

MOTHER ENGLAND

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STOPES

MOTHER ENGLAND

A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Self-written by those who have had no historian

EDITED BY

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**DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO
ARE EXPECTED TO BE THE
MOTHERS OF AN IMPERIAL RACE**

PREFACE.

A TRUE history of the common people of any century has never yet been written. In the following pages will be found a chapter of contemporary English history, unique only in that it finds its way into print. It is the self-written record of the dumb class of working mothers of whose lives history has taken no cognizance.

They wrote to me as to a friend, and in so doing portray their own lives better than any skilled craftsman could.

Readers who wish to minimize the heartache they induce may try to argue—"Oh, these are just the exceptionally bad cases selected over years——." They are not, they are all from one file in one year (1926) and the letters have not been specially selected, they are simply from women whose surnames begin with any of the letters A to H. To publish the corresponding letters from the rest of the alphabet would have made the volume too bulky. By this simple alphabetical selection a "fair sample" is obtained from all over the country. The home towns are deleted because anonymity is to be desired. It may be mentioned that letters in this volume came

from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, from large towns and country villages about in equal proportion. One comes from Canada, and is particularly touching (see p. 168).

The letters have not been edited at all beyond the omission of the introductory apologies for writing or pleadings for help or such an opening as "I always read everything of yours I can get hold of, and have plucked up courage to write." Some such preliminaries occur in most letters. In a very few one or two sentences too intense for publication have also been cut out. The spelling and punctuation, as far as possible, have been left in the form each writer used.

Let the letters make their own impression, they are but a fraction of a percentage of those which reach me. In the comment (p. 178) I have a few words to say to those who have read them. A rather special *Index* has been prepared which marshals some of the main data these letters present. Some readers will probably find this *Index* an interesting guide to this Inferno.

Now, listen to the Mothers of Britons, all unpremeditated, and unaware that they are to be overheard.

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