

SOURCE 5

Extract from a pamphlet on sanitation and health published by the Women's Labour League, May 1912

(PRO ref: PRO 30/69/1834)

HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :

Study this source carefully and consider what it tells you about why people thought women should get the vote. You should consider:

ASK YOURSELF:

- What are the main concerns expressed in this leaflet?
- Why does the leaflet believe women are responsible for tackling the issue of health and sanitation?
- What is the main aim of this document?
- How does it try to achieve its aim?
- Is there any connection between this issue and the struggle to get the vote for women?

SOURCE 5

THE CHALLENGE. The efficient collection and purification of refuse is of vital importance to the health of the Community ; yet in very few administrative areas has efficiency been reached. The women who work in the homes are the people to whom we must look to remedy defects in methods of collection, but it is hard work to get them to realise their duty.

THE BLINDNESS OF MRS. X. Consider a moment the sad case of Mrs. X. She will scrub her house, polish her brasses till they serve as mirrors, and work like a galley slave to keep her children neat. One sunny afternoon she was unconcernedly looking out of her parlour window, watching the dustman in his progress down the street. She and her neighbours had lined the highway with old pails, wooden boxes, etc., all without covers, and all filled to overflowing with the house refuse of the week. A putrid stench offended the nostrils, dirty scraps, bones, cabbage stalks, rags, and greasy matter were strewn along the path, and carried hither and thither by the wind. *These muck heaps had been in the sun for hours !*

“ There’s the dustman at last ; I can’t abide walking down the street on dusty collecting days,” and Mrs. X went out to fetch her empty but still evil smelling pail, and put it down just outside her backdoor near the larder window. She went to get tea and found flies, which had been disturbed from the muck heaps, on the butter, the milk, and stuck right into the jam. “ Bother the pesky flies. I’ll get fly-papers,” said Mrs. X. She did not see death in the milk which she gave to her baby. The little one was dead within a week. Mrs. X was neither dirty nor brutal. *She was blind with the blindness of ignorance.*