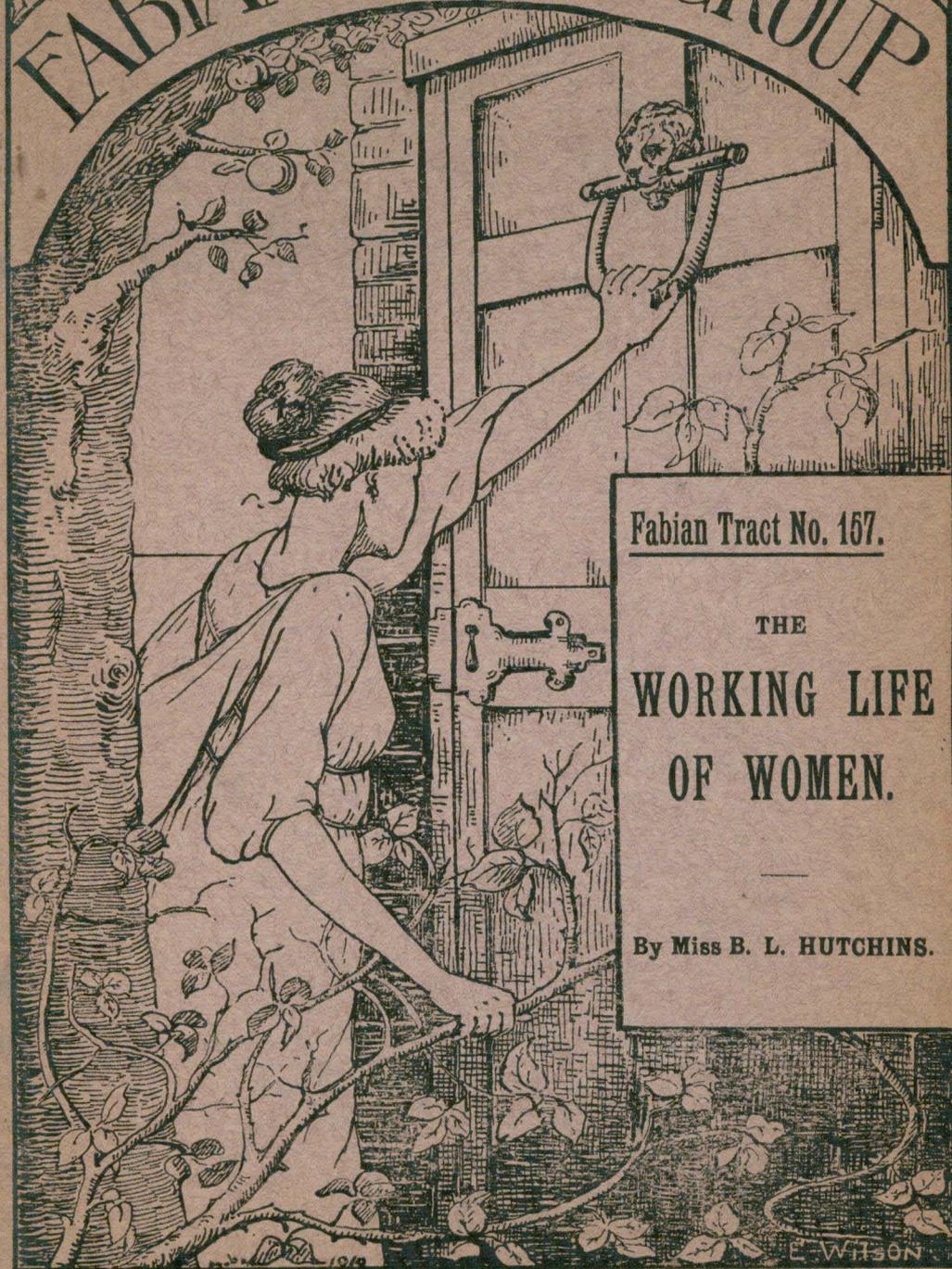


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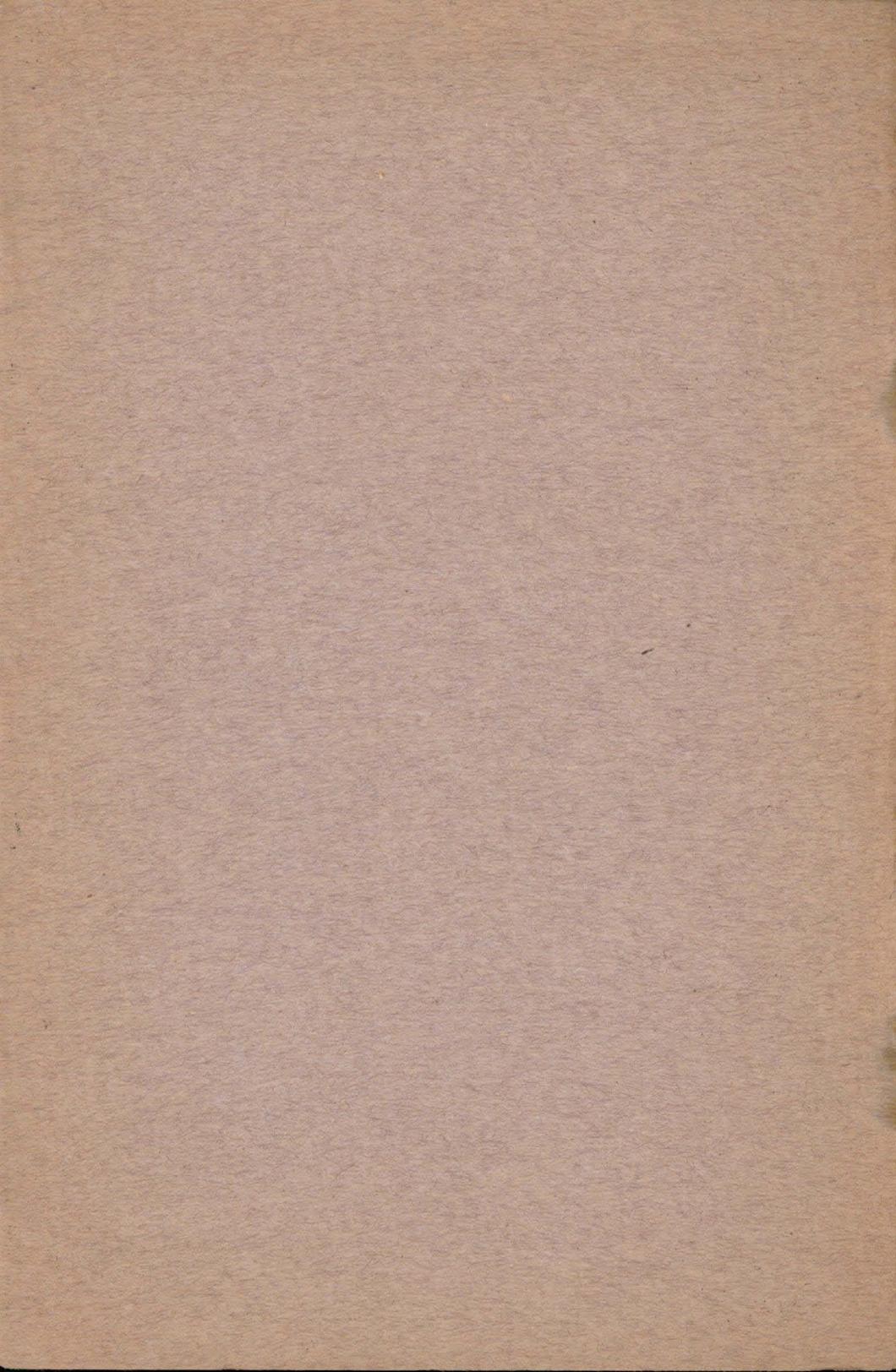
Fabian Tract No. 157.

THE
WORKING LIFE
OF WOMEN.

By Miss B. L. HUTCHINS.

E. WILSON

PRICE ONE PENNY.



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THE WORKING LIFE OF WOMEN.

It is still the custom in some quarters to assert that "the proper sphere for women is the home," and to assume that a decree of Providence or a natural law has marked off and separated the duties of men and women. Man, it is said, is the economic support and protector of the family, woman is its watchful guardian and nurse; whence it follows that the wife must be maintained by her husband in order to give her whole time to home and children. The present paper does not attempt to discuss what is in theory the highest life for women; whether the majority of women can ever realize their fullest life outside the family, or whether an intelligent wife and mother has not on the whole, other things equal, more scope for the development of her personality than any single woman can possibly have. The question I am here concerned with relates to the actual position of the women themselves. Is it the lot of all women, or even of a large majority of women, to have their material needs provided for them so that they can reserve themselves for the duties that tend to conserve the home and family?

Let us see what the Census has to tell us on the subject. We find that in 1901 there were in round numbers 15,729,000 men and boys, and 16,799,000 women and girls, in England and Wales. This means that there are 1,070,000 more women than men, and if we omit all children under fifteen there are about 110 women to every 100 men. This surplus of women has increased slowly but steadily in every Census since 1841; that is to say, in 1841 there were in every 1,000 persons 489 males, and 511 females; but in 1901 there were in every 1,000, 484 males, and 516 females.

The disproportionate numbers of women are no doubt partly due to the Imperial needs which compel a large number of men to emigrate to our actual or potential colonies and dependencies. It is impossible to say how many are thus to be accounted for, probably not a very large proportion, save in the upper classes. The Census shows figures for the army, navy, and merchant seamen serving abroad, but if these are added to the population of the United Kingdom the excess of women is still considerable. There seems to be no means of estimating the numbers of men who are absent on private business.

The main cause of the surplus of women seems to be their lower death-rate, and this is popularly accounted for as the advantage resulting to women from their comparatively sheltered life and less exposure to accident and occupational disease. This assumption no doubt accounts for some part of the difference; women do not work on railways or as general laborers, or usually in the most unhealthy

processes of trades scheduled as "Dangerous" under the Factory Act. There can be no doubt either that the death-rate of women has been lowered by the operation of the Factory Act in improving conditions of employment. The death-rate of men has also been lowered, but in a less degree, because although men benefit by improved conditions in the factory just as women do, the proportion of men employed in factories and workshops is small comparatively with women, so many men being employed in transport, building, laboring, docks, etc. These latter occupations so far have obtained very little legal protection from the risks and dangers run by the workers, although many of these dangers are notoriously preventible.

Still it is doubtful whether the lower death-rate of women can be entirely accounted for by the greater degree of protection enjoyed. Women often work longer hours even under the Factory Act than most men do under their trade union; much of the work done by women in laundries, jam factories, sack factories, and others, is extremely laborious. Again, the enormous amount of domestic work accomplished by women in their homes, without outside help, in addition to the bearing and caring for infants and young children, must be equal in output of energy to much more than all the industrial work of women, especially when the rough, inconvenient, and inadequate nature of the appliances common in working-class homes is considered, and the still more painful fact is remembered that the very person responsible for all this work is often the one of the family who in case of need is the first to go short of food.

It is true that more men than women die of accidents. But let us add to the accidental deaths the deaths of women from childbirth and other causes peculiar to women. We find that in 1907 10,895 males died from accidents; 4,890 females died from accidents; 4,670 from causes peculiar to women, 9,560 altogether, about 1,300 less than men. But the total deaths of men in 1907 exceeded the deaths of women by 14,297, an excess more than ten times as great.

There is also the question of age, which is important in connection with the death-rate. The number of boys born is larger than the number of girls, about 104 to 100. The death-rate of boy babies is almost always higher than that of girls, and in 1907 the death-rate of boys under four was higher than that of girls, but the death-rate of boys from four to fifteen was lower than that of girls at the same age; then at fifteen the male death-rate again rises above the female and remains higher at all later ages.

DEATH-RATES, 1907, PER 1,000 LIVING.

	Under 1 year per 1,000 births	aged							
		1	2	3	4	under 5	5	10	all ages
Males ...	130	38.4	15.5	10.1	6.9	44.8	3.3	1.9	
Females...	104	36.2	14.8	9.7	7.6	37.0	3.4	2.0	
		15	20	25	35	45	55	65	all ages
Males ...	2.9	3.8	5.6	9.5	16.9	33.7	94.1	16.0	
Females ...	2.7	3.2	4.6	7.8	13.1	26.0	85.9	14.1	

Now if the lower death-rate of girls and women is due to their being taken more care of, how inexplicable are these figures. There is little enough difference in the care and shelter given to boys and girls under four, yet the boys die much faster; between four and fifteen, on the other hand, girls usually are a good deal more sheltered and protected than boys, and less likely to run into dangerous places and positions, yet from four to fifteen the male death-rate is slightly lower than the female. At fifteen when, as we shall see, a very large proportion of girls begin industrial work, the death-rates are again reversed, the male death-rate being thenceforward the higher. Nor does it appear that the death-rate of young women is much influenced by the fact of industrial employment. It is true that in Lancashire, where many women and girls work, the death-rate of women is higher than in England and Wales; but in Durham, where comparatively very few women and girls are employed, the death-rate is higher still.

PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES OCCUPIED.

	LANCASHIRE.			DURHAM		
	Ages 15	20	25-34	15	20	25-34
Single	78	80	76	40	49	49
Married or widowed	24	25	19	1	2	3
Death-rates, 1907—						
Male... ..	3·3	4·2	6·1	3·8	4·7	5·6
Female	3·0	3·5	5·4	3·7	4·4	6·3

The contrast seems to indicate that it is not the fact of employment, but the conditions, both of life and employment, that are prejudicial to women in these industrial centres, for although death-rates have generally fallen, they are still higher in most of the mining and manufacturing districts, notably in Lancashire and Durham, than the average of England and Wales.

It will be agreed that the greater average duration of life among women is sufficient to account for a large excess number of women over men, over and above the emigration of many young men, which contributes to the same result. The surplus of women is distributed very differently in different districts: it is greater in London and the Home Counties, and also in Lancashire; less in the mining districts and the rural districts; and generally much greater in town than country. In the urban districts women over fifteen number 112, in the rural districts only 102, to every 100 males. This is perhaps partly due to the girls going to towns as domestic servants; for although the percentage of domestic servants is rather higher in the country than in town, the actual numbers are much less, and particular towns and residential urban districts—Bournemouth, Hampstead, and the like—show a very high percentage of servants. But the higher proportion of males in the country must in part be due to the fact that babies born in the country have a better chance of life. Although the number of boys born is greater than the number of girls (it was about 1,037 to 1,000 in 1891-1900, and slightly higher since 1901), the boy babies are on the average more

difficult to bring into the world and more delicate for the first few years of life, as is shown by the male infant death-rate being higher than the female. It follows that though boy babies are more numerous at the outset, the girls steadily gain upon them, and at some point in early life the numbers are equal. If infant mortality is high, the surplus boy babies are very soon swept out of existence, and there may be "superfluous women" even under five years old! But in healthy districts, especially in the country, where infant mortality is low, the boys survive in greater numbers, and exceed the girls in numbers up to the age of twenty; thus in later life the disproportion of women is not so great in the country as it is in towns. This fact constitutes one important reason (among others that are better known) for improving the sanitary conditions in towns. A diminution in infant mortality will tend to keep a larger proportion of boys alive, and thus by so much redress the balance of the sexes. To give an instance: in rural districts of Lancashire the boys under five were 1,018 to every 1,000 girls; in the urban districts, which include many towns with a high infant mortality, the boys under five were only 989 to every 1,000 girls. It is impossible here to give many details on this point, but fuller statistics are given in the *Statistical Journal*, June, 1909, pp. 211-212.

Marriage and Widowhood.

But it is evident that one way or another we must face the fact of a large excess number of women, even though we may hope that improvement in the people's life and health may prevent some of the waste of men and boys' life that occurs at present. How are women provided for? Marriage is still the most important and extensively followed occupation for women. Over 5,700,000 women in England and Wales are married, or 49.6 per cent.; nearly one-half of the female population over fifteen.

In every 100 women aged	15-20	.....	2	are married.
"	"	"	20-25	..... 27
"	"	"	25-35	..... 64
"	"	"	35-45	..... 75
"	"	"	45-55	..... 71
"	"	"	55-65	..... 57
"	"	"	65-75	..... 37
"	"	"	75	..... 16

In middle life—from thirty-five to fifty-five—three-fourths of the women are married. In early life a large proportion are single; in later life a large proportion are widowed. Put it in another way. From twenty to thirty-five, only two out of every four women are married, most of the others being still single; from thirty-five to fifty-five, three in every four women are married; over fifty-five, less than two in every four are married, most of the others being already widowed. It is only for twenty years (between thirty-five and fifty-five) that as many as three-fourths of women can be said to be provided for by marriage, even on the assumption that all wives are provided for by their husbands.

As we have seen, women exceed men in numbers, and not only that, but the age of marriage is usually for economic reasons later for men than women, and some men do not marry at all, consequently it is utterly vain to assume that women *generally* can look to marriage for support, and to talk of the home as "women's true sphere." Mrs. Butler wrote, now many years ago, that, like Pharaoh who commanded the Israelites to make bricks without straw, "these moralisers command this multitude of enquiring women back to homes which are not, and which they have not the material to create." Although about three-fourths of the women in the country do get married some time or other, at any given time fully half the women over fifteen are either single or widowed. Women marry younger and live longer than men, consequently the proportion of widows is considerable, something like one woman in every eight over twenty years old. The largest proportion occurs, as might be expected, at advanced years.

In every 100 women aged	35-45	.....	6	are widows.
"	"	"	16	"
"	"	"	31	"
"	"	"	52	"
"	"	"	73	"

Occupation.

The number of women and girls over fifteen returned in 1901 as occupied was 3,970,000, or 34.5. This figure can only be regarded as an approximate one, as there is little information to show how many of the numerous women who work occasionally, but not regularly, do or do not return themselves as occupied, and even if this information were forthcoming, it is difficult to see how any precise line of demarcation could be devised to distinguish the degree of regularity that should constitute an "occupied" woman. The figure is again obviously inadequate in regard to women's *work* (as distinguished from occupation), as no account is taken of the enormous amount of work done at home—cooking, washing, cleaning, mending and making of clothes, tendance of children, and nursing the sick done by women, especially in the working class, who are not returned as belonging to any specific occupation.

It is misleading, however, to take the percentage 34.5 as if it meant that about one-third of all women enter upon a trade or occupation.

In every 100 women aged	15	.....	66	are occupied.
"	"	"	56	"
"	"	"	31	"
"	"	"	23	"
"	"	"	22	"
"	"	"	21	"
"	"	"	16	"
"	"	"	7	"

These figures show what is a very important point to remember, viz., that the majority of women workers are quite young, and this is

one great difference in the work of men and women. The Census shows that over 90 per cent. of the men are occupied till fifty-five, and 89 per cent. even from fifty-five to sixty-five. But for women, especially in the industrial classes, the case is different. Their employment is largely an episode of early life. The majority of young working women work for a few years and leave work at marriage, as is shown by the rapid fall in the percentage occupied from the age of twenty-five. It is often stated by social investigators that the prospect of marriage makes working girls slack about trade unions, and indifferent about training. Many girls seem for this reason to fail in some degree to realize their full possibilities or to achieve their full industrial efficiency. In the case of those who do marry, and whose best years will be given to work socially far more important than the episodic employment carried on by them in mill, factory or workroom, this alleged lack of industrial efficiency is not perhaps of much consequence. But although a large proportion of women are married before thirty-five, and as we know, the proportion married is greater in the working classes than among the middle and upper classes, yet it is a mistake to suppose that the mature single woman in industry is so rare as to be a negligible quantity. There are, for instance, nearly a quarter of a million single occupied women between thirty-five and forty-four. They include 88,000 domestic servants, 32,500 professional women (teachers, doctors, etc.), 30,000 textile workers, and 40,000 workers in making clothes and dress. These figures show that self dependence is a necessity for many even at the age when, and in the class where marriage is most frequent. The importance to the single self-supporting woman of a skilled occupation which she can pursue with self-respect and for which she can be decently remunerated, need hardly be emphasized here.

Married and Widowed Women Occupied.

The proportion of married or widowed women who are occupied is about 13 per cent., but, unlike the single women, whose percentage of occupation steadily falls as age increases, the percentage of married or widowed occupied is low at first, highest between thirty-five and fifty-five, and then falls to old age.

In every hundred married or widowed women occupied, six are under twenty-five; forty-four are between twenty-five and forty-five; forty are between forty-five and sixty-five; ten are over sixty-five.

The figures in our Census unfortunately do not separate the married or widowed occupied, so it is difficult to estimate from the above figures what proportion falls in to either class, but there can be little doubt that the high percentage of middle-aged women is due to widowhood. Frau Elizabeth Gnauck-Kühne, who has made a very able study of the life and work of German women,* tells us that in Germany, of married women only 12 per cent. are occupied, of widowed women as many as 44 per cent. The proportion of occupied widows is probably lower with us, as we have much less small farming, which in Germany is often carried on by women after the

* "Die Deutsche Frau."

husbands' death ; but there can be little doubt that the proportion of widows working is higher than the proportion married. In a very interesting passage Madame Gnauck points out the peculiar handicap suffered by a woman who is thus forced to renew industrial activity in middle life. The industrial life of women, she writes, is not continuous, but is split in two. Woman is normally provided for by marriage, let us say, for twenty or thirty years. But marriage is not a life-long provision for the average woman, it is only a provision for the best years of life, those years, in fact, in which a woman is ordinarily most capable of taking care of herself. The husband is, in many cases, swept off in middle life, and in the industrial classes he has usually not had very much chance of saving a competence for his widow. A certain proportion of women, therefore, we cannot say exactly how many, are forced to re-enter the labor market by widowhood, or by other economic causes—illness of the husband, desertion, and so on. Once more the woman appears in the industrial arena, with all the disadvantage of a long period of intermitted employment and loss of industrial experience. Having lost the habit of industrial work, having very usually children to look after and a home to find, she has to compete with girls and young women for wages based on the standard of life of a single unencumbered woman. It may be that the inferior technical skill often attributed to women as compared with men is largely due to this fact, that while a man gives his best years to his work, a woman gives precisely those years to other work, and therefore returns to industry under a considerable handicap. We can hardly doubt that this is a chief cause of pauperism.

The late Mr. Kirkman Gray, in his interesting unfinished work, "Philanthropy and the State," wrote:—"The theory is that the male can earn enough for a family and the female enough for herself. But this theory, even if we accept it as correct, makes no allowance for the fact that every eighth woman is a widow. Here then is the bitter anomaly of the widow's position in the economic sphere. As head of a family, she ought to be able to earn a family wage ; as woman she can only gain the customary price of individual subsistence." The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission recognizes the same anomaly. "It is to the man that is paid the income necessary for the support of the family, on the assumption that the work of the woman is to care for the home and the children. The result is that mothers of young children, if they seek industrial employment, do so under the double disadvantage that the woman's wage is fixed to maintain herself alone, and that even this can be earned only by giving up to work the time that is needed by the care of the children."

Even the Charity Organization Society, which usually inclines to ignore the social aspect of economic hardship and treat every case as merely individual, is forced to recognize the anomaly of the widow's position. "We must look the poor woman's troubles in the face. . . . She has to do the work of two people ; she has to be the breadwinner and go out to work, and she must also be the housekeeper. She has to wash, clean, and cook, make and mend clothes, care for and train

her children. Can one pair of hands manage all this? And, secondly, when she goes out to work our poor widow will probably only earn low wages . . . about 10s. a week, and she will certainly not be able to support herself and her family on that."*

The reflection here occurs that the life of women is inseparably connected with the life of men, and we may well pause to ask whether it is necessary so large a proportion of women should be widows at all. There is an excellent saying, that "we can have as many paupers as we like to pay for." It has an intimate bearing on the toleration of preventible disease and accidents as well as on administrative laxity in the Poor Law. The comparative mortality figure for the general laborer is more than double that of occupied males generally, and it is true the Registrar-General ascribes some of this mortality to confused returns, but even if some allowance, say 25 per cent., be made on this ground, the excess is still great. A pamphlet by Mr. Brockelbank † shows that in 1907 one shunter in thirteen was killed or injured at his work on the railway. The same writer gives reasons for supposing that the published returns of fatal accidents to railway servants fall far short of the truth, only those accidents which cause death within twenty-four hours being reported as fatal.

Many other occupations have a deplorably high death-rate, and it would seem that there is still a good deal to be done in improving the conditions of those workers who are not under the Factory Acts or protected by any effective organization. The protection of women by factory regulation has gone on the lines of protecting the individual woman worker at her work. Surely protection is also needed for the woman at home who sees her husband go off daily to some dangerous trade, where, for want of the necessary technical means for the prevention of disease or accident, he may be killed, maimed, or incur disease, and she and her children be left desolate.

It is notorious that a great deal of industrial disease and many accidents are due to causes largely preventible and within control. A very interesting report was issued last year in regard to dangers in building operations, which affect a large number of men—over a million. The report states that laborers are the principal sufferers from accidents, and have the most dangerous part of the work to do. One trade union secretary stated that 9 per cent. of his members had accidents in 1905. On this scale in eleven years each member would have an accident. Another union official said that a large number of accidents were preventible, and asked for more Government inspection. An employer stated that accidents were, in his belief, largely due to the lack of competent foremen and skilled supervision; he had only had three accidents in thirty years' experience, and attributed this immunity to his engagement of a really competent man. He thought the building trade got into bad odor with the public owing to the tendency to save in wages and put

* "How to Help Widows," by A. M. Humphrey, p. 1. (Published by the Charity Organization Society.)

† "A Question of National Importance." (Hapworth and Co., 1909.)

incompetent men to work that needs really expert supervision. Another witness complained that accidents were caused by putting unskilled men to skilled work for the sake of cheapness.

Dr. Young stated before the Physical Deterioration Committee in 1903 that factories contributed to the spread of phthisis, and that he considered that while a great deal had been done to combat the special dangers and diseases incidental to special trades in general industrial conditions, a great deal remained to be done, and legislative interference had by no means reached its limit. From the Registrar-General's report we find that very high rates of phthisis occur among men in early manhood and middle life. In 1891-1900 of the total deaths among men twenty-five to thirty-five, nearly one-half were due to phthisis and respiratory diseases. The comparative mortality figure for certain occupations in 1900-02 was as follows:—

	Phthisis.	Other Respiratory Diseases.
All occupied males	175	78
All occupied males in agricultural districts	125	38
Tin miners	838	653
General laborers	567	268
General laborers (industrial districts)	450	171
File makers... ..	375	173
Lead miners	317	187
Dock laborers	291	161

It is in the light of such figures as these, it seems to me, that we have to study the problem of married or widowed women's work and the pauperism of able-bodied widows and their children. As women become better instructed, better organized, able to take more interest in politics, and especially when they obtain the Parliamentary franchise, it is to be hoped that they will agitate for drastic legislation and stringent inspection in the industries carried on by men and unregulated by Factory Law.

In the mining and industrial counties the death-rate is markedly above that of England and Wales as a whole, and it is somewhat curious that while a great deal of attention has been given to the infant mortality of Lancashire, which is usually explained as being due to married women's employment, much less notice has been taken of the fact that the *corrected* death-rate of Lancashire is even more above the average than is the mortality of infants.* In 1907, which was an exceptionally healthy year, the death-rates of Lancashire, though diminished, showed themselves still conspicuously above the average; which can be most simply shown by taking the death-rate for the whole country as 100.

* See Corrected Death-Rates in Counties, Registrar-General's Report for 1907, pp. 12-20, cf. p. 14.

COMPARATIVE DEATH-RATE, 1907.

	Infants,	General Death-Rate, corrected for age-constitution.	
		Male.	Female.
England and Wales ...	100	100	100
Lancashire ...	117	124	126

A large part of this excess mortality, which is not by any means peculiar to Lancashire but can be paralleled in some mining districts and exceeded in the Potteries, is made up of deaths from phthisis and respiratory diseases, which are now considered to be largely traceable to unhealthy conditions of houses and work places, and in very great measure preventable. It is impossible in the limits of this paper to give full statistics, but those who desire further information are referred to the Reports of the Registrar-General, especially the two parts of the Decennial Supplement, published in 1907 and 1908 respectively, which are an invaluable mine of facts and figures, and also to the *Statistical Journal* (*loc. cit.*)

The Woman's Handicap.

It is not very easy to summarize briefly the facts of woman's life and employment, which demand a treatment much fuller than is possible within our limits. But there are several points which seem to be of special importance. First, there is the curious fact that women, though physically weaker than men, seem to have a greater stability of nerves, a greater power of resistance to disease, and a stronger hold of life altogether. It is notorious that there are more male lunatics, and very many more male criminals than female, and much fewer women die from alcoholism, nervous diseases, suicide, and various complaints that indicate mental and physical instability, while more women than men die of old age. On the other hand, there are more female paupers and more female old-age pensioners than male, and these facts seem to indicate that women on the whole are handicapped rather by their economic position than by physical disability. We have seen that in this country women are more numerous than men, and that for various reasons they cannot all be maintained by men, even if it were theoretically desirable that they should be so maintained, a point which I am not here discussing. It follows that (quite apart from the question of economic independence as an ideal) economic self dependence is in a vast number of cases a necessity. It is impossible to estimate in how many cases this occurs, but it is safe to say that many women do in fact support themselves and others, and that many more would do so if they could.

Normally working women seem to pass from one plane of social development to another, not once only but in many cases twice or thrice in their lives. We might distinguish these planes as status and contract, or value-in-use or value-in-exchange. All children, it is evident, are born into a world of value-in-use; they are not, for some years at all events, valued at what their services will fetch in the market. At an age varying somewhere between eight and eighteen or twenty the working girl, like the boy, starts on an

excursion into the world of competition and exchange; she sells her work for what it will fetch. This stage, the stage of the cash nexus, lasts for the majority of girls a few years only. If she marries and leaves work, she returns at once into the world of value-in-use: the work she does for husband, home, and children is not paid at so much per unit, but is done for its own sake. This accounts on an average for say twenty-five years; then she, in numbers at present unknown, is forced again to enter competitive industry on widowhood. This is what Madame Gnauck has called the "cleft" (*Spalte*) in the woman's industrial career. The lower death-rate of women is actually a source of weakness to them, in so far as it leaves a disproportionate number of women without partners at the very time when owing to the care of young children they are least capable of self-support, and it increases the competition of women for employment. Their use-value in the home, however great, will not fetch bread and shelter for their children. Professor Thomas Jones, in his deeply interesting report to the Poor Law Commission (Appendix XVII., Out-Relief and Wages) has been impressed by the pitiful fact that outside work should be forced on women whose whole desire is usually to be at home. He writes in reference to the well-intentioned efforts made by the Charity Organization Society to train widows for self support, efforts which, unfortunately, have not met with much success: "The widow whom it is sought to train is no longer young. It is rather late to begin. . . . Further, many women are domestic by instinct, and dislike factory life. More important still in explaining failure . . . is the conflict between the bread-winner and the house-mother. Many a mother is distracted during the training time with anxiety for the children at home who may or may not be properly cared for."*

Many serious discourses and amiable sermons are delivered in public and in private on the supreme beauty and importance of woman's influence, the necessity of maintaining a high standard of home life, and the integrity of the family. All this may be true, but for many women it is singularly irrelevant. *Il faut vivre.*

A woman may possess all the domestic virtues in the highest possible degree, but she cannot live by them. Value-in-use is subordinated to value-in-exchange. Mrs. Brown may be much more useful, from the point of view of her family and the community, when she is engaged in keeping her little home clean and tidy and caring more or less efficiently for the fatherless little Browns' bodily and spiritual needs, than she is when fruit-picking, sack-making, or washing for an employer's profit. But the point is that these kinds of work do at worst bring her in a few shillings a week, and the former—nothing at all. In the face of such facts it is absurd to tell women that their work as mothers is of the highest importance to the State. We may hope, however, that public opinion will ere long be convinced that the present system of dealing with indigent widows, as described in Professor Jones's Report, is wasteful of child life, destructive of the home, and cruelly

* Poor Law Commission, Appendix, Vol. XVII.

burdensome to the most conscientious and tender-hearted mothers. The truly statesmanlike course will be to grant widows with young children a pension sufficient for family maintenance, on the condition that the home should be under some form of efficient inspection or control to ensure the money being properly laid out and the children cared for.* In the case of those women who are not naturally adapted to an entirely domestic life and prefer to work for themselves, it might be arranged that some portion of the pension should be diverted to pay a substitute. These cases would probably not be numerous, but it is as well to recognize that some such do exist.†

Socialists will not fail to realize that the case of the mother of small children forced under a competitive system to do unskilful and ill-remunerated work and neglect the work that is all-important for the State, viz., the care and nurture of its future citizens, is only an extreme instance of the anomaly of the whole position of woman in an individualist industrial community. This is not a place to enter on a discussion of the lines on which the economic position of women may be expected to develop under Socialism. I desire here merely to emphasize the importance of the distinction between value-in-use and value-in exchange which seems to me to lie at the root of the whole social question; but most especially so as regards women. Our present industrial system, and therewith largely our social system also, is continually balanced perilously on the possibility of profit. Production is directed, not towards satisfying the needs and building up of the character of the nation's citizens, but merely towards what will yield most profit to the individuals who control the process. Except to the extent of the regulations of the Factory, Public Health, and Adulteration Acts (often inadequate and imperfectly enforced), it makes no difference at all whether the objects produced are useful or poisonous, beautiful or hideous, whether the conditions are healthy or dangerous, ennobling or degrading; profit is the only test. The special anomaly of the woman's position is that while the pressure of social tradition is continually used to induce her to cultivate qualities that, so far from helping, are a positive hindrance to success in competitive industry, yet when circumstances throw her out into the struggle there is little or no social attempt made to compensate her for her deficiencies. Her very virtues are often her weakness.

No sane person can argue that adaptability to the conditions of profit-making industry can afford any test of a woman's merit *quâ* woman, yet it is all that many women have to depend on for their own and their children's living. The position ought at once to be frankly faced that women's work at home is service to the State, and it may be hoped that ere long some practical step may be taken to put in force the Minority Report suggestions regarding allowances to widows with young children.

* See Minority Report Poor Law Commission, Part I., p. 184 (Longmans' edition).

† I am not here alluding to cruel, depraved, or drunken mothers. In those cases children should obviously be entirely removed from the mother, and she herself dealt with penally or curatively, as may be deemed advisable.

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