

CHAPTER VI

MODIFICATIONS OF FAMILY RELATIONS

MANY socialist writers advocate changes in the existing marital relation, equally extravagant and repulsive. Disregarding all such advocacy, as possibly the mere outcome of individual idiosyncrasy, we shall inquire here what are the changes in the constitution of the family which the adoption of Socialism must produce.

Equality of reward, rendering women economically independent, must powerfully affect the relation of the sexes to each other. Women will no longer be driven into loveless marriages by fear of destitution or desire for wealth; nor will such considerations prevent them from seeking the dissolution of unions which have grown distasteful.

The compulsion, accompanying the right to equal reward, to render industrial labour equally with men, must lead to further modifications. Women whose energy is expended in industrial work cannot preserve the comfort or even decency of an individual household. Even if they were able to undertake the additional work required it would be done perfunctorily, their interests lying elsewhere. That this distaste for and inability to perform the duties of the household is a necessary outcome of the industrial occupations of women is shown by present-day experience. An experienced observer, himself a socialist, remarks :—

“The growth of factory work among women has brought with it inevitably a weakening of home interests and a neglect of home duties. . . . Home work is consciously

slighted as secondary in importance and inferior because it brings no wages, and if not neglected is performed in a perfunctory manner, which robs it of its grace and value. This narrowing of the home as a place of hurried meals and sleep is, on the whole, the worst injury modern industry has inflicted on our lives, and it is difficult to see how it can be compensated by any increase of material products. Factory life for women, save in extremely rare cases, saps the physical and moral health of the family. The exigencies of factory life are inconsistent with the position of a good mother, a good wife, or the maker of a home."¹

This lessening of home interests and neglect of home duties must inevitably lead to the disappearance of separate family homes under Socialism. Married couples, as well as adult single persons, would occupy one or two rooms in what may best be described as boarding-houses, the service in which would be performed exclusively by professional attendants.

The industrial services demanded of mothers must prevent due care being given to children, especially during their earlier years, nor could such care be given under the conditions imposed by residence in boarding-houses. Children would therefore be handed over to the care of the State at as early a period after birth as is practicable.

These, then, are immediate and obviously inevitable results of Socialism :—

Economic independence of women, abandonment of separate family homes, early separation of children and parents, and transference of the former to the care of the State.

The life of the family as it now exists, therefore, would disappear, and the new life must profoundly affect the relation of the sexes as well as the propagation of the race. The probable nature of these consequential changes will form the subject of subsequent inquiry.

¹ Hobson, *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, p. 320.