Eleanor Marx
Edward Aveling

The Woman Question

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The Woman Question

Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling

EDITION BASIS

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PAMPHLETS EDITION

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Original English, not a later translation. Historical quotations are retained as part of the 1886 essay. The 2000 web transcription and site navigation are not presented as authorship or a new translation. The essay's Bebel quotations were checked separately. The historical English translator H. B. Adams Walther is identified in biographical and library records as Hope Bridges Adams (later Adams Lehmann), who died in 1916. The historical essay's spelling of her name is preserved; no modern translation has been substituted.

SOURCES

Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, "The Woman Question," Westminster Review, 1886. Original English text; complete essay.

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The Woman Question

The publication of August Bebel's *Woman – Past, Present and Future* and the issue of a translation of the work in English, make any attempt to explain the position of Socialists in respect to the woman question timely. The reception that the work has met with in Germany and in England renders such an attempt imperative, unless our antagonists are willing to misunderstand us, and we are willing to remain passive under the misunderstanding. The writers of this article have thought that the English public, with that fairness which is said to be its special prerogative, would give hearing to the views, the arguments, the conclusions of those who call themselves Socialists. Thus, whatever opinions may be held by that English public as to the conclusions, its opinions will at least have a basis of knowledge. And the writers have further considered that the treatment of such a question as this is as its best when it is that of a man and a woman thinking and working together. In all that follows they desire it to be understood that they are giving utterance to their own opinions as two individual Socialists. Whilst they believe that these opinions are shared by the majority of their fellow-thinkers and fellow-workers in England, on the Continent, and in America, they are in no sense to be understood as pledging their Party to all, or necessarily to any particular one, of the propositions put forward.

A word or two, first, on the work that serves as the text of this discourse. Bebel is a working-man, a Socialist, and a member of the Reichstag. His book *Die Frau* has been prohibited in Germany. This has increased at once the difficulty of obtaining the book, and the number of those that obtain it. The German press has almost to a journal condemned it, and has ascribed to its author every possible and impossible vice. The influence of the work, and the significance of these attacks, will both be understood by those that bear in mind the position and the personal character of Bebel. One of the founders of the Socialist Party in Germany, one of the foremost among the exponents of the economics of Karl Marx, perhaps the finest orator of his country, Bebel is beloved and trusted by the Proletariat, hated and feared by the capitalists and aristocrats. He is not only the most popular man in Germany. He is by those that know him, foes as well as friends, respected. Calumny has, of course, been busy with him, but, without any hesitation, we may say that the accusations made against him are as false as they are venomous.

The English translation of his latest work has met in certain quarters with a vituperative reception. The wrath of these irritated critics would have been well placed had it been poured out on the quite unequalled carelessness of the publishers

of this English version. This carelessness is the more noticeable and unpardonable as the German edition, printed at Zurich, is singularly free from errors. We ought to except in part from our condemnation the translator, Dr. Harriet B. Adams Walther. On the whole, her work has been fairly well done, though an apparent want of acquaintance with economic words and phrases has here and there produced ambiguity, and there is a most unaccountable objection to the use of the plural. But the book teems with printer's errors, in type, in spelling, and in punctuation. To have in a book of only 164 pages an aggregate of at least 170 blunders is really too bad.

With the first or historical part of the work we do not propose dealing. Deeply interesting as it is, this must be passed over, as so much is to be said on the present relations between men and women, and on the changes that we believe are impending. Moreover, the historic portion is not quite the best in the book. It has its errors here and there. The most reliable book to consult on this particular branch of the woman question is Friedrich Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* Let us turn, therefore, to the society and the women of today.

Society is, from the point of view of Bebel, and we may fairly say here of Socialists generally, in a condition of unrest, of fermentation. The unrest is that of a mass of rottenness; the fermentation that of putrefaction. Dissolution is at hand, in both senses of the word. The death of the capitalistic method of production, and therefore of the society based on it, is, as we think, within a distance measurable in terms of years rather than of centuries. And that death means the re-solution of society into simpler forms, even into elements, that recombining will produce a new and better order of things. Society is morally bankrupt, and in nothing does this gruesome moral bankruptcy come out with a more hideous distinctness than in the relation between men and women. Efforts to postpone the crash by drawing bills upon the imagination are useless. The facts have to be faced.

One of these facts of the most fundamental importance is not, and never has been, fairly confronted by the average man or woman in considering these relations. It has not been understood even by those men and women above the average who have made the struggle for the greater freedom of women the very business of their lives. This fundamental fact is, that the question is one of economics. The position of women rests, as everything in our complex modern society rests, on an economic basis. Had Bebel done nothing but insist upon this, his work would have been valuable. The woman question is one of the organisation of society as a whole. For those who have not grasped this conception, we may quote Bacon in the first book of the *Advancement of Learning.* "Another error ... is that, after the

distribution of particular Arts and Sciences, men have abandoned universality ... which cannot but cease and stop all progression. ... Neither is it possible to discover the more remote and deeper parts of any science if you stand but upon the level of the same science and ascend not to a higher." This error, indeed, when "men (and women) have abandoned universality," is something more than a "peccant humour." It is a disease. Or, to use an illustration possibly suggested by the passage and the phrase just quoted, those who attack the present treatment of women without seeking for the cause of this in the economics of our latter-day society are like doctors who treat a local affection without inquiring into the general bodily health.

This criticism applies not alone to the commonplace person who makes a jest of any discussion into which the element of sex enters. It applies to those higher natures, in many cases earnest and thoughtful, who see that women are in a parlous state, and are anxious that something should be done to better their condition. These are the excellent and hard-working folk who agitate for that perfectly just aim, woman suffrage; for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, a monstrosity begotten of male cowardice and brutality; for the higher education of women; for the opening to them of universities, the learned professions, and all callings, from that of teacher to that of bagman. In all this work – good as far as it goes – three things are especially notable. First, those concerned in it are of the well-to-do classes, as a rule. With the single and only partial exception of the Contagious Diseases agitation, scarcely any of the women taking a prominent part in these various movements belong to the working class. We are prepared for the comment that something very like this may be said, as far as concerns England, of the larger movement that claims our special efforts. Certainly, Socialism is at present in this country little more than a literary movement. It has but a fringe of working men on its border. But we can answer to this criticism that in Germany this is not the case, and that even here Socialism is now beginning to extend among the workers.

The second point is that all these ideas of our *advanced* women are based either on property, or on sentimental or professional questions. Not one of them gets down through these to the bedrock of the economic basis, not only of each of these three, but of society itself. This fact is not astonishing to those who note the ignorance of economics characteristic of most of those that labour for the enfranchisement of women. Judging from the writings and speeches of the majority of women's advocates, no attention has been given by them to the study of the evolution of society. Even the orthodox political economy, which is, as we think, misleading in its statements and inaccurate in its conclusions, does not appear to have been mastered generally.

The third point grows out of the second. The school of whom we speak make no suggestion that is outside the limits of the society of today. Hence their work is, always from our point of view, of little value. We will support all women, not only those having property, enabled to vote; the Contagious Diseases Act repealed; every calling thrown open to both sexes. The actual position of women in respect to men would not be very vitally touched. (We are not concerned at present with the results of the increased competition and more embittered struggle for existence.) For not one of these things, save indirectly the Contagious Diseases Act, touches them in their sex relations. Nor should we deny that, with the gain of each or all of these points, the tremendous change that is to come would be more easy of attainment. But it is essential to keep in mind that ultimate change, only to come about when the yet more tremendous social change whose corollary it will be has taken place. Without that larger social change women will never be free.

The truth, not fully recognised even by those anxious to do good to woman, is that she, like the labour-classes, is in an oppressed condition; that her position, like theirs, is one of merciless degradation. Women are the creatures of an organised tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organised tyranny of idlers. Even where this much is grasped, we must never be weary of insisting on the non-understanding that for women, as for the labouring classes, no solution of the difficulties and problems that present themselves is really possible in the present condition of society. All that is done, heralded with no matter what flourish of trumpets, is palliative, not remedial. Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves. Women will find allies in the better sort of men, as the labourers are finding allies among the philosophers, artists, and poets. But the one has nothing to hope from man as a whole, and the other has nothing to hope from the middle class as a whole.

The truth of this comes out in the fact that, before we pass to the consideration of the condition of women, we have to speak this word of warning. To many, that which we have to say of the Now will seem exaggerated; much that we have to say of the Hereafter, visionary, and perhaps all that is said, dangerous. To cultured people, public opinion is still that of man alone, and the customary is the moral. The majority still lays stress upon the occasional sex-helplessness of woman as a bar to her even consideration with man. It still descants upon the *natural calling* of the female. As to the former, people forget that sex-helplessness at certain times is largely exaggerated by the unhealthy conditions of our modern life, if, indeed, it is not wholly due to these. Given rational conditions, it would largely, if not completely, disappear. They forget also that all this about which the talk is so glib

when women's freedom is under discussion is conveniently ignored when the question is one of women's enslavement. They forget that by capitalist employers this very sex-helplessness of woman is only taken into account with the view of lowering the general rate of wages. Again, there is no more a *natural calling* of woman than there is a natural law of capitalistic production, or a *natural* limit to the amount of the labourer's product that goes to him for means of subsistence. That in the first case, woman's *calling* is supposed to be only the tending of children, the maintenance of household conditions, and a general obedience to her lord; that, in the second, the production of surplus value is a necessary preliminary to the production of capital; that, in the third, the amount the labourer receives for his means of subsistence is so much as will keep him only just above starvation point: these are not natural laws in the same sense as are the laws of motion. They are only certain temporary conventions of society, like the convention that French is the language of diplomacy.

To treat the position of women at the present time in detail is to repeat a thousand-times-told tale. Yet, for our purpose, we must re-emphasise some familiar points, and perhaps mention one or two less familiar. And first, a general idea that has to do with all women. The life of woman does not coincide with that of man. Their lives do not intersect; in many cases do not even touch. Hence the life of the race is stunted. According to Kant, "a man and woman constitute, when united, the whole and entire being; one sex completes the other." But when each sex is incomplete, and the one incomplete to the most lamentable extent, and when, as a rule, neither of them comes into real, thorough, habitual, free contact, mind to mind, with the other, the being is neither whole nor entire.

Second, a special idea that has to do with only a certain number, but that a large one, of women. Every one knows the effect that certain callings, or habits of life, have on the *physique* and on the face of those that follow them. The horsy man, the drunkard are known by gait, physiognomy. How many of us have ever paused, or dared to pause, upon the serious fact that in the streets and public buildings, in the friend-circle, we can, in a moment, tell the unmarried women, if they are beyond a certain age which lively writers call, with a delicate irony peculiarly their own, *uncertain?* But we cannot tell a man that is unmarried from one that is wedded. Before the question that arises out of this fact is asked, let us call to mind the terrible proportion of women that are unmarried. For example, in England, in the year 1870, 41 per cent of the women were in this condition. The question to which all this leads is a plain one, a legitimate one, and is only an unpleasant one because of the answer that must be given. How is it that our sisters bear upon their brews this stamp of lost instincts, stifled affections, a nature in part murdered? How is it

that their *more fortunate brothers* bear no such mark? Here, assuredly, no *natural law* obtains. This licence for the man, this prevention of legions of noble and holy unions that does not affect him, but falls heavily on her, are the inevitable outcome of our economic system. Our marriages, like our morals, are based upon commercialism. Not to be able to meet one's business engagements is a greater sin than the slander of a friend, and our weddings are business transactions.

Whether we consider women as a whole, or only that sad sisterhood wearing upon its melancholy brews the stamp of eternal virginity, we find alike a want of ideas and of ideals. The reason of this is again the economic position of dependency upon man. Women, once more like the labourers, have been expropriated as to their rights as human beings, just as the labourers were expropriated as to their rights as producers. The method in each case is the only one that makes expropriation at any time and under any circumstances possible – and that method is force.

In Germany at the present day the woman is a minor with regard to man. A husband *of low estate* may chastise a wife. All decisions as to the children rest with him, even to the fixing of the date of weanings. Whatever fortune the wife may have he manages. She may not enter into agreements without his consent; she may not take part in political associations. It is unnecessary for us to point out how much better, within the last few years, these things have been managed in England, or to remind our readers that the recent changes were due to the action of women themselves. But it is necessary to remind them that with all these added civil rights English women, married and unmarried alike, are morally dependent on man, and are badly treated by him. The position is little better in other civilised lands, with the strange exception of Russia, where women are socially more free than in any other part of Europe. In France, the women of the upper middle class are more unhappily situated than in England. Those of the lower middle and working-classes are better off than either in England or Germany. But two consecutive paragraphs in the *Code Civil*, 340 and 341, show that injustice to women is not only Teutonic. *La recherche de la paternité est interdité* and *La recherche de la maternité est admise*.

Every one who refuses to blink facts knows that Demosthenes words of the Athenians are true of our English middle and upper classes today, "We marry in order to obtain legitimate children and a faithful warder of the house; we keep concubines as servants for our daily attendance, but we seek the Hetairai for love's delight." The wife is still the child-bearer, the housewarder. The husband lives and loves according to his own bad pleasure. Even those who admit this will possibly

join issue with us when we suggest as another wrong to women the rigorous social rule that from man only must come the first proffer of affection, the proposal for marriage. This may be on the principle of compensation. After marriage the proffers come generally from the woman, and the reserve is the man's. That this is no natural law our Shakespeare has shown. Miranda, untrammelled by society, tenders herself to Ferdinand. "I am your wife if you will marry me: if not I'll die your maid;" and Helena, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, with her love for Bertram, that carries her from Rousillon to Paris and Florence, is, as Coleridge has it, *Shakespeare's loveliest character.*

We have said that marriage is based upon commercialism. It is a barter transaction in many cases, and in all, under the condition of things today, the question of ways and means plays of necessity a large part. Among the upper classes the business is carried on quite unblushingly. The Sir Gorgius Midas pictures in *Punch* testify to this. The nature of the periodical in which they appear reminds us that all the horrors they reveal are only regarded as foibles, not as sins. In the lower middle class many a man denies himself the joy of home life until he grows out of the longing for it; many a woman closes the book of her life at its fairest page for ever, because of the dread *rerum angustarum domi* [*of the narrow confines of domestic life*].

Another proof of the commercial nature of our marriage system is afforded by the varying times at which wedlock is customary in the varying grades of society. The time is in no sense regulated, as it ought to be, by the time of life. Some favoured individuals, kings, princes, aristocrats, marry, or are married, at the age to which Nature points as fitting. Many of the working class marry young – that is, at the natural period. The virtuous capitalist who at that age makes a habitual use of prostitution dilates unctuously upon the improvidence of the artisan. The student of physiology and economics notes the fact as interesting evidence that not even the frightful capitalistic system has crushed out a normal and righteous instinct. But, with the stratum of society wedged in between these two, unions, as we have just seen, cannot take place as a rule until years after the heyday of youth is passed and passion is on the wane.

All this tells far more on the women than on the men. Society provides, recognises, legalises for the latter the means of gratifying the sex instinct. In the eyes of that same society an unmarried woman who acts after the fashion habitual to her unmarried brothers and the men that dance with her at balls, or work with her in the shop, is a pariah. And even with the working classes who marry at the normal time, the life of the woman under the present system is the more arduous and irksome of

the two. The old promise of the legend, *in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children,* is not only realised, but extended. She has to bring them up through long years, unrelieved by rest, unbrightened by hope, in the same atmosphere of perennial labour and sorrow. The man, worn out as he may be by labour, has the evening in which to do nothing. The woman is occupied until bedtime comes. Often with young children her toil goes far into, or all through, the night.

When marriage has taken place all is in favour of the one and is adverse to the other. Some wonder that John Stuart Mill wrote, *Marriage is at the present day the only actual form of serfdom recognised by law.* The wonder to us is that he never saw this serfdom as a question, not of sentiment, but of economics, the result of our capitalistic system. After marriage, as before, the woman is under restraint, and the man is not. Adultery in her is a crime, in him a venial offence. He can obtain a divorce, she cannot, on the ground of adultery. She must prove that *cruelty* (i. e. of a physical kind) has been shown. Marriages thus arranged, thus carried out, with such an attendant train of circumstances and of consequences, seem to us – let us say it with all deliberation – worse than prostitution. To call them sacred or moral is a desecration.

In connexion with the subject of divorce we may note an instance of the self-deception, not only of society and its constituent classes but of individuals. The clergy are ready and willing to marry anybody and everybody, age to youth, vice to virtue, *and no questions asked,* as a certain class of advertisements put it. Yet the clergy set their faces most sternly against divorce. To protest against such discordant unions as they again and again ratify would be an *interference with the liberty of the subject.* But to oppose anything that facilitates divorce is a most serious interference with the liberty of the subject. The whole question of divorce, complex in any case, is made more complicated by the fact that it has to be considered, first in relation to the present conditions, second in relation to the socialistic conditions of the future. Many advanced thinkers plead for greater facility of divorce now. They contend that divorce ought to be made at least as easy as marriage; that an engagement entered into by people who have had little or no opportunity of knowing one another ought not to be irrevocably, or even stringently binding; that incompatibility of temper, non-realisation of deep-rooted hopes, actual dislike, should be sufficient grounds for separation; finally, and most important of all, that the conditions of divorce should be the same for the two sexes. All this is excellent, and would be not only feasible but just, if – but mark the if – the economic positions of the two sexes were the same. They are not the same. Hence, whilst agreeing with every one of these ideas theoretically, we believe that they would, practically applied under our present system, result, in the

majority of cases, in yet further injustice to women. The man would be able to take advantage of them; the woman would not, except in the rare instances where she had private property or some means of livelihood. The annulling of the union would be to him freedom; to her, starvation for herself and her children.

We may be asked, will these same principles of divorce hold under the socialistic regime? Our answer is this-the union between men and women, to be explained in the sequel, will be seen to be of such a nature as wholly to obviate the necessity of divorce.

Upon our treatment of the last two points, where we consider the future, we expect more hostile judgement than on anything that has gone before. To both of these points passing reference has already been made. The first is the sex instinct. To us, the whole of the method adopted by society in dealing with this is fatally wrong. It is wrong from the very beginning. Our children are constantly silenced when they ask about the begetting and the birth of offspring. The question is as natural as one about the beats of the heart or the movements of respiration. The one ought to be answered as readily and as clearly as the others. Perhaps there may be a time in the very young life when an explanation of any physiological fact in answer to a question would not be understood, though we are not prepared to define that time. There can never be a time when falsehood should be taught about any function of the body. As our boys and girls grow up, the whole subject of sex relations is made a mystery and a shame. This is the reason why an undue and unhealthy curiosity is begotten to them. The mind becomes excessively concentrated upon them, remains long unsatisfied, or Incompletely satisfied – passes into a morbid condition. To us, it seems that the reproductive organs ought to be discussed as frankly, as freely, between parents and children as the digestive. The objection to this is but a form of the vulgar prejudice against the teaching of physiology, a prejudice that found its truest expression in a recent letter from a parent to a School Board mistress. *Please, don't teach my girl anything about her inside. It does her no good, and which it is rude.* How many of us have suffered from the *suggestio falsi* or the *suppressio veri* in this matter, due to parents, or teachers, or even servants? Let us each honestly ask ourselves from whose lips, under what circumstances, did we first learn the truth about parentage. And yet it is a truth which, having to do with the birth of little children, we cannot err in calling sacred. In how many cases was it from the mother who had the holiest right to teach-a right acquired by suffering?

Nor can we admit that to speak honestly to children on these matters is to injure them. Let us quote Bebel, who in his turn quotes Mrs. Isabella Beecher Hooker. "In order to satisfy the constant questionings of her little boy of eight, with regard to

his origin, and to avoid telling him fables, which she regarded as unmoral, she told him the whole truth. The child listened with the greatest attention, and from the day on which he had heard what pain and anxiety he had caused his mother, clung to her with an entirely new tenderness and reverence. The same reverence he had shown also towards other women." To us at least one woman is known who has told all her children the whole truth. The children have for her a love and reverence altogether deeper than, and different from, that which they had before.

With the false shame and false secrecy, against which we protest, goes the unhealthy separation of the sexes that begins as children quit the nursery, and only ends when the dead men and women are laid in the common earth. In the *Story of an African Farm,* the girl Lyndall cries out, "We were equals once, when we lay new-born babies on our nurses' knees. We shall be equals again when they tie up our jaws for the last sleep." In the schools this separation is carried out, and even in some churches the system, with all its suggestiveness, is in vogue. Its worst form is, of course, in the non-human institutions called monasteries and nunneries. But all the less virulent forms of the same evil are, only in less degree, non-human.

In ordinary society even, the restrictions laid upon the intercourse of the sexes are, like repressive measures with school-boys, the source of much mischief. These restrictions are especially dangerous in regard to conversational subjects. Every man sees the consequence of this, though he may not know it as a consequence, in the kind of talk that goes on in the smoking-rooms of middle and upper class society. Only when men and women pure-minded, or, at least, striving after purity, discuss the sexual question in all its bearings, as free human beings, looking frankly into each other's faces, will there be any hope of its solution. With this, as we are constantly iterating, must go the understanding that the basis of the whole matter is economic. Mary Wollstonecraft, in the *Rights of Woman,* taught, in part, this commingling of the sexes, instead of the separation of them throughout life. She demanded that women should have equal educational advantages, should be educated in the same schools and colleges with men; that from infancy to adult age the two should be trained side by side. This demand is a sore thorn in the flesh of Mr. J. C. Jeaffreson in his latest compilation.

Two extreme forms of the distinction of the sexes that spring from this their separation are, as Bebel points out, the effeminate man and masculine woman. These are two types from which even the average person recoils with a perfectly natural horror of the unnatural. For reasons that have been indicated more than once, the former is less bequent than the latter. But these two types do not exhaust the list of diseased forms due to our unnatural dealing with the sex relations. That

morbid virginity, of which mention has already been made, is another. Lunacy is a fourth. Suicide is a fifth. As to these last two, a few figures in the one case and a reminder in the other. The reminder first. Most women suicides are between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. Many of these, of course, are due to the pregnancy which our social system drags down to the level of a crime. But others are due to ungratified sex instincts, often concealed under the euphemism *disappointed love.* Here are a few lunacy numbers, taken from p. 47 of the English translation of Bebel: - Hanover, 1881, 1 lunatic to 457 unmarried, 1 lunatic to 1,316 married inhabitants; Saxony, 260 unmarried lunatics to a million unmarried sane women, 125 married lunatics to a million married sane; Prussia, in 1882, to every 10,000 inhabitants 32.2 unmarried male lunatics, 9.5 married male lunatics, 29.3 female unmarried lunatics, 9.5 married female lunatics.

It is time for men and women to recognise that the slaying of sex is always followed by disaster. Extreme passion is ill. But the opposite extreme of the sacrifice of healthy natural instinct is as ill. T*hey that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows,* is as true in this connection as of melancholy and over-mirth when Rosalind railed at them in the Forest of Arden. And yet thousands of women pass, through what hell-fires they only know, to the Moloch of our social system; thousands of women are defrauded, month after month, year after year, of *their unreturning May-time.* Hence we – and with us, in this, at all events, most Socialists – contend that chastity is unhealthy and unholy. Always understanding by chastity the entire suppression of all instincts connected with the begetting of children, we regard chastity as a crime. As with all crimes, the criminal is not the individual sufferer, but the society that forces her to sin and to suffer. Here we are at one with Shelley. In his Notes to *Queen Mab* we have the following passage: – “Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; for it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolise according to law.” Finally, in this most important connexion, we call to mind the accumulated medical testimony to the fact that women suffer more than men under these restraints.

Our other point, before we pass to the concluding portion of this article, is that necessary result of our today system – prostitution. This evil is, as we have said, recognised, and it is legalised, in some European countries. All that we need add here is the truism that its chief supporters are of the middle class. The aristocracy are not, of course, excepted; but the mainstay of the hideous system is the respectable, well-to-do, most *seeming-virtuous* capitalist. This is not due only to the great accumulation of wealth and the consequent habits of luxury. The

significant fact is that in a society based upon capital, whose centre is therefore the capitalistic middle class, prostitution, one of the worst outcomes of that society, is supported chiefly by that very class. This points clearly the moral that once again, under a new form, we urge. That which might be said on the special cases which the *Pall Mall Gazette* has made familiar to us applies to prostitution generally. To get rid of prostitution, we must get rid of the social conditions that are its parent. Midnight meetings, refuges for the distressed, all the well-meant attempts to grapple with this awful problem are, as their initiators despairingly admit, futile. And futile they will remain as long as the system of production lasts which, creating a surplus labour-population, creates with this, criminal men, and women that are very literally and sadly *abandoned.* Get rid of this, the capitalistic system of production, say the Socialists, and prostitution will pass away.

This leads us to our last point. What is it that we as Socialists desire? What is it that we expect? What is that of whose coming we feel as assured as of the rising of tomorrow's sun? What are the evolution changes in society that we believe are already close at hand? And what are the changes in the condition of woman that we anticipate as consequence of these? Let us disclaim all intention of the prophetic. He that, reasoning on a series of observed phenomena, sees the inevitable event to which they lead is no prophet. A man cannot prophesy any more than he has a right to wager, about a certainty. To us it seems clear that as in England the Germanic society, whose basis was the free landholder, gave way to the feudal system, and this to the capitalistic, so this last, no more eternal than its predecessors, will give way to the Socialistic system; that as slavery passed into serfdom, and serfdom into the wage-slavery Of today, so this last will pass into the condition where all the means of production will belong neither to slave-owner, nor to serf's lord, nor to the wage-slave's master, the capitalist, but to the community as a whole. At the risk of raising the habitual smile and sneer, we confess that into every detail of that Socialistic working of society we are no more prepared to enter than were the first capitalists to enter into the details of the system that they founded. Nothing is more common, nothing is more unjust, nothing is more indicative of meagre understanding, than the vulgar clamour for exact details of things under the social condition towards which we believe the world is moving. No expounder of any new great truth, no one of his followers, can hope to work out all the truth into its ultimate ramifications. That would have been thought of those who rejected the gravitation discovery of Newton because he had not, by application of it, found out Neptune? Or of those who rejected the Darwinian theory of Natural Selection because instinct presented certain difficulties? Yet this is precisely what the average opponents of Socialism do; always with a vacuous calmness, ignoring the

fact that for every difficulty or misery they suppose will arise from the socialisation of the means of production a score worse are actually existent in the putrescent society of today.

What is it that we feel certain is coming? We have wandered so far from Bebel along our own lines of thought, at the entrance of whose ways his suggestive work has generally placed us, that for the answer to this question we return gladly and gratefully to him, “A society in which all the means of production are the property of the community, a society which recognises the full equality of all without distinction of sex, which provides for the application of every kind of technical and scientific improvement or discovery, which enrolls as workers all those who are at present unproductive, or whose activity assumes an injurious shape, the idlers and the drones, and which, while it minimises the period of labour necessary for its support, raises the mental and physical condition of all its members to the highest attainable pitch.”

We disguise neither from ourselves nor from our antagonists that the first step to this is the expropriation of all private property in land and in all other means of production. With this would happen the abolition of the State as it now is. No confusion as to our aims is more common than that which leads woolly thinking people to imagine that the changes we desire can be brought about, and the conditions subsequent upon them can exist, under a State regime such as that of today. The State is now a force-organisation for the maintenance of the present conditions of property and of social rule. Its representatives are a few middle and upper class men contending for places yielding abnormal salaries. The State under Socialism, if indeed a word of such ugly historical associations is retained will be the organised capacity of a community of workers. Its officials will be no better and no worse off than their fellows. The divorce between art and labour, the antagonism between head and hand work, that grieves the souls of artists, without their knowing in most cases the economic cause of their grief, will vanish.

And now comes the question as to how the future position of woman, and therefore of the race, will be affected by all this. Of one or two things we may be very sure. Others the evolution of society alone will decide positively, though every one of us may have his own idea upon each particular point. Clearly there will be equality for all, without distinction of sex. Thus, woman will be independent: her education and all other opportunities as those of man. Like him, she, if sound in mind and body (and how the number of women thus will grow!) will have to give her one, two, or three hours of social labour to supply the wants of the community, and therefore of herself. Thereafter she will be free for art or science, or teaching or writing, or

amusement in any form. Prostitution will have vanished with the economic conditions that made it, and make it at this hour, a necessity.

Whether monogamy or polygamy will obtain in the Socialistic state is a detail on which one can only speak as an individual. The question is too large to be solved within the mists and miasmata of the capitalistic system. Personally, we believe that monogamy will gain the day. There are approximately equal numbers of men and women, and the highest ideal seems to be the complete, harmonious, lasting blending of two human lives. Such an ideal, almost never attainable today, needs at least four things. These are love, respect, intellectual likeness, and command of the necessities of life. Each of these four is far more possible under the system towards which we move than under that in which we now *have our being.* The last is absolutely ensured to all. As Ibsen makes Helmer say to Nora, “Home life ceases to be free and beautiful directly its foundations are borrowing and debts.” But borrowing and debts, when one is a member of community, and not an isolated man fighting for his own hand, can never come. Intellectual likeness. The same education for men and women; the bringing up of these twain side by side, until they join hands at last, will ensure a greater degree of this. That objectionable product of capitalism, Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* young woman, with her “I cannot understand, I love,” will be a myth. Every one will have learnt that there can be no love without understanding. And the love and respect that are wanting, or are lost today, because of sins and shortcomings, the product of the commercial system of society, will be more easily forthcoming, and vanish almost never. The contract between man and woman will be of a purely private nature, without the intervention of any public functionary. The woman will no longer be the man’s slave, but his equal. For divorce there will be no need.

And whether we are right or not in regarding monogamy as the best form of society, we may be sure that the best form will be chosen, and that by wisdoms riper and richer than ours. We may be equally sure that the choice will not be the barter-marriages, with its one-sided polygamy, of our own sad time. Above all, we may be sure, that two great curses that help, with others, to ruin the relations between man and woman will have passed. Those curses are the treatment of men and women as different beings, and the want of truth. There will no longer be one law for the woman and one for the man. If the coming society, like European society today, regards it as right for man to have mistresses as well as wife, we may be certain that the like freedom will be extended to women. Nor will there be the hideous disguise, the constant lying that makes the domestic life of almost all our English homes an organised hypocrisy. Whatever the matured and deliberate opinion of the community finds best will be carried out fairly, openly. Husband and

wife will be able to do that which but few can do now-look clear through one another's eyes into one another's hearts. For ourselves, we believe that the cleaving of one man to one woman will be best for all, and that these will find each in the heart of the other, that which is in the eyes, their own image.