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Woman and Labour

by

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Dedicated to Constance Lytton

"Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song, Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea--
 Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong-- Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
 Give her the glory of going on and still to be."

Tennyson.

Olive Schreiner. De Aar, Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. 1911.

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Introduction.

It is necessary to say a few words to explain this book. The original title of the book was "Musings on Woman and Labour."

It is, what its name implies, a collection of musings on some of the points connected with woman's work.

In my early youth I began a book on Woman. I continued the work till ten years ago. It necessarily touched on most matters in which sex has a part, however incompletely.

It began by tracing the differences of sex function to their earliest appearances in life on the globe; not only as when in the animal world, two amoeboid globules coalesce, and the process of sexual generation almost unconsciously begins; but to its yet more primitive manifestations in plant life. In the first three chapters I traced, as far as I was able, the evolution of sex in different branches of non-human life. Many large facts surprised me in following this line of thought by their bearing on the whole modern sex problem. Such facts as this; that, in the great majority of species on the earth the female form exceeds the male in size and strength and often in predatory instinct; and that sex relationships may assume almost any form on earth as the conditions of life vary; and that, even in their sexual relations towards offspring, those differences which we, conventionally, are apt to suppose are inherent in the paternal or the maternal sex form, are not inherent--as when one studies the lives of certain toads, where the female deposits her eggs in cavities on the back of the male, where the eggs are preserved and hatched; or, of certain sea animals, in which the male carries the young about with him and rears them in a pouch formed of his own substance; and countless other such. And above all, this important fact, which had first impressed me when as a child I wandered alone in the African bush and watched cock-o-veets singing their inter-knit love-songs, and small singing birds building their nests together, and caring for and watching over, not only their young, but each other, and which has powerfully influenced all I have thought and felt on sex matters since;--the fact that, along the line of bird life and among certain of its species sex has attained its highest and aesthetic, and one might almost say intellectual, development on earth: a point of development to which no human race as a whole has yet reached, and which represents the realisation of the highest sexual ideal which haunts humanity.

When these three chapters we ended I went on to deal, as far as possible, with woman's condition in the most primitive, in the savage and in the semi-savage states. I had always been strangely interested from childhood in watching the condition of the native African women in their primitive society about me. When I was eighteen I had a conversation with a Kafir woman still in her untouched primitive condition, a conversation which made a more profound impression on my mind than any but one other incident connected with the position of woman has ever done. She was a woman whom I cannot think of otherwise than as a person of genius. In language more eloquent and intense than I have ever heard from the lips of any other woman, she painted the condition of the women of her race; the labour of women, the anguish of woman as she grew older, and the limitations of her life closed in about her, her sufferings under the condition of polygamy and subjection; all this she painted with a passion and intensity I have not known equalled; and yet, and this was

the interesting point, when I went on to question her, combined with a deep and almost fierce bitterness against life and the unseen powers which had shaped woman and her conditions as they were, there was not one word of bitterness against the individual man, nor any will or intention to revolt; rather, there was a stern and almost majestic attitude of acceptance of the inevitable; life and the conditions of her race being what they were. It was this conversation which first forced upon me a truth, which I have since come to regard as almost axiomatic, that, the women of no race or class will ever rise in revolt or attempt to bring about a revolutionary readjustment of their relation to their society, however intense their suffering and however clear their perception of it, while the welfare and persistence of their society requires their submission: that, wherever there is a general attempt on the part of the women of any society to readjust their position in it, a close analysis will always show that the changed or changing conditions of that society have made woman's acquiescence no longer necessary or desirable.

Another point which it was attempted to deal with in this division of the book was the probability, amounting almost to a certainty, that woman's physical suffering and weakness in childbirth and certain other directions was the price which woman has been compelled to pay for the passing of the race from the quadrupedal and four-handed state to the erect; and which was essential if humanity as we know it was to exist (this of course was dealt with by a physiological study of woman's structure); and also, to deal with the highly probable, though unproved and perhaps unprovable, suggestion, that it was largely the necessity which woman was under of bearing her helpless young in her arms while procuring food for them and herself, and of carrying them when escaping from enemies, that led to the entirely erect position being forced on developing humanity.

These and many other points throwing an interesting light on the later development of women (such as the relation between agriculture and the subjection of women) were gone into in this division of the book dealing with primitive and semi-barbarous womanhood.

When this division was ended, I had them type-written, and with the first three chapters bound in one volume about the year 1888; and then went on to work at the last division, which I had already begun.

This dealt with what is more popularly known as the women's question: with the causes which in modern European societies are leading women to attempt readjustment in their relation to their social organism; with the direction in which such readjustments are taking place; and with the results which in the future it appears likely such readjustments will produce.

After eleven years, 1899, these chapters were finished and bound in a large volume with the first two divisions. There then only remained to revise the book and write a preface. In addition to the prose argument I had in each chapter one or more allegories; because while it is easy clearly to express abstract thoughts in argumentative prose, whatever emotion those thoughts awaken I have not felt myself able adequately to express except in the other form. (The allegory "Three Dreams in a Desert" which I published about nineteen years ago was taken from this book; and I have felt that perhaps being taken from its context it was not quite clear to every one.) I had also tried throughout to illustrate the subject with exactly those particular facts in the animal and human world, with which I had come into personal contact and which had helped to form the conclusions which were given; as it has always seemed to me that in dealing with sociological questions a knowledge of the exact manner in which any writer has arrived at his view is necessary in measuring its worth. The work had occupied a large part of my life, and I had hoped, whatever its deficiencies, that it might at least stimulate other minds, perhaps more happily situated, to an enlarged study of the question.

In 1899 I was living in Johannesburg, when, owing to ill-health, I was ordered suddenly to spend some time at a lower level. At the end of two months the Boer War broke out. Two days after war was proclaimed I arrived at De Aar on my way back to the Transvaal; but Martial Law had already been proclaimed there, and the military authorities refused to allow my return to my home in Johannesburg and sent me to the Colony; nor was I allowed to send any communication through, to any person, who might have extended some care over

my possessions. Some eight months after, when the British troops had taken and entered Johannesburg; a friend, who, being on the British side, had been allowed to go up, wrote me that he had visited my house and found it looted, that all that was of value had been taken or destroyed; that my desk had been forced open and broken up, and its contents set on fire in the centre of the room, so that the roof was blackened over the pile of burnt papers. He added that there was little in the remnants of paper of which I could make any use, but that he had gathered and stored the fragments till such time as I might be allowed to come and see them. I thus knew my book had been destroyed.

Some months later in the war when confined in a little up-country hamlet, many hundreds of miles from the coast and from Johannesburg; with the brunt of the war at that time breaking around us, de Wet having crossed the Orange River and being said to have been within a few miles of us, and the British columns moving hither and thither, I was living in a little house on the outskirts of the village, in a single room, with a stretcher and two packing-cases as furniture, and with my little dog for company. Thirty-six armed African natives were set to guard night and day at the doors and windows of the house; and I was only allowed to go out during certain hours in the middle of the day to fetch water from the fountain, or to buy what I needed, and I was allowed to receive no books, newspapers or magazines. A high barbed wire fence, guarded by armed natives, surrounded the village, through which it would have been death to try to escape. All day the pom-poms from the armoured trains, that paraded on the railway line nine miles distant, could be heard at intervals; and at night the talk of the armed natives as they pressed against the windows, and the tramp of the watch with the endless "Who goes there?" as they walked round the wire fence through the long, dark hours, when one was allowed neither to light a candle nor strike a match. When a conflict was fought near by, the dying and wounded were brought in; three men belonging to our little village were led out to execution; death sentences were read in our little market-place; our prison was filled with our fellow-countrymen; and we did not know from hour to hour what the next would bring to any of us. Under these conditions I felt it necessary I should resolutely force my thought at times from the horror of the world around me, to dwell on some abstract question, and it was under these circumstances that this little book was written; being a remembrance mainly drawn from one chapter of the larger book. The armed native guards standing against the uncurtained windows, it was impossible to open the shutters, and the room was therefore always so dark that even the physical act of writing was difficult.

A year and a half after, when the war was over and peace had been proclaimed for above four months, I with difficulty obtained a permit to visit the Transvaal. I found among the burnt fragments the leathern back of my book intact, the front half of the leaves burnt away; the back half of the leaves next to the cover still all there, but so browned and scorched with the flames that they broke as you touched them; and there was nothing left but to destroy it. I even then felt a hope that at some future time I might yet rewrite the entire book. But life is short; and I have found that not only shall I never rewrite the book, but I shall not have the health even to fill out and harmonise this little remembrance from it.

It is therefore with considerable pain that I give out this fragment. I am only comforted by the thought that perhaps, all sincere and earnest search after truth, even where it fails to reach it, yet, often comes so near to it, that other minds more happily situated may be led, by pointing out its very limitations and errors, to obtain a larger view.

I have dared to give this long and very uninteresting explanation, not at all because I have wished by giving the conditions under which this little book was written, to make excuse for any repetitions or lack of literary perfection, for these things matter very little; but, because (and this matters very much) it might lead to misconception on the subject-matter itself if its genesis were not exactly understood.

Not only is this book not a general view of the whole vast body of phenomena connected with woman's position; but it is not even a bird's-eye view of the whole question of woman's relation to labour.

In the original book the matter of the parasitism of woman filled only one chapter out of twelve, and it was

mainly from this chapter that this book was drawn. The question of the parasitism of woman is, I think, very vital, very important; it explains many phenomena which nothing else explains; and it will be of increasing importance. But for the moment there are other aspects of woman's relation to labour practically quite as pressing. In the larger book I had devoted one chapter entirely to an examination of the work woman has done and still does in the modern world, and the gigantic evils which arise from the fact that her labour, especially domestic labour, often the most wearisome and unending known to any section of the human race, is not adequately recognised or recompensed. Especially on this point I have feared this book might lead to a misconception, if by its great insistence on the problem of sex parasitism, and the lighter dealing with other aspects, it should lead to the impression that woman's domestic labour at the present day (something quite distinct from, though indirectly connected with, the sexual relation between man and woman) should not be highly and most highly recognised and recompensed. I believe it will be in the future, and then when woman gives up her independent field of labour for domestic or marital duty of any kind, she will not receive her share of the earnings of the man as a more or less eleemosynary benefaction, placing her in a position of subjection, but an equal share, as the fair division, in an equal partnership. (It may be objected that where a man and woman have valued each other sufficiently to select one another from all other humans for a lifelong physical union, it is an impertinence to suppose there could be any necessity to adjust economic relations. In love there is no first nor last! And that the desire of each must be to excel the other in service.

That this should be so is true; that it is so now, in the case of union between two perfectly morally developed humans, is also true, and that this condition may in a distant future be almost universal is certainly true. But dealing with this matter as a practical question today, we have to consider not what should be, or what may be, but what, given traditions and institutions of our societies, is, today.) Especially I have feared that the points dealt with in this little book, when taken apart from other aspects of the question, might lead to the conception that it was intended to express the thought, that it was possible or desirable that woman in addition to her child-bearing should take from man his share in the support and care of his offspring or of the woman who fulfilled with regard to himself domestic duties of any kind. In that chapter in the original book devoted to the consideration of man's labour in connection with woman and with his offspring more than one hundred pages were devoted to illustrating how essential to the humanising and civilising of man, and therefore of the whole race, was an increased sense of sexual and paternal responsibility, and an increased justice towards woman as a domestic labourer. In the last half of the same chapter I dealt at great length with what seems to me an even more pressing practical sex question at this moment--man's attitude towards those women who are not engaged in domestic labour; toward that vast and always increasing body of women, who as modern conditions develop are thrown out into the stream of modern economic life to sustain themselves and often others by their own labour; and who yet are there bound hand and foot, not by the intellectual or physical limitations of their nature, but by artificial constrictions and conventions, the remnants of a past condition of society. It is largely this maladjustment, which, deeply studied in all its ramifications, will be found to lie as the taproot and central source of the most terrible of the social diseases that afflict us.

The fact that for equal work equally well performed by a man and by a woman, it is ordained that the woman on the ground of her sex alone shall receive a less recompense, is the nearest approach to a wilful and unqualified "wrong" in the whole relation of woman to society today. That males of enlightenment and equity can for an hour tolerate the existence of this inequality has seemed to me always incomprehensible; and it is only explainable when one regards it as a result of the blinding effects of custom and habit. Personally, I have felt so profoundly on this subject, that this, with one other point connected with woman's sexual relation to man, are the only matters connected with woman's position, in thinking of which I have always felt it necessary almost fiercely to crush down indignation and to restrain it, if I would maintain an impartiality of outlook. I should therefore much regret if the light and passing manner in which this question has been touched on in this little book made it seem of less vital importance than I hold it.

In the last chapter of the original book, the longest, and I believe the most important, I dealt with the problems connected with marriage and the personal relations of men and women in the modern world. In it I tried to give expression to that which I hold to be a great truth, and one on which I should not fear to challenge the

verdict of long future generations-- that, the direction in which the endeavour of woman to readjust herself to the new conditions of life is leading today, is not towards a greater sexual laxity, or promiscuity, or to an increased self-indulgence, but toward a higher appreciation of the sacredness of all sex relations, and a clearer perception of the sex relation between man and woman as the basis of human society, on whose integrity, beauty and healthfulness depend the health and beauty of human life, as a whole. Above all, that it will lead to a closer, more permanent, more emotionally and intellectually complete and intimate relation between the individual man and woman. And if in the present disco-ordinate transitional stage of our social growth it is found necessary to allow of readjustment by means of divorce, it will not be because such readjustments will be regarded lightly, but rather, as when, in a complex and delicate mechanism moved by a central spring, we allow in the structure for the readjustment and regulation of that spring, because on its absolute perfection of action depends the movement of the whole mechanism. In the last pages of the book, I tried to express what seems to me a most profound truth often overlooked--that as humanity and human societies pass on slowly from their present barbarous and semi-savage condition in matters of sex into a higher, it will be found increasingly, that over and above its function in producing and sending onward the physical stream of life (a function which humanity shares with the most lowly animal and vegetable forms of life, and which even by some noted thinkers of the present day seems to be regarded as its only possible function,) that sex and the sexual relation between man and woman have distinct aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual functions and ends, apart entirely from physical reproduction. That noble as is the function of the physical reproduction of humanity by the union of man and woman, rightly viewed, that union has in it latent, other, and even higher forms, of creative energy and life-dispensing power, and that its history on earth has only begun. As the first wild rose when it hung from its stem with its centre of stamens and pistils and its single whorl of pale petals, had only begun its course, and was destined, as the ages passed, to develop stamen upon stamen and petal upon petal, till it assumed a hundred forms of joy and beauty.

And, it would indeed almost seem, that, on the path toward the higher development of sexual life on earth, as man has so often had to lead in other paths, that here it is perhaps woman, by reason of those very sexual conditions which in the past have crushed and trammelled her, who is bound to lead the way, and man to follow. So that it may be at last, that sexual love--that tired angel who through the ages has presided over the march of humanity, with distraught eyes, and feather-shafts broken, and wings drabbed in the mires of lust and greed, and golden locks caked over with the dust of injustice and oppression--till those looking at him have sometimes cried in terror, "He is the Evil and not the Good of life!" and have sought, if it were not possible, to exterminate him--shall yet, at last, bathed from the mire and dust of ages in the streams of friendship and freedom, leap upwards, with white wings spread, resplendent in the sunshine of a distant future--the essentially Good and Beautiful of human existence.

I have given this long and very wearisome explanation of the scope and origin of this little book, because I feel that it might lead to grave misunderstanding were it not understood how it came to be written.

I have inscribed it to my friend, Lady Constance Lytton; not because I think it worthy of her, nor yet because of the splendid part she has played in the struggle of the women fighting today in England for certain forms of freedom for all women. It is, if I may be allowed without violating the sanctity of a close personal friendship so to say, because she, with one or two other men and women I have known, have embodied for me the highest ideal of human nature, in which intellectual power and strength of will are combined with an infinite tenderness and a wide human sympathy; a combination which, whether in the person of the man or the woman, is essential to the existence of the fully rounded and harmonised human creature; and which an English woman of genius summed in one line when she cried in her invocation of her great French sister:--

"Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man!"

One word more I should like to add, as I may not again speak or write on this subject. I should like to say to the men and women of the generations which will come after us--"You will look back at us with astonishment! You will wonder at passionate struggles that accomplished so little; at the, to you, obvious

paths to attain our ends which we did not take; at the intolerable evils before which it will seem to you we sat down passive; at the great truths staring us in the face, which we failed to see; at the truths we grasped at, but could never quite get our fingers round. You will marvel at the labour that ended in so little--but, what you will never know is how it was thinking of you and for you, that we struggled as we did and accomplished the little which we have done; that it was in the thought of your larger realisation and fuller life, that we found consolation for the futilities of our own."

"What I aspired to be, and was not, comforts me."

O.S.

Chapter I.

Parasitism.

In that clamour which has arisen in the modern world, where now this, and then that, is demanded for and by large bodies of modern women, he who listens carefully may detect as a keynote, beneath all the clamour, a demand which may be embodied in such a cry as this: Give us labour and the training which fits for labour! We demand this, not for ourselves alone, but for the race.

If this demand be logically expanded, it will take such form as this: Give us labour! For countless ages, for thousands, millions it may be, we have laboured. When first man wandered, the naked, newly-erected savage, and hunted and fought, we wandered with him: each step of his was ours. Within our bodies we bore the race, on our shoulders we carried it; we sought the roots and plants for its food; and, when man's barbed arrow or hook brought the game, our hands dressed it. Side by side, the savage man and the savage woman, we wandered free together and laboured free together. And we were contented!

Then a change came.

We ceased from our wanderings, and, camping upon one spot of earth, again the labours of life were divided between us. While man went forth to hunt, or to battle with the foe who would have dispossessed us of all, we laboured on the land. We hoed the earth, we reaped the grain, we shaped the dwellings, we wove the clothing, we modelled the earthen vessels and drew the lines upon them, which were humanity's first attempt at domestic art; we studied the properties and uses of plants, and our old women were the first physicians of the race, as, often, its first priests and prophets.

We fed the race at our breast, we bore it on our shoulders; through us it was shaped, fed, and clothed. Labour more toilsome and unending than that of man was ours; yet did we never cry out that it was too heavy for us. While savage man lay in the sunshine on his skins, resting, that he might be fitted for war or the chase, or while he shaped his weapons of death, he ate and drank that which our hands had provided for him; and while we knelt over our grindstone, or hoed in the fields, with one child in our womb, perhaps, and one on our back, toiling till the young body was old before its time--did we ever cry out that the labour allotted to us was too hard for us? Did we not know that the woman who threw down her burden was as a man who cast away his shield in battle--a coward and a traitor to his race? Man fought--that was his work; we fed and nurtured the race--that was ours. We knew that upon our labours, even as upon man's, depended the life and well-being of the people whom we bore. We endured our toil, as man bore his wounds, silently; and we were content.

Then again a change came.

Ages passed, and time was when it was no longer necessary that all men should go to the hunt or the field of war; and when only one in five, or one in ten, or but one in twenty, was needed continually for these labours. Then our fellow-man, having no longer full occupation in his old fields of labour, began to take his share in ours. He too began to cultivate the field, to build the house, to grind the corn (or make his male slaves do it); and the hoe, and the potter's tools, and the thatching-needle, and at last even the grindstones which we first had picked up and smoothed to grind the food for our children, began to pass from our hands into his. The old, sweet life of the open fields was ours no more; we moved within the gates, where the time passes more slowly and the world is sadder than in the air outside; but we had our own work still, and were content.

If, indeed, we might no longer grow the food for our people, we were still its dressers; if we did not always plant and prepare the flax and hemp, we still wove the garments for our race; if we did no longer raise the house walls, the tapestries that covered them were the work of our hands; we brewed the ale, and the simples which were used as medicines we distilled and prescribed; and, close about our feet, from birth to manhood, grew up the children whom we had borne; their voices were always in our ears. At the doors of our houses we

sat with our spinning-wheels, and we looked out across the fields that were once ours to labour in--and were contented. Lord's wife, peasant's, or burgher's, we all still had our work to do!

A thousand years ago, had one gone to some great dame, questioning her why she did not go out a-hunting or a-fighting, or enter the great hall to dispense justice and confer upon the making of laws, she would have answered: "Am I a fool that you put to me such questions? Have I not a hundred maidens to keep at work at spinning-wheels and needles? With my own hands daily do I not dispense bread to over a hundred folk? In the great hall go and see the tapestries I with my maidens have created by the labour of years, and which we shall labour over for twenty more, that my children's children may see recorded the great deeds of their forefathers. In my store-room are there not salves and simples, that my own hands have prepared for the healing of my household and the sick in the country round? Ill would it go indeed, if when the folk came home from war and the chase of wild beasts, weary or wounded, they found all the womenfolk gone out a-hunting and a-fighting, and none there to dress their wounds, or prepare their meat, or guide and rule the household! Better far might my lord and his followers come and help us with our work, than that we should go to help them! You are surely bereft of all wit. What becomes of the country if the women forsake their toil?"

And the burgher's wife, asked why she did not go to labour in her husband's workshop, or away into the market-place, or go a-trading to foreign countries, would certainly have answered: "I am too busy to speak with such as you! The bread is in the oven (already I smell it a-burning), the winter is coming on, and my children lack good woollen hose and my husband needs a warm coat. I have six vats of ale all a-brewing, and I have daughters whom I must teach to spin and sew, and the babies are clinging round my knees. And you ask me why I do not go abroad to seek for new labours! Godsooth! Would you have me to leave my household to starve in summer and die of cold in winter, and my children to go untrained, while I gad about to seek for other work? A man must have his belly full and his back covered before all things in life. Who, think you, would spin and bake and brew, and rear and train my babes, if I went abroad? New labour, indeed, when the days are not long enough, and I have to toil far into the night! I have no time to talk with fools! Who will rear and shape the nation if I do not?"

And the young maiden at the cottage door, beside her wheel, asked why she was content and did not seek new fields of labour, would surely have answered: "Go away, I have no time to listen to you. Do you not see that I am spinning here that I too may have a home of my own? I am weaving the linen garments that shall clothe my household in the long years to come! I cannot marry till the chest upstairs be full. You cannot hear it, but as I sit here alone, spinning, far off across the hum of my spinning-wheel I hear the voices of my little unborn children calling to me--'O mother, mother, make haste, that we may be!'"--and sometimes, when I seem to be looking out across my wheel into the sunshine, it is the blaze of my own fireside that I see, and the light shines on the faces round it; and I spin on the faster and the steadier when I think of what shall come. Do you ask me why I do not go out and labour in the fields with the lad whom I have chosen? Is his work, then, indeed more needed than mine for the raising of that home that shall be ours? Oh, very hard I will labour, for him and for my children, in the long years to come. But I cannot stop to talk to you now. Far off, over the hum of my spinning-wheel, I hear the voices of my children calling, and I must hurry on. Do you ask me why I do not seek for labour whose hands are full to bursting? Who will give folk to the nation if I do not?"

Such would have been our answer in Europe in the ages of the past, if asked the question why we were contented with our field of labour and sought no other. Man had his work; we had ours. We knew that we upbore our world on our shoulders; and that through the labour of our hands it was sustained and strengthened--and we were contented.

But now, again a change has come.

Something that is entirely new has entered into the field of human labour, and left nothing as it was.

In man's fields of toil, change has accomplished, and is yet more quickly accomplishing, itself.

On lands where once fifty men and youths toiled with their cattle, today one steam-plough, guided by but two pair of hands, passes swiftly; and an automatic reaper in one day reaps and binds and prepares for the garner the produce of fields it would have taken a hundred strong male arms to harvest in the past. The iron tools and weapons, only one of which it took an ancient father of our race long months of stern exertion to extract from ore and bring to shape and temper, are now poured forth by steam-driven machinery as a millpond pours forth its water; and even in war, the male's ancient and especial field of labour, a complete reversal of the ancient order has taken place. Time was when the size and strength of the muscles in a man's legs and arms, and the strength and size of his body, largely determined his fighting powers, and an Achilles or a Richard Coeur de Lion, armed only with his spear or battle-axe, made a host fly before him; today the puniest mannikin behind a modern Maxim gun may mow down in perfect safety a phalanx of heroes whose legs and arms and physical powers a Greek god might have envied, but who, having not the modern machinery of war, fall powerless. The day of the primary import to humanity of the strength in man's extensor and flexor muscles, whether in labours of war or of peace, is gone by for ever; and the day of the all-importance of the culture and activity of man's brain and nerve has already come.

The brain of one consumptive German chemist, who in his laboratory compounds a new explosive, has more effect upon the wars of the modern peoples than ten thousand soldierly legs and arms; and the man who invents one new labour-saving machine may, through the cerebration of a few days, have performed the labour it would otherwise have taken hundreds of thousands of his lusty fellows decades to accomplish.

Year by year, month by month, and almost hour by hour, this change is increasingly showing itself in the field of the modern labour; and crude muscular force, whether in man or beast, sinks continually in its value in the world of human toil; while intellectual power, virility, and activity, and that culture which leads to the mastery of the inanimate forces of nature, to the invention of machinery, and to that delicate manipulative skill often required in guiding it, becomes ever of greater and greater importance to the race. Already today we tremble on the verge of a discovery, which may come tomorrow or the next day, when, through the attainment of a simple and cheap method of controlling some widely diffused, everywhere accessible, natural force (such, for instance, as the force of the great tidal wave) there will at once and for ever pass away even that comparatively small value which still, in our present stage of material civilisation, clings to the expenditure of mere crude, mechanical, human energy; and the creature, however physically powerful, who can merely pull, push, and lift, much after the manner of a machine, will have no further value in the field of human labour.

Therefore, even today, we find that wherever that condition which we call modern civilisation prevails, and in proportion as it tends to prevail-- wherever steam-power, electricity, or the forces of wind and water, are compelled by man's intellectual activity to act as the motor-powers in the accomplishment of human toil, wherever the delicate adaptations of scientifically constructed machinery are taking the place of the simple manipulation of the human hand--there has arisen, all the world over, a large body of males who find that their ancient fields of labour have slipped or are slipping from them, and who discover that the modern world has no place or need for them. At the gates of our dockyards, in our streets, and in our fields, are to be found everywhere, in proportion as modern civilisation is really dominant, men whose bulk and mere animal strength would have made them as warriors invaluable members of any primitive community, and who would have been valuable even in any simpler civilisation than our own, as machines of toil; but who, owing to lack of intellectual or delicate manual training, have now no form of labour to offer society which it stands really in need of, and who therefore tend to form our Great Male Unemployed--a body which finds the only powers it possesses so little needed by its fellows that, in return for its intensest physical labour, it hardly earns the poorest sustenance. The material conditions of life have been rapidly modified, and the man has not been modified with them; machinery has largely filled his place in his old field of labour, and he has found no new one.

It is from these men, men who, viewed from the broad humanitarian standpoint, are often of the most lovable and interesting type, and who might in a simpler state of society, where physical force was the dominating factor, have been the heroes, leaders, and chiefs of their people, that there arises in the modern world the bitter

cry of the male unemployed: "Give us labour or we die!" (The problem of the unemployed male is, of course, not nearly so modern as that of the unemployed female. It may be said in England to have taken its rise in almost its present form as early as the fifteenth century, when economic changes began to sever the agricultural labourer from the land, and rob him of his ancient forms of social toil. Still, in its most acute form, it may be called a modern problem.)

Yet it is only upon one, and a comparatively small, section of the males of the modern civilised world that these changes in the material conditions of life have told in such fashion as to take all useful occupation from them and render them wholly or partly worthless to society. If the modern man's field of labour has contracted at one end (the physical), at the other (the intellectual) it has immeasurably expanded! If machinery and the command of inanimate motor-forces have rendered of comparatively little value the male's mere physical motor-power, the demand upon his intellectual faculties, the call for the expenditure of nervous energy, and the exercise of delicate manipulative skill in the labour of human life, have immeasurably increased.

In a million new directions forms of honoured and remunerative social labour are opening up before the feet of the modern man, which his ancestors never dreamed of; and day by day they yet increase in numbers and importance. The steamship, the hydraulic lift, the patent road-maker, the railway-train, the electric tram-car, the steam-driven mill, the Maxim gun and the torpedo boat, once made, may perform their labours with the guidance and assistance of comparatively few hands; but a whole army of men of science, engineers, clerks, and highly-trained workmen is necessary for their invention, construction, and maintenance. In the domains of art, of science, of literature, and above all in the field of politics and government, an almost infinite extension has taken place in the fields of male labour. Where in primitive times woman was often the only builder, and patterns she daubed on her hut walls or traced on her earthen vessels the only attempts at domestic art; and where later but an individual here and there was required to design a king's palace or a god's temple or to ornament it with statues or paintings, today a mighty army of men, a million strong, is employed in producing plastic art alone, both high and low, from the traceries on wall-paper and the illustrations in penny journals, to the production of the pictures and statues which adorn the national collections, and a mighty new field of toil has opened before the anciently hunting and fighting male. Where once one ancient witch-doctress may have been the only creature in a whole district who studied the nature of herbs and earths, or a solitary wizard experimenting on poisons was the only individual in a whole territory interrogating nature; and where later, a few score of alchemists and astrologers only were engaged in examining the structure of substances, or the movement of planets, today thousands of men in every civilised community are labouring to unravel the mysteries of nature, and the practical chemist, the physician, the anatomist, the engineer, the astronomer, the mathematician, the electrician, form a mighty and always increasingly important army of male labourers. Where once an isolated bard supplied a nation with its literatures, or where later a few thousand priests and men of letters wrote and transcribed for the few to read, today literature gives labour to a multitude almost as countless as a swarm of locusts. From the penny-a-liner to the artist and thinker, the demand for their labour continually increases. Where one town-crier with stout legs and lusty lungs was once all-sufficient to spread the town and country news, a score of men now sit daily pen in hand, preparing the columns of the morning's paper, and far into the night a hundred compositors are engaged in a labour which requires a higher culture of brain and finger than most ancient kings and rulers possessed. Even in the labours of war, the most brutal and primitive of the occupations lingering on into civilised life from the savage state, the new demand for labour of an intellectual kind is enormous. The invention, construction, and working of one Krupp gun, though its mere discharge hardly demands more crude muscular exertion than a savage expends in throwing his boomerang, yet represents an infinitude of intellectual care and thought, far greater than that which went to the shaping of all the weapons of a primitive army. Above all, in the domain of politics and government, where once a king or queen, aided by a handful of councillors, was alone practically concerned in the labours of national guidance or legislation; today, owing to the rapid means of intercommunication, printing, and the consequent diffusion of political and social information throughout a territory, it has become possible, for the first time, for all adults in a large community to keep themselves closely informed on all national affairs; and in every highly-civilised state the ordinary male has been almost compelled to take his share, however small, in the duties and labours of legislation and government. Thus there has opened before the mass of men a vast

new sphere of labour undreamed of by their ancestors. In every direction the change which material civilisation has wrought, while it has militated against that comparatively small section of males who have nothing to offer society but the expenditure of their untrained muscular energy (inflicting much and often completely unmerited suffering upon them), has immeasurably extended the field of male labour as a whole. Never before in the history of the earth has the man's field of remunerative toil been so wide, so interesting, so complex, and in its results so all-important to society; never before has the male sex, taken as a whole, been so fully and strenuously employed.

So much is this the case, that, exactly as in the earlier conditions of society an excessive and almost crushing amount of the most important physical labour generally devolved upon the female, so under modern civilised conditions among the wealthier and fully civilised classes, an unduly excessive share of labour tends to devolve upon the male. That almost entirely modern, morbid condition, affecting brain and nervous system, and shortening the lives of thousands in modern civilised societies, which is vulgarly known as "overwork" or "nervous breakdown," is but one evidence of the even excessive share of mental toil devolving upon the modern male of the cultured classes, who, in addition to maintaining himself, has frequently dependent upon him a larger or smaller number of entirely parasitic females. But, whatever the result of the changes of modern civilisation may be with regard to the male, he certainly cannot complain that they have as a whole robbed him of his fields of labour, diminished his share in the conduct of life, or reduced him to a condition of morbid inactivity.

In our woman's field of labour, matters have tended to shape themselves wholly otherwise! The changes which have taken place during the last centuries, and which we sum up under the compendious term "modern civilisation," have tended to rob woman, not merely in part but almost wholly, of the more valuable of her ancient domain of productive and social labour; and, where there has not been a determined and conscious resistance on her part, have nowhere spontaneously tended to open out to her new and compensatory fields.

It is this fact which constitutes our modern "Woman's Labour Problem."

Our spinning-wheels are all broken; in a thousand huge buildings steam-driven looms, guided by a few hundred thousands of hands (often those of men), produce the clothings of half the world; and we dare no longer say, proudly, as of old, that we and we alone clothe our peoples.

Our hoes and our grindstones passed from us long ago, when the ploughman and the miller took our place; but for a time we kept fast possession of the kneading-trough and the brewing-vat. Today, steam often shapes our bread, and the loaves are set down at our very door--it may be by a man-driven motor-car! The history of our household drinks we know no longer; we merely see them set before us at our tables. Day by day machine-prepared and factory-produced viands take a larger and larger place in the dietary of rich and poor, till the working man's wife places before her household little that is of her own preparation; while among the wealthier classes, so far has domestic change gone that men are not unfrequently found labouring in our houses and kitchens, and even standing behind our chairs ready to do all but actually place the morsels of food between our feminine lips. The army of rosy milkmaids has passed away for ever, to give place to the cream-separator and the, largely, male-and-machinery manipulated butter pat. In every direction the ancient saw, that it was exclusively the woman's sphere to prepare the viands for her household, has become, in proportion as civilisation has perfected itself, an antiquated lie.

Even the minor domestic operations are tending to pass out of the circle of woman's labour. In modern cities our carpets are beaten, our windows cleaned, our floors polished, by machinery, or extra domestic, and often male labour. Change has gone much farther than to the mere taking from us of the preparation of the materials from which the clothing is formed. Already the domestic sewing-machine, which has supplanted almost entirely the ancient needle, begins to become antiquated, and a thousand machines driven in factories by central engines are supplying not only the husband and son, but the woman herself, with almost every article of clothing from vest to jacket; while among the wealthy classes, the male dress-designer with his hundred

male-milliners and dressmakers is helping finally to explode the ancient myth, that it is woman's exclusive sphere, and a part of her domestic toil, to cut and shape the garments she or her household wear.

Year by year, day by day, there is a silently working but determined tendency for the sphere of woman's domestic labours to contract itself; and the contraction is marked exactly in proportion as that complex condition which we term "modern civilisation" is advanced.

It manifests itself more in England and America than in Italy and Spain, more in great cities than in country places, more among the wealthier classes than the poorer, and is an unfailing indication of advancing modern civilisation. (There is, indeed, often something pathetic in the attitude of many a good old mother of the race, who having survived, here and there, into the heart of our modern civilisation, is sorely puzzled by the change in woman's duties and obligations. She may be found looking into the eyes of some ancient crone, who, like herself, has survived from a previous state of civilisation, seeking there a confirmation of a view of life of which a troublous doubt has crept even into her own soul. "I," she cries, "always cured my own hams, and knitted my own socks, and made up all the linen by hand. We always did it when we were girls--but now my daughters object!" And her old crone answers her? "Yes, we did it; it's the right thing; but it's so expensive. It's so much cheaper to buy things ready made!" And they shake their heads and go their ways, feeling that the world is strangely out of joint when duty seems no more duty. Such women are, in truth, like a good old mother duck, who, having for years led her ducklings to the same pond, when that pond has been drained and nothing is left but baked mud, will still persist in bringing her younglings down to it, and walks about with flapping wings and anxious quack, trying to induce them to enter it. But the ducklings, with fresh young instincts, hear far off the delicious drippings from the new dam which has been built higher up to catch the water, and they smell the chickweed and the long grass that is growing up beside it; and absolutely refuse to disport themselves on the baked mud or to pretend to seek for worms where no worms are. And they leave the ancient mother quacking beside her pond and set out to seek for new pastures--perhaps to lose themselves upon the way?--perhaps to find them? To the old mother one is inclined to say, "Ah, good old mother duck, can you not see the world has changed? You cannot bring the water back into the dried-up pond! Mayhap it was better and pleasanter when it was there, but it has gone for ever; and, would you and yours swim again, it must be in other waters." New machinery, new duties.)

But it is not only, nor even mainly, in the sphere of women's material domestic labours that change has touched her and shrunk her ancient field of labour.

Time was, when the woman kept her children about her knees till adult years were reached. Hers was the training and influence which shaped them. From the moment when the infant first lay on her breast, till her daughters left her for marriage and her sons went to take share in man's labour, they were continually under the mother's influence. Today, so complex have become even the technical and simpler branches of education, so mighty and inexorable are the demands which modern civilisation makes for specialised instruction and training for all individuals who are to survive and retain their usefulness under modern conditions, that, from the earliest years of its life, the child is of necessity largely removed from the hands of the mother, and placed in those of the specialised instructor. Among the wealthier classes, scarcely is the infant born when it passes into the hands of the trained nurse, and from hers on into the hands of the qualified teacher; till, at nine or ten, the son in certain countries often leaves his home for ever for the public school, to pass on to the college and university; while the daughter, in the hands of trained instructors and dependents, owes in the majority of cases hardly more of her education or formation to maternal toil. While even among our poorer classes, the infant school, and the public school; and later on the necessity for manual training, takes the son and often the daughter as completely, and always increasingly as civilisation advances, from the mother's control. So marked has this change in woman's ancient field of labour become, that a woman of almost any class may have borne many children and yet in early middle age be found sitting alone in an empty house, all her offspring gone from her to receive training and instruction at the hands of others. The ancient statement that the training and education of her offspring is exclusively the duty of the mother, however true it may have been with regard to a remote past, has become an absolute misstatement; and the woman who should at the

present day insist on entirely educating her own offspring would, in nine cases out of ten, inflict an irreparable injury on them, because she is incompetent.

But, if possible, yet more deeply and radically have the changes of modern civilisation touched our ancient field of labour in another direction--in that very portion of the field of human labour which is peculiarly and organically ours, and which can never be wholly taken from us. Here the shrinkage has been larger than in any other direction, and touches us as women more vitally.

Time was, and still is, among almost all primitive and savage folk, when the first and all-important duty of the female to her society was to bear, to bear much, and to bear unceasingly! On her adequate and persistent performance of this passive form of labour, and of her successful feeding of her young from her own breast, and rearing it, depended, not merely the welfare, but often the very existence, of her tribe or nation. Where, as is the case among almost all barbarous peoples, the rate of infant mortality is high; where the unceasing casualties resulting from war, the chase, and acts of personal violence tend continually to reduce the number of adult males; where, surgical knowledge being still in its infancy, most wounds are fatal; where, above all, recurrent pestilence and famine, unfailing if of irregular recurrence, decimated the people, it has been all important that woman should employ her creative power to its very uttermost limits if the race were not at once to dwindle and die out. "May thy wife's womb never cease from bearing," is still today the highest expression of goodwill on the part of a native African chief to his departing guest. For, not only does the prolific woman in the primitive state contribute to the wealth and strength of her nation as a whole, but to that of her own male companion and of her family. Where the social conditions of life are so simple that, in addition to bearing and suckling the child, it is reared and nourished through childhood almost entirely through the labour and care of the mother, requiring no expenditure of tribal or family wealth on its training or education, its value as an adult enormously outweighs, both to the state and the male, the trouble and expense of rearing it, which falls almost entirely on the individual woman who bears it. The man who has twenty children to become warriors and labourers is by so much the richer and the more powerful than he who has but one; while the state whose women are prolific and labour for and rear their children stands so far insured against destruction. Incessant and persistent child-bearing is thus truly the highest duty and the most socially esteemed occupation of the primitive woman, equalling fully in social importance the labour of the man as hunter and warrior.

Even under those conditions of civilisation which have existed in the centuries which divide primitive savagery from high civilisation, the demand for continuous, unbroken child-bearing on the part of the woman as her loftiest social duty has generally been hardly less imperious. Throughout the Middle Ages of Europe, and down almost to our own day, the rate of infant mortality was almost as large as in a savage state; medical ignorance destroyed innumerable lives; antiseptic surgery being unknown, serious wounds were still almost always fatal; in the low state of sanitary science, plagues such as those which in the reign of Justinian swept across the civilised world from India to Northern Europe, well nigh depopulating the globe, or the Black Death of 1349, which in England alone swept away more than half the population of the island, were but extreme forms of the destruction of population going on continually as the result of zymotic disease; while wars were not merely far more common but, owing to the famines which almost invariably followed them, were far more destructive to human life than in our own days, and deaths by violence, whether at the hands of the state or as the result of personal enmity, were of daily occurrence in all lands. Under these conditions abstinence on the part of woman from incessant child-bearing might have led to almost the same serious diminution or even extinction of her people, as in the savage state; while the very existence of her civilisation depended on the production of an immense number of individuals as beasts of burden, without the expenditure of whose crude muscular force in physical labour of agriculture and manufacture those intermediate civilisations would, in the absence of machinery, have been impossible. Twenty men had to be born, fed at the breast, and reared by women to perform the crude brute labour which is performed today by one small, well-adjusted steam crane; and the demand for large masses of human creatures as mere reservoirs of motor force for accomplishing the simplest processes was imperative. So strong, indeed, was the consciousness of the importance to society of continuous child-bearing on the part of woman, that as late as the middle of the

sixteenth century Martin Luther wrote: "If a woman becomes weary or at last dead from bearing, that matters not; let her only die from bearing, she is there to do it;" and he doubtless gave expression, in a crude and somewhat brutal form, to a conviction common to the bulk of his contemporaries, both male and female.

Today, this condition has almost completely reversed itself.

The advance of science and the amelioration of the physical conditions of life tend rapidly toward a diminution of human mortality. The infant death-rate among the upper classes in modern civilisations has fallen by more than one-half; while among poorer classes it is already, though slowly, falling: the increased knowledge of the laws of sanitation has made among all highly civilised peoples the depopulation by plague a thing of the past, and the discoveries of the next twenty or thirty years will probably do away for ever with the danger to man of zymotic disease. Famines of the old desolating type have become an impossibility where rapid means of transportation convey the superfluity of one land to supply the lack of another; and war and deeds of violence, though still lingering among us, have already become episodal in the lives of nations as of individuals; while the vast advances in antiseptic surgery have caused even the effects of wounds and dismemberments to become only very partially fatal to human life. All these changes have tended to diminish human mortality and protract human life; and they have today already made it possible for a race not only to maintain its numbers, but even to increase them, with a comparatively small expenditure of woman's vitality in the passive labour of child-bearing.

But yet more seriously has the demand for woman's labour as child-bearer been diminished by change in another direction.

Every mechanical invention which lessens the necessity for rough, untrained, muscular, human labour, diminishes also the social demand upon woman as the producer in large masses of such labourers. Already throughout the modern civilised world we have reached a point at which the social demand is not merely for human creatures in the bulk for use as beasts of burden, but, rather, and only, for such human creatures as shall be so trained and cultured as to be fitted for the performance of the more complex duties of modern life. Not, now, merely for many men, but, rather, for few men, and those few, well born and well instructed, is the modern demand. And the woman who today merely produces twelve children and suckles them, and then turns them loose on her society and family, is regarded, and rightly so, as a curse and down draught, and not the productive labourer, of her community. Indeed, so difficult and expensive has become in the modern world the rearing and training of even one individual, in a manner suited to fit it for coping with the complexities and difficulties of civilised life, that, to the family as well as to the state, unlimited fecundity on the part of the female has already, in most cases, become irremediable evil; whether it be in the case of the artisan, who at the cost of immense self-sacrifice must support and train his children till their twelfth or fourteenth year, if they are ever to become even skilled manual labourers, and who if his family be large often sinks beneath the burden, allowing his offspring, untaught and untrained, to become waste products of human life; or, in that of the professional man, who by his mental toil is compelled to support and educate, at immense expense, his sons till they are twenty or older, and to sustain his daughters, often throughout their whole lives should they not marry, and to whom a large family proves often no less disastrous; while the state whose women produce recklessly large masses of individuals in excess of those for whom they can provide instruction and nourishment is a state, in so far, tending toward deterioration. The commandment to the modern woman is now not simply "Thou shalt bear," but rather, "Thou shalt not bear in excess of thy power to rear and train satisfactorily;" and the woman who should today appear at the door of a workhouse or the tribunal of the poor-law guardians followed by her twelve infants, demanding honourable sustenance for them and herself in return for the labour she had undergone in producing them, would meet with but short shrift. And the modern man who on his wedding-day should be greeted with the ancient good wish, that he might become the father of twenty sons and twenty daughters, would regard it as a malediction rather than a blessing. It is certain that the time is now rapidly approaching when child-bearing will be regarded rather as a lofty privilege, permissible only to those who have shown their power rightly to train and provide for their offspring, than a labour which in itself, and under whatever conditions performed, is beneficial to society.

(The difference between the primitive and modern view on this matter is aptly and quaintly illustrated by two incidents. Seeing a certain Bantu woman who appeared better cared for, less hard worked, and happier than the mass of her companions, we made inquiry, and found that she had two impotent brothers; because of this she herself had not married, but had borne by different men fourteen children, all of whom when grown she had given to her brothers. "They are fond of me because I have given them so many children, therefore I have not to work like the other women; and my brothers give me plenty of mealies and milk," she replied, complacently, when questioned, "and our family will not die out." And this person, whose conduct was so emphatically anti-social on all sides when viewed from the modern standpoint, was evidently regarded as pre-eminently of value to her family and to society because of her mere fecundity. On the other hand, a few weeks back appeared an account in the London papers of an individual who, taken up at the East End for some brutal offence, blubbered out in court that she was the mother of twenty children. "You should be ashamed of yourself!" responded the magistrate; "a woman capable of such conduct would be capable of doing anything!" and the fine was remorselessly inflicted. Undoubtedly, if somewhat brutally, the magistrate yet gave true voice to the modern view on the subject of excessive and reckless child-bearing.)

Further, owing partly to the diminished demand for child-bearing, rising from the extreme difficulty and expense of rearing and education, and to many other complex social causes, to which we shall return later, millions of women in our modern societies are so placed as to be absolutely compelled to go through life not merely childless, but without sex relationship in any form whatever; while another mighty army of women is reduced by the dislocations of our civilisation to accepting sexual relationships which practically negate child-bearing, and whose only product is physical and moral disease.

Thus, it has come to pass that vast numbers of us are, by modern social conditions, prohibited from child-bearing at all; and that even those among us who are child-bearers are required, in proportion as the class of race to which we belong stands high in the scale of civilisation, to produce in most cases a limited number of offspring; so that even for these of us, child-bearing and suckling, instead of filling the entire circle of female life from the first appearance of puberty to the end of middle age, becomes an episodal occupation, employing from three or four to ten or twenty of the threescore-and-ten-years which are allotted to human life. In such societies the statement (so profoundly true when made with regard to most savage societies, and even largely true with regard to those in the intermediate stages of civilisation) that the main and continuous occupation of all women from puberty to age is the bearing and suckling of children, and that this occupation must fully satisfy all her needs for social labour and activity, becomes an antiquated and unmitigated misstatement.

Not only are millions of our women precluded from ever bearing a child, but for those of us who do bear the demand is ever increasingly in civilised societies coupled with the condition that if we would act socially we must restrict our powers. (As regards modern civilised nations, we find that those whose birthrate is the highest per woman are by no means the happiest, most enlightened, or powerful; nor do we even find that the population always increases in proportion to the births. France, which in many respects leads in the van of civilisation, has one of the lowest birthrates per woman in Europe; and among the free and enlightened population of Switzerland and Scandinavia the birthrate is often exceedingly low; while Ireland, one of the most unhappy and weak of European nations, had long one of the highest birthrates, without any proportional increase in population or power. With regard to the different classes in one community, the same effect is observable. The birthrate per woman is higher among the lowest and most ignorant classes in the back slums of our great cities, than among the women of the upper and cultured classes, mainly because the age at which marriages are contracted always tends to become higher as the culture and intelligence of individuals rises, but also because of the regulation of the number of births after marriage. Yet the number of children reared to adult years among the more intelligent classes probably equals or exceeds those of the lowest, owing to the high rate of infant mortality where births are excessive.)

Looking round, then, with the uttermost impartiality we can command, on the entire field of woman's ancient and traditional labours, we find that fully three-fourths of it have shrunk away for ever, and that the remaining

fourth still tends to shrink.

It is this great fact, so often and so completely overlooked, which lies as the propelling force behind that vast and restless "Woman's Movement" which marks our day. It is this fact, whether clearly and intellectually grasped, or, as is more often the case, vaguely and painfully felt, which awakes in the hearts of the ablest modern European women their passionate, and at times it would seem almost incoherent, cry for new forms of labour and new fields for the exercise of their powers.

Thrown into strict logical form, our demand is this: We do not ask that the wheels of time should reverse themselves, or the stream of life flow backward. We do not ask that our ancient spinning-wheels be again resuscitated and placed in our hands; we do not demand that our old grindstones and hoes be returned to us, or that man should again betake himself entirely to his ancient province of war and the chase, leaving to us all domestic and civil labour. We do not even demand that society shall immediately so reconstruct itself that every woman may be again a child-bearer (deep and over-mastering as lies the hunger for motherhood in every virile woman's heart!); neither do we demand that the children whom we bear shall again be put exclusively into our hands to train. This, we know, cannot be. The past material conditions of life have gone for ever; no will of man can recall them; but this is our demand: We demand that, in that strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman, where nothing is as it was, and all things are assuming new shapes and relations, that in this new world we also shall have our share of honoured and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labour of the Children of Woman. We demand nothing more than this, and we will take nothing less. This is our "WOMAN'S RIGHT!"

Chapter II.

Parasitism (continued).

Is it to be, that, in the future, machinery and the captive motor-forces of nature are largely to take the place of human hand and foot in the labour of clothing and feeding the nations; are these branches of industry to be no longer domestic labours?--then, we demand in the factory, the warehouse, and the field, wherever machinery has usurped our ancient labour-ground, that we also should have our place, as guiders, controllers, and possessors. Is child-bearing to become the labour of but a portion of our sex?--then we demand for those among us who are allowed to take no share in it, compensatory and equally honourable and important fields of social toil. Is the training of human creatures to become a yet more and more onerous and laborious occupation, their education and culture to become increasingly a high art, complex and scientific?--if so, then, we demand that high and complex culture and training which shall fit us for instructing the race which we bring into the world. Is the demand for child-bearing to become so diminished that, even in the lives of those among us who are child-bearers, it shall fill no more than half a dozen years out of the three-score-and-ten of human life?--then we demand that an additional outlet be ours which shall fill up with dignity and value the tale of the years not so employed. Is intellectual labour to take ever and increasingly the place of crude muscular exertion in the labour of life?-- then we demand for ourselves that culture and the freedom of action which alone can yield us the knowledge of life and the intellectual vigour and strength which will enable us to undertake the same share of mental which we have borne in the past in physical labours of life. Are the rulers of the race to be no more its kings and queens, but the mass of the peoples?-- then we, one-half of the nations, demand our full queens' share in the duties and labours of government and legislation. Slowly but determinately, as the old fields of labour close up and are submerged behind us, we demand entrance into the new.

We make this demand, not for our own sakes alone, but for the succour of the race.

A horseman, riding along on a dark night in an unknown land, may chance to feel his horse start beneath him; rearing, it may almost hurl him to the earth: in the darkness he may curse his beast, and believe its aim is simply to cast him off, and free itself for ever of its burden. But when the morning dawns and lights the hills and valleys he has travelled, looking backward, he may perceive that the spot where his beast reared, planting its feet into the earth, and where it refused to move farther on the old road, was indeed the edge of a mighty precipice, down which one step more would have precipitated both horse and rider. And he may then see that it was an instinct wiser than his own which lead his creature, though in the dark, to leap backward, seeking a new path along which both might travel. (Is it not recorded that even Balaam's ass on which he rode saw the angel with flaming sword, but Balaam saw it not?)

In the confusion and darkness of the present, it may well seem to some, that woman, in her desire to seek for new paths of labour and employment, is guided only by an irresponsible impulse; or that she seeks selfishly only her own good, at the cost of that of the race, which she has so long and faithfully borne onward. But, when a clearer future shall have arisen and the obscuring mists of the present have been dissipated, may it not then be clearly manifest that not for herself alone, but for her entire race, has woman sought her new paths?

For let it be noted exactly what our position is, who today, as women, are demanding new fields of labour and a reconstruction of our relationship with life.

It is often said that the labour problem before the modern woman and that before the unemployed or partially or almost uselessly employed male, are absolutely identical; and that therefore, when the male labour problem of our age solves itself, that of the woman will of necessity have met its solution also.

This statement, with a certain specious semblance of truth, is yet, we believe, radically and fundamentally false. It is true that both the male and the female problems of our age have taken their rise largely in the same

rapid material changes which during the last centuries, and more especially the last ninety years, have altered the face of the human world. Both men and women have been robbed by those changes of their ancient remunerative fields of social work: here the resemblance stops. The male, from whom the changes of modern civilisation have taken his ancient field of labour, has but one choice before him: he must find new fields of labour, or he must perish. Society will not ultimately support him in an absolutely quiescent and almost useless condition. If he does not vigorously exert himself in some direction or other (the direction may even be predatory) he must ultimately be annihilated. Individual drones, both among the wealthiest and the poorest classes (millionaires' sons, dukes, or tramps), may in isolated cases be preserved, and allowed to reproduce themselves without any exertion or activity of mind or body, but a vast body of males who, having lost their old forms of social employment, should refuse in any way to exert themselves or seek for new, would at no great length of time become extinct. There never has been, and as far as can be seen, there never will be, a time when the majority of the males in any society will be supported by the rest of the males in a condition of perfect mental and physical inactivity. "Find labour or die," is the choice ultimately put before the human male today, as in the past; and this constitutes his labour problem. (The nearest approach to complete parasitism on the part of a vast body of males occurred, perhaps, in ancient Rome at the time of the decay and downfall of the Empire, when the bulk of the population, male as well as female, was fed on imported corn, wine, and oil, and supplied even with entertainment, almost entirely without exertion or labour of any kind; but this condition was of short duration, and speedily contributed to the downfall of the diseased Empire itself. Among the wealthy and so-called upper classes, the males of various aristocracies have frequently tended to become completely parasitic after a lapse of time, but such a condition has always been met by a short and sharp remedy; and the class has fallen, or become extinct. The condition of the males of the upper classes in France before the Revolution affords an interesting illustration of this point.)

The labour of the man may not always be useful in the highest sense to his society, or it may even be distinctly harmful and antisocial, as in the case of the robber-barons of the Middle Ages, who lived by capturing and despoiling all who passed by their castles; or as in the case of the share speculators, stock-jobbers, ring-and-corner capitalists, and monopolists of the present day, who feed upon the productive labours of society without contributing anything to its welfare. But even males so occupied are compelled to expend a vast amount of energy and even a low intelligence in their callings; and, however injurious to their societies, they run no personal risk of handing down effete and enervated constitutions to their race. Whether beneficially or unbeneficially, the human male must, generally speaking, employ his intellect, or his muscle, or die.

The position of the unemployed modern female is one wholly different. The choice before her, as her ancient fields of domestic labour slip from her, is not generally or often at the present day the choice between finding new fields of labour, or death; but one far more serious in its ultimate reaction on humanity as a whole--it is the choice between finding new forms of labour or sinking slowly into a condition of more or less complete and passive sex-parasitism! (It is not without profound interest to note the varying phenomena of sex-parasitism as they present themselves in the animal world, both in the male and in the female form. Though among the greater number of species in the animal world the female form is larger and more powerful rather than the male (e.g., among birds of prey, such as eagles, falcons, vultures, &c., and among fishes, insects, &c.), yet sex-parasitism appears among both sex forms. In certain sea-creatures, for example, the female carries about in the folds of her covering three or four minute and quite inactive males, who are entirely passive and dependent upon her. Among termites, on the other hand, the female has so far degenerated that she has entirely lost the power of locomotion; she can no longer provide herself or her offspring with nourishment, or defend or even clean herself; she has become a mere passive, distended bag of eggs, without intelligence or activity, she and her offspring existing through the exertions of the workers of the community. Among other insects, such, for example, as certain ticks, another form of female parasitism prevails, and while the male remains a complex, highly active, and winded creature, the female, fastening herself by the head into the flesh of some living animal and sucking its blood, has lost wings and all activity, and power of locomotion; having become a mere distended bladder, which when filled with eggs bursts and ends a parasitic existence which has hardly been life. It is not impossible, and it appears, indeed, highly

probable, that it has been this degeneration and parasitism on the part of the female which has set its limitation to the evolution of ants, creatures which, having reached a point of mental development in some respects almost as high as that of man, have yet become curiously and immovably arrested. The whole question of sex-parasitism among the lower animals is one throwing suggestive and instructive side-lights on human social problems, but is too extensive to be here entered on.)

Again and again in the history of the past, when among human creatures a certain stage of material civilisation has been reached, a curious tendency has manifested itself for the human female to become more or less parasitic; social conditions tend to rob her of all forms of active, conscious, social labour, and to reduce her, like the field-tick, to the passive exercise of her sex functions alone. And the result of this parasitism has invariably been the decay in vitality and intelligence of the female, followed after a longer or shorter period by that of her male descendants and her entire society.

Nevertheless, in the history of the past the dangers of the sex-parasitism have never threatened more than a small section of the females of the human race, those exclusively of some comparatively small dominant race or class; the mass of women beneath them being still compelled to assume many forms of strenuous activity. It is at the present day, and under the peculiar conditions of our modern civilisation, that for the first time sex-parasitism has become a danger, more or less remote, to the mass of civilised women, perhaps ultimately to all.

In the very early stages of human growth, the sexual parasitism and degeneration of the female formed no possible source of social danger. Where the conditions of life rendered it inevitable that all the labour of a community should be performed by the members of that community for themselves, without the assistance of slaves or machinery, the tendency has always been rather to throw an excessive amount of social labour on the female. Under no conditions, at no time, in no place, in the history of the world have the males of any period, of any nation, or of any class, shown the slightest inclination to allow their own females to become inactive or parasitic, so long as the actual muscular labour of feeding and clothing them would in that case have devolved upon themselves!

The parasitism of the human female becomes a possibility only when a point in civilisation is reached (such as that which was attained in the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome, Persia, Assyria, India, and such as today exists in many of the civilisations of the East, such as those of China and Turkey), when, owing to the extensive employment of the labour of slaves, or of subject races or classes, the dominant race or class has become so liberally supplied with the material goods of life, that mere physical toil on the part of its own female members has become unnecessary. It is when this point has been reached, and never before, that the symptoms of female parasitism have in the past almost invariably tended to manifest themselves, and have become a social danger. The males of the dominant class have almost always contrived to absorb to themselves the new intellectual occupations, with the absence of necessity for the old forms of physical toil made possible in their societies; and the females of the dominant class or race, for whose muscular labours there was now also no longer any need, not succeeding in grasping or attaining to these new forms of labour, have sunk into a state in which, performing no species of active social duty, they have existed through the passive performance of sexual functions alone, with how much or how little of discontent will now never be known, since no literary record has been made by the woman of the past, of her desires or sorrows. Then, in place of the active labouring woman, upholding society by her toil, has come the effete wife, concubine, or prostitute, clad in fine raiment, the work of others' fingers; fed on luxurious viands, the result of others' toil, waited on and tended by the labour of others. The need for her physical labour having gone, and mental industry not having taken its place, she bedecked and scented her person, or had it bedecked and scented for her, she lay upon her sofa, or drove or was carried out in her vehicle, and, loaded with jewels, she sought by dissipations and amusements to fill up the inordinate blank left by the lack of productive activity. And as the hand whitened and frame softened, till, at last, the very duties of motherhood, which were all the constitution of her life left her, became distasteful, and, from the instant when her infant came damp from her womb, it passed into the hands of others, to be tended and reared by them; and from youth to age her offspring often