

THE FREEWOMAN

A WEEKLY FEMINIST REVIEW

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COMMENTARY ON BONDWOMEN.

IT turns out that the editorial attitude for this week will have to take the form of a commentary on that of last. According to correspondence, it would appear that in Bondwomen we gave the idea that we consider that only those women who are gifted to the extent of genius can be Freewomen, and all the rest, according to our version, must be Bondwomen, i.e., followers, servants. What, asks a very reasonable correspondent, who wishes to remain anonymous—what is to become of the “ordinary women”? Is not your championing of the strong, of the masters, as unnecessary as it is easy, and your postulating the existence of servants as an established fact, as unhelpful as it is cynical? Cannot the gifted take care of themselves? To use your own instance, has not Ellen Terry made herself free by the simple right of her genius? Are you not treating as negligible considerations the only ones where help such as you can give would count? Are you not engendering a revolt against a sphere wherein most “ordinary women” must of necessity spend their lives? Are you not, by depreciating the value of housework, supporting the view that housework is of little worth, and making it less likely that it should be recognised as a properly-paid profession? A sheaf of questions and objections! Let us see. Returning to the first, that we put forward the view that women's freedom is bound up with genius—well, that is a view we are prepared to uphold. To be a freewoman one must have the essential attribute of genius. Last week we implied it, and this week we state it, and, having more space, we take this opportunity of defining genius. Genius is an individual revelation of life-manifestation, made realisable to others in some outward form. So we hold that anyone who has an individual and personal vision of life in any sphere has the essential attribute of genius, and those who have not this individual realisation are without genius.

They are therefore followers—servants, if so preferred. We called them Bondwomen. We maintain that to accept the fact that great numbers of individuals are born without creative power in regard to any sphere of life whatever, argues no more cynicism than it would to accept the fact, and the statement of it, that coal is black and snow is white. It is a fact to be proved by simple observation. Our contention is that life should supply the conditions which would enable this native endowment of vision to make itself communicable to others, and we consider that so many women appear ordinary, not because they are born ordinary, but because they are bundled pell-mell into a sphere in which they can show no special gift; and because they are expected to be so bundled, they are deprived of that training which would enable them to make their individual revelation communicable, that is, of their chance to become artists. Nor for one moment do we wish to support the view that all women will be free, any more than all men are free. It will be difficult enough for freewomen to be free, and to force women, who neither are nor wish to be free, into the responsibilities of freedom is as futile as endeavouring to make two and two into five. It cannot be done. This explains why a feminist must make her appeal to freewomen, and not to “ordinary” women. The doctrine of feminism is one so hard on women that, at the outset, we can only appeal to those who have already shown signs of individuality and strength, and it is just here that the cult of the freewoman becomes plainly distinguishable from that of the Suffragist. If it is the work of the Suffragist women to guard the rear, it is that of the Freewomen to cheer the van. The cult of the Suffragist takes its stand upon the weakness and dejectedness of the conditions of women. The cult of the Suffragist would say, “Are women not

weak? Are women not crushed down? Are women not in need of protection? Therefore, give them the means wherewith they may be protected." Those of the cult of the Freewoman, however, while granting this in part, would go on to say, "In spite of our position, we feel within us the stirrings of new powers and of growing strength. If we can secure scope, opportunity, and responsibility, we feel we can make realisable to the world a new revelation of spiritual consciousness. We feel we can produce new evidence of creative force, which, when allowed its course, will encompass developments sufficiently great to constitute a higher development in the evolution of the human race and of human achievement." We believe that it is to the Freewomen we have to look for the conscious setting towards a higher race, for which their achievements will help to make ready, and their strivings and aspirations help to mould. For this they do not require protection; they need liberty. They do not require ease; they need strenuous effort. They do not wish, by law or by any other means, to fasten their responsibilities on others. They themselves are prepared to shoulder their own. They bear no grudge and claim no exemption because of the greater burdens which Nature has made theirs. They accept them willingly, because of their added opportunity and power.

In the attainment of all these things the vote will lend its small quota—small because it is of the letter and not of the spirit. The spirit comes from within. It can be fostered, but it cannot be created before its time, and when its time has come it cannot be unduly repressed, oh Suffragists!

It is not so long as it seems, but from these hopes and dreams of the future it appears a long cry back to the problems of the domestic questions of to-day. If the Freewoman is not going to be the protected woman, but is to carve out an independence for herself, she must produce within herself strength sufficient to provide for herself and for those of whom Nature has made her the natural guardian, her children. To this end she must open up resources of wealth for herself. She must work, earn money. She must seize upon the incentives which have spurred on men to strenuous effort—wealth, power, titles, and public honour.

To this end she will have to strive, and that she should so strive will be well for her children. Many will say that this responsibility on the mother is too hard. What are the responsibilities of the father? Well, that is his business. Perhaps the State will have something to say to him, but the Freewoman's concern is to see to it that she shall be in a position to bear children if she wants them without soliciting maintenance from any man, whoever he may be; and this she can only do if she is earning money for herself, or is provided for out of some common fund for a limited time. Some women and men here suggest a compromise. They suggest, in order that the women shall at once retain dignity and receive maintenance, that they shall act as housekeepers to the men who provide this maintenance, and receive money for their domestic services. There are endless objections to this, even as a voluntary arrangement. In the first place, a growing number of women, while hoping to have children, refuse to sacrifice their career to domestic

work, much as they like it. In the second place, many women detest domestic work, which is wholly alien to their natural capabilities. Many of them think that they have capabilities of an order which make them regard domestic work as inferior work. To surmount this difficulty, well-intentioned people have been trying, by artificial adjuncts, to raise the status of domestic work. To these we would point out that the distaste felt is not due to the social estimation in which it is held, high or low as this may be, but is due to a temperamental distaste for it. The well-intentioned people, now utterly bewildered, are pretending that housework has fallen into disrepute because it is unpaid work, forgetting that the best of the worker's work is always unpaid. In their bewilderment they have gone so far as to set up a monstrous theory that wives should become the paid employees of their husbands! Beyond this, folly can no further go!

And yet Suffragists, and advanced persons among women generally, make use of this theory. Imagine the circumstances! The man would be compelled by law to pay a portion of his salary to a person whom he is prevented by law from dismissing, and who is prevented by law from securing release. The paid person may be satisfactory or not. If unsatisfactory, what redress is there for the employer? No redress! but a possible remedy in corporal punishment, such as is administered to soldiers in barracks under similar circumstances. And the employee against a tyrannical employer? No power to refuse to sell her labour! power only to form a trade union of paid wives! The entire theory is ludicrous in its absurdity. No! Personal relationships between equals must be entered into on terms of equality. And this brings us to the real feeling which is expressed in the animus against domestic occupation for so large a proportion of women. The feeling has its roots in the elementary fact that, in order to attend to a house, a woman has to give up the work which represents to her, at most, independence and self-expression, and, at least, self-support. In giving up her work the woman gives up the obvious means of support over which she has control, and she becomes dependent upon the energy and work of some other individual. Feminism would hold that it is neither desirable nor necessary for women, when they are mothers, to leave their chosen, money-earning work for any length of time. The fact that they so often do so largely rests on tradition which has to be worn down. In wearing it down vast changes must take place in social conditions, in housing, nursing, kindergarten, education, cooking, cleaning, in the industrial world, and in the professions. These changes will have for their motive the accommodation of such conditions as will enable women to choose and follow a life-work, apart from, and in addition to, their natural function of reproduction.

So it is from a full recognition of the fact that the feminist doctrine is a hard one for women, that the path of the Freewoman will be beset with difficulties, with temptations both from without and within, that we are led to the further recognition of the futility of preaching it to the women who are essentially ordinary women, who do not already bear in themselves the stamp of the individual.

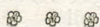
We are convinced that, at the present time, our interpretation of the doctrine has merely to be stated clearly to be frankly rejected by, at least, three women in every four.

Probably these replies will raise more objections than those they were put forward to meet, but if such is the case it will be not merely what was expected, but what is hoped.

NOTES OF THE WEEK.

THIS week has been made vivid for us on account of the unique opportunity which our position as editors of THE FREEWOMAN has afforded us to learn at first hand the methods of a number of female bullies.

In terms which would have been intolerable from Lord God Almighty to a black beetle, to make use of a famous quotation, we have been informed as to our unworthiness, our caddishness, and our black treachery. As many of these correspondents have availed themselves of the expedient of addressing their communications to one or other of the joint editors personally, we are unable, much to our regret, to publish the correspondence in full. One personal letter, however, coming from one of the most prominent supporters of the Women's Social and Political Union, we quote in part, and hope to obtain permission to quote in full, with signature attached, in next week's issue. Coming from a rich woman, it embodies the tone and spirit now customary with certain wealthy women, who have a bare acquaintance with militancy, and who presume to adopt the attitude of censor towards those who have given of their passion and physical strength, and have thereby given life to a great part of the militant movement in the past.



Among other passages which occur are these:—"Your vile attack on Miss Pankhurst fills me with amazement and disgust too deep for expression, that you, *you*, who talk so glibly of seeking, first and foremost, truth and light, you who have worked and suffered for the cause, are now betraying it, . . . just out of some petty personal spite. You have committed the unpardonable sin, for you have sinned against your own ideals. Oh, I am deeply ashamed of you; yes, and I am sorry for you, for you must be ashamed of yourself to your heart's core.

"The attack is not even honest, for you know as well as Miss Pankhurst knows that the only way to get Woman's Suffrage. . . . You have too much political acumen to be taken in by Mr. Lloyd George. Why are you deliberately playing into his hands? But your lack of honesty in this is on a par with your lack of honesty to me, and probably to the other subscribers to your establishment fund. How dared you ask me to subscribe without giving me the faintest hint as to your changed attitude towards the whole Suffrage Question?" (Here we should mention that the lady has *promised* the sum of £10.)



It is in the light of such epistles as these that the utter silence which sur-

rounds the inner workings of the Women's Social and Political Union becomes explicable. The simultaneous use of emotional appeal and of virulent scolding makes it quite understandable why sensitive people have fallen back in horror from the ordeal. If for a straightforward, impersonal criticism of a policy (of necessity initiated by somebody who *must* bear a name), and for a simple statement that we think it wise, for the present, to accept the promise of a statesman, and think it folly to do otherwise and say so, we get such a torrent of hysterical chiding and abuse as this, does it not make patent to the world how far personal dominance can go, and how deadly and degrading it can become?



One correspondent wonders at our temerity still to uphold the right to form an independent judgment and to state it, and to maintain the indefeasible right to criticise openly the actions of a public body. She appears amazed that we have not been struck down with hopelessness in view of the oblivion which she implies has befallen an earlier critic. She appears not to understand that with people who think and feel and keep alive the last power to flicker out is the power to judge and criticise and to shape actions accordingly. We shall be very dead indeed when our powers in this direction are stayed. And we point out to her—and others—that we are not hereby hurting the cause of freedom. We believe and know that by doing just this thing we are maintaining a conception of freedom loftier than any of those of which she has ever dreamed, and as lofty as the vision of those whom she follows, at a time when their own vision of freedom was more clear to them than it appears to-day. For the whole is greater than its part, and a political freedom secured at the price of forcing individual wills and consciences is more than just worthless. It is wicked, and we refuse to acquiesce in the uncritical attitude, not only of the W.S.P.U. devotees, but of the public in general. For it is a fact that the W.S.P.U., as an organisation, has received no public criticism whatsoever, although by the very nature of its organisation it stands in most need of outside criticism. It has had criticism enough and to spare of the happenings of its demonstration days, duly advertised, with criticism expected and even exploited; but its organisation and policy as a whole have never yet received adequate and well-intentioned criticism, and in consequence it has become the happy meeting-ground of the sentimental and the unthinking. They still call themselves the militant Union. But the actual weight and value of their militancy can be judged by a record of the occasions of their militant activities

of the last two years. In 1909 the Committee of Three commanded fierce "War." War was made. In January, 1909 the Committee said "Peace," the organisers of the Union learning it was peace through the public Press. Peace was made. In June, 1910, as a result of the Conciliation Bill, Mrs. Pankhurst said in the Albert Hall: "I have only one word for you: it is Victory." All hailed victory and preached it. In July, 1910, the Conciliation Bill failed to get its third reading. All expected war. The Committee said "No war," so we made no war. In November, 1910, the Committee suddenly announced "War." The warriors were ready, and as a result a large number of them were locked up in prison throughout the Christmas election. The election over, the Committee said "Peace," and Peace it was. In June, 1911, the Conciliation Bill failed a second time. The warriors' hopes were at their Nadir—they felt defeated; but the Committee said "Peace," and Peace continued. In November, 1911, the Suffrage sky suddenly brightened; political guarantees were for the first time forthcoming. Hope leapt up all round. Now, not on the guarantee of the "Committee," but on the guarantee of the "Powers," it appeared a straight, hard-working course to a successful finish. Then, lo and behold! the Committee again said "War," and the devotees acquiesced. One would think credulity could no further go; but we are convinced that if next week the Committee said "Peace," without a single change appearing on the Suffrage horizon, the devotees will echo "Peace." And no one here need say that we are personal. This is not being personal. It is a true and impersonal record of past events, in the light of which the events of last week find their true bearings. We might here say that when THE FREEWOMAN was first launched, we had no immediate intention of entering into a discussion regarding the affairs of a militant Union. We waited on events, and the actions of members of the Union themselves called for the first unbiassed criticism. This week has made it clear that some members of the Union do not understand that its doings are tolerated merely, and not approved; whilst the astonishing tone of censoriousness which has been used by members of a Union we know so well is as ludicrous as it is intolerable. We hope it will not again be necessary to point out to women in public life the distinction between personal abuse and criticism of a public policy. To those who feel that this criticism, though true, is ill-timed, we have to reply that this is a remark which has been made for years, and to us it appears of more import to the cause of Votes for Women that a large body

of women forming a public Union should retain their indefeasible and essential right of criticism than that militancy or censoriousness should be condoned. Leaving this distasteful, if necessary subject, we may proceed to the feminist political situation, the condition of feminist politics. The week's events, of which for women Mr. Lloyd George's speech at Bath is the chief, have strengthened the belief which we expressed in our first issue. In the light of his speech, we believe that Mr. Lloyd George has quite seriously undertaken the championing of the Votes for Women cause. It may be that he thinks that his championing will wipe out a few scores written up against him by women on account of the Insurance Bill, though even in regard to this he is endeavouring to placate the wrath of the servants and their mistresses. He is evidently in a very malleable state of mind, as far as women's claims are concerned; and the result of the by-elections will probably make him more so. It now remains for women to keep a keen eye on his Suffrage amendment proposals. In spite of the right-heartedness of his main intention, we cannot wholly trust his clear-headedness, unaided by the advice of women in regard to their own affairs, even when he means to act sincerely on their behalf. A correspondent has asked us for an alternative scheme to militancy. Although it is not an essential part of our business as critics of a policy which we think wrong to supply an alternative, we might suggest an early Conference of all Women's Suffrage bodies—Liberal, Conservative, Labour, and Socialist—and that at such a Conference women might endeavour to arrive at some kind of conclusion as to the kind of amendment which would be most acceptable to them without jeopardising the chances of becoming an integral part of the Reform Bill next session.

Such a conference would have at least three good uses. Women of different societies would have the opportunity of learning the wishes and objections felt by women of differing societies; they would perhaps be able to arrive at a common opinion as to what should be demanded in regard to the amendment; and it would form a preliminary to an exhaustive campaign for the education of the private member by way of his constituents. It would certainly be effective in securing a greater measure of solidarity among women of differing societies.

The correspondent who asked the questions dealt with in our leading article asks if we do not consider Miss Pankhurst's arguments, expressed in a leader in this week's *Votes for Women*, irrefutable.

Quite bluntly, we do not consider that Miss Pankhurst deals with the practical political issue at all. She

puts forward hypothetical conditions and stipulations, and thereon proceeds to erect an apparently irrefutable argument.

"If," says Miss P., "Woman Suffrage is made a Government measure, there is at stake, not that measure only, but the existence of the Government, and all the other measures on their programme." Of course, this is wholly true, and, because it is true, it supplies the reason why the Government, united on the Liberal programme, but disunited on Women's Suffrage, speaks with one definite official voice to the effect that Votes for Women may not become a Government measure. The reason is plain. Mr. Asquith will not coerce his conscience in regard to Votes for Women. He evidently would rather resign, and his Cabinet apparently will not permit him to resign, and therefore will not coerce him, because of their anxiety for the programme as a whole. They therefore agree upon a common policy, which enables each to speak and vote according to his personal wish in a matter which they consider one of second-class importance, though Suffragists regard it as one of first class. A commonsense understanding of this position disposes of the entire claim of Suffragists to have Votes for Women introduced as a Government measure. Further, we cannot agree with Miss Pankhurst's dictum, even when supported by quotations from Mr. Asquith, that "Ministers should not be allowed to emit on public platforms discordant opinions, and to pose as propagandists of two wholly opposing views of public policy."

As a dictum relating to hard-bound party politics, and used in relation to a measure recognised as a party measure, everything might be said in its support; but at a time when we are recognising the futility of party politics, and the very real danger of that blind alley of democratic Government—i.e., the close ring of Cabinet rule—we are prepared even to welcome as a precedent the opportunity which the Government proposes to give to the ordinarily unimportant private member to express his views on a matter of really serious import. So it turns out that in this matter the private member is to play the part of Umpire, and no person who claims to believe in representative Government can conscientiously have anything to say against that. Miss Pankhurst evidently fears the verdict of the private member, and, as will be seen in a quotation from the leading article before mentioned, she proposes to safeguard Votes for Women by what can only be called political overreaching. Not being prepared to trust Votes for Women on its own merits in the House of Commons, she says: "If Woman Suffrage is made a Government measure, there is at stake, not that measure only, but the existence of the Government and all the other measures on their programme. Whereas if we depend on a mere amendment, nothing whatever is at stake *except the women's cause itself*, and if the amendment should be defeated the Government would continue their career, and the various items on their programme would be

carried as though nothing whatever had happened. That is to say, if the Women's Social and Political Union's demand is conceded, and the Government stake their existence on a measure giving votes to women, the members of the Coalition—Liberal, Labour, and Nationalist—will be absolutely determined to get this measure carried, *because otherwise the defeat and resignation of the Government will follow*, and their own causes of Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, and the rest will also come to destruction. They will become ardent and active supporters of Votes for Women, not only for our sake, but for their own."

We do not consider this legitimate political pressure. Mr. Asquith, a politician whose favour Suffragists have never courted, is to be coerced into bringing in a measure in which he does not believe, in order that his party Whips may be used to coerce members into voting for a measure in which they presumably do not believe, and all to satisfy a body of people who have been offered an alternative which would give them more than they themselves had been prepared to accept. Surely there is some conscience left in politics. Surely there is no real cause for cynicism such as this in those to whom we look to uplift politics in the future. Is it not the straighter way at this moment to persuade the electorate, which in the long run is the only body which can use coercion, and it uses it on the one person who, as it happens in this case, is the umpire on Votes for Women, the private member.

We need to make a reference to an objection brought forward in a letter which we publish from a correspondent—i.e., the objection that our review is unduly concerned with the relationship between the sexes. It is an odd enough criticism of a journal which calls itself a feminist review. That it can be made arises from the difficulty of grasping the definition of Feminism, even when specifically defined. Feminism is concerned with the readjustment of the balance of sex relationships, which has been rendered necessary by the age-long acceptance of Masculinism, the present accepted, but not unchallenged, theory—a theory which acknowledges the domination of men in sex relationships and in all the various activities and spheres of labour which are accommodated to such. It will thus be seen that we regard feminism, not as a final doctrine, but as a temporary theory of expedients and readjustments. Masculinism and Feminism are relative terms, and when one is strong enough to equate the other both will become merged in a common doctrine of Humanism. We assure our correspondent that, both by interest and temperament, we are far more likely to trespass upon the sphere of Humanism than to keep too unduly to the restricted sphere of Feminism.

Among the contents in next week's issue will appear:—

"Asquith Will Die." By H. G. Wells.

"The Sanction of Virtue." By E. S. P. H.

Article. By J. J. Mallon.

"The New Morality."

"Dramatic and Literary Criticism," etc.

The Tragedy of the Happy Marriage.

TO the average Philistine, commonly known as the Man in the Street, the title of this article will appear a contradiction in terms. He keeps his conceptions of marriage, as of all other other matters, in sharply defined compartments, fondly imagining that realities correspond. There are good marriages and bad ones, happy and unhappy ones; and the two have nothing in common except the practical inviolability of the bond. As to the existence of bad marriages and the tragic experience involved, he is comparatively well informed. For, however zealous his efforts to hide his head in the sands of oblivion, directly or indirectly, the insistent plaint of the sex novelist or the problem dramatist will inevitably reach his ear. He knows that there are brutal husbands and faithless ones, drunken and slatternly wives. He has even heard of temperamental incompatibility as an occasional justification of separation, but probably in his heart of hearts regards it as a euphemism for sheer lawless perversity. On the other hand, in the subject of "happy" marriages, that is to say, of marriages concerning which the parties most interested make no audible complaint, he takes no interest whatever. They afford no melodramatic possibilities; they are like the favoured nations which have no history; the sex novelists, knowing the taste of their public to a nicety, leave them severely alone. If one wishes to engage the sympathy of the subscribers to Mudie's for the wandering affections of one's heroine, one must be careful to provide her with a husband of approved ineligibility, moral, physical, or, better, both. That is how these things always happen in fiction: the pity is that they do not happen so in life. But, after all, we need not concern ourselves with the opinions or deprecate the condemnation of the average Philistine: what have we to do with him? We address that select audience which has at least some inkling of psychology; which knows therefore that human nature does not submit kindly to constraint, and that the last word has not been said about a given union when it has been estimated as, upon the whole, a success. The members of our select audience are not unacquainted with Boswell, who recorded this memorable saying of his hero: "It is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage that we find all the motives they have for remaining in that state, and the restraints which civilised society imposes to prevent separation are hardly sufficient to keep them together." There, stated with characteristic downrightness, you have the naked truth in a nutshell. Not a word of qualification, you observe; no exception for the case of a rare and fortuitous affinity: it is marriage in general—happy or unhappy, as outsiders may choose to determine—that is condemned as anti-natural, and therefore irksome to our kind. "Marriage," remarks Robert Louis Stevenson—again, you will observe, without specification of this or the other sort of marriage—"is a field of battle and not a bed of roses." A field of battle is no idyllic scene: it is a place of struggle and carnage, of tragedy, that is to say. No competent observer of matrimonial amenities will

seriously dispute the aptness of the metaphor. If Nietzsche is to be believed—and I know of no keener psychologist—the "will to power" is an absolutely universal characteristic of all conscious beings, and one of the deepest, if not the deepest, of all. Marriage, then, is the field of battle whereon the will to power of two human beings condemned (mainly by Society, if Dr. Johnson is to be credited) to live under the same roof in perpetuity is engaged in endless, however decently masked, conflict. A *modus vivendi* can only be established by the more or less complete victory of one will over the other, temporary or permanent, as the case may be. And what we call "happy" marriages are simply those in which this inevitable conflict is more or less unconsciously waged, or in which the dust and turmoil of the spiritual fray are discreetly veiled from prying eyes. Do not doubt for a moment, whatever shallow optimists may affirm, that in such spiritual conflicts, even the mildest and most unequal, real blows are given and received, real wounds inflicted, real blood caused to flow. Oscar Wilde, in his "Ballad of Reading Gaol," has a terrible sentence, to the effect that "each man kills the thing he loves," and I have sometimes feared that he is right. Of how many "devoted couples," one would like to know, is the seeming peace and serenity of their common existence due to the fact that the innermost life of one spirit has perished at the hand of the other? How many affectionate wives or husbands, I wonder, are spending their lives in heroic effort to conceal the ache of a broken heart, the vain regret for slain aspirations, or the bitterness of complete and final disillusionment? I have no statistics to offer with regard to the fatalities that prevail on Stevenson's "field of battle," but that innumerable spiritual mutilations are to be debited to the matrimonial account I have no doubt whatsoever. In this connection I will mention two points which ought by no means to be overlooked by impartial scrutineers. The first is the extreme vulnerability, especially in their germinal phases, of those elements of personality upon which its highest and rarest possibilities depend. The second is the immense advantage, from the point of view of the modification in subtle ways of the trend of a given personality, conferred by the intimacy of married life. A well-timed sneer may kill out a budding aspiration which in maturity would have proved strong enough to defy a hostile world. Readers of "Middlemarch" will hardly need reminding that a budding aspiration may be inconvenient in a material or social sense to the life-partner of its possessor. I will go further and assert that, as things are at present, it is, as a rule, greatly to a husband's advantage to thwart or dwarf the individual development of his wife, and almost indispensable for a wife to do the same for her husband. Crudely stated, a modern husband's interest in his wife is that she should be the instrument of his pleasure without producing more children or spending more money than he can afford; while that of a modern wife in her husband is that he shall devote himself without pause or scruple to the art of "making" money in order to enhance her power and prestige. I do not suggest for a moment that these rather sordid considerations inevitably prevail; on the contrary, I am sure that they are often resisted, and sometimes overcome. That does not alter my conviction that the existence of such a conflict of interests is inimical always, and in many cases fatal, to the higher life of both parties concerned.

Such considerations make it possible to understand why the popular standard of happiness in marriage is so deplorably low. The vulgar concep-

tion of happy wedlock is realised by a husband and wife who do not quarrel in public or throw the fire-irons at one another's heads in the privacy of their suburban villa. It is not nearly enough. On kindred lines one might rhapsodise over the ideal union of a tiger and a lamb, the one being *inside* the other. Not that one expects impossibilities: a certain amount of fiction is healthy and beneficial; beyond that, but far within the popular conception of success, a point is reached where spiritual incompatibility is manifested and only separation can avert disaster to both. But separation is forbidden; consequently, of the "devoted pairs" that are held up to our admiration, a large percentage are to the discerning eye apparent as divorced individuals immorally cohabiting to the detriment of themselves and Society. A true union of souls is a thing so rare, precious and beautiful that we decline to accept as a substitute these cold and colourless imitations. Nietzsche has an aphorism, with which I do not agree, to the effect that the worth of a given marriage is precisely that of the two persons involved. There are many excellent people who are always at their worst when together; if they are unfortunate enough to be married to one another it is obviously their duty to part. The obstinacy with which at present such persons, as a rule, persist in making one another wretched would extort the admiration due to heroism, were it not for the suspicion that indolence and moral cowardice are the true explanation of the fact. But excellent persons do not outrage the minor deficiencies; consequently they are always accredited to the list of the happily married. The truth often is that they *have been* happily married, but are no longer married at all in any high sense of the term. For all human relationships are mortal, though some few of them have immortal souls. The conception of marriage as an episode is therefore one for which, among others, I predict a long and honourable future. But not, needless to say, while the tune of life continues to be set by those timid and shallow sentimentalists who fear even death less than the loss of a single illusion. "There is one thing absolutely universal in man's life," observes the late James Hinton, "namely, that he has to give up everything that good and right first lead him to." It is a hard saying . . . and, *therefore*, probably a true one!

CHARLES J. WHITBY, M.D.

Women's Municipal Lodging-Houses.

SOME friends, who live in London, took a lease of a desirable suburban house. It was conveniently situated, and possessed a large garden in which their children could play happily. But, alas! they had no sooner entered on possession than they discovered that a very bad smell came to them from the field behind, apparently occupied only by peacefully feeding horses and cows! Further investigation showed that over the hedge was a cesspool, which received the drainage from two cottages. These cottages were survivals from the past; the cesspool was the elementary provision of the neighbourhood for drainage before it became suburban. The villa, with its modern arrangements for sanitation, was simply built next door. It was not long before my friends stirred the authorities to get rid of the cesspool.

Just in the same way, in all modern cities we are

sufferers from a condition of things that are a survival of the past. It is not until they become intolerable that we begin to scent them out. It would be a good thing if their removal was as easy as that of the cesspool that troubled my friends. But often it proceeds only by slow stages, and is left incomplete. I may illustrate this by the history of abattoirs. Formerly, in the primitive days when our cities were surrounded by country villages, every butcher killed his own beasts on his own premises. The primitive arrangements for killing a few beasts, hardly fit even for that (as, for instance, when the shed used opened directly into the butcher's living-room), became a *nuisance* and disgrace when closely surrounded by houses. So at last legislation stepped in timidly. All existing killing places were *registered*. They could not, however, be extinguished unless certain by-laws were transgressed. Moreover, the place was registered in the name of the owner, not the occupier. All new places were then *licensed*. In practice we still have surviving in many towns all sorts of odd, inconvenient and insanitary premises *registered* which can hardly be put down, because offences cannot be proved on the *owner*, and a number of better places *licensed*. But it has been found better in many large towns to supersede even these by a *public abattoir*, which gives much better and more merciful arrangements for killing animals, and a much better control over the meat supply. On the Continent, this has been carried to its logical conclusion by the suppression of the private killing shop. But we in England are *not logical*, and these two survivals—the registered and the licensed premises—are still found side by side with the *public abattoir*. Legislation with regard to the common lodging-house has pursued much the same course, and different cities and towns show side by side as backward or advanced, according as they have adopted *registration*, superseded it by *licence*, or gone forward still further to the *municipal lodging-house*.

The common lodging-house, in its primitive state, may certainly be considered a cesspool of humanity. It contains a state of things so dangerous to the community—such a festering mass of foul humanity—that only the fact that it is out of sight, and therefore out of mind, could allow of its existence in the twentieth century. I could not have believed such conditions existed under the ægis of our municipal authorities if I had not actually experienced them. Men, women and children were herded together in filthy beds, with vermin dropping from above, and only an apology for partitions, without fastenings. This I personally experienced, but was told of worse horrors—of open dormitories, and a solitary bucket for all the calls of nature; children in the beds with adults of all ages, and not the slightest pretence of even morality, since the occupiers of the beds were but, in lodging-house parlance, "couples"; no washing appliances but a common sink in the "living-room"; the outdoor sanitary arrangements an ordinary closet, overflowing.

It filled me with horror to find such conditions existing; but the question arose, "How could they exist?" Then I learnt what "registration" meant. As in the case of the butchers' shambles, the first step was simply "registration." All existing places were registered. That is all. Once registered, always registered. A keeper of a common lodging-house cannot, in cities that have only registration, be made to improve the condition of his house. He can only be fined 40s. for overcrowding (that is, allowing less than the meagre minimum air-space); for not posting up the official tickets, if there are any; not opening the windows two hours

a day, and sweeping the floors once before ten o'clock, and washing them once a week; for not providing water and "sufficient" washing accommodation; for not limewashing walls and ceilings twice, and washing rugs, blankets, and counterpanes three times a year. He must notify infectious diseases, and ought to see that his "couples" are married. Even these regulations are in many places very perfunctorily enforced. The owner of a common lodging-house puts in a "deputy," who may be one of his lodgers. His chief concern is to get his money regularly. I learnt something of the inner working of such a lodging-house (which, by the way, called itself a "model") by taking compassion on the wife of a "deputy." Her husband was in the workhouse, suffering from the effects of strong drink. She told me she and a woman helper had the place to keep clean and 150 beds to make. "Of course, we did not *make* them," she said. The work to be done left no time to examine for vermin, nothing but a hasty throwing-up of the bedclothes and smoothing over, and hasty sweeping, and changing of beds once a week. No wonder that places like this, when occasionally inspected, have proved to be so full of vermin that the beds have had to be burnt and the keeper fined—40s.! Weekly lodging-houses escape even registration. Strangely enough, in this matter of the common lodging-house, even a city foremost in general policy may be only in the first stage—that of *registration*. It is strange that the next step, that of yearly *licensing* of lodging-houses, which has been taken by some towns, has not been taken except by a few towns with special by-laws. In some legislation has been obtained for houses let in furnished rooms. The regulation of these furnished rooms is greatly needed. But so is greater power over the common lodging-house.

In Liverpool, for example, the medical officer of health has a certain arbitrary power greater than in other towns. The history of this power is curious. It illustrates the way in which legislation often proceeds that, because of the ravages of cholera, under an old Act the M.O.H. has power to summarily close a lodging-house, or to reduce the number of beds, but not to enforce sanitation and morality. Liverpool, a city foremost in many respects in sanitary regulations, has not yet the Model By-laws of the L.G.B. of 1901, or the more stringent ones of the Scotch Act of 1897, many of which were adopted by the London County Council.

In the rest of the country there are also very many towns that are still only in this preliminary stage of *registration*. The misleading name of "Model" was quickly adopted by *registered* lodging-houses for trade purposes, but it covers all sorts of undesirable conditions, and is a disgrace to our municipalities.

MARY HIGGS.

(To be continued.)

The Gospel According to Shaw.

FOR many reasons it is an indiscreet thing to handle prophets and philosophers while they are still in active business. It is obviously safer to expound them a few odd centuries after their departure: when they cannot write to the papers next day and prove that they said and thought nothing of the kind we have fathered on them. That is why the classical men are so popular—there is no one to contradict authoritatively all the silly things we say about them. We do not play with live prophets, for much the same reason that we do not

take liberties with live lions. They may bite. Then, again, a prophet with an evolutionary mind and the dramatic sense may be saving up his best piece for the last; just as the first chapter of Genesis saved up Adam for the sixth day; just as we keep our biggest rocket for the grand finale on bonfire night. Try to realise the immaturity of their criticism if the Women's Social and Political Union had hastily sent an indignant deputation to the Author before he got as far as Eve.

In any case, it is impossible to deal with Mr. Bernard Shaw in exactly the same way that one would treat Plato and Mohammed, or Zoroaster and St. Paul. For one thing, having sat on the Fabian Society Executive for so many years, he knows a great deal more than these other prophets, and talks much better sense. Then, again, Mr. Shaw's gospel concerns practical, everyday things that really do matter: whereas the other fellows, just mentioned, were always worrying about Ideas or the gods of Olympus, and Fire-worship or Reconciliation. One can get through life without investigating such gospels. But philosophers like Mr. Shaw insist on preaching a crusade concerning affairs which cannot be evaded: he rides out with a lance, not to win a temple in the East or the faith of Islam, but to settle municipal trading and the relief of destitution.

Amongst other very pertinent, everyday things, Mr. Shaw has included that most urgent phenomenon, Woman, as a prominent part of his gospel. Woman is a subject which cannot wait for discreet discussion at the end of the next century: a few nights ago she broke half the windows in Whitehall. Mr. Shaw, realising that the matter was pressing, has devoted to it several plays which seem to raise all the vital problems at issue. Now, THE FREEWOMAN is a technical trade journal on Womanhood, so it is naturally interested in this part of Mr. Shaw's philosophy. Hence this article.

There is one preliminary observation which must be made. When one is dealing with works of art, like Mr. Shaw's plays, it is not fair to assume that the characters he puts on the stage are necessarily speaking their author's own opinions. Mr. Shaw is an artist; but he is such a successful sociological propagandist that his art has not received the recognition that is due. Being an artist, he has the privilege of irresponsible creation—which (from what one sees of mankind) he shares with the Creator. One has no more right to ask Mr. Shaw to defend the views of his stage men and women than to ask the Almighty to defend some of his puppets. As a matter of fact, Mr. Shaw, for his part, has never created anyone he need be ashamed of: whereas . . . but that does not matter now.

In his play "Getting Married" Mr. Shaw has made a marvellous mosaic of men and women engaged in discussing the problems of sex. There seems to be someone of every sort. There is the bishop's wife, who accepts marriage because she has no theories about it; there is Lesbia, who rejects it because she has too many theories; there is a general who wants to marry Lesbia because he is sentimental about her; there is Hotchkiss, who seems prepared to marry anyone, because he has no sentiments; there is a lady who wants two husbands, and a lady who cannot stand one; there is a clergyman who preaches celibacy, and another who sympathises with polygamists; there is represented every possible kind of view on the sex relationship—the only thing that is left out, as if unnatural, is a woman who believes in celibacy: for the lady who does not want a husband still desires children.

To all these enters Mrs. George Collins. Whether Mr. Shaw intended her to represent his own views

does not really matter; we are fully entitled to take Mrs. George as she is; and, indeed, she is a lady who is quite capable of representing herself. She is a woman with vast experience of men in their passionate moments; and when all these perplexed men and women on the stage refer to her the problem of drawing up a model marriage contract, they are looking to one having authority. She is now near fifty, and her face is described as "a battlefield of the passions." As her brother-in-law, the greengrocer, said of her: "She didn't seem to have any control over herself when she fell in love. She would mope for a couple of days, crying about nothing; and then she would up and say—no matter who was there to hear her—I must go to him, George." "What an odious woman!" bursts forth the bishop's wife. "Well, many ladies with a domestic turn thought so and said so, ma'am. But I will say for Mrs. George that the variety of experience made her wonderful interesting. That's where the flighty ones score off the steady ones, ma'am." Now in rational and cultured circles those words "wonderful interesting" would be almost a conclusive defence of any line of conduct. But even that is only a small point.

Some readers, who do not know the rest of the tale, will hastily conclude that this career of tempestuous disregard of the teaching of the Liberal Nonconformist Press will end in a woman of coarsest tastes and crudest desires. Listen! This squabbling over the financial and legal restrictions of the model marriage contract becomes a piece of vulgar materialism in the presence of a woman who has found in sex a spiritual experience, whilst the rest would handle it as a pound of butter to be bargained for at a market stall. They, in their crudeness, imagine that it can all be packed inside the precise terminology of a legal document; but Mrs. George knows better. It appears that this woman of many lovers has one who is dearer than them all—the bishop himself—whom she has approached no closer than before the altar rails at the communion. She has held no converse with him but in anonymous letters, on cheap paper, wherein she tells him that he is to be "high above all her lovers, . . . who will never know her, never touch her, as she is on earth, but whom she can meet in heaven." (The Nonconformist Press will begin to hope that things are not so bad as they imagined at first.) She signs herself "Incognita Appassionata."

She is given to trances; and one happens now. "When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul. . . . Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors as well? . . . I have given you the greatest of all things; and you ask me to give you little things. Was it not enough?" The whole passage is one of the prose-poems of the English language. But it is something else: it is a philosophy of sex.

Judging from the criticisms of "Getting Married," if one remembers them aright, half the audience did not know Mrs. George had a philosophy, and the other half did not understand it. There are excuses; for, like all great people, she is a bundle of contradictions, until you stand back and get them in a proper perspective. The "nice" people were so pleased to think that she was becoming a reformed character; but the wise people (who are never "nice") accurately observed the very obvious fact that her spiritual heights were based on a very extensive earthly experience. They saw that this freebooting career of hers was not capable of being guaranteed under the ordinary marriage certificate,

and it had nothing to do with her professional work as a housekeeper and mother. Finally, and perhaps most vitally, she did not hold that the passion of love was a thing to flee from, of which to be ashamed; it was a most stimulating and elevating event in her life. In short, this entrancing creature of wisdom and intellectual charm was a highly strung instrument of love. Mr. Shaw has created an ideal woman. She is one who has played every note in the scale of sex; and, instead of making her an unbalanced creature, it has left her wiser and completer than her sisters who have saved their talents in a napkin. Passion is not a vice, but an education. It is one of the senses by which we learn the lessons of this mysterious world. And its legitimate exercise did not make Mrs. George a Bacchanalian; it made her a poet. I don't know whether Mr. Shaw meant that—but Mrs. George did.

But there are some who will say that to think of Woman as merely a musician of love-songs is altogether a narrow conception. Certainly; but the other part of her life is so obvious; it does not need discussion amongst reasonable persons. Mr. Shaw, like all cultured thinkers, holds that a woman has all the common rights of a human being—the right to vote; to be paid a full price for her labour, whether she labours as a mill-hand, or a housekeeper, or a mother, or a civil servant.

G. R. S. TAYLOR.

Feminism under the Republic and the Early Empire.

II.

IT is interesting to notice here the attitude to women of Cato the Censor, who was regarded, as was his grandson at a later date, as the pillar *par excellence* of Roman virtue in the time in which he lived.

His farmstead was in the Sabine country. While he was abroad in the wars, or while he held office in the city, his wife was at home, superintending his slaves and his house. We can imagine that these were the happiest times of her life, for when at home he supervised even the washing of the children. His family and slaves lived in terror of his nod. When the latter were growing old in his service, he sold them ruthlessly. He punished them with his own hand and at his leisure, during the evening when the day's work was done; but he accounted it a concession that he did not flog his wife or married children. His writings are full of invective against woman: "Woman is plaguy and proud," she is an encumbrance and a nuisance, but, as the mother of Romans, she must be endured. His views on faithfulness in marriage are known to us in his own words. If she erred, the wife was to be put to death by the husband, without trial, but she had no business to expect any degree of faithfulness in a husband; in fact, that was regarded as a most unreasonable demand on her part. We quote from Aulus Gellius the following extract from one of the speeches of Cato:

"In adulterio uxorem tuam siprehendisses, sine iudicio impune necares: illa te si adulterares, sive tu adulterare, digito non auderet contingere, neque jus est."

Mommsen remarks casually that the Censor's view of faithfulness in marriage is but that which one expects to meet in a slave-ridden community.

This masculine licence is reflected to a surprising extent in the Roman literature of the period. Stage plays in particular reveal a freedom which it is amazing that the cultured Roman could so complacently recognise and tolerate in a State where his daughters were wives.

It remained, however, for the censor, Metellus Macedonicus, in the year 131 B.C., while urging men to marry, and pointing to the decreasing birth-rate, to utter words which must have roused the feeblest and most timid of Roman wives to exasperation and hatred—and these words were cynically quoted over a century later by Augustus to his Senate of Romans who were models of fine-gentlemanhood and elegance: "If we could do without wives," said the Censor to the people in his address, "we should be rid of that nuisance: but since nature has decreed that we can neither live comfortably with them nor live at all without them, we must e'en look rather to our permanent interests than to our passing pleasure."

It was not a very far cry from this to Juvenal's "Well, you used to be sane, at all events! You Postumus going to marry! Say, what snakes are driving you mad?"

No wonder that the outward respect paid to the stola in theatre, circus, and Forum should seem a bitter mockery to the woman who might chance to hear such speeches, to read the *Ars Amandi* of Ovid, or the odes of Horace and Propertius, all of which unite in expressing contempt for the wife.

Above all, in the plays of the period, dealing as they do with any women rather than the matrons, she saw herself an object of derision. Wives were the bugbears in the background—"the everlasting female barkers," who made home depressing for light-hearted husbands.

The wearisome jokes of Callicles and Megaronides in the *Trinummus* of Plautus illustrate this admirably. After greetings, the following dialogue ensues:—

"*Megaronides*: And how does your wife do? How is she?"

"*Callicles*: Better than I wish.

"*Megaronides*: 'Tis well i' faith for you that she is alive and well.

"*Callicles*: Troth, I believe you are glad if I have any misfortune.

"*Megaronides*: That which I have I wish for all my friends as well.

"*Callicles*: Hark ye! How does your wife do?"

"*Megaronides*: She is immortal; she lives and is likely to live."

"*Callicles*: I' faith, you tell me good news; and I pray the gods that, surviving you, she may last out your life.

"*Megaronides*: By my troth, if indeed she were only married to yourself, I could wish it sincerely."

At the moment at which they are speaking the wife of Callicles is gracing the household god with a chaplet, that the dwelling may turn out lucky, happy and fortunate.

The grip of the money-god was stronger perhaps on the Roman people than on any other civilisation of antiquity; to get money was the end and aim of every citizen. The virtuous censor, Cato, strove to that end with tremendous zeal and industry. Marriage came to be regarded more and more as a monetary transaction. Some women were wealthy in spite of the necessity of evading the Voconian Law, stigmatised by Augustine as "the most unjust of laws," which forbade women to inherit collaterally.

Accordingly we find that the dowry and property of the woman became a matter of serious thought to her father or guardian on her marriage. That this wealth should be given over to the absolute

control of the husband was likely to be productive of disagreeable consequences; and hence, rather through fear of this than, as Mommsen suggests, by the devices of the women (though if any were sufficiently free to devise this way out of an unpleasant situation we cannot wonder at their doing so), the strictest form of *justum matrimonium* was abandoned gradually for one less strict. Confarreation was ousted by coemption.

This latter ceremony was modified, moreover, so that the woman and her property, instead of passing "into the hand" of her husband, remained "in the hand" of her father. This was a momentous change for women, and its results cannot be over-estimated, for if the father were preoccupied or indulgent, the daughter would be practically the mistress of her wealth. Some fathers, moreover, gave the daughter's property over to her completely, so that she held it *sui juris*—that is, of her own right. We must point out, however, that many legal evasions and clever shifts must be employed by the woman who wished to do as she would with her own, even under the most favourable individual circumstances, and that those circumstances were produced rather by opportunity than legality, and, as such, were liable to change with the change of environment, so that woman's tenure of her money was a precarious one at best. Another advantage offered by coemption was that divorce, which was impossible—as far as the wife's divorcing her husband was concerned—under the stricter method, was far more easily possible under this form of matrimony.

These advantages were considered by most Romans to outweigh some disadvantages, such as, for instance, the fact that the children of a marriage by coemption were debarred from the highest religious offices in the State, though from little else.

This greater freedom of divorce and the possession of wealth by women, however, brought wretchedness for many women in its train, for it became the custom towards the close of the Republic to use wives or daughters as political assets; to traffic with them in marriage, making use of them as means of easing strained relationships between rival politicians. Thus a woman, the daughter of an influential leader, might be married and divorced many times over for the sake of her father's status, or her fortune, or both. So Sylla, seeing in Pompeius a useful ally, made him divorce his wife, who was related to the opposition party, and remarry, the bride being his (Sylla's) daughter-in-law. She herself was already married, and was about to become a mother; but she was torn from her home and married to Pompey, only to die in his house on the birth of her child. Moreover, the mother of Pompey's divorced Antistia, whose husband had been slain in the Senate House immediately before the divorce for his attachment to the cause of Pompey, on hearing of her daughter's repudiation by the very man for whom her husband had given his life, "laid violent hands on herself," and so died miserably, thus leaving to posterity an imperishable refutation of the notion that such transactions were regarded by the women with indifference.

Another equally amazing story is related by Plutarch of the married life of Cato the Younger—that model of all the virtues, whose mode of life was accounted a counsel of perfection by the Romans—and throws considerable light on the kind of treatment a Roman woman might expect from her husband, even though he were regarded as the most honourable of his countrymen. Hortensius, being desirous of

cementing an alliance with the wealthy and important family of Cato, asked for the hand of his daughter Portia (Shakespeare's Portia) in marriage. This Cato refused—for his daughter was already married and the mother of two children—but with reluctance; and on Hortensius expressing a wish for his (Cato's) own young wife, he, after asking permission of her father, in whose tutelage she evidently was, divorced her and gave her over to Hortensius. His own child was born in the house of Hortensius. Later, when Hortensius was dead, Cato again took Marcia, who is, by the way, commended by the historian as being "a woman of good character," as his wife, for Hortensius had by some evasion of the law, perhaps by endowing her with it in his lifetime, left her his whole wealth. Cæsar reproached Cato with his avarice, and, indeed, he would seem to have been more sensitive to the sordidness and misery of these transactions than the model Cato himself, although his own historic piece of bombast that "Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion" pre-eminently illustrates the curious onesidedness of the masculine Roman view of the relation of the sexes. However, Cæsar at least refused in his youth to divorce his first wife at Sylla's bidding, and went into exile in consequence.

Most astonishing of all, Cicero, the fond father, did not scruple to use his only daughter, his Tulliola, as he calls her with what sounds like genuine affection, to further his own political ambitions, and he married her the third time to Dolabella, one of the most revolting characters of that day. We know that Cicero himself, whatever his faults, was a man of such scrupulous natural refinement in his own life and thought as we rarely see excelled in our own day. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Tullia may have inherited these qualities. Moreover, human nature is basically the same in all civilisations. This being so, Tullia's feelings on her marriage with Dolabella may be left to the imagination. In any case, she died five years later, on the birth of her only child (which does not appear to have survived her), and immediately after her divorce from her husband, who proved to be such as her father might have expected. The fact that he was ruining Tullia financially is, nevertheless, the only complaint made by Cicero to Atticus, his confidant and correspondent. Even after the death of Tullia the two men remained on intimate terms. The daughter of the great orator passed, however, in the silence which shrouds the personal griefs and perplexities of all these women.

Still, the Roman wives, brought up often with the most rigid decorum—Cato, the Censor, degraded a senator merely "for giving his wife a kiss before his daughter"—thrown upon life with such violence afterwards, were expected by their masculine relatives to remain unquestioningly domesticated, simple, and retiring. Their experiences were to have no effect on their characters. They were married and remarried, and their husbands were notoriously unfaithful. Still, they were to be as waxen tablets on which it is permissible to inscribe one's most worthless fancy, because afterwards it may be completely obliterated. They were, in short, to have minds completely aloof from and absolutely unchanged by their lots in life, with any bitter experience which might form an accompaniment. They were still, in the old phrase, to be virtuous, to keep their houses, and to spin wool.

Well might Syra exclaim in the "Mercator" of Plautus:—

Ecator! lege dura vivunt mulieres,
Multoque iniquiore miserae quam viri.

AMY HAUGHTON.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

To the Editors.

I have just received THE FREEWOMAN, and must congratulate you upon its excellency. I wish it every success.

You have had the foresight to cater for a large section of women to whom few or no other women's papers appeal. THE FREEWOMAN supplies a need of which we feminists were only subconscious until its appearance.—Yours, etc.,

FLORENCE HARRIS.

To the Editors.

As President of the North Middlesex Women's Suffrage Society, let me congratulate you most heartily on the first number of THE FREEWOMAN. The paper was badly needed, and it is a most satisfactory threepenn'orth. I have ordered it from Smith's, and three extra copies for this week.

It will be a real pleasure to help you. I feel so keenly that we must do all we can to further any Feminist movement in England and her colonies.

Wishing you every success,—Yours, etc.,

November 25th, 1911. ROBENA NICHOLSON.

To the Editors.

I feel obliged to state (although I do so with great regret) that, had I realised more clearly the tone of your new review, THE FREEWOMAN, I should not have acceded to your request to contribute to its pages.

Whatever may be the personal opinion of the Editors of THE FREEWOMAN on the present militant Suffrage tactics, I consider that a public and acrimonious attack on a prominent militant leader is ill-judged and likely to harm the Suffrage cause.

Apart from this editorial, the bulk of the review deals with the relation between the sexes. To envisage feminism almost entirely from this one point of view appears to me distressingly oriental. As the articles in the review are chiefly unsigned, their pronouncements must be taken as representing the views of THE FREEWOMAN. In my opinion, many of these views are hasty and immature, and I find myself largely in disagreement with the general attitude. The apparently advanced may be the actually retrograde when the line of progress has taken the form of a circle.

On both these counts I must, therefore, reluctantly dissociate myself from the new venture, and must ask you, in fairness to me, to publish this letter.—Yours, etc.,

E. AYRTON ZANGWILL.

November 24th, 1911.

[We publish Mrs. Zangwill's letter with great willingness, and we much regret the misapprehension which may possibly have arisen regarding Mrs. Zangwill's attitude towards THE FREEWOMAN. Mrs. Zangwill's criticism that we envisage feminism as a theory regarding the relationship of the sexes resolves itself into a criticism of our definition of feminism. The matter is dealt with in our current "Notes of the Week," and it will, therefore, be a sufficient reply for us here to make if we say that if our review of occidental problems appears "distressingly oriental," it only makes clear the fact that the difficulties of intimate human relationships both in "occident" and "orient" are "distressingly" alike.—ED. *The Freewoman*.]

To the Editors.

After looking forward to your paper, THE FREEWOMAN, with much pleasure, I was disgusted and disappointed, upon opening it, to find that I had struck another Mrs. Theresa Billington-Greig. I much regret your onslaught upon Miss Pankhurst's leadership. It shows a petty spirit and belittles your literary venture. No matter how widely Miss Pankhurst differs from other societies' policies, you never find her stooping to personal attacks or displaying jealousy. That is because she has a great soul and is a born leader. Many people think they are political, but few can prove such a record of political insight as Miss Pankhurst has done. Time alone can tell whether this latest move on her part is right or wrong; but though circumstances have prevented me from joining in the recent outburst, I am one of those who feel that she is on the right track, and cannot understand how anyone can be hoodwinked by Mr. Lloyd George, who has never given women occasion to trust him. His Insurance Bill is sufficient to show what he thinks of women. Miss Pankhurst's political insight seems to me to amount to genius, and I trust her implicitly. I am so sorry to have to cancel my order, but I could not do otherwise, as I consider your article quite unnecessary.—Yours, etc.,

LILIAN DOVE-WILLCOX.

The Women's Social and Political Union,
4, Clement's Inn, Strand, W.C.,
November 24th, 1911.

[We sympathise with our correspondent in her dismay, of which we have unwittingly been the cause. We do not know if it will be any consolation to remind her of the classic parallel, "When the pie was opened the birds began to sing." Not all singing birds, however, are of the same species, and if our correspondent could overcome her first dismay sufficiently to look into the pie again, she might discover the species to which THE FREEWOMAN belongs.—ED. *The Freewoman*.]

To the Editors.

Having read your article on Miss Pankhurst, I certainly do not intend to subscribe to a paper for whose editors I have no respect. To turn round and stab in the back those who have shown us all a thousand kindnesses may be the goal of a "Feminist," but will not be the ambition of the "Suffragette," who admires, above all else, the truth and loyalty and the *political sagacity* which was demonstrated on Tuesday, 21st. Mrs. Billington-Greig's failure ought surely to have been sufficient warning that a second attempt to belittle the W.S.P.U. would be as inept as it is small-minded and spiteful. CATHERINE T. CORBETT, M.S.
(Mrs. F. Corbett).

[Our correspondent will doubtless find an editorial reply in the current "Notes of the Week."—ED. *The Freewoman*.]

To the Editors.

Will you permit me to offer some criticisms, from a biological point of view, on the opinions expressed in your paper? I notice that you have touched on the two great tragedies of womanhood—the misery of the unmarried mother and the bitter cry of the unmated woman. But the solution of the problem, though it is courageously and sincerely proposed, namely, to accord the same licence to women that men have arrogated to themselves, seems to me a counsel of despair. For however inferior women may appear

to us at the present time, Nature has ordained that the female should play by far the most important part in the life of the race. Not merely, as we all admit, because she bears and rears the offspring, but rather because she selects her mate. To her has been entrusted the preservation of life, the conservation of type, and the purity of race. Therefore "the virtue of the female animal is absolute, for virtue does not consist in refusal, but in selection. It is refusal of the unfit and of all, at improper times and places. . . . The female animal or the human female in the gynœcratic state would perish before she would surrender her virtue." In sub-human species, where the female is not subject to the male, sexual excess is unknown, and by the guidance of their simple instincts monogamous union is not unfrequently attained.

But the human female has lost her great prerogative. As bondwoman, she must perforce pander to the lusts of her lords and masters. From her infancy she has been sedulously trained for this purpose, though she is strangely ignorant of the real nature of sex and its functions, and if she would earn an independent livelihood she is handicapped all along the line.

"All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me"—wealth, public esteem, home, family; nay, if Mr. Lloyd George is successful, even the coveted franchise will be bestowed upon the woman who has succeeded in getting a husband. Who shall blame her if she has surrendered her virtue? What wonder that the spinster feels herself a failure, her only valuable function wasted!

But it is Society that has wronged woman, and not Nature. She, indeed, has well fitted the female for the part she was intended to take, for woman is physically complete. Though she is a necessity to man, he is not necessary to her. In single life she retains health, strength, and vitality, and her functions are unimpaired. It is inconceivable to suppose that the female could hold her position if she were craving for motherhood. Maternal love comes like her milk when the babe needs it.

When women are spiritually free, we shall no longer know the prostitute or the atrophied spinster. The mystery of sex will be revealed, and woman will have attained self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, and will have equal honour as faithful wife or pure virgin.

MARGARET E. HILL, B.Sc.(Lond.)

MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD.

To the Editors.

M. d'Auvergne's article on Marriage, in common with all such which apparently have their inspiration in the prevailing horror of a decreasing birth-rate, strikes me as distinctly humorous. Why, may I ask, all this insane concern for the continuation of the race? Set aside the consideration of the supposed necessity for perpetually providing an adequate supply of male targets for the practice of the Foreign Foe, a consideration which, by the way, might be taken more seriously in this country were there any consistent attempt made to stem the tide of emigration abroad; if our young men at present available were quietly made to understand that "their place is the home"—of Great Britain, their devoted bodies the fit and proper resting-place of the future bullets of the presently spectral German invader.

Leaving aside this particular "game breeding" aspect of the case—however important it may seem to the sportsman instincts of the nation—has the human race proved itself so eminently

admirable and desirable in its manifestations hitherto that our chief concern and first thought should be that of its continued propagation? or, are we supposed merely to have resigned ourselves to the attitude of compensating for lack of quality by an enforced supply of superabundant quantity?

Whatever may be M. d'Auvergne's point of view, I for one must vigorously protest against his scheme for reducing the legalised marriage to the level of a mere State-licensed human incubating concern. Humanity is surely low enough already without being degraded still further by insisting that human souls shall be incarnated *to order*—at so much per dozen, perhaps, in premiums—and with penalties incurred and administered for failure, wilful or otherwise. What a noble birthright for the children of the future!—to be produced and reared specially for the State market, like chickens for our food supply! We hear much of the cry of the child's right to be "well born." Does M. d'Auvergne seriously claim that his State-enforced hatcheries will provide the suitable conditions for such birth? Surely any self-respecting, spirit-seeking incarnation in human form would prefer to remain eternally unborn rather than willingly seek entry through such channel, if the power of choice were given.

There is no such thing as being "well born," except the birth be the result of the free and voluntary desire of the parents for an outward manifestation of their love for one another, and enforced child-bearing is a sin against the human race, whether it be the thrusting of an unwanted child upon an individual unwilling mother, or the more subtle compulsion of a distorted public opinion upon all mothers. Until we realise this we shall never adequately deal with the question. The very thought of compulsion in any form must be eliminated from it if we are ever to raise it to a higher level. It is pure absurdity to prate about the glory and dignity of motherhood and of its being the crown of a woman's life if at the same time every effort to make of her a truly free woman is strenuously opposed as unfitting her and rendering her hostile to child-bearing.

Suppose we assured the coal-miner of how much we appreciated the dignity of his labour of production, declaring that his work was of the highest and best, and the only one for which he and his fellows were pre-eminently fitted; could we blame him if he accused us of lying hypocrisy, if we, fearing the result, endeavoured to prevent him coming above ground into the light of day, lest he should be tempted to desert the sphere of his past labours? Would he not be the more likely to desert it when he discovered the true attitude of mind towards it and him, in the belief that only ignorance of better things and the compulsion of circumstances had previously kept him there? So, with women, we tell them their place is the home, their duty, ordained by Nature, to be mothers and mothers only; but we show no faith in Nature's ordination, we act as if she cannot be trusted. Women, we say, must be *kept* in their place, for with fuller knowledge and freedom they will decline to remain there, and repudiate all home responsibilities. Such is the illogical attitude which has tended to breed all recent disorders. Realising, even if sometimes only dimly, the true attitude of men towards motherhood, the self-respecting woman refuses any longer to be a mere breeding machine, and nothing but the growth of a higher and nobler ideal of woman, of sex, and of parenthood will bring order out of the human chaos growing around us. And to me it is of more real value to the future of the human race as things

are that women should be giving birth to new thoughts, new aspirations, and new ideals than that they should be wasting their creative forces on merely increasing a very mediocre population. Until we can realise that true motherhood does consist as much in the one form of creation as the other we shall never rise to a high level of thought on the question. It is just as absurd to confine motherhood to the outward physical reproduction of the species as to hold that work is only represented by the material production of the manual labourer, to the exclusion of all brain workers in the State, a position no longer held by any thoughtful, intelligent person.—Yours, etc.,

I. D. PEARCE.

To the Editors.

It is years since my interest has been so stirred as it has been by the article in your paper, entitled "The Spinster." While I sit at my evening ease by my fire I have been constrained to review the past and to wonder into which of your contributor's two classes of spinsters I must be placed.

Not in the first, for the apparitions rise before me of those who, in the past, with bank-book in the right hand (or not, as the case might be) and left hand on heart, were aspirants to what, in the language of the early Victorians, I will call my hand.

I meditate on my past inability to accept these kindly meant offers. Can it have been that I was in the second class, and was one of those misguided women who, urged by parents, aunts, guardians, or similar tutors, was waiting for "the best man," or, less classically, for Mr. Right, to come along? Surely that cannot be! Modesty compels me to record that not my relatives only, but I myself, ever considered I was all unworthy of M. N., who sang in so melodious a tenor that a nightingale might have taken a few hints. Or what can I say of those golden locks which adorned the head of O. P.? Were they not as those of the Apollo Belvidere? Can I, urged by the aforesaid article, bring myself to regret these vanished ones? I grow pleasantly melancholy over the memories of that voice and those curls! Suddenly a vision!—thankfulness overwhelms me!—M. N. would now have been practising his scales in this very room (he was ever industrious over scales). I can hear him taking his top G.!

O. P.'s head, worn through his curls, would now be bent over a Liberal daily (he was ever a student of such), duly expounded to me! The fire splutters, the light catches the lines of my books and my pictures, a cheque for my last article is to hand, my best friend is to drop in to supper, I still sign myself

"SINGLE, BUT UNDISMAYED."

"A DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE."

To the Editors.

I would wish that every man and woman in Christendom would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest M. d'Auvergne's article in your excellent first number, wherein the value and importance of the true meaning and purpose of marriage is clearly maintained. I would particularly wish that every member and minister of the Christian Churches would hearken unto his plea for a saner, nobler conception of the holy estate, and earnestly examine and accept the definition of marriage contained therein.

It is the only natural and rational definition possible, and it wholly agrees with the inspired teaching of the Christian Churches that have always affirmed, and still most obstinately contend, that

marriage was originally ordained for the propagation of the human race, and the protection of mothers and their children. It should specially appeal to the Bishop of London, for it is the only definition capable of a real social value, and is the essence of good eugenics. It is, therefore, sincerely to be desired that the Bishop will recognise its double claim to his enthusiastic attention, and, if he is eugenically in earnest, will endeavour ardently to effect its practical realisation.

In future, therefore, let him waste no more idle words on the ears of those willingly too deaf to hear them, but, as becomes the eminent Churchman, let him lead Society back to the fundamental conception of the family, and fearlessly insist on the restoration of the dignity of marriage and the importance of motherhood by obtaining all and not merely nominal rights for the unmarried mother and the illegitimate child. Let him, in fact, seek to abolish for ever the bastard and the whore, even though he should have to insist on the fullest legal, social, and moral recognition of polygamy, which, in spite of the cruellest persecution, has always existed, and will always continue to exist, throughout Christendom.

H. F. STEPHENS.

The College, Guy's Hospital, S.E.,
November 26th, 1911.

✻ ✻ ✻

To the Editors.

Will you accept my congratulations on the first issue of THE FREEWOMAN? My pen is not eloquent, or I would add more. May your paper be the means of bringing God into intellectualism.—With best wishes,

WM. A. WILLOX.

City Guilds College, South Kensington,
November 25th, 1911.

✻ ✻ ✻

To the Editors.

Seeing your weekly paper advertised in *Votes for Women*, I ordered it from my stationer's, intending to take it in for a year, and, in order to make your book known, I promised to lend it to some of my friends, after which to place it in the local office of the W.S.P.U.

I intend countermanding the order. Your criticisms upon Miss Pankhurst are unnecessary. Even if they express your views, that does not make them correct. There is sufficient work for all to do without descending to this.

I have just received a visit from my family solicitor, strongly advising me to remove my investments on property which a few years back he had advised, on account of having an . . . as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

If men are unscrupulous in one thing, they can be so in others, and Miss Pankhurst may have a better political insight than yourselves.

(Mrs.) ANNIE PARSONS.

November 25th, 1911.

[In view of the law of libel, we are not prepared to take the risks of publishing the description assigned to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.—E.D. *The Freewoman*.]

BEAUTY.

Aspire to beauty's self,

Nor shrine an empty token.

Beauty is no gem that glistens in the clod;

Beauty is no gleam, by sin and sorrow broken.

Lumen of the soul is she,

Flashed from the face of God.

E. H. VISIAK.

Doth a Man Travail with Child?

ISAIAH seizes an obvious difference between man and woman, one which must ever produce a certain real antagonism in the sexes; but I hold them pedantic who will allow no great common essentials between man and woman. Both, for instance, stand upright, so that their eyes may look upwards towards heaven and downwards towards hell. Man and woman have, in contrast with the beasts, their eyes set close together, so that they may not see all that is going on around them, whilst they can see so far above them and so far below them. Man and woman see above them the heaven of freedom, and below them the hell of bondage.

Freedom is not a man's privilege; it is a human being's natural right. "Renoncer à sa liberté, c'est renoncer à sa qualité d'homme, aux droits de l'humanité, même à ses devoirs. . . . Une telle renonciation est incompatible avec la nature de l'homme; et c'est ôter toute moralité à ses actions que d'ôter toute liberté à sa volonté." I shall certainly not put it clearer than Rousseau, nor shall I try.

THE FREEWOMAN finds it difficult to answer, "Who are the Freewomen?" It arrives at a certainty of one such woman. Were there none, however, the natural right of woman to be free was answered by Rousseau in that same "Du Contrat Social," from which I have just quoted. It would be, indeed, somewhat remarkable even to find but one free woman to save Great Britain. It happens, however, that the great bulk of the women of this country are and have always been freewomen. Not free in the sense used by the writer of the article on "Bondwomen," an entity separate from all other human entities, with relationships towards no other individuals, associating with none, linked to no one, bound to nothing.

Such freedom of the individual is for ever impossible to human beings. It may be the law of the cave-bear. I know little about their laws, and that little I don't like. In asylums many such bearish beings are to be heard—individuals who "stand alone in the world," who are "born out of their due time," who are God, or the Universe, or the Absolute, and so on. Indeed, it was the ravings of the madman Nietzsche who gave the thing a kind of vogue in those days, because his rhapsodies happened to get printed. (In Germany they shut Nietzsche up. I suppose he was regarded as a dangerous madman. In England those who write about Nietzsche are properly regarded as harmless lunatics.)

But freedom to dispose of their lives as they chose, to sell their labour when and where they chose, to marry whom they chose, and to marry when they chose—such freedom has always belonged, does, up till the time of writing, still belong to the great majority of the women of this country—to the women of the working classes. Such restrictions as exist in practice in no wise invalidate the

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general principle. Through fear, or affection, or affliction a girl may have worked in the cottage at home instead of engaging herself at a hiring to a distant farmer, or taking to domestic service, or gone into a factory. The power of the rich to-day may be so great, so complete their hold of the means of livelihood, that the girl's choice as to the sale of her labour may in practice amount to very little, and she is very properly called a "wage slave." But the loss of freedom is here due to her class, not to her sex. In theory, and this is most important, the single woman of the working classes, of the poor, has never lost her freedom.

What has been called the "modern woman's movement," "the revolt of the daughters," is, in reality, an attempt on the part of the middle-class women to obtain for themselves the freedom enjoyed by poor women. These middle-class women have rightly divined that it is very largely bound up with economic independence. Hence the women in business, women in the professions. Another side of this revolt is shown in the attempts made by middle-class women to interfere with the independence of the poor. Jealousy of this independence is a chief motive with the ladies who would abolish barmaids, pit-brow lassies, mill operatives. Half the clubs and societies for working-class girls patronised by wealthy ladies and their dependents owe their origin to this same jealousy of the "poor" girl's independence. If the lady cannot be free herself, she will do her best to curb the freedom enjoyed by "poor" girls. You will find none of these ladies objecting with the same vehemence to domestic service for poor women. Here the worker's liberty of action is far less than in any other employment. It is for this reason that working girls show, and rightly show, a growing repug-

nance to domestic service. The class of women which has always enjoyed liberty prefers, on the whole, freedom, accompanied by hardship, to the servant's serious loss of independence, accompanied, as it may be, by much greater personal well-being.

Now, although the unmarried women of the working classes have always been free, and many unmarried women of the middle classes are demanding freedom, the position of married women is very different.

Even here the position of the "poor" women and middle-class women is not quite the same. The working-class woman, even though she go not out to work, remains a *working woman*, and to a very large extent this is recognised in custom. Husband and wife are in partnership—the man having certain duties, the woman others, to perform. In a poor man's house it is acknowledged that as much skill is required to spend the wages judiciously as to earn them. All this does not go very far, however. In the main the married woman is not a freewoman in any class. Now, so long as there are no children in the household there is no new question to be solved. Married, the woman can continue at the job she was engaged in; her economic independence is perfectly safeguarded.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton has told women how delightful is their rôle of amateur compared with man's horrible burden of specialism. A woman, he argued, doing a hundred things fairly well, is in a much jollier position than a man who is obliged to do only one thing. There is no special work done by man that I cannot imagine woman doing. There is one special work done by woman that I cannot believe man will ever do. *A man does not travail with child.* No great biological imagination is required to speculate on the chances of a world without man, of the begetting of human children by parthenogenesis; but no biologist has ventured on human reproduction without woman.

It is the special relationship of woman to the child that demands special treatment—unless women are content that, whilst childless, they are free, motherhood shall deprive them for ever of their liberty. And therein lies the need for the endowment of motherhood. The practical schemes of such endowment I shall not now discuss. I would only like to add that, contrary to the view I once held, I should now prefer that the endowment take the form of cash payment (not payment, "as far as possible, in kind"); that all mothers should be paid equally. Finally, I need only say that if any fool now attempted to make any such measure law, I should belong to the opposition. Until the men and women of this country are convinced of its justice, of its necessity, no one would desire it less than myself. Endowment of motherhood is a subject for discussion, not for Parliamentary Bills.

M. D. EDER.

[We hope to deal with the interesting arguments brought forward by Dr. Eder in next week's issue.—ED. *The Freewoman.*]

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The Tyranny of Words.

WORDS are at the root of all human ills. By the employment of words every man and woman during the brief space of his and her existence suffer the torments of hell. "Sin," "conviction," "repentance"—three words taken at hazard—are words illustrating my statement. These words happen to be associated with Christendom especially; and everyone who knows the history of Western civilisation must admit the tragedy of

human individual life in Christian states. This tragedy is wholly due to the artificial creations of spiritual moods and emotions—by the employment of words. I am aware that the unthinking person is ready to leap at me with, "Oh, but emotions precede words; words are but the expression of emotions," and I would simply advise this unthinking person a course of study. Let him reflect upon those emotions which differentiate man from the brute. He may then discover that strictly human emotions, such as the religious emotions, may have been evolved just by the employment of language; that, further, only by language can these emotions be called into being. Without the invention of emotional figures of speech, soul-torture would have had no existence.

This is a challenge, both to the theologian and the student of ethics. It is well that the philosopher and the theologian (mongrel brother to the philosopher) should be challenged in this matter. Neither of them has given proper attention to the psychological value of words. By an examination of this value, all our accepted ideas of morality will be shattered, and a new code would be evolved. Mankind has been misled by language more than by anything else.

At this moment our old standards of morality are in the melting-pot. It is being recognised that the so-called truths on which these standards have been based are no truths at all; that they are only an enslaving network of words; rather, they are instruments forged and shaped by words for the benefit of the few and the misery of the many; they are the means by which natural pure humanity has been duped into believing itself impure; by which also the rich have enslaved the poor. The gospel of life is not the gospel of the poor; it is the gospel of the rich. The rich, the strong, the secure in possession, have artfully invented befooling strings of words for the oppression of the poor, the unprotected, the possessionless. And the Christian religion has ever been the handmaid of the rich.

Yet the body of persons living under bondage to the mere word is so great that it still dominates the government and conventions of nations. Nay, they love this bondage. The effect of their pet words and phrases is so insidiously pleasing that they prefer lies to truth.

The pleasing immorality of the exalted conditions of persons attending a religious assembly is a thing too good to be got rid of. They prefer to spend an hour with their god—words—than do an hour's storming of the citadel of cruelty and negligence, the people's government.

The lies of religion and convention are the bed that is as sweet to them as attar of roses. For, let it be noted, religion and convention are never bitter to those who live beyond them. The millionaire insists upon the convention of honesty for all those who earn of his money; he himself is beyond the convention. The married woman insists upon the virginity of her unmarried sister, as a sine-quâ-non of companionship; she herself does not feel the pinch of convention, for she possesses!

To state the matter plainly, all conventions, whether of morality or necessity, are based upon word-values.

The word-values of the past and present are for us to-day no longer valid. A revaluation is urgently needed.

Connotations have accumulated which have to be discarded. No two persons will agree as to what

they mean to connote by "God." The want of fixity in its connotation leads to immense evil and gross injustice. Everyone connotes in his employment of the word "God" what is most agreeable to himself, careless of the well-being of his fellow.

A general agreement of thinkers upon the connotation of "God" and "morality" is urgently needed. Such an agreement would save the human soul most of its present tortures. G. GRANVILLE.

Freewomen and the Birth-Rate.

IT is continually cast up against advanced women by Imperialists and Eugenists that education and freedom unfits them for their divine function of motherhood. Those who wish to see to what lengths authorities will go in this direction may be referred to the article by Dr. Murray Leslie in the *Eugenics' Review* for January last, or to the writings of the German "Race Hygienists" and militarists, who contend that woman's function is the passive production and rearing of an unlimited amount of "cheap labour" and "food for powder," and who point to the falling marriage and birth rates as an evil result of woman's higher education and freedom. To such an extent has this been the case that we have had most anxious attempts to disprove it, and Lady Stout has told us with triumph of the increase of the birth-rate in New Zealand since the grant of Women's Suffrage (from 25.1 per 1,000 in 1899 to 27.3 in 1909). Unfortunately (or fortunately), however, this fact by no means shows that New Zealand women have reverted to the production of larger families, as there has been a large and steady rise of marriage (due probably to greater female immigration), and, as a matter of fact, the fertility of married women has gone steadily down from 337.2 births per 1,000 married women in 1878 to 243.8 in 1901 and 227.6 in 1906, the last recorded figure.* The truth must be confessed that civilisation and the awakening of woman *has* tended to, or at least co-existed with, a decided reduction of her maternal fertility.

But before women apologise for this condition of things it would be well for them to consider a little more fully what have been the results of this passive maternity in the past, not only for themselves but for the community and the Empire. In her much-

* New Zealand Official Handbook, 1908, p. 244.

THE FREEWOMAN

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EDITORIAL

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discussed "Women and Labour," Olive Schreiner has dealt with this matter in a manner which can leave no doubt that there is another side to the question, and that women's passive maternity has not only been a source of great injury to herself as regards her health, strength, and intellectual development, but an equally, if not greater, injury to her children and the whole community. Clearly and strongly as Olive Schreiner has pointed this out, I venture to think that not even she has grasped or at least set forth the full meaning of this all-important truth and its vital relation to the advanced women's movement of to-day, especially in our own country, and I cannot help feeling that a greater realisation of it would be an immense assistance to the whole Suffragist and feminist movement.

However greatly the question has been obscured by prejudice, few people are entirely ignorant of the fact that Malthus and the best thinkers of the last century, especially including John Stuart Mill, the pioneer of the practical Woman's Suffrage movement, regarded the production of large families as the most serious difficulty, from the economic and moral point of view, of all those which confronted humanity. John Stuart Mill, indeed, went so far as to say that "little advance can be expected in morality until the production of large families is regarded in the same light as drunkenness or any other physical excess," and in his chapter on the probable future of the labouring classes he says: "The ideas and institutions by which the accident of sex is made the groundwork of an inequality of legal rights and a forced dissimilarity of social functions, must ere long be recognised as the greatest hindrance to moral, social, and even intellectual improvement. On the present occasion I shall only indicate, among the probable consequences of the industrial and social independence of women, a great diminution of the evil of over-population."* It thus appears that Mill was perfectly aware that women's emancipation would bring about the result deplored by the Imperialists and the Bishop of London, but that, so far from this being a deterrent, it was one of the strongest reasons for his advocacy of women's emancipation.

Space does not permit of showing how fully this population doctrine has been accepted by the greatest thinkers of every department of knowledge, or how it has recently suffered a temporary eclipse since the declining birth-rate has led capitalists and militarists to shelve it for their supposed self-interest, and Socialists to deny and oppose it as offering a solution of economic difficulties apart from their reforms. It must suffice to say that, so far from being disproved, the vital statistics now available afford the most rigid proof of Malthus's doctrine, and show that every civilised country at the present time is still over-populated, with the

* "Political Economy," Book IV., chap. vii., §3.

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exception of New Zealand and perhaps Australia. The principal proof lies in the fact that the death-rate clearly depends on the birth-rate, showing that a high birth-rate, instead of producing the large numbers so dear to the unthinking Imperialist and capitalist, only produce a greater amount of death, disease, and unfitness, in addition to the greater strain and suffering upon women and other social evils.

The results of present and past over-population may be briefly summarised as follows:—

(a) The high birth-rate of thirty-five years ago simply produced a high death-rate and high infantile mortality without any advantage as regards numbers. At present our birth-rate is about 25, and death-rate 15, and a reduction of the former to 20 would enable the latter to drop to 10 without any slackening of increase of population, but with great decrease of economic misery and infantile mortality. It may be claimed that between 20 and 30 million fewer deaths have occurred in Europe alone since 1876 as a result of the falling birth-rate.

(b) The obvious economic evils of large families have acted as a deterrent against early and general marriage, and this is the real reason for prostitution.

(c) In addition, the economic difficulties of over-population has led to a large amount of emigration, principally of young unmarried men. As a result of the above there has been a steadily increasing excess of women over men, which has now reached the figure of 1,360,000 in the United Kingdom (21,823,000 males, 23,183,000 females in 1909), and of which the bulk exists at the productive and marriageable ages.

(d) The combination of the surplus of women with abstention of marriage for economic reasons has led to less than half of the women between fifteen and forty-five years of age being married, and these must either remain as dependants upon their relatives or be forced into the labour market. This is the chief and fundamental reason for the entry of women into the industries, and the urgency of their demand for enfranchisement, while their competition excites sex antagonism, and their numerical excess is one of the chief reasons for male opposition to Women's Suffrage.

(e) The economic pressure due to over-population is the chief cause of rivalry between nations and war, while the bad conditions, death, disease, and physical deterioration caused by it weaken rather than strengthen nations for attack or defence, and the military spirit thus engendered is a great obstacle to the advancement of women.

(f) The rôle of passive maternity, combined with the economic dependence of women, which is its correlate, instead of leading to the respect for women by men, which is generally pretended has had exactly the reverse effect, as it has made marriage a trap into which men have been forced to fall by sexual attraction against their intellectual judgment, and in which women have been forced to act the part of decoys. In no countries have women so

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much real respect as those in which their families are small, as in France, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, and, among Eastern nations, in Burma, where almost everyone of our pretended safeguards for women are thrown to the winds.

The above bald statements will, doubtless, be indignantly repudiated by a great many people, but there are many others who will realise their truth, and that not only has the principal factor in woman's subjection in the past been her passive acquiescence in unlimited maternity, but that she has thereby unwillingly inflicted a grievous harm upon the whole community. I do not personally believe that the present powerful women's movement could have arisen had it not been for the great decline in the birth-rate, which has freed many women to devote themselves to this work. It is sincerely to be hoped, therefore, that feminist leaders, instead of attempting to explain away or apologise for the declining birth-rate, will openly confess and glory in it, and show what a magnificent future lies before humanity when women demand their right as the mothers of the race to regulate their families in accordance with the possibilities of giving their children the best possible physical, mental, and moral inheritance and environments, and will refuse altogether to bring weakly and diseased children into unwholesome surroundings. When this is the case we shall not only have improvement in every direction, racial and economic, but we shall be free from the most detestable and cowardly of all masculine hypocrisies of the present day, the claim of superiority for military service, when only 250,000 men serve in the British Army and few are called on to fight, and more than a million women go into the battle of maternity each year, of which 3.7 per 1,000 births, or more than 4,000, die on the field.* No battle in the whole history of the world has had a tithe of the combatants or casualties of a single year of maternity, and there is no sadder sight than to notice the silence of women while Anti-Suffragists parade the abominable physical force "argument." This ought to show any reflecting woman how low the value of motherhood has really fallen, and convince her that the only hope of making it truly respected is to make it a limited, if not a scarcity article.

These remarks have already run beyond their intended length, but lest many women should fear lest frank acknowledgment of this position should prejudice the progress of their emancipation, I venture to add two facts. The first is that, in addressing Women's Suffrage meetings, even in the open air, I have personally dealt frequently with this matter, and have received nothing but the most respectful and interested attention from all classes, who seem quite glad to hear rational economic doctrines concerning poverty, unemployment, and social evils. The second is that in many other countries, notably Holland, Germany, France, and Hungary, the founders or leading representatives of the Woman Suffrage movement are also the leaders of the Neo-Malthusian movement for family restriction in their country. I must conclude with the following quotation from my revered friend, Frau Marie Strilt, of Dresden, formerly President of the International Council of Women in Germany, and who has just been called to the presidency of the German Woman Suffrage movement, in spite of her magnificent and continuous efforts for the Neo-Malthusian cause. In her introduction to Dr. Rutgers' book, "Rassenverbesserung," she says:—

"By this we mean that the claim of Neo-Mal-

* Registrar-General's Report, 1909, p. xcvi.

thusianism therein developed—the voluntary regulation of the number of children by the mother—is that which secures the domestic and social individuality of the woman; that it is an incontestable and fundamental right; and that all adherents of the women's movement must reject with indignation the rule of blind chance and the old sex slavery. . . . May this book prove the incentive to this result, and may it, above all, induce our women's societies to give that serious and earnest attention to this question (which has hitherto been so sedulously avoided) which it deserves."

There is no mystery about the bondwoman nor the inconsistencies of the moral code to students of the population question. While marriage was only compatible with unlimited maternity, freedom was practically impossible. But science has given to women the power to break their chains, to marry the men of their choice without degrading themselves to passive annual maternity, and enveloping their loved ones in their ruin. The Bradlaugh and Besant trial of 1876 was the real signal for the advent of the Freewoman, who will use and control her maternity for the glory of herself and the race.

Hilda Lessways.

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fairly exhausted, and it takes some little time to feel able to detach the sombre young woman Hilda from the kitchen atmosphere of her creator's setting. When you do though, you are amply repaid. You recover rapidly. You haven't smiled once since you began her detailed soul-history. In face of her earnestness you couldn't. You would as soon have smiled in a room full of bishops. And now you are suffused with a delicious sense of the humour that solemn Hilda has been bamboozling Mr. Bennett! Mr. Bennett—may we crave the vulgarity to say—has hatched the wrong kind of egg, and Hilda Lessways, whom many women know well, belongs to a wholly different genre of woman from the impulsive, unself-conscious "womanly" woman trembling at her own emotions that Mr. Bennett makes her out to be. Hilda is ushered on to the stage by Mr. Bennett at the advanced age of twenty-one. She lives in a small industrial town with her mother, a lady of independent means. She is fairly good-looking, "interesting," NOT fond of books, living the life of a recluse almost. Then, suddenly, at twenty-one, she blossoms out. She takes a strong, independent line of her own, becoming the "first woman in the Five Towns to learn shorthand—almost the first in England." She is received almost immediately into the best society in the town, and becomes a favourite on the spot. Then, presumably because she has been thus secluded hitherto, she falls in love, physically, and largely on account of his immaculate linen, with the first man with whom she comes into close contact, and somewhere about the same time, falls in love with another young man, soulfully, because of the look in his eyes. She marries the first man, lives with him a week, is just getting a little "tired," when she learns he is a bigamist, and that she is enceinte. So, off with the first love, only first, tears and chagrin, poverty and bailiffs, and then, remembering Tennyson and the ending of Clayhanger, "the arms of her loved one round her once again." Clayhanger's, not the bigamist's. (The latter is, conveniently enough, in prison for bigamy, forgery, and other trifles.) And we await the rest in a third volume.

In spite of the great interest of Hilda Lessways, one is compelled to make these comments—that the entire situation lacks verisimilitude. It postulates what cannot be granted. Young girls in small towns with a little money, who have gifts, who recite, attend dancing-classes, cannot live the inexperienced life ascribed to Hilda Lessways' first twenty-one years, and, still less, intelligent, strong-pulsed girls like Hilda. A girl with a personality

like hers would have been known throughout the town. Personality is a bulging thing, especially in young girls in small towns. Also, the sense of power comes early to women who possess it, and long before Hilda won a reputation as a "reciter" she must have been aware that she possessed it. And when you know you have power, you use it. As for love-making, between the ages of fifteen and twenty, she must have tried her prentice-hand on a dozen youths. Where were the curates, schoolmasters, choir-boys, and handsome young medical students like Charlie Orgreaves? The Hildas of small and large towns are like that. Hilda was a flirt—a good term; in love it means an experimenter. To her, as to Ulysses of old, "all experience is an arch, wherethro' gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades for ever and for ever as she moves." What Mr. Bennett has not seen is that her experience could no more have begun with George Cannon than it will end with Edwin Clayhanger, and if Hilda Lessways has any right to detain our attention through four hundred pages it is because of her relation to this problem. If Mr. Bennett wanted to keep her "inexperienced" in order to explain why she so easily fell to George Cannon, he should not have told us of her buying her own dinner at a tripe-shop out of mere rage, when she was a child, nor that she recited "Maud" to a spell-bound audience at a moment's notice, nor of the garden episode, nor of her asking to be shown a printing-press, nor of leaving her handkerchief, nor of her telling George Cannon an awkward rumour, which would have compelled some sort of declaration from the man, even had he not been in love with her. Mr. Bennett seems to have shirked the problem which the Hildas of the world present. He does not appear to recognise that almost from babyhood they are the experimenters with life, always trying new experiences and that they will go on so trying until life in them dies down. There are men as well as women who are like that, but if they are women we give them an odd name. They are the charming, straight-looking women who take life as a gift. Of an experience, they scent the flavour, and, liking it, they gulp it down. But they have to wait to pay the bill. In real life one is not allowed to try one's experimental hand on a "dummy." There are not usually heaven-sent bigamists. So, ordinarily, the bill is beyond the means of the everyday woman. In the case of Hilda Lessways it mounted up to a pretty stiff figure. She was left, man-less, with a child in prospect, no occupation, her previous income lost in a bad speculation, and a nerve-shattered, bed-ridden old woman on her hands. So much is indicated at the close of Hilda Lessways. When we next hear of her in Clayhanger, she is meeting Edwin Clayhanger for the first time since she discovered she was to be a mother, and her boy is nine years old! What has happened in the meantime (and what does happen is the really vital question concerning Hilda Lessways) we are not told. What Hilda's psychology was during these years, and how she managed to keep her head above the stream, we need to know. So, if Mr. Bennett is to ignore what Hilda stands for as a type, and also has nothing to say regarding the difficulties of the environment into which her occasional acting true to type places her, we see no reason at all why the book should have been written. However, a third volume is promised, and this may supply much that is wanting in the first two. We shall, therefore, look forward with considerable interest to see how Hilda fares in the love-noose which we are led to expect in this last volume.

A. B.

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However, it turns out to be an account of the various social organisations and activities of women in Great Britain, and a rough sketch of the path down which Indian Feminism is going to progress—or rather toddle. For the Maharani's aims would not justify a quicker pace. She seems to regard the unseemly muddle into which women's affairs have fallen to-day in Europe as something for which Indian women should strive. In fact, she takes a step backward. She actually recommends women to take up "genteel callings," such as enamelling, furniture carving, decorative needlework—illuminating. Her timid attitude towards the woman worker may be estimated from the following extract:—

"The profession of domestic architect is in itself exceedingly interesting, and one which Indian women might, in part, very well take up. The oversight of the workmen would have to be left to men, nor could women very well climb the scaffolding to superintend the progress of the building; but the drawing of the plans and the details could easily be done by our women if they made it the subject of professional study. There is, however, no need for women to undertake the entire architecture of the house. There is ample room for their talent in designing portions of the interior—such as useful wall-cupboards, mouldings, friezes, ornamental designs for doors and windows, and the general decorative details of construction."

Now we in England know what this playing at wage-earning, this pathetic skulking on the outskirts of industry, brought us to during the Victorian era. It brought to women the most humiliating and the most hungry period of oppression they had ever endured. The Feminist must take a bolder line. If she is going to enter the labour market she must take capital with her—she must try from the first to capture the commanding fortresses of industry, from which she can dictate the conditions of her own labour.

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Moreover, the authors repeat over and over again that most malignant libel spoken by the rich against the poor—that the average housewife of the lower and middle classes is an ignorant incompetent. This is one of the most cherished beliefs of the wholly undomesticated women of the aristocratic classes. It is, of course, a device to cheat poor girls out of their education. "Domestic science" is designed to elbow out of the school curriculum all subjects likely to develop the minds of the girl scholars, and thus leave them, irrespective of their individual gifts, fit for nothing but domestic service. The authors err, too, in attributing the over-supply of "poorly paid governesses and half-educated girl-clerks" to "a training . . . far too abstract, too intellectual." It is obvious that this glut of worthless labour is partly due to the desire of parents to absorb their daughters into unprofitable domestic labour, partly to the lack of first-rate educational facilities, and partly to the fact that a woman knows that her labour capital—her education, her talent, her experience—is confiscated on her entrance into marriage.

The truth is, the authors' Feminism is out of date. They apologise for Woman, and nag at her for the inborn failings of human nature. They are too complaisant about her under-payment, blandly remarking, after a comment on the miserable wages of matrons, that "salaries in England are not large. For instance, the Prime Minister of England gets a smaller salary than the Governor of an Indian Province." And they are confused by the old-fashioned idea that it is the labour of women who are not wholly dependent on their own earnings which depresses the general level of women's salaries. As a matter of fact, we know that these make the finest trades unionists. Surely the authors misinterpret the Feminist opposition to regulative legislation of women's labour. It is not the regulative aspect of it that the women object to, but the fact that it is regulation framed according to the conception of Woman held by the public schoolboys who make up the House of Commons.

Yet the authors have an immense enthusiasm for the cause of Feminism, and see it as a coming force in the movement towards the unity of India. The pity is that they have not seen beneath the surface of English life. They do not realise that in spite of that august institution, the International Council of Women, the average woman worker is growing thin on "no salary but ample opportunities for Christian work."

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