



1 THE PARISIAN WORLD ON FIVE FLOORS

Caricature by Lavielle, c. 1850. Private collection
 Apartment houses appeared in the 19th century. They were microcosms of society. The first floor, with a balcony, belonged to the wealthy; the second, to well-off young couples with families; the third was often visited by cats and creditors; while no one, not even the concierge, ever went up to the fourth, under the eaves: that was reserved for maids, artists and the unemployed.

2 The 'good fortune' of a factory girl

I had a recommendation to a famous factory. I had never been so well paid. My only wish was to have fine clothes. I wanted no one to know I was a factory girl when I went to church on Sunday, because I was ashamed of my position. When I was still an apprentice, I was always hearing people say that factory girls were loose-living and corrupt. They only talked about them scornfully. All I felt was that I was no longer poor. Our magnificent Sunday dinner seemed to me to be fit for a king. For 20 kreuzer we bought meat and when my salary went up we added a small glass of sweet wine.

A. Popp, *A Young Working Girl*, 1909

tricts were demolished and broad boulevards gave new grandeur to the city. This example was followed elsewhere, as for instance in Brussels. In Great Britain, France and Germany reformers called for landed property to be nationalized, for housing to be inspected by the state and for laws on town planning to be passed. In France a growing number of dwellings came to be provided by local authorities or cooperative societies. In some German cities such as Hamburg there were large-scale slum clearance schemes and a number of dwellings were built by cooperative societies or supplied by firms. In Great Britain philanthropic industrialists built 'model towns' for their workpeople. In 1887, in the East End of London, the Rothschild Buildings were filled mainly with Jewish immigrants, refugees from persecution in Eastern Europe. Dwellings in north-west Europe differed considerably from those in much of the rest of Europe: Great Britain, Belgium and Holland preferred small family houses, while the countries in the south preferred apartments. Even if some of the reforms were successful, not all the problems were solved. Many families suffered discomfort or overcrowding, and their meagre income often left too little for clothes and food.

In most European countries the state began to tackle the fight against poverty. Germany was the first to pass social legislation, after 1880, making old-age and sickness insurance compulsory, and establishing old-age pensions. In Great Britain a retirement scheme was established in 1909 and insurance against sickness and unemployment became compulsory in 1911. In most of the countries in Western Europe a growing number of people thought that governments should deal with social welfare, but the retirement pensions and health insurance actually provided gave only limited protection.

The changing status of women

As in previous centuries, men still dominated European society. Women's role was marriage, motherhood and child-rearing. They had few rights. Religion and convention discouraged them from pursuing professional careers or seeking equality with men. But at the end of the 19th century they began to enjoy a longer expectation of life and to devote fewer years to bearing and rearing children. Their legal status improved: in Great Britain married women now had property rights.

New jobs in offices (as secretaries or telephonists) and in department stores (as salesgirls) gave them the chance of employment. More and more women, too, obtained the qualifications needed

for various professions. In the Netherlands the first woman physician began to practise in 1870; in France, the first woman lawyer in 1903. The most famous professional women included the educationist Maria Montessori, the physicist Marie Curie and the nurse Florence Nightingale.

There were new job prospects for women in education. In Great Britain, thanks to the Girls' Public Day School Trust, founded in 1871, more of the daughters of middle-class families could enjoy better teaching. In France the first *lycée* for girls was opened in 1884 in Montpellier. In Germany girls went to state schools from 1894 onwards. In 1867 the University of Zurich admitted women students and its example was soon followed in Paris, Sweden and Finland.

In many European countries feminist movements arose, demanding the right to vote. Finland accepted female suffrage in 1906 and Norway in 1913. In Great Britain the Suffragists founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. French Socialists thought that the emancipation of the working classes was more urgent than that of women. The other parties ruled it out altogether.



3 LONDON SUFFRAGETTES

Le Petit Journal, September 1908
 In England women campaigned for the right to vote, using every means in their power: speeches, writing on the pavement, door-to-door canvassing, wearing sandwich boards, demonstrating. Even imprisonment did not silence them. In 1918 women over 30 who (or whose husbands) occupied premises or lands to the annual value of £5 could vote. Not until 1928 was the age limit reduced to 21, like that of men.



4 A TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

Le Petit Journal, April 1904. Musée de la Poste, Paris
 Alexander Graham Bell, a Scotsman who emigrated to the United States, invented the telephone in 1876, and two years later the first exchange had 21 subscribers. Not until 1890 did exchanges spread throughout the world, offering jobs for many young women.