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Woman and the Social Problem.

By "EZNUK."

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WHEN READ PLEASE PASS ON.

Woman And the Social Problem.

BY "EZNUR" OF THE S.D.V.

SOME American writer has said, "Women are the great half army of Socialism." The Vanguard gatherings and its membership confirm that statement. Woman's natural sympathy for human suffering, her great concern in the well-being and the future of the children is a power that must add strength to the Socialist movement the world over.

Here in Australia she will shortly possess equal political voice with men. To direct this new force of democracy into the channels of social justice is an object well worthy of the best efforts of Socialists, who from the inception of the woman's movement have fought in her behalf, recognising that her emancipation, as

that of all who labor, is possible only by the realisation of economic freedom, without which political equality is but a sham. Woman's dependence on man for a livelihood has been, and is the cause of her social and moral enslavement. And so with all toilers. The land, the instruments and machinery of production and exchange are the factors by the use of which alone we can satisfy our needs and wants under the present state of civilisation. Whilst these are the monopoly of a small section, the remainder of the community must pay tribute to them, and are practically the slaves of the monopolists.

Once men and women learn this lesson, which is brought home to us clearer year by year, as wealth is being concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, our *social* as well as our political freedom will be ensured. All who are thoughtful of the future for the children, all who seek to secure for them a chance for the freer development of their lives, must join hands.

with those who are working to bring about social justice. In Socialism alone is hope for us and the children.

The problem we have to face is best stated by a few quotations from a recent article to the American press by Ernest H. Crosby, the famous authority on social questions. Referring to the industrial upheaval, the war between capital and labor, the strikes, lockouts, and trade disputes that are raging throughout the United States, causing widespread misery and distress, he says: "It is time for society in its own interest to consider the causes of this disastrous state of affairs, and to find and apply the remedy."

"What is this war about?" he asks. "If you had been alive 150 years ago, and some prophet had told you that in the year 1901 one man could by means of machinery do the work of thirteen—striking an average for all trades and industries—what would you have said? Would you not have exclaimed, 'Why, then people will only

have to work one-thirteenth as much as they do now, and with one or two hours' work a day they will have all the luxuries imaginable.' Well, to-day one man can do as much as thirteen could in 1750. The wealth of the world has increased enormously. In this country, especially, it is increasing by leaps and bounds.

"Where has this machine-made wealth gone? Look around you and see. One per cent of the families in this country own more than half of the wealth. There are several thousands of millionaires in New York city alone. Forty years ago there were hardly a dozen in the country. There were no tramps in those days, and very little talk of the unemployed. Now we have a rapidly-growing army of tramps.

"I visited a mill some time ago which exemplified the progress of industry in a striking way. In it they manufactured cheap socks. There were 400 machines, and each machine made a complete sock by itself in five

minutes. It began at the ankle, making the sock in blue thread. At the heel it substituted white thread and again at the toe. Then it cut the thread, laid the sock down, and commenced another. There was nobody near the machine during the operation. In fact, when I came into the room, which contained 100 similar machines, I saw no one at all. Finally, in the distance, I saw the head of a small boy, and then another. There were five boys in the room, and each watched 20 machines. All they had to do was to oil and clean them, supply new thread when the great spools were exhausted, and report any break in the machinery. In this factory 50 boys (there are several shifts) turned out 5000 dozen pair of socks a day, or as much as 50,000 people could have done 150 years ago. *In such factories as the above the "hands" are discharged at the age of 20 or so.* What shall we do with the men ?

“ Meanwhile, what shall we do with our 5000 dozen pairs of socks every

day, with no workmen to wear them, or—what amounts to the same thing—with no money to buy them.”

As a further illustration of how the present system of production for profit instead of for use is effecting men and women alike, let me quote the following report from the daily press:—

“In Jersey City the American Cigar Trust’ opened their fourth factory last week after closing down 25 smaller concerns. In answer to the notice “Girls Wanted,” 400 men and boys blocked the entrance to the works. On the outer edge of the crowd were 200 girls. The men clawed and clamored for work, shouting that they could do anything the girls could do and *would do it just as cheap*. They were told that only girls were wanted, but they continued to blockade the place and shove the girls out. The manager finally telephoned to police headquarters and had them driven away. It is the intention of the Trust to employ 3000 girls in their new works. The work is of light charac-

ter, and only one man to each 100 girls will be employed. The Trust will manufacture all cheaper grade cigars by means of machines, and expects to have them perfected to handle the better grades as well."

Although here in Australia industrial conditions have as yet not reached an acute state as here depicted, the beginning is surely with us. Financial kings have already a large control of our natural resources and some of our primary industries. The question of what shall we do with our boys and girls is of serious importance to fathers and mothers.

The results of this planless system of competition, and the private ownership of land and the means of production, made itself felt with us in '93, and another "depression" is already making itself felt.

Do not women suffer even more than men in these periodical "crises?" Think of the stress and anxiety of a mother when the breadwinner has been out of work for weeks and months.

think of her cares and sorrows, when after a long and hopeless struggle she sees her little ones fading for want of proper food, and the little home, that has taken years of careful management and saving to acquire, getting empty, as article by article is sold to keep the gaunt wolf of hunger from the door. Are these social problems then of no concern to women? Is the consideration of these questions outside of the "woman's sphere," which politicians and others are so apt to prate about?

And what is to be the lot of the helpless girls who, perhaps fatherless and motherless, have to depend on their labor for a living, and are through "slackness of trade" cast on the streets?

Marriages are yearly decreasing owing to the uncertainty of finding work and the dread of poverty with all its untold miseries. It is the profit system that forces men and women into competition with each other to obtain employment, without which

they cannot live. Labor-saving inventions are displacing both. The mass of the people are becoming poorer, whilst the few manipulators of the machinery of labor are piling millions upon millions.

Will it help either men or women, to fight amongst themselves for the crust thus left to them, or would it be wiser and better for them and the children to unite in the cause of social democracy, and by claiming social justice, make a freer and nobler life possible to all.

How is it possible to do this? It is clear it must be done by our united efforts. Foremost then we must learn to understand the drift of social events, and then by our united voices we will be able to demand from the legislature of the nation a solution of the social problem. The chances of individual escape from this degrading struggle for a livelihood are fast diminishing owing to the rapid concentration of the means of production into the hands of a few men.

The interests of men and women, employed and unemployed, the man behind the pick and pen, the toilers in the field, the bush, and the factory are one, and their salvation is the socialisation of the means of living, the land and the instruments of production. The progress of the ages, made possible only through the work of all, will then become a blessing to mankind.



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