, whose weekly publication, *The Women's Leader*, would keep them well informed in all such matters; in addition, the Society possesses a library and the Secretary is always glad to give any possible help.

The use of the Vote, then, is of vital importance for it not merely secures the passage of particular laws; it affects our relations with other countries, and ultimately determines the whole framework of our social life.

Many high-minded people hold aloof from political controversy because they consider politics a dirty game; such action, however, cannot tend to purify political life. In other cases this attitude is, I fear, but assumed as a cloak for mental laziness. Any excuse is good enough to avoid the need for exertion, especially to-day when throughout the country there are so many counter-attractions that make no demand upon the intellect.

But, in addition to mental indolence—of which comparatively few of us are innocent—there is to-day another obstacle to fight—the fear of being thought too serious. To consider that anything matters intensely is to run the risk of being thought

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not merely a crank, which is forgivable, but a bore, which is not. Both these difficulties have to be fought; but it is worth while, for the world that we make to-day is the world which our children will inherit.

The idea that old age is the time for reflection and that youth is the time for thoughtlessness is, of all propositions, the most foolish. What use for reflection when action is over? It is as if an actor were to start learning his part just as the curtain was about to fall at the close of the play. If reflection is ever to be of use, it must be when life lies ahead; it is then that careful judgment is of supreme importance.

The hope of the country has always lain with the young, and, in a sense that has never been true before, the fulfilment of that hope depends upon the Women of To-day.



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