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“HOMO SUM”

BEING A LETTER TO AN  
ANTI-SUFFRAGIST FROM  
◦ AN ANTHROPOLOGIST. ◦

BY

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## “HOMO SUM.”

Being a Letter to an Anti-Suffragist from an Anthropologist.

DEAR ANTI-SUFFRAGIST,—

Will it induce you to read this letter if I tell you at the outset that the possession of a vote would grievously embarrass me? Personally, I have no more interest in or aptitude for politics than I have for plumbing. But, embarrassing though I should find the possession of a vote, I strongly feel that it is a gift which ought to be given, a gift which I must nerve myself to receive. May I also add that, had your Society been founded some ten or twenty years ago, I might very possibly have joined it. I cannot do so now, because my point of view has changed. How this change came about, I should like to explain a little later. For the present, will you, by way of apology for this letter, accept the fact that there is between us the deep-down sympathy of a conviction once shared?

And further, by way of preface, may I say that I do not want to argue, probably because I find that in my own case disputation rarely, if ever, is an efficient instrument in my search after truth. What always interests and often helps me is to be told of any conviction seriously and strongly felt by another mind,



especially if I can at the same time learn in detail the avenues by which that conviction has been approached. This is why I venture on the egotism of recounting my own experiences.

In my own case, the avenues of approach to what I believe to be truth have been circuitous and through regions apparently remote and subjects irrelevant. I have been investigating lately the origins of religion among primitive peoples, and this has led me to observe the customs of South Sea Islanders and North American Indians. In order to understand these customs, I have been further driven to acquire the elements of psychology and sociology. Without intentionally thinking about the suffrage question at all, while my thoughts have been consciously engaged with these multifarious topics, dimly at first, and clearly of late, the conviction has grown up in my mind that I ought to be a Suffragist. I can with perfect candour say that for weeks and even months I have tried to shirk the formulation of my own views and the expression of them to you, partly because I feared their expression might cause either boredom or irritation, still more because I wanted to do other things. But the subject, fermenting in my mind, has left me no peace, and irresistibly I have felt compelled to embark on this letter.

Your position is, I think, what mine once was: that a woman is better without a vote. The possession and use of a vote—of political power—is somehow “unwomanly.” With this position in one sense I still heartily agree, but I must add a hasty and perhaps unexpected corollary.

Possession and use of a vote by a man is unmanly. This sounds absurd, because by “man” our language compels us to mean not only a male thing but a human being; whereas of the word “woman” we cannot at present make the correlative statement. In this undoubted linguistic fact lies hidden a long, sad story, the secret indeed of the whole controversy. For the present, may I summarise my position thus? I share with you the feeling that a vote is unwomanly. I add to it the feeling that it is unmanly. What I mean is that, to my mind, a vote has nothing whatever to do with either sex *qua* sex; it has everything to do with the humanity shared in common by two sexes.

May I illustrate this statement? We are apt to speak of certain virtues as “womanly,” certain others as “manly.” It is “womanly” to be meek, patient, tactful, modest. It is manly to be strong, brave, honourable. We make here, I think, an initial mistake, or at least, over-statement, apt to damage the morality of both man and woman. To be meek, patient, tactful, modest, honourable, brave, is not to be either manly or womanly; it is to be humane, to have social virtue. To be womanly is one thing and one only; it is to be sensitive to man; to be highly endowed with the sex instinct; to be manly is to be sensitive to woman. About this sex-endowment other and more complex sentiments may tend to group themselves; but, in the final resort, womanliness and manliness can have no other than this simple significance. When we exhort a woman to be “womanly,” we urge her to emphasise her relation to the other sex, to enhance her sensitiveness, already, perhaps, over keen, to focus her attention on an element



in life which nature has already made quite adequately prominent. We intend to urge her to be refined, we are in peril of inviting her to be coarse.

The moral and social danger of dividing the "humane" virtues into two groups, manly and womanly, is evident. Until quite recent years a boy was often brought up to feel that so long as he was strong, brave and honourable, he might leave gentleness, patience, modesty to his sister. To her, so long as she was gentle, tactful, modest, much latitude was allowed in the matter of physical cowardice and petty moral shifts. Both were the losers by this artificial division of moral industry. The whole convention rested on a rather complex confusion of thought, which cannot here be completely unravelled. The virtues supposed to be womanly are in the main the virtues generated by subordinate social position. Such are gentleness and the inevitable "tact." They are the weapons of the weaker, physically or socially, of the man or the woman who dare not either strike out or speak out; they are virtues practised by the conquered, by the slave in rude societies, in politer states by the governess and the companion, but also by the private secretary and the tutor; they are virtues not specially characteristic of the average duchess. In a word they are the outcome not of sex but of status.

The attempt, then, to confine man or woman within the limits of sex, to judge of right or wrong for them by a sex standard, is, I think, dangerous and disastrous to the individual, dangerous and disastrous to the society of which he or she is a unit. This is felt and acknowledged about man. We do not incessantly say to a man, "Be male, your manhood is in danger." Such

counsel, we instinctively feel, would be, if not superfluous and impertinent, at least precarious. A man sanely and rightly refuses to have his activities secluded into the accident of sex. We have learnt the lesson—and to this language bears unconscious witness—that "man" connotes and comprises "humanity." Dare we say as much of "woman"? The whole Woman's Movement is, to my mind, just the learning of that lesson. It is not an attempt to arrogate man's prerogative of manhood; it is not even an attempt to assert and emphasize woman's privilege of womanhood; it is simply the demand that in the life of woman, as in the life of man, space and liberty shall be found for a thing bigger than either manhood or womanhood—for humanity. On the banners of every suffrage society, one motto, and one only, should be blazoned:—

*Homo sum, humani nihil (ne suffragium quidem)\* a me alienum puto.*

In the early phases of the woman's movement this point was not, I think, to any of us quite clear. The beginnings of a movement are always dark and half unconscious, characterised rather by a blind unrest and sense of discomfort than by a clear vision of the means of relief. Woman had been told *ad nauseam* that she

\* To anyone who has patience to read this letter to the end it will, I hope, be sufficiently clear that I wish to emphasise rather the importance of the general movement for woman's emancipation than the particular question of the vote. The words of Terence chosen for my motto mark my attitude: "I am a human being, nothing that is human do I account alien." But that there may be no ambiguity I have allowed myself the addition of a parenthesis, "not even a vote"—*ne suffragium quidem*.



must be womanly, she was not unreasonably sick to death of it, stifled by unmitigated womanliness. By a not unnatural reaction, she sought relief in what seemed the easiest exit—in trying to be manly; she sought salvation in hard collars and billy-cock hats. Considering the extravagance and inconvenience of the feminine dress of the day, small blame to her if she did. I am ashamed to remember now that a certain superficial ugliness in the first beginnings of the movement blinded me for a time to its essential soundness. It was at this date that, had your Anti-Suffrage Society existed, I might have joined it.

The danger, never serious, of any tendency to "ape the man" is over and past. The most militant of Suffragists\* never now aims at being masculine. Rather, by a swing of the pendulum we are back in an inverse form of the old initial error, the over-emphasis of sex. Woman, not man, now insists over-loudly on her own womanhood, and in this hubbub of man and woman the still small voice of humanity is apt to be unheard. This new emphasis of sex seems to me as ugly and perhaps coarser than the old error. Still, we are bound to remember that perfect sanity can never fairly be demanded from those in bondage or in pain.

The woman question seems, then, somehow to hinge on the balance between sex and humanity. Between the two there seems some sort of rivalry, some antinomy.

But is this possible? Is there really any conflict, any dissonance? And if so, how may we hope for its resolution?

\* I cannot bring myself to use the ugly diminutive now current.

The real issue of a problem is always best seen when its factors are so far as possible simplified. We may therefore be pardoned if for a moment we go back to consider conditions of life less complex than our own. It was indeed in studying the psychology\* of primitive man, in noting how primitive man faced the problems of sex and humanity, that what may possibly be in part a solution of the difficulty occurred to me.

That frail, complex, pathetic thing we call our humanity is built up, it would seem, out of some few primitive instincts which we share with other animals and with some plants. Sex† is one of these instincts, nutrition another, self-preservation a third. These three instincts all work together for the conservation of life in the individual. Each in itself gives satisfaction, and—a noticeable point—they do not normally clash. Each makes way for the other, no two acting simultaneously. Hunger appeased makes way for love, and love for hunger. Instincts on the whole tend to be *recurrent* rather than *concurrent*. If we had only these simple instincts to reckon with, if our humanity was based only on sex, self-preservation, nutrition, there would be, it seems, no "war in our members."

\* I should like here to acknowledge my debt to Mr. W. McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology*, a book which should be in the hands of every student of social phenomena. My psychology is almost wholly based on the work of Mr. McDougall and Dr. William James. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add that for my views on the woman's question neither of these writers is in any way responsible.

† For brevity's sake I use the word *sex* as equivalent to what psychologists term the "instinct of reproduction"; the equivalence is valid for all but the lowest forms of animal life.



But to these simple impulses, these life-functions as it were, man has added another,—the gregarious, or, as sociologists pleasantly term it, the “herd” instinct.\* Why men and some other animals herd together—whether for warmth, for food, for mutual protection, or from some obscurer sympathetic impulse—is not very clearly known. But once the “herd” impulse is established, the “simple life” is, it would seem, at an end. Up to this point though individuality was but little developed, the life-impulses of the unit were paramount; but henceforth, the life-impulses of each unit are controlled by a power from without as well as by instincts from within—controlled by the life-impulses of other units, a power that acts contemporaneously with the inner instincts, and that is bound to control them, to inhibit for its own ends the individualistic impulses of hunger, of reproduction, even of self-preservation. With the “herd” instinct arises the conflict between *our* life-impulses and the life-impulses of others. Out of that conflict is developed our whole religion and morality, our sociology, our politics.

Between “herd” instinct and the individual impulses, all, happily, is not conflict. The “herd” helps the individual to hunt and to get food, above all helps the weaker individual to survive. But, on the whole, what we notice most is *inhibition*, what primitive man calls *tabu*. The history of civilisation is the history of a long conflict between herd-socialism and individualistic im-

\* See Mr. Trotter's very suggestive papers on “Herd Instinct” in the *Sociological Review*, 1908.

pulse. What concerns us here is the effect of “herd” instinct on one, and only one, of these impulses, the sex instinct. Herd instinct tends to inhibit *all* individualistic impulse, but the conflict is, in the case of the impulse of sex, most marked, and, it would seem, most ineluctable. The herd aggregates, sex, more than any other instinct, segregates; the herd is social, sex anti-social. Some animals—*e.g.*, birds—are gregarious until breeding time, and then they separate. Had humanity had no sex, it would probably have been civilised ages ago, only there might have been no humanity to civilise.

At this point you will, I am sure, exclaim—I am almost tempted to exclaim myself—“This is impossible, outrageous.” What about the primal sanctities of marriage? What about “the voice that breathed o’er Eden”? Are not man and wife the primitive unit of civilisation? From the primitive pair, you will urge, arises the family, from the family the tribe, from the tribe the state, from the state the nation, from the nation the federation, from the federation the brotherhood of all humanity. Alas, alas! To the roots of that fair Family Tree, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, anthropology, sociology, and psychology have combined to lay the axe. Alas for Eden! Adam and Eve may have learnt there, though they appear to have forgotten, their Duty towards God, but of their Duty towards their Neighbour they necessarily knew less than a pack of hunting wolves. Society, in so far as it deals with sex, starts with the herd. Society is founded, not on the union of the sexes, but on what is a widely different thing, its *prohibition*, its limitation. The “herd” says to primitive man not “thou shalt marry,”



but, save under the strictest limitations for the common good, "thou shalt *not* marry."\*

Here, again, a glance at primitive conditions may serve to illustrate my point. Without entering on any vexed questions of origins, it is now accepted on all hands that in the social state known as *Exogamy* we find one of the earliest instances of marriage, or, rather, anti-marriage law, of inhibition of the sex-impulse by the herd. Savages over a large portion of the globe are still found who form themselves into groups with *totems*, sacred animals or plants whose name they bear. Within these *totem* groups they agree *not* to marry—the Buffalo man may *not* marry a Buffalo girl; he *may* marry an Antelope girl. All Antelope women are his potential wives. All Buffalo girls are "*tabu*," are his "sisters," or his "mothers." Sex, if it is not, as some sociologists think, the origin of the pugnacious instinct in man, is at least often closely neighbored by it. By the institution of exogamy, by the *tabu* on the women of a man's own group, peace is in this respect secured—secured, be it noted, not through sex union, but by its limitation, its prohibition.

All this, you will say, is curious and interesting; but really too primitive to be of any avail. We have shed these savage instincts. Pugnacity about sex is really out of date, as irrelevant to humanity as the horns that the buffalo exhibits in fighting for his mate. I am not so sure that pugnacity in relation to sex is really obsolete, since sex is still shadowed by its dark familiar,

\* I use "marriage" throughout this paper to mean simply the union of man and woman irrespective of any forms or ceremonies that may attend it.

jealousy. But let that pass. The instinct of sex is anti-social, exclusive, not only owing to its pugnacity; it is, we have now to note, anti-social, exclusive, owing also to the intensity of its egotism.

Once more I would not be misunderstood. Egotism, the self-regarding sentiment, is, like pugnacity, an element that has worked and does work for civilisation. The self-regarding sentiment is indeed the very heart and kernel of our volition, and hence of our highest moral efforts. Moreover, all passion, all strong emotion, intellectual passion excepted, is in a sense exclusive and egotistic; but of all passions sex-emotion is nowadays perhaps the most exclusive, the most egotistic.

The reason of this is so far obscure that it must be considered a little in detail. As civilisation advances, the primal instincts, though they remain the bases of character and the motive power of action, are in their cruder form habitually satisfied, and therefore not immediately and obviously operative. Among the well-to-do classes, it is rare to find anyone who has felt the stimulus of acute hunger, and unless he go out into the wilds to seek it—thanks to generations of good government and efficient police—a man may pass his whole life without experiencing the emotion of fear. But, for the prompt and efficient satisfaction of the sex-impulse, society has made and can make no adequate provision. And this for a reason that demands special attention.

It is very important that we should keep hold of the initial fact that at the back of sex lies a blind instinct for the continuance of the race, an instinct shared with plants and animals. This instinct is so bound up with our life, with our keenest and most complex emotions,



that we are inclined to forget that there is an instinct at all, apt to forget not how *low* down but how *deep* down it lies. This instinct, it has been well observed, tends "in mankind to lend the immense energy of its impulse to sentiments and complex impulses into which it enters while its specific character remains submerged and unconscious."\* This is not the case with hunger, nor yet, save to some slight degree, with fear. But, if it is important that we should not lose sight of the basal instinct, it is still more important that we clearly recognise the complexity of the emotional system into which that basal instinct enters, because therein lies the complexity of the problem of relating the individual to the herd. So long as the need is simple and instinctive, its inherent egotism is not seriously anti-social; but when the simple instinct of sex develops into the complex sentiment of love, the impulse and its attendant egotism is, if less violent, far more extensive and all-pervading, far more difficult to content and balance. Desire is a ruthless tyrant, but simple-hearted; love the most exacting of taskmasters.

This egotism, this exclusiveness in sex-emotion, is most easily observed in its acuter phases, and in these analytic days is noted by patient as well as spectator. Take the letters of the newly-engaged. Old style (frankly self-centred and self-projective): "We feel that all the world is the richer for our new-found joy." New style (introspective, altruistic): "We shall try not to be more selfish than we can help." The practical

\* See W. McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 82.

result is probably much the same; in the intensity of the new reinforcement of two lives united, all the outside world, once so interesting, becomes for a time a negligible fringe; but the advance in the new intellectual outlook is marked. Personality we now recognise is not a thing that you can tie up in separate parcels, labelling each parcel with the name of the person to whom it is addressed. Any new strong emotion dyes and alters the whole personality, so that it never is and never can be the same to anyone again. Analogy is usually misleading, but the closest and most instructive analogy to what happens is that of focus. You cannot have a strong emotional focus on two things at the same time. Of this natural and inevitable sex-egotism society is, of course, wisely tolerant. This man and woman will ultimately do society a supreme service, and for a time she accepts as inevitable that they should be, in common parlance, "no good." Society *en masse* has a good deal of common-sense, but in the more intimate clash of individual relations sentiment is apt to obscure clear vision, and the necessarily egotistic and exclusive character of a sex-emotion\* is sometimes overlooked.

Sex, then, like other strong instincts, is anti-social and individualistic. In its primal form it induces, perhaps more than any other instinct, pugnacity; in its later and more diffused form, as the emotion of love, it is exclusive through its intensity of focus.

\* I apologise to all psychologists, and especially to Mr. McDougall, for a somewhat loose use (unavoidable in a popular discussion) of the terms instinct, emotion, sentiment.



Now, this intensity of focus, this egotism, is often confused with altruism, and is labelled "Devotion to another." Society, it will be urged, may suffer from the exclusiveness of sex, but is it not ennobled by the spectacle of utter self-devotion, the devotion of the lover to his mistress, of the wife to her husband. A Frenchman long ago defined love—with a truth that is not at all necessarily cynical—as *Le grand égoïsme à deux*. No one who has gone through the experience of "falling in love" will deny that the definition is illuminating. One secret of the intense joy of loving and being loved is the immense reinforcement of one's own personality. Suddenly, to another you become what you have always been to yourself, the centre of the universe. You are more vividly conscious, more sure of yourself. Many motives move a man and a woman to marriage, but of these not the meanest is a healthy and hungry egotism.

But surely, it will be urged, self-devotion cannot be akin to egotism. The self is "lost in another." "Hence the purifying, elevating nature of the flame of love, which burns up all the dross of selfishness," etc., etc. But does it? Can any honest man or woman say that he or she, with single-hearted devotion, desires solely the good of the beloved one? A man desires his wife's happiness. That happiness comes to her through another, not through him. Is he utterly content? What he really desires is not solely her happiness but that her happiness should be in him.

Surely, though, there is such a thing as utter devotion, that asks no return. The spirit of "though he slay

me yet will I trust him," a spirit of self-abasement rather than self-enhancement. There is, and it is what modern psychology calls "negative self-feeling."\* Its recognition throws a flood of light on the supposed ennobling devotion of sex, and especially, perhaps, of sex in woman.

Egotism or self-feeling takes, we are now taught, two forms, positive and negative; the instinct for self-assertion, the instinct, sometimes equally strong, for self-abasement. With the first form we are all familiar. The second form, which is quite as real, and perhaps more poignant, has been, till lately, somewhat neglected. This instinct of self-abasement, of negative self-feeling, appears in animals. A young dog will crawl on his belly, with his head sunk and his tail drooping, to approach a larger, older dog. The instinct is not fear; it does not accompany flight. The dog approaches, he even wants to attract attention, but it is by deprecation. It is the very ecstasy of humility.

This negative self-regarding sentiment, this instinct of of subjection, enters into all intensely passionate relations. It is an ingredient alike of love and of religion, and accounts for many of the analogies between these two complex sentiments. There can, however, be little question that, though it is rarely, in moments of vehement emotion, wholly absent in either sex, it is more highly developed and more uniformly present in women. In the bed-rock of human—or, rather,

\* Mr. McDougall (*Social Psychology*, p. 62) says that "negative and positive self-feelings" were "first adequately recognised" by M. Ribot (*Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 240).



animal—nature lies, I think, the sex-subjection of woman, not, be it clearly understood, because man is physically stronger, but because he is man and his form of sex self-feeling is dominant and positive; woman's is more usually submissive and negative.

A superficial thinker may imagine that here I give my case away. "Ah! now at last we have the truth. Man is born to command, woman to obey. Woman is by nature unfitted to rule, and hence to vote. Back to the hearth and home." Not at all. Woman *qua* woman, *qua* sex, is in subjection. What purpose that serves in the divine economy I do not know, but it seems to me a *fact*, one that I have neither the power nor the wish to alter, one also, I think, that has not been clearly enough recognised. But woman *qua* human being, and even *qua* weaker human being, is not in subjection. The argument from superior force is as obsolete as war-paint and woad. When a man first says to a woman, "I must insist that you . . . ." he had better take care. He is in danger of toppling over from admiration or friendship into love. The woman, if she is attracted, yields, with a strange thrill. This is not because he is the stronger. The same evening her brother also "insists" that she shall not borrow his latch key. He also is stronger, but there is no corresponding thrill.

My point is, I hope, clear. If woman were woman only, "the sex," as she is sometimes called, she would wish, she would ask, for no vote, no share in dominion. A claim based on sex is, to my mind, doomed to failure, and this not because man is physically or even mentally stronger, but because *qua* man he is dominant, he has more *positive* self-feeling. The consciousness of this

haunts, I believe obscurely, the inward mind of many, both men and women, who object to "women's rights"; they shrink from formulating this consciousness, and confuse it with the argument from superior strength. It is better, I think, that, if true, it be plainly faced and stated. To my mind, one of the most difficult problems that men and women have to work out together is how to reconcile this subjection of sex with that equality and comradeship which is the true and only basis of even married friendship.

Our analysis of egotism into positive and negative has important bearings on the subject of "devotion" and its supposed "hallowing" influences. Sex-devotion is not altruism. This truth women, perhaps, more than men, need to lay to heart. I do not think women can fairly be blamed for their confusion of thought in this matter, because the sanctity of devotion has been so constantly impressed upon them. Their charity is always to begin, and often end, at home. What purpose in evolution this tendency to self-devotion in women serves, remains, as before said, obscure. It is the cause of intense rapture to women, and, so far, is a good. It occurs in strong natures as much, and perhaps more, than in weak. When unduly fostered, and when not balanced by sympathy and comradeship, and by a wide intellectual and social outlook, it acts in married life as an obscure canker, peculiarly irritating and poisonous, because masquerading as a virtue. The egotism of self-assertion atrophies life by over-focus, but the egotism of self-abasement adds to this morbid over-focus a slackening and enfeebling of the whole personality, which defeats its own end and repels where



it would attract. The important thing is to clear the air and see plainly that this sex-devotion, this egotism of self-abasement, is *not* altruism. It causes none of the healthy reactions of altruism, none of that bracing and expanding and uplifting of the spirit that mysteriously comes of "giving ourselves to something other and greater than ourselves."

But, it may again be urged, granted that sex leads to egotism, yet because it is intimately bound up with the parental instinct, it does *also* lead to altruism. Bound up with, associated—yes, but of its essence, no. People do not marry that they may indulge the altruism of bringing up their children. Races exist who are not even aware that marriage has any connection with the birth of children, and to whom therefore the prospect can lend no altruistic impulse. Parental, or, rather, maternal instinct is one, and perhaps the greatest source of "tender" altruistic emotion, of that disinterested love for and desire to protect the helpless which is the least egotistical and perhaps the loveliest of human sentiments. But the maternal instinct in the main is a thing healthy indeed and happy, but nowise specially holy. It is an extended egotism. Our *ego*, we are nowadays taught, is not limited by our own personality. It extends to wife and husband, to children and relations, to our clothes and possessions, to our clubs and associations. The extended *ego*, like the personal *ego*, is apt to be at war with herd-altruism. Love of my own children does not necessarily lead to love of yours. A woman will often shamelessly indulge about her children an egotism that she would blush to

exhibit for herself. Strange though it may seem, the most altruistic members of society, the best citizens, are not invariably those with the largest families. Here, again, we are bound to remember that a large tolerance should be extended by society to the egotism of parents. It is from parents that society draws the raw material of which society is made.

Before leaving the question of sex-egotism and sex-exclusiveness, may I guard against any possible exaggeration or misunderstanding? The instinct of sex, by its association with pugnacity, and by the intensity of its mutual egotism, is, we are obliged to admit, to an extent beyond that of the other instincts, exclusive and anti-social. Under the influence of sex and the intensified self-assertion it brings with it, a man will demand that society should be a sympathetic spectator; here comes in his *positive* self-feeling; he will be sensitive and alert to resent any shadow of criticism as to his choice, but share his emotion he cannot. Most highly civilised human beings have moments when, if they look facts in the face, they feel that under the influence of passion they fall, somehow, a little below themselves, just because of this intense egotism, this inexorable inability to share. The social conscience is sensitive nowadays. Our very religion has come to be not a matter of personal salvation, but rather the sense of sharing a life greater than our own and somehow common to us all.

And yet, all said and done, a man or woman is generally (not always) the better and the bigger for passing through the experience of *le grand égoïsme à deux*. Because of the frailty of our mortal nature he can have



this experience only towards one human being at a time, and that one must be of the opposite sex. But through that one,

"Earth's crammed full of Heaven  
And every common bush ablaze with God."

To almost every mortal it is granted once in his life to go up into the Mount of Transfiguration. He comes down with his face shining, and of the things he saw on the Mount he may not speak. But through that revelation he is suddenly humbled before all the rest of the world whom he cannot thus utterly love.

To resume: Sex, we have found, is a splendid and vital instinct with a singular power of inter-penetrating and reinforcing other energies. But it is an instinct that has for its attendant characteristics, among primitive peoples, pugnacity, in later civilisation, intense egotism. Always and everywhere it tends to be exclusive and individualistic. This exclusiveness of sex seems permanently and inexorably imposed by ineluctable nature. Now, if the object of life were the reproduction, the handing on of life, we should say, and rightly say, to woman: "Be womanly: be wife and mother." And we should say to man: "Be manly: be husband and father." So best would our purpose be served. But the problem before us is more difficult, more complex. We want to live life, and human life, for woman as for man, is lived to the full only in and through the "herd,"—is social. We want, in a word, for the sake of this fulness of life, to co-ordinate our individualistic instincts of which sex seems to be the strongest and most exclusive, with our altruistic herd-instincts.

The old view, while we were yet untroubled by ethnology, sociology, and psychology, was that life is a sort of Sunday school, which we entered at birth to fit us for a future life. It had rules we were bound to obey, virtues and vices to be acquired and shunned, praise and, above all, blame, to be duly apportioned. Alas! for the Sunday school and its virtues; it has gone the way of the Garden of Eden. We may well nowadays sometimes sigh for their lost simplicity. The life we know now is more like a great maelstrom of forces out of which man, in tardy self-consciousness, just uprears his head. And the maelstrom is not only of mechanical forces, which he might compute and balance, and which by counterpoise negate each other, but of vital spiritual and mental forces, which *grew* by counterpoise and whose infinite intricacy baffles computation. Not the least difficult, and certainly among the most intricate and complex of the problems before us, is the due counterpoise of sex and humanity.

The problem is not likely to grow simpler. Sex shows no sign of a tendency to atrophy. In view of evolutionary laws, how should it? It is by and through sex that the fittest survive. On the whole, it is those least highly dowered with sex who remain unmarried and die out. It is true, however, that though the sex-impulse does not atrophy, it becomes milder and less purely instinctive by being blended with other impulses. From a blind reproductive force it becomes a complex sentiment. Therein, in the diffusion and softening of the impulse lies the real hope, but therein lies the complexity of the problem. It is interesting, and may be, I think, instructive, to note a very early and widespread attempt at solution made,



and still being made, by primitive man—an attempt in some respects curiously analogous\* to the efforts to-day of beings more highly civilised.

Over the greater part of the world, from the South Pacific Islands, through Australia, Melanesia, Polynesia, Africa and America, an institution has been observed common to nearly all savage tribes called the "Man's House." The savage, instead of living a simple domestic life with wife and child, lives a double life. He has a domestic home and a social home. In the domestic home are his wife and family; in the Man's House is passed all his social civilised life. To the Man's House he goes when he attains maturity. It is his public school, his university, his club, his public-house. Even after marriage, it is in the Man's House he mainly lives. For a woman to enter the Man's House is usually *tabu*; the penalty is often death. Oddest of all to our minds, the Man's House is not only his social home but also his church. A woman among savages must not go to the Man's Church. To join in the mysteries of the Man's Church, or even sometimes to behold them from a distance, is to a woman death. At the sound of the church-bell, the sacred Bull-roarer, woman must flee, or fall flat with her face to the ground. The home is to us the place of hospitality for strangers. Not so for primitive man. The entertainment of strangers, all contact with and

\* I should like to state distinctly that the ethnological observations introduced from time to time are to be regarded not as arguments supporting my thesis but merely as illustrations. The desirability of the emancipation of women is no wise bound up with their acceptance, and should they be discredited to-morrow or otherwise interpreted, it would remain untouched. The study of primitive custom has, however, helped me to my present point of view, and may, I hope, help others.

news from the outside world, is reserved for the Man's House. There, too, he discusses the affairs of the tribe, there holds his parliament, in a word, a Man's House is "the House" and has all its "inviolable sanctity." From religion, from politics, from social life, from contact with the outside world, woman is rigidly secluded. She is segregated within her sex. She is invited to be "womanly."

From these undoubted and world-wide facts the learned German,\* who has contributed so much to our knowledge of them, draws a conclusion singularly Germane. The province of woman, he urges, always has been, *always must be*, that of natural ties, of sex and of the blood relationships that spring from sex. Her emotional sphere is that of the family. Man, on the other hand, is by nature apt for society. He is naturally drawn to artificial associations made, not under the compulsion of sex, but by free choice, through sympathy, equality of age, similarity of temperament. Woman is the eternal guardian and champion of the union of the sexes. She sets her face always against comradeship, against the free association of equals, which leads to advanced social complexes, to clubs, brotherhoods, artificial societies of every sort. In fact, broadly speaking, woman is of the individualistic instincts; man is of the herd-sentiments. Ethnologically speaking, woman is of the family; man of the Man's House.

This *mutatis mutandis* is the position occupied by many at the present day. But, be it observed, this

\* Heinrich Schurtz, *Altersklassen und Männerbünde*, 1902, and for English readers see Hutton Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies*, 1908.



position must not be based on arguments drawn from primitive sociology. Our learned German, had he read to the end of his own book, must have seen the refutation of his own theory. *The Institution of the Man's House almost invariably breaks down.* The doors, once so rigidly closed to all but the initiated man, open inch by inch. Gradually the Man's House alters in character, becomes more religious, the centre of a Secret Society to which woman begs or buys admission; it ends as a mere sanctuary or temple, or as a club-house whose *tabus* are less and less stringent, and whose last survivals are still precariously entrenched in the precincts of Pall Mall.

The institution of the Man's House was unquestionably an advance in civilisation; but what is good for a time is not therefore good for *all* time. The full reasons for its breakdown are too complex for discussion here, but one cause of inadequacy is clear. Good and useful though the Man's House was for man, it left out half of humanity, woman. It civilised man by releasing him from sex, or, rather, by balancing his sex instincts which gather round his home with his "herd" instincts, his comradeship which centred round the Man's House. But the solution was crude, and by segregation. Release was sought, as too often to-day, not by a wise ascetism, but by the banishment of temptation, by the seclusion of women within their sex. It is as noticeable to-day as then that the less self-restraint a man is prepared to exercise, the more rigorously will he insist that woman shall be secluded. It is only the man who has his passions well to heel who is prepared to grant liberty to woman. Man had, and, in part, still *has* yet to learn that one half of humanity cannot be fully humanised without the other.

We are now at the second chapter in the history of the relation of the sexes. Woman, as well as man, is asking to be civilised, woman, who bore man, and who will bear his children. In woman, too, is this tremendous sex-impulse, that may devastate, and that should fertilise. Is woman to live life to the full, or is her function only to hand on life? If she is to live it to the full, there is for her as for him only one solution. Sex must be not ignored or atrophied, still less must it, by a sort of mental jugglery, be at one and the same moment ignored and over-emphasised. Woman cannot be moralised through sex, because sex is a non-moral, that is a non-social instinct. But, for woman as for man, *non-moral* sex, the greatest of life forces, can be balanced, blended with other and humane sentiments. Man, because he is physically stronger, has got a little ahead in civilisation. Woman, not because he is stronger, but merely *qua* sex impulse, is at present subject to him. It is for him, surely, to hand on to her the gospel that has been his salvation, to teach her the words: "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto."

If sex, then, is egotistic, exclusive, if it needs balance by a broader humanity, what are the chief non-egotistic humanising tendencies? What master passions can we oppose to the individualism, the exclusiveness, the pugnacity, the egotism of sex? The answer is clear. We have two great forces at our disposal, the desire for knowledge,\* or, as psychologists call it, the "instinct of

\* "The love of knowledge must be a disinterested love; and those who are fortunate enough to possess it, just in proportion to the strength and width of their love, enter into a great kingdom where the strain of disturbing passions grows quiet and even the persecuting whisper of egotism dies at last almost completely away."—PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY.



curiosity," and pure altruism, the desire to use our strength and our knowledge for the welfare of the herd, and specially its weaker members. Now, it is the emergence of these two desires which have marked the two stages of the Woman's Movement—I mean the demand for higher education, the demand for political freedom.

At this point I must make a somewhat shameful confession. For long, very long, I was half-hearted as to the Woman's Movement. I desired higher education, freedom to know, but not, as I explained before, the vote, not freedom to act and control. The reason was mainly pure selfishness, and—for this is always at the back of selfishness—a sluggish imagination. I myself intensely desired freedom to learn; I felt it to be the birthright of every human being. The thing was self-evident to me, I did not care to argue about it; it was a faith held with a passionate intensity beyond any reasoned conviction. Man had always most generously held out to me the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; I not unnaturally placed him on a pedestal, and did homage to him as my Sacred Serpent.

But as to the vote, politics seemed to me, personally, heavy and sometimes rather dirty work, and I had always, on principle, preferred that a man-servant should bring in the coals. I am not ashamed of my lack of interest in politics. That deficiency still remains and must lie where it has always lain, on the knees of the gods. But that I failed to sympathise with a need I did not feel, of that I am truly ashamed. From that inertia and stupidity I was roused by the Militant Suffragists. I read of delicate and fastidious women who faced the intimate disgusts of prison life because they and their

sister-women wanted a vote. Something caught me in the throat. I felt *that they were feeling*, and then, because I felt, I began to understand.

To feel keenly is often, if not always, an amazing intellectual revelation. You have been wandering in that disused rabbit-warren of other people's opinions and prejudices which you call your mind, and suddenly you are out in the light. If this letter should meet the eye of any Militant Suffragist (pugnacity, may I say, is *not* my favourite virtue, though my sympathies are always apt to go more with the church militant than the church triumphant), I should like, though I do not fight in her camp, to thank her from my heart for doing me a signal service, for making me feel, and thereby teaching me to understand.

An eminent novelist has recently told us that women are to have higher education, but not political power, not the Parliamentary vote. Women are "unfit to govern." An eminent statesman has only yesterday told us that women may have university training, they may even look for that priceless boon, that crown of intellectual effort, the degree of Bachelor of Arts; they may have knowledge, and the label that guarantees them as knowing, but membership of the university, power to govern, power to shape the teachings by which they have profited, No.

Have Mrs. Humphry Ward and Lord Curzon, in their busy and beneficent lives, found time to read M. Henri Bergson's "*L'Evolution Créatrice*"? Long ago Socrates told us that we only know in order that we may act. M. Bergson has shown us *how* this is, and *why*. Intellect as contrasted with instinct, is the tool-maker, is essenti-



ally practical, always ultimately intent on action. To a few of us—and we are happy, if sometimes lonely—knowledge, which began with practical intent, becomes an end in itself, an object for rapturous contemplation. But to most human beings, and these are the best of our citizens, knowledge is the outcome of desire, and is always forging on towards action, action which necessarily takes shape as increased dominion over the world of nature and humanity. You can, it is true, shovel ready-made information into the human mind, without seriously affecting life and character. But the awakening of the *desire to know* is primarily nothing but the awakening of the *intention to act*, to act more efficiently and to shape the world more completely to our will.

Mrs. Humphry Ward and Lord Curzon are half-a-century too late. They may entrench themselves on their castle of sand, but the tide has turned, and the sea is upon them. When women first felt the insistent need to know, behind it, from the beginning, unconscious though they were, was for most of them the more imperative impulse to act.

Women *qua* women may remain, for the better continuance of life, subject to men; women as human beings demand to live as well as to continue life. To live effectively they must learn to know the world through and through, in order that, side by side with men, they may fashion life to their common good.

I am, dear Anti-Suffragist,

Sincerely yours,

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST.

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# "No Votes for Women"

A Reply to Some Recent  
Anti-Suffrage Publications

By

Lady Constance Lytton

London

A. C. Fifield, 44 Fleet Street, E.C.

1909



## “No Votes for Women”

A Reply to some recent Anti-Suffrage  
Publications

The question of the vote appears to me to be not one of women versus men, but of the men and women of the future against the men and women of the past.—VERNON LEE.

Woman's cause is man's; they  
rise or sink  
Together, dwarfed or godlike,  
bond or free.

TENNYSON.

I earnestly hope the day is not far distant when women also will bear their share in voting for Members of Parliament, and in determining the policy of the country. I can conceive no argument by which they are excluded. It is obvious that they are abundantly as well fitted as many who now possess the suffrage, by knowledge, by training, and by character.—*The late MARQUIS OF SALISBURY at a Primrose League Meeting, Edinburgh, November 12th, 1888.*

THE more active advocates of woman suffrage are frequently told by their opponents that they have only one achievement to their credit, viz. the destruction of the cause which they have at heart, which cause, but for their tactics, might conceivably have persuaded a reluctant Government to legislate in its favour. Nevertheless, the anti-suffragists are finding it worth while to unite their forces and arm against this adversary who has recently committed suicide. Among the knights-errant who have volunteered for the ghostly quest, there are many to whom I would like to offer my sympathy.



4 "No Votes for Women"

The earnestness of their appeal and their good intentions towards humanity in general, and women in particular, are obvious. They are conscientious, for they speak out, despite a certain tone of reluctance and apology which seems to haunt their arguments. I long to lift from their kindly hearts the nightmare that oppresses them. On their behalf I desire more ardently than before the hastening of the franchise, that they may know how much less dreadful is the reality than their expectation of it.

It is said that the subject of "Votes for Women" is woefully threadbare. I admit that some of the arguments against granting the franchise to women are not only threadbare, but worn into holes; yet the question has not up to the present made for itself a slang or system of word-signalling such as generally accrues to proposed legislation of a controversial kind. The fact is, the proposal, in this case, is so unusually simple and definite that, on the part of its advocates, there is no need for an algebra. "To grant the parliamentary franchise to women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men," this demand can hardly be codified into briefer simplicity, and the meaning of the phrase is self-evident. There is no appeal for privilege; where inequalities exist they will remain, where equality is proved the demand is for removal of the law which creates artificial disqualification on the ground of sex. But when we turn to the opponents of this measure, the arguments used are many and various, often contradictory, and sometimes difficult to grasp. It is then that one yearns for some terminology that will summarise a whole group of ideas after the manner, let us

"No Votes for Women" 5

say, of those elucidating phrases "Cowper-Templeism" and "contracting-out" in the case of education, or "tied house" and "time-limit" in the case of liquor licenses. To the uninitiated the connection between these expressions and the subjects of learning or the drink traffic seems remote in the extreme, but to those who have followed the controversy what vistas of battlefields they reveal! At the mere mention of one of these masonic pass-words any detailed discussion of the points in question becomes superfluous, and by the manner of their use one is able at once to recognise a friend or foe.

For my own satisfaction I am going to try and codify a few of the arguments against female suffrage.

DARKEST AFRICA. A leap in the dark. We know the ways of women as mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, sweethearts, and wives, in numberless professions and occupations, in public and private work, even in politics, where they have played a considerable part, yet it is quite impossible to gauge how women would use the vote. On this point they are to us as some undiscovered tribe of the dark continent. It is assumed they would all be of one colour, but what that colour would be, who can tell?

PLAIN AS DAY. Are you a Conservative? Then it is perfectly clear to you that if the franchise is given to women you may as well throw up the sponge. Why, all women are born rebels! They have no sense of law and order, they recognise no traditions, honour no authority. If additional proof of this were needed, just look at the manner in which they are carrying on this campaign. Have men ever behaved in such a



## 6 "No Votes for Women"

way? If you are a Liberal you are equally certain that all women are Tories at heart, born to fear change, steeped in prejudice, bound hand and foot by conventionality. This is self-evident; besides, look at the way women voted at the last municipal elections in London. Have men constituents ever shown a bias equal to that?

UNSEX. If women are given a parliamentary vote they will cease to be womanly and neglect the interests of maidenhood, of wifeliness, of maternity. Only men can truly safeguard such matters. Have men, through the franchise, ceased to be manly and ignored the special rights and qualities of their sex? In the matter of local government, women may not only vote, but, in certain instances, be members of the legislating bodies: is it national and imperial questions alone that contain this venom of unwomanliness? It is admitted that women may hold meetings, speak, and canvass in favour of a parliamentary candidate: is it voting, then, that unsexes or achieves the hermaphroditic trick?

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES. Women can't fight. They are less muscularly developed than men. They have some physical capacities which men have not, but these are of a kind that do not assist them in the firing line. But for these exclusively feminine physical capacities, the recruiting problem would be more dire even than it is; but this is a side issue—the main fact remains, women cannot fight. It is those men capable of fighting who alone bear up the pillars of our Empire. When it comes to a call to arms, when the nation is threatened by a foreign army, of what avail are the

## "No Votes for Women" 7

politician, the diplomat, the men of learning and science, the preachers and artists, financiers, merchants and tradesmen, the mechanic and labourer, if they are not trained to war? It may be due to these men that our armies fight in a good cause and not a bad one, that they have strong allies or at least powerless neutrals in the armies of other nations, that international interests are respected, and the ever-growing recognition of the claims of a common humanity maintained even during war itself. The weapons and equipment that our soldiers and sailors use may be inventions resulting from a lifetime of experiment by such men; the food, the clothing, the financial supplies, the whole apparatus of our fighting forces may be the outcome of their skill, knowledge, and years of grinding labour. But what of all this if they cannot fight? The conditions entailed by these civilian occupations have unfitted them for a campaign; out with them from our political arena, why do they cumber the public life of our warrior nation? Let them join the ranks of disenfranchised women, and then we shall stand on firm ground. But it is said, in the case of men, these incapables are given the vote for their latent, or once latent powers as fighting men. They have ignored and neglected these powers, but they receive the prize for what they might have been. It is only due to their own perversity that our non-combatant public men are not sailors and soldiers.

In answer to these arguments it may be said that, if truly the claim to citizenship rests on fighting power, this should be maintained, if need be, for both sexes. In the days when it was required of them, women



## 8 "No Votes for Women"

proved themselves capable of fighting, and probably it would take less than a generation for such capabilities to develop again. But, if by common consent they are thought more useful to the State by keeping themselves to other pursuits, if differentiation between the sexes is agreed upon for the good of all concerned, then why should the result be stigmatised as an incapacitator for citizenship any more than it is in the case of non-combatant men? Personally I agree with those who claim for physical development, amongst both men and women of all occupations, a greater recognition than is accorded to it in civilised countries to-day. I also think that while standing armies and other systems of national defence are found to be necessary it would be well if public opinion could be brought to some more logical and deliberate attitude upon the subject. If war has ceased to be a necessity, let this be recognised and persisted in at times of international strife, of national disaster. If war is still a necessity, let the fighting man be respected, not only in times of war but also in times of peace, not as a ruffian who suffers from intermittent attacks of heroism, but as the prime element in the fighting machine, worth maintaining at a rate of payment to scale with civilian professions, worth honouring at all times for those extremes of self-sacrifice which are exacted in his calling as in no other, and which are not payable in money. In the days when neighbouring towns, families, and individuals were constantly at war with each other, it was reasonable and truly honourable to wear a sword. A gentleman so equipped in the normal civilian life of to-day would find this weapon not only useless, but

## "No Votes for Women" 9

supremely ridiculous. This does not mean that the sword-bearers in their time would have been wise to go unarmed or ill-armed. If international conditions can be changed and interests unified, will not the armaments rot of themselves?

THE DRAWING-ROOM LADY. To come to other matters in which physical disability is urged against women's claim to the vote, one writer\* maintains that a woman is crippled, mentally and physically, during the three principal stages of her natural life—in adolescence, at the age of child-bearing, and again when maternal faculties come to an end—and that on this ground "it is only for half the affairs of life that her uncertain work is suitable." It is not stated which "affairs" are to be found in this "half," but one is tempted to suspect the allusion is to those services which, however arduous, are unpaid and unrecognised. I appreciate the obvious sincerity of this opponent's convictions, but if alarm is felt for the crippled sex at the prospect of those of them who are so minded being able to vote for a parliamentary candidate, what must be the dismay, now to-day, for that overwhelming majority of women who work unremittingly, mostly for longer hours than men, almost invariably for far lower wages, from fourteen years old and younger, right through the years of maternity, with seldom so much as a fortnight off for child-birth, and on into old age—at home-maintenance work, at home industries, sweated and otherwise, in factories and shops, in domestic service, in laundries, on the stage, in offices and schools

\* "What Every Woman Knows," by Mrs. J. Parker Smith. *National Review*, Dec., 1908.



and professions of all kinds too numerous to mention. I would also suggest, for the consolation of this class of alarmist, if there is a law of nature so pronounced that women are verily incapacitated from all but intermittent pursuits, how can a parliamentary law influenced by women supersede it? If the law of female nature demands that for the greater part of life she should be excluded from mental and physical exertion, then inevitably the result of giving women the vote will be that in course of time legislation will become modified in the direction of enabling them to lead these purdah lives.

FOOLS. Intellectual disability. Women are less mentally capable than men, how can we allow them a share in the direction of great affairs of State, of the Empire, our Colonies and India, of foreign affairs, finance, and trade? True, the technical management of these matters is not in the hands of the electorate, but it is the popular vote which selects between one set of ministers and another, and so decides the broad lines of policy at issue. It is for decisions of this kind, we are told, that the male mind is peculiarly fitted, the female peculiarly not! A woman may have spent many years of her life in India, one of the colonies, or elsewhere abroad, she may be in constant communication with over-sea friends or relatives. To every man who leaves this island home there are on an average at least two or three women specially tied to his interests, who by their devotion bridge the separating seas and mentally take part in his exile, its conditions and surroundings, and all that concerns these whether in home or foreign policy. Yet it is said that the opinion of women

with regard to greater Britain must necessarily be less reliable than that of the club-men, the sporting squires, the over-worked parsons, the city clerks, the artisans, the labourers who have never stirred from these shores, whose interests are purely local, and who indulge in none but a business correspondence. Do not the incidents of foreign policy, war and peace, trade and taxation and colonisation affect women's lives, property, and interests as much as those of men?

The other day a friend took me to visit a lady whom she described as good, intellectual, charming, well-read, a model administrator of her own life and of the lives dependent upon her. On seeing her, this praise seemed justified. My friend introduced the subject of votes for women. The lady put in that she was against the vote because she herself did not feel qualified "to judge of foreign affairs." I have no doubt that if an anti-suffrage appeal had reached her in time she would have set her signature to it with a good conscience. I answer her and the numbers of women who echo her confession: "Do you not feel qualified, if you give your mind to it, to judge between two political parties as represented by their local candidates?" And to women of all classes one might add, "If you have any particular interest in or opinion about any matter affecting politics, do you not feel yourself as fit to urge that opinion upon your local candidate when he or his emissaries come round to tout for your vote as the male electorate of your own class?"

When there is a question of women's influence in the control of their country's destiny with regard to foreign countries or our over-sea Empire, these localities are



talked of as remote and mysterious, but of infinitely greater importance than home affairs. But if one of these distant giants has played a successful experiment in the way of female suffrage it immediately, in our adversary's references, dwindles to something insignificant, as a place "almost exclusively occupied with local and domestic affairs . . . of the very kind that women are best suited to undertake." In looking at the statistics and public tributes to the women's vote in these "parochial" districts, one is at a loss to discover how its influence would be detrimental to any affairs of State, international or otherwise. I am told that the case of Wyoming is hackneyed, but the following document seems to be little known, and I think it should be given every publicity. Women do not sit in parliament in Wyoming, but after they had enjoyed the suffrage there for twenty-five years the House of Representatives in 1893 passed, by a unanimous vote, the following resolution—

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SECOND LEGISLATURE  
OF THE STATE OF WYOMING

That the possession and exercise of suffrage by the women in Wyoming for the past quarter of a century has wrought no harm, and has done much good in many ways:—that it has largely aided in banishing crime, pauperism, and vice from this State, and that without any violent or oppressive legislation; that it has secured peaceful and orderly elections, good government, and a remarkable degree of civilisation and public order; and we point with pride to the facts that after nearly twenty-five years of Woman Suffrage, not one county in Wyoming has a poor-house, that our jails are almost empty, and crime, except that committed by strangers in the State, almost unknown; and as the result of experience we urge every civilised community on earth to enfranchise its women without delay.

RESOLVED, That an authenticated copy of these resolutions be forwarded by the Governor of the State to the Legislature of every State and Territory in this country, and to every legislative

body in the world; and that we request the Press throughout the civilised world to call the attention of their readers to these resolutions.

The testimony of numerous Governors of Wyoming, who are appointed by the President, not elected, and therefore independent of the women's vote, is in agreement with this resolution.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward and the Anti-suffrage League have made general statements as to the failure of woman's suffrage in America, and in illustration of this contention they point out that the preponderance of the more populated states have not yet followed suit. But I am able to learn of nothing more definite than that. The neighbouring states may have excellent reasons for not yielding to the example of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho, but one would like to know these reasons. It would not be surprising if they prove to be identical with those which obtain in most European States. These I summarise under three heads: (1) Blindness to the need for woman's suffrage; (2) Unwillingness to recognise the harmful injustice of withholding it; (3) Unwarranted fears as to the results of granting it.

It is sometimes asked, would not India take offence if the home Government were controlled by a partly female electorate? Do we, then, regulate our central Government according to native Indian, Hindu, or Mahomedan opinion? When our political and social rule in India itself is brought more closely into harmony with local traditions and aspirations it will be time to consider the question of home Government in accordance with the same. If our national customs and forms of



government are such that we ourselves are proud of them, we need not fear that India will feel insulted by them. Did India resent the rule of the Great White Queen? Could anything surpass the loyalty, the personal devotion amounting almost to worship, which India laid at the feet of Queen Victoria? But some say, "Queen Victoria herself was against female suffrage," and sentences from her early letters are quoted in corroboration. The private correspondence of great statesmen, Queen Victoria included, must always have special value and interest to the student of human nature and of history, but the State as a whole is less concerned with the opinions than with the life, the actions, the example of her public servants. When posterity judges whether Queen Victoria was equipped to rule, as a constitutional sovereign, over the destinies of a great Empire, can it be doubted that the verdict will be "Yes"?

MECHANICAL TOY. The minority argument. "This complicated, modern, hyper-civilised State," say some of the male voters to the women, "we for the most part make it, you shan't help to wind it up." It has been said a thousand times, but one cannot here avoid repeating that if men mostly make the mechanical toy, women have far the larger share of making and rearing the toy-makers. The tax of maternity is well-known and obvious; it nevertheless (perhaps because of those very reasons) is often ignored. It is also often forgotten that even if we discount women's contributions to the State as mothers, as participators in numerous professions and trades, and as taxpayers, another joist in the mechanical toy making consists

of those forms of labour which have so far escaped the statisticians, and whose value is not tabulated in £. s. d. Even if it be granted that the male labourer, artisan, clerk, and so on up the scale, have alone constructed the mechanism of the State, how could they be released and equipped for their work but for the mother, wife, sister, daughter, who as housekeeper, cook, laundrywoman, needlewoman, nurse, spare him the time and thought he would otherwise have to spend on these essential details of maintenance? We have but to imagine the removal of all women from the land to realise the drain which their absence would cause to the national resources. One more point before leaving the mechanical toy. Women certainly have only a minority share in its direct production, but is not this partly due to their arbitrary exclusion and thanks to laws produced by a one-sided franchise? Is not this argument against giving women the vote as if the State had decreed, Chinese fashion, "Women's feet shall be crippled," and then denied them equal privileges with men in other directions because they do not run races. The laws of Parliament and of national custom have a way of following the same bent. To the women these laws and customs now say: "You shall mostly be employed in works for which there is no cash payment; when paid, you shall receive lower rates of wages than men, you shall inherit under greater disadvantages, and finally you shall not be enfranchised because your contributions through taxation are insignificant compared to those of men."

THE DANGEROUS MAJORITY. Women in England are more numerous than men. The day is not far



16 "No Votes for Women"

distant when universal suffrage will inevitably come upon us. Then where shall we be? Petticoat government! Out-voted by women! Women-made laws rampant! Women-filled offices! Women, women everywhere, and not a wife worth wedding! What will Europe say? What will India think? What of the Navy and Army then? There is much talk of hysteria in connection with the franchise demand. This particular argument against it, "the dangerous majority," has called forth as fine a display of hysteria as one may wish to meet. Will the women then unite, and the men against them? If there is a subject on which it might reasonably be supposed that they might do so, it would be this of the franchise. But what do we see? A women's League against the women's demand, a men's League for it.

At the time of the Reform Bill of 1867 the nightmare of that day was that the working man would unite against the wealthier classes; that, his interests being certainly different and he in a great majority, all stability of the country would come to an end. Lord Ellenborough, in a protest which he issued "to remain on record as long as the House of Lords lasts or any trace of its proceedings be preserved," wrote: "When labour makes laws for capital, poverty for property, legislation no longer directed by educated intelligence will impair the individual freedom of action and the security of possession which have been the foundations of our prosperity and wealth." I am grateful to the man who put this opinion on record. He was short-sighted, but he had the excuse of inexperience for his surmises, and the preservation of his gloomy forebodings

"No Votes for Women" 17

are of immense value to us of a later generation. It may now be pointed out, as a lesson of recent years, that when one set of people legislate for others that are wholly unrepresented, then "individual freedom of action and security of possession" are apt to remain almost exclusively in the hands of the legislators, in defiance of the fact that the distribution of education, land, and money are no birthright of any particular section of the community. We may show that, in need as they were of a share in these assets, the newly enfranchised class are acquiring them but slowly, and that, in spite of their overwhelming majority, they have proved to be sufficiently varied in temperament, in interests, in aims, in beliefs, to rank themselves with both of the two leading political parties in the State. Conservative, Liberal; Tory, Radical; Unionist, Home Ruler; Tariff Reformer, Free Trader—all these political creeds and scores of others equally find recruits among the working classes. If this is how a majority class-franchise works out, is there reason to suppose that women, who represent all classes and every variety of interest and opinion, would be more tied to one policy? Some people are horrified at the unspeakable injustice of male voters possibly one day being in a minority, though I suppose it is felt that they could at least give a good account of themselves as a powerful minority. But the sense of justice of these same individuals sleeps quietly to-day while a male minority has sole representation, the female majority none. In a country where, broadly speaking, majority rule has been accepted for years, it is put forward as an unanswerable argument against female suffrage that women represent a majority



of the population! The situation recalls a remark attributed to Anatole France when questioned as to his opinion on the "Yellow Peril." "The Yellow Peril for Europe," he replied, "is an unlikely chimera; let us discuss a calamity now actually taking place, the white peril in China."

In this connection the argument may be mentioned of the adult-suffragists and of those who fear that a mere sex-disability-removal Bill would not place female franchise on a democratic basis, that while being nominally on the same basis as male suffrage, it would in fact include a smaller proportion of the working class than is the case with the male franchise. Conservative-minded advocates of female suffrage urge that the removal of sex disability will act as a barrier to universal suffrage, for many of the hitherto advocates of universal suffrage, who by that term meant only manhood suffrage, will be reluctant to pursue their demand once it includes womanhood suffrage. This strikes me as a sound argument so far as it goes: the removal of sex disability will not only defer the day of solely manhood suffrage, it will make it an impossibility for all time.

On the other hand, from the democratic point of view, it is inconceivable that those who are willing to move at once from the state of present-day total disenfranchisement of women to universal suffrage (for women as well as men) should be deterred from this course by the fact of women having first been admitted to the franchise on the present basis. There remains the argument that the present franchise system being on a property basis, every additional set of people enfranchised on this footing would militate against universal suffrage.

This, I confess, is the only one of all the arguments against the present demand which seems to me, taken by itself, a more or less plausible one. But what, from this point of view, are the alternative expectations? (1) That the present electorate will achieve manhood suffrage, and manhood suffrage be followed up by universal suffrage. (2) That the disqualification Bill be passed, and that universal suffrage, when it comes, will automatically include womanhood suffrage. As regards these alternatives the attitude of women may be described as "once bitten, twice shy"—or, rather, "many times bitten, incurably shy." Ever since 1832, when women were first by law excluded from the franchise, the promises have been many and friendly. For each extension of the franchise to men, women have worked alongside of them in the fight, have claimed and been promised equal reward. In every case they have been left out. Nothing short of a separate Act removing sex disability will satisfy the women of to-day. The extension of the present franchise basis can be brought about separately and as speedily as may be, but not until the sex disability is first removed. The argument of the universal suffragists seems to lie this way: "Unless and until we can enfranchise all women, we will enfranchise none." The reply of the women is: "Even on the present basis, the removal of the sex barrier will widely affect the position of women throughout national life, even in the ranks of the still disenfranchised." The men who raise this objection themselves hold the vote on a property basis. If it is not illogical and undemocratic for men to use this present franchise, why should it be so for women? Public



20 "No Votes for Women"

opinion in England is ripe for the removal of a glaring injustice to women; it is not yet ripe for the wider measure of universal suffrage. It is only by realising the no harm and the much good of a sex equality franchise that the nation will ever become friendly to the idea of universal suffrage.

I suppose until women actually go to the poll and the revising barristers set their seal upon disputed qualifications, it is impossible to state minutely what will be the proportion of working women enfranchised, but I have nowhere seen it disputed that although the present property basis tells against women much more than against men, yet the great bulk of women voters would undoubtedly belong to the working classes. "A thorough classification made by the I.L.P. in the town of Nelson (Bradley Ward), in Lancashire, showed that even if the property qualification were the test, only 7 women out of 468 could not be classed as working women. On the Bolton Municipal Register there are to-day 5234 women voters, and of these 4752 are working women—that is over 90%."\* There is one more point overlooked by the democratic critics of the disability-removal Bill, who look with dread at the women property holders. It may be safely assumed that these are not numerous: the inheritance laws and male commercial monopoly determine that.

When I first became keen on the suffrage movement, a friend of mine, a Liberal, wrote: "Because too many men have the vote, is it a remedy to cut political

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\* *The Case for Woman's Suffrage*, by Thomas Johnstone. The Forward Printing and Publishing Company, Ltd., 164 Howard Street, Glasgow. Price 1d.

"No Votes for Women" 21

power into still smaller pieces by giving it to women?" Whether "too many" men, or enough, or too few have the vote is a matter wide of my subject, but because many men have the vote is certainly among the strongest reasons why many women should have it. The case presents itself to me somewhat after this fashion. I take a homely illustration. A household sit at meat together; their table is daily ruled by the householder, who sees to the bill of fare. In spite of creditable efforts to please, he often makes mistakes as to the tastes and requirements of the various members of the community, but, except for those who have the advantage of sitting near to the householder, they all share alike, their risks and their chances are on a par. One day a change is made, and half the household—those of certain tastes, physique, and occupations—are allowed to choose the bill-of-fare, the other half—of other tastes, physique, and occupations—remain unprivileged as they were before. Is the diet of these last and the manner of serving it not likely to suffer from the change? It is suggested that the requirements of the bill-of-fare choosers and of those remaining unprivileged are identical: if so, what harm is feared from giving them equal revising power? If the needs of the two are different, how can it be just to give the means of expression to one and withhold it from the other?

Some anti-suffragists have remarkable appreciation for the virtues of women. Mrs. Maxse\* does not "in any way suggest that women are inferior to men."

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\* "Votes for Women." *National Review*, November, 1908.



22 "No Votes for Women"

"I live," she writes, "in continual wonderment at the capacities and virtues displayed by women as a whole." She has a high admiration for women's special abilities and gifts, and practical experience of their value in politics, and she summarises amongst the virtues which "unfit woman from taking over from man the reins of State" (who, I wonder, has suggested that they should do this?), "her wonderful capacity for detail . . . her sympathy, tenderness of heart, and power of imagination . . . her deep devotion and loyalty to those she loves"; and that "she is patriotic, high-minded, disinterested, no one can be more so." Now I feel it to be a very sad thing that here, where at least I might look for agreement between Mrs. Maxse as an anti-suffragist and myself as an ardent suffragette, I still must record a difference of view. It is suggested that the above virtues are feminine rather than male. I have not found them so. One of the most distressing necessities to combatants for the removal of women's disabilities is that opponents always assume we are arguing to the disparagement of men, urging the superior claims of women to exceptional privileges. I think we do nothing of the kind; certainly such a line of argument would be most unsuited to my own opinions. The desirable and lovable, as well as the contemptible and repellent, characteristics seem to me fairly equally divided between men and women, and, broadly speaking, they strike me as much alike, despite the wide divergence in the traditional habits and customs of the two sexes. To work for the removal of injustice to one sex need imply no partiality. For my part I wish, among other reasons, that women were on a

"No Votes for Women" 23

political equality with men, that we might help to champion the causes that men have at heart more fully than we now can do, and after the manner that many of them have often fought for our welfare, unaided by us.

UNWANTED. Most women do not want the vote. Then they will not use it, and the majority nightmare at least is removed.

The bulk of women now clamouring for it will not use it when they get it. Maybe; then why fuss about the "national disaster"?

If they do get the vote and use it, women will find it enables them to obtain nothing which they could not have without it. In other words, the vote is a meaningless fetish that has been worshipped too long. Perhaps; if so, when men realise this and cast away the franchise system, women will probably follow suit.

Women have won much without the vote, there is no limit to their present powers, they can "advise, influence, and inspire" the electorate; and the weight of moral character, we are reminded, will always tell. Mrs. Humphrey Ward urges that women have "the power which will always belong, vote or no vote, to knowledge and experience wherever they are to be found." Are men, then, without these same "almost limitless" advantages? Can they not also advise, influence, and inspire others, and if they can manage to tack on knowledge, experience, and moral character, will not their gain likewise be the greater? Yet do they not discover some latent merits in the parliamentary vote, despite their other immense powers?

I cannot nearly exhaust the strange and varied argu-



ments used against extending the franchise to women, but there is one more I must mention which weighs strongly with those who put it forward.

PICCADILLY. To quote Mrs. Maxse again: "The abolition of prostitution constitutes an item in the legislative programme of the suffragists. But no explanation is forthcoming as to how they propose, by a stroke of the legislative pen, to solve this eternal problem of human nature." First of all, may I suggest an amendment to the term "eternal problem of human nature"? Is it not rather a temporary phase of dislocated civilisation? Does it exist in the world commonly described as "of nature," in the animal world, in the world of primitive human races? Is it not the product of a disharmony between the natural state and the truly civilised state? It is a thing surely impossible where women are developed fully and equally with men, each along their own lines; where they have the physical force to protect their own bodies, where they have proportioned intelligence to defend their own interests. It is equally non-existent in primitive civilisations (tribal organisations) where men and women together have agreed to divide up the labours of life in the way best suited to each—the men to fight and watch against external enemies, the women to guard the home and rear the children. The thing should be impossible in a reformed, enlightened civilisation, where the interests of the two sexes are studied from the point of view of both. I have yet to come across the individual man or woman who proposes to remedy any branch of this evil "by a stroke of the legislative pen." Many strokes will be wanted, and some of them, no doubt, will strike

amiss, and their work will have to be undone and done again with the help of a wider experience. But on a question which concerns women so intimately and so acutely, can it be maintained that the best chance of a solution can be found by men alone, that the influx of the women's point of view into legislation would not give a tremendous stimulus, an indispensable guidance in the direction of an effectual solution?

We may as well look for "strokes of the legislative pen," concerning these matters, to states where women are among the electors. In New South Wales, soon after women were enfranchised, a Bill was passed enabling an unmarried woman to name the father of the child and to claim from him by law the funds to carry her through her trouble and to provide for the child up to a certain age. Formerly the percentage of deaths among children born out of wedlock amounted to 240 per 1000 as compared to less than 100 deaths per 1000 among legitimate children. The new law has had the desired effect—the death rate has decreased and fewer children are born out of wedlock.\* In England the yearly statistics show:

Number of legitimate children born, 897,691. Deaths per thousand, 127·13.

Illegitimate children born, 37,390. Deaths per thousand, 261·35.†

I have in my possession a letter that appeared in a

\* *The Women's Vote in Australia*, by Mrs. Martel. Price 1d. The Woman's Press, 4 Clement's Inn, Strand, W.C.

† Sixty-ninth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England and Wales (1906), C.D. 3833, 1908.



provincial paper. It was sent to me anonymously shortly after I had joined the suffrage movement. It is signed "Barrister-at-law," and it raises a point which the writer declares he has "nowhere seen expressed." But his view of the matter, whether or not it has appeared in print, is one frequently held, and I am glad of the opportunity his letter affords for discussing it. Referring to the women who form the militant sections of the franchise movement, he writes: "Such persons, indeed, are common scolds and viragos, who are fortunate to live in an age which has forgotten the use of the ducking-stool." He then proceeds to his main point. "There are in London at the present moment between 50,000 to 60,000 fallen women.\* In *Darkest England and the Way Out*, General Booth estimates that about the year 1890 there were no less than 200,000 in Great Britain. If the suffrage were granted to women the vast majority of these unfortunates would have the lodger's vote. There would be London constituencies where they held the elections in their hands—nay, further, I believe there would be at least one where by themselves they would have an absolute majority." The closing sentence of the letter contains these words: "To me it has been a sad spectacle, relieved most emphatically by a strong element of humour,

\* As regards these figures there are no official returns, but Mr. W. A. Coote, Secretary of the National Vigilance League and Deputy Chairman of the London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality, in his evidence before the Royal Commission upon the duties of the Metropolitan Police (1908) said: "They (the figures) are not reliable, but I should put the outside, myself, engaged in this public prostitution—both English, foreign, and everything—at 8000. . . . I do not think that there is anything like the number that there are reported to be."

to see these poor ladies" (the pleaders in the woman's franchise clause) "gesticulating and clamouring that they may be taken from the pedestal on which their sex is raised." Pedestal indeed! We will assume that this "Barrister-at-law" himself at least has had no share in the "fall" of these "200,000 women"; that he has placed no brick and laid no mortar in the building of this "pedestal"; even we will credit him, when "the element of humour" overcomes him, with the excuse of momentary forgetfulness of the statistics to which he had so recently referred. But as to these statistics being an argument against suffrage for women, may it not rather be urged that on these grounds alone there would be reason for asking it? According to the most reliable authorities the above figures are enormously exaggerated, but to meet the argument, let us suppose them approximately correct. I would go so far as to say, the greater the proportion of these women—and the greater, consequently, their representation on a fair electoral basis—the more cause there is for the women's voice to be heard. For surely this proportion is a barometer that accurately registers the degree of disregard as to women's welfare, and plainly exposes the disadvantages to both men and women of neglecting that welfare. "Barrister-at-law" would exempt these women from the franchise; does he think then that their trade is not an exchange? Is it honourable to buy in the market where, according to universal opinion, it is so ignoble to sell? If to provide the supply be so criminal, what about the demand? Does he propose to disenfranchise the many more than 200,000 men who have helped to run up these hideous statistics?



28 "No Votes for Women"

I would remind him of another point which has been forcibly put by an abler pen than mine: "There is a vital difference . . . between the position of the woman and the man in this market of vice. The man is not driven by poverty, by the denial of the right to work, to this traffic. The woman often is. The sweated woman worker, who cannot earn a sufficient pittance on which to exist, is driven into the army of the street. The season worker, whose wage when work can be got is too low to permit of saving, finds the same degradation. Thousands of other working women—the domestic servant turned suddenly out of a place, the shop assistant dismissed without a character, the pretty girl tempted once and then eternally banned by society—fall a ready prey to the sharks that prowl ever on the outlook for victims."\* Can it be said that it is a fanciful stretch of the imagination to suppose these matters would be affected for the better in course of time by the enfranchisement of women?

Sir Edward Clarke at an Anti-Suffrage League Meeting the other day expressed himself as "delighted to see the successful efforts that were being made to disprove the assertions of the 'suffragettes' that they represent either the majority of women or the best-informed and most public-spirited among them." He believed "that neither assertion is well founded." Shortly after this speech was made, the Association of Registered Medical Women in Great Britain and Ireland asked Mr. Asquith to receive a deputation of their representatives "in

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\* *Towards Woman's Liberty*, by Teresa Billington-Greig. 4d. "Women's Freedom League," 1, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.

"No Votes for Women" 29

favour of the extension of the suffrage to women." In making this appeal they wrote: "When receiving a deputation of Members of Parliament in last May on the same subject, you invited an expression of opinion from the women of the country. In response to this invitation we have written to all the registered medical women residing in the United Kingdom, asking whether or not they are in favour of woman suffrage. The results of this enquiry are as follows: In favour, 538; against, 15." Mr. Asquith was too busy to receive the deputation, but asked for their representations to be made in writing. In reply a statement was sent, signed by nineteen women practitioners (whose names in themselves are an argument), and the whole document constitutes one of the most impressive official appeals yet made on the subject.\* It contains this sentence: "In the course of our work we come into contact with many classes of women, and we have special opportunities for realising the disabilities which attach to their lives through lack of effective representation. In hospital practice we observe the miserable condition of some of the women of the poorer classes. We see at close quarters the lives of the underpaid, the unemployed, and the exploited, and also of the criminal, degenerate, and intemperate, *and we recognise that closely associated with the economic condition of woman's labour is the whole question of prostitution with its far-reaching attendant evils.*" I have placed the last words in italics. Sir Edward Clarke, Mrs. Ivor Maxse, and others of the Anti-Suffrage League will doubtless read this document

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\* See *The Times*, Dec. 14th, 1908, p. 6.



unmoved, but it may be recommended to those of an open mind who are seeking for guidance on the subject.

In no direction has the long era of solely male legislation shown itself more injuriously than in the resultant influence on women themselves. Bred in an atmosphere of one-sided morality their training reacts on their sons and daughters with a cumulative force which a rational training in other respects is often unable to counteract. Working women, unshielded by social privilege, remain in some respects in closer touch with the natural elements of life and see with more directness than those in the leisured classes the effects and counter-effects of behaviour. Their morality may sometimes be lax, but when, for whatever reason, this is so, they pay full price for that laxity, and consequently sex-differentiation is comparatively absent from their code of family morals. But in those spheres of society where privilege helps to cripple conscience, the attitude of many women—in other respects often good and high-minded women—upon certain customs would be revolting were it not pathetic. How frequent here is the ready connivance on the part of mothers at the shibboleth that the "social evil" is the only means whereby the health and virility of their sons may be maintained. If this were truly believed, one would expect to find these mothers urging their own daughters to this service as benefactors of the race. There is, however, an inconsistency in their practice which commends their judgment while it undermines their doctrine: they leave the ranks of this calling, which they maintain is so necessary, to be filled by other women's daughters, who

are mostly hounded thereto by poverty, social degradation, and despair.

Finally in the region of immediate practical politics we are told that the Woman Suffrage question has come to a deadlock because it is not a party question, because, though no whole party is against it, yet no party as a whole is for it. But sooner or later, if there is any meaning whatever in the demand, it will become a matter of political life or death to the Ministry in power. Not a party question? Why need it ever be this? Are either party anxious that it should be championed solely by their opponents? It is a national question, a racial question. Was ever a political party weakened by backing such a cause?

It is thought, perhaps, that the expression "fight" is an absurdity in this matter, that those prepared to fight for woman's franchise are only women, and that these have no power to seize political freedom, however great the need, however arbitrary the refusal of it. But it must be remembered that the women who back this movement show a quite other spirit from that of the Members of Parliament who in the course of the last forty years have pledged themselves to the principle of the political equality of men and women. The women in this movement are pledged to it by their belief in it, by their devotion to it, by their service for it. The greater the call for their labours and their heroism the greater their response. The more the sphere of legitimate action is narrowed for them, the greater the pressure of their cramped enthusiasm, and, whatever the cost, they do not yield.



32 "No Votes for Women"

In 1867 the women's franchise cause first appeared before Parliament in the shape of an amendment to the Reform Bill of that year. In 1870 the first Bill was introduced by Jacob Bright. Since then Bills, and amendments to Reform Bills, have succeeded each other almost incessantly. Petitions, meetings, resolutions, deputations, greater in number and in their representative character than those of any other franchise reform, have failed so far to produce any practical results. A majority of the Members of the House of Commons have for years been in favour of it. Cabinet Ministers of either party have spoken stoutly on its behalf. As Mr. Herbert Gladstone remarked: "On this question experience showed that predominance of argument alone—and he believed that had been obtained—was not enough to win the political day."\* What further conditions have to be fulfilled? For forty-two years the ever-increasing injustice of this political situation has appealed for redress; for how much longer will it have to appeal to the mother of Parliaments, to this country, boastful of its love of justice and fair play, to British sentiment, famed throughout the ages for sober but deep-rooted chivalry?

\* Speech on Mr. Stanger's Bill for Women's Enfranchisement, 1908.

THE END

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Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

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## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties.

By BERTRAND RUSSELL.

THE arguments against women's suffrage were, until lately, by no means easy to discover. For though much had been written and spoken in its favour, opponents still felt themselves securely entrenched behind the ramparts of prejudice and custom, and did not think it necessary or prudent to venture on the open ground of explicit discussion. Now, however, owing to the activities of the Anti-Suffrage League and the writings of an eminent Professor,\* it has become possible to discover what are the reasons for opposition which it is thought wise to avow. It must be confessed that they do not make a very formidable array, and that many of them are old friends which have done duty against every reform since the Ancient Britons first ceased to dye themselves with woad. But such as they are, they deserve examination.

\* "Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women." By A. V. Dicey, K.C., LL.D., Hon. D.C.L. (Murray. 1909.)



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

In this examination, Professor Dicey's book will afford a useful text.

We will begin, as the Professor himself does, with minor arguments which have not much persuasive power in themselves, but serve to raise a prejudice or a presumption which may make the reader more receptive when he comes to the really serious objections.

"The concession of Parliamentary votes to women," we are told, "must be in the United Kingdom, either for good or bad, a revolution" (p. 10). Certainly we must admit that it shares this distinction with the Budget and flying-machines and wireless telegraphy and most other things. But that alone would not, at first sight, have any bearing on the question whether this revolution was for good or for bad; yet it is supposed that, if it were not for bad, it would have been made long ago. Thus Professor Dicey asserts that Mill, in "The Subjection of Women," "in effect inculcates the neglect of the lessons to be derived from historical experience embodied in the general, if not universal, customs of mankind" (p. 7). This is the familiar argument of "the wisdom of our ancestors." But there is a special fallacy in speaking of "lessons to be derived from historical experience." For the only thing that history teaches

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

is that men, as a rule, have not, in fact, allowed power to women. This is part of the larger "teaching"—that the strong have almost everywhere been ruthless, and the weak have almost everywhere been oppressed. But how can history teach us that this state of things ought to continue? The world we read of in history is not so perfect a paradise as to make us feel that the institutions upon which it rested must have been wise. Are we merely to imitate the long record of war and cruelty and extortion which constitutes "the general, if not universal, customs of mankind"? The "lesson" to be learnt is—so in effect we are told—that we ought ourselves to commit every crime commonly committed by our ancestors. But if such a lesson is to be inculcated, it is rather the fault of the historian than of the history.

And, considered more scientifically, if the custom of keeping women in subjection were in fact "universal," no inference could be drawn from history as to its good or bad effects. In order to argue inductively as to the good or bad effects of an institution, there must be examples both ways; it must be possible to compare the effects of its presence with the effects of its absence. Otherwise, it is impossible to disentangle, by mere history, the good and the bad in



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

all human societies, and say which of them is due to this universal custom. Now, owing to the existence of women's suffrage in some countries, we can, to some extent, make such a comparison. This comparison, however, Professor Dicey has very wisely abstained from making. There is no hint or suggestion throughout his book that women's suffrage, where it has been tried, has been found harmful. Only a very careful reader can discover, from Professor Dicey, that any countries at all exist where women vote, and even the most careful reader could not discover how numerous they are. For one who professes to learn from history, it is odd to ignore entirely the most relevant history there is. But this history is only to be learnt, as yet, by travel or conversation, not by the unearthing of dusty archives; it would be, therefore, beneath the dignity of the historian to notice what, as yet, forms no part of "polite learning." We may suspect, however, that if any moral against women's suffrage were to be derived from the countries where it is practised, the Professor would not have ignored their existence so completely. And, having learnt this "lesson of history," we can pass on to other aspects of the question.

We are told that there is no such thing as a

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

"right" to vote; that a vote is conferred for the benefit of the community, not of the individual; and that the philosophy of natural right was long ago exploded by Burke and Bentham. As a matter of abstract ethics this is, of course, true; but if it is argued that therefore there is no harm in injustice, and no truth in the contention that justice requires women's enfranchisement, then there is a far too hasty and crude application of theory to practice. The argument from justice does not require any fallacious foundation in the philosophy of natural rights. To inflict a special disability upon one class in the community is in itself an evil, and is calculated to generate resentment on one side and arrogance on the other. It may be admitted that this evil, in some cases, is more than balanced by compensating advantages; but it remains an evil, and any gain for the sake of which it is to be endured must be very great and very certain.

And when it is said that a vote is conferred for the benefit of the community, not of the individual, there is a false antithesis which is very misleading. The community is only the sum of the individuals; and if a vote confers a benefit on the individual woman, then the enfranchisement of women would confer a benefit on half the members of the community,



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

which goes near to proving that it would confer a benefit on the community.

The Professor makes a distinction between civil and political rights, and states that while women ought to have civil rights they ought not to have political rights.\* But the distinction, as he states it, is too subtle to be comprehensible to the lay mind. Civil rights, he says, consist in the right to govern oneself, and political rights consist in the right to govern others. But in that case, men, by the possession of political rights, have the right to govern others—*i.e.*, women—and women, therefore, cannot govern themselves. This is, of course, the fact at present. By factory Acts, by marriage laws, and so on, women are controlled in innumerable ways which may be good or bad, but in any case have been imposed by men, in virtue of men's political rights. The pretence that a person who does not possess political rights can possess the same control over his or her own circumstances as the person who possesses political rights, may, for aught I know, be enshrined in legal theory; but whoever considers facts cannot maintain it for a moment.

Anti-Suffragists, however, are persuaded that, as it is, women secure whatever is good for them from the bounty of Parliament, which is perfectly

\* See pp. 32-4 and 79-80.

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

ready to offend the electors in order to remedy the minutest grievance of the voteless. It is astonishing what noble and self-sacrificing virtue our legislators display; but, oddly enough, one finds on examination that, taking Professor Dicey's own evidence, they only began to display this virtue after the agitation for women's suffrage had achieved a certain strength, when it became undesirable to leave good arguments to those who complained of the injustices inflicted on women. "The desired innovation or revolution is, we are further told, needed to deliver English women from, or guard them against, grievous wrongs. But we *now* know from happy experience that such wrongs may be, as they, in fact, have been, removed or averted by a Parliament consisting solely of men, and in the election whereof no woman had a part."\* Why *now*? Because now the suffrage agitation has made men conscious of some of the more glaring injustices from which women suffer. But many injustices remain; and, what is perhaps the greatest injustice of all, none of them count as injustices unless they appear to be such to those who profit by them. Parliament, we are told, will give women "relief from every *proved* wrong" (p. 27. Italics mine). But to have to

\* P. 78. My italics.



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

prove the wrong to those who inflict it, and who have every motive, both private and political, for paying no attention to the proof, is a severe preliminary to relief. Abdul Hamid, it is said, is about to publish his memoirs, and doubtless he will state that he was always ready to grant to the Armenians relief from every *proved* wrong, but as for an occasional massacre, that was necessary in the interests of the community, for citizens have no abstract *right* to life, and therefore ought only to be allowed to live if the Sultan judges that their lives are useful. Garnished with allusions to Burke and Bentham, a very eloquent apologia might be constructed on these lines.

But, to do Professor Dicey justice, he is compelled, after all, to admit that women's interests do not receive that attention which they would receive if women had the vote. After conceding that trade unions have received better legislative treatment since working men have had the vote, and that the case of women is parallel, he says: "Nor can any impartial critic maintain that, even at the present day, the desires of women, about matters in which they are vitally concerned, obtain from Parliament all the attention they deserve" (p. 22). While giving due respect to his candour, we must

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

maintain that, with this admission, his whole argument collapses.

The contention that the vote will raise women's wages is discussed by the Professor by means of one of those false antitheses which do duty so constantly among opponents of reform. "The plain answer to it," we are told, "is that the prediction, if it means (as every working woman does understand it to mean) that a vote will in itself raise the market value of a woman's work, is false. The ordinary current price of labour depends on economical causes" (p. 38). I do not know how many working women Professor Dicey has examined as to the sense in which they believe that a vote would raise wages, but I greatly doubt if they are quite so simple-minded as he believes, or so ignorant of the conditions which really determine wages. The contention that "the ordinary current price of labour depends on economical causes" has been used, ever since the industrial revolution, by the opponents of trade unions and labour legislation. Yet the wages-fund theory, upon which this contention formerly rested, has been relegated to the lumber-room of obsolete errors, and every extension of the franchise has been followed (at a respectful distance) by a modification of the orthodox economics. The plain fact that the "economical



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

causes" which determine the price of labour are themselves intimately dependent upon political causes is entirely overlooked, at each fresh stage, by those who maintain that political power cannot help the wage-earner. Yet the whole history of trade unionism and of methods of taxation is an illustration of this obvious truth.

All such more or less indirect ways in which the vote may raise wages are, however, classed by Professor Dicey as "bribery." "There is," he says, "another sense in which a vote or political power may, I admit, have its pecuniary value. It may be used by women, and still more by a body of women, to wring money, or money's worth, from the State. A Ministry in want of support may bid high for the votes of women. But such traffic in votes is nothing better than sheer bribery" (p. 40). This is surely the most strangely unreal alternative. The more correct account of the matter would be that a class which is suffering injustice cannot, unless by some unusual combination of circumstances, secure the attention of Parliament or the recognition of its wrongs, without that power of insisting upon its needs which only the vote can give. The Professor's view seems to be that Parliament should consist of 670 philosophers, who, without regard to the wishes of their constituents, decide,

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

out of the plenitude of their wisdom, what boons they may prudently grant to a grateful nation. Any other method of securing legislation is apparently regarded as corrupt. But if so, corruption is of the essence of representative government. The whole effect of representative government on the choice of candidates, on the selection of questions to be dealt with by legislation, on the matters to which members are forced to give their attention—all this would have to be condemned as corruption. The legitimate weight which a Member naturally gives to the representations of those who will be most affected by any proposed change would also have to be counted as corruption. If any of these things are not considered corrupt, then it will follow that, without corruption, women's suffrage will tend to raise women's wages. For, whatever may be said by some belated adherents of the "classical" political economy, it cannot be denied that legislation and Government action can affect wages—by helping or hindering collective bargaining, by increasing or diminishing the opportunities of employment, by varying the methods of raising revenue, or by the effect of raising or lowering the wages of Government employees. If women had the vote, they would, in all these respects, be in a better position. In the first place, candi-



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

dates would be likely to be selected who were sympathetic to their claims. In the second place, the measures that would be to the fore at elections and in Parliament would be more likely to be such as afforded a prospect of improving the economic position of women. In the third place, Members would become much more aware of the needs and wishes of women, if the women in their constituency could approach them with the status of voters. If such influences are corrupt when brought to bear by women, they are corrupt when brought to bear by men, and the only pure Government left in the world is that of Russia.

Professor Dicey shares with other Anti-Suffragists the fear of introducing some undefined quality called "feminine emotion" into politics. Experience alone can dispel such fears, and as far as experience has gone at present, wherever women are seen taking part in public life, they show a remarkable absence of any so-called "feminine emotion." The actions of women poor-law guardians are decided by their economic opinions, socialist women taking one line, women who believe in C.O.S. doctrines taking another. Women on Educational Committees and teachers consider the needs of the children in a serious and practical way. Organisations of working

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

women take most level-headed views of industrial and social reforms.

On the other hand, it seems to be forgotten how emotional men can be. Religious revivalism, attacks of Imperialism, Mafficking celebrations, panics, all show that excitable forms of emotion are not confined to one sex, or to one class.

But it is time to turn our attention to the arguments upon which Professor Dicey lays most stress. There are four of them.

I. "Woman suffrage must ultimately, and probably in no long time, lead to adult suffrage, and will increase all the admitted defects of so-called universal, or in strictness manhood suffrage" (p. 55).

We will not reply by denying that adult suffrage must come, since, on the contrary, we hold that it ought to come, if possible, without any intervening period during which some women only are enfranchised, and we agree that "every reason and every sentiment which supports the cry of 'Votes for women!' tells, at any rate with nine people out of ten, in favour of adult suffrage" (p. 56). But we will ask: What are the "admitted defects of so-called universal, or in strictness manhood, suffrage"? There is only one defect which we are prepared to concede as "admitted" about "so-called



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

universal" suffrage, and that is that it is not universal ; and this defect will not be increased by adult suffrage. Let us see, however, what are the defects which are supposed to be "admitted." In the first place, we are told that large constituencies are worse than small ones. "A large constituency is, just because of its size, a bad electoral body. As the number of electors is increased, the power and the responsibility of each man are diminished. Authority passes into the hands of persons who possess neither the independence due to the possession of property, nor the intelligence due to education" (p. 59).

This objection to large constituencies appears to be widely felt, and to lead many people to oppose adult suffrage. Yet it is difficult to see on what it is based. The existing constituencies are of very varying size, and it notorious that those in which corruption is most prevalent are among the smallest. This is, indeed, only what might be expected, since a given sum spent in bribery will go nearer to securing election where there are few electors than where there are many. If Professor Dicey were right, it would seem a pity that rotten boroughs were abolished. Yet we do not find it recorded that the elector of Old Sarum possessed either "the independence due to property" or "the intelli-

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

gence due to education." It is to be supposed, however, that he means to argue against women's suffrage on the ground that women are poorer than men, and are not given so good an education. This ground seems scarcely compatible with the view that women suffer no serious injustice at present. To be handicapped, as compared with men, both in property and in education, seems scarcely a trivial injustice. The Professor's argument is, therefore, the familiar argument of possessors of power : that certain things, which only power will give, are necessary to the wise use of power, and, therefore, only those who already have power are fit to have it. It follows that all injustices should be perpetuated, and all wrongs must be eternal.

There are, of course, other reasons which lead people to oppose adult suffrage. The Professor makes a great deal of one of these objections—namely, that since adult suffrage would produce a majority of women, it would place government in the hands of the physically weaker half of the nation, and so lead to instability. This argument we shall consider shortly. Other objections, though not urged by Professor Dicey, deserve a passing mention. The objection based upon the view that it is essentially the possession of property that confers a right to



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

the vote belongs to another order of ideas. But it may be said in passing that no ground exists for protesting against the disfranchisement of women on the ground of sex which does not apply equally against the disfranchisement of the poor on the ground that they have no property sufficient to qualify for a vote. Objections to a majority of women, other than that derived from a possible appeal to force on the part of men, are simply variants of the denial that women ought to be placed on an equality with men. The objection is, in a word: "By all means let some women have the vote, provided you can be sure that it will make no difference, and that no grievance suffered by women will be removed by it. But if you allow women to become the majority, we, the lords of creation, may be outvoted, and may be forced to discontinue some of the injustices dearest to our hearts. This is a disaster not to be contemplated for a moment, and, therefore, it would never do to admit *all* women to the vote." This, however, is merely the argument of the tyrant, who is prepared, if necessary, to conceal his tyranny, but is not prepared to abandon it. And against such an argument there would seem to be no weapon but moral exhortation, directed to extort a recognition that others also have their rights.

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

II. After some vague generalisations about the character of "Woman," which may be summed up in the two remarks that women have less tenacity than men (p. 60), and that it would be a misfortune if British policy were determined by the fighting suffragists (p. 62)—I suppose because of their sad lack of tenacity—we come to the second great argument against women's suffrage. This is, in its entirety, as follows:

"The grant of votes to women settles nothing. If conceded to-morrow, it must be followed by the cry of 'Seats in Parliament for women!' 'Places in the Cabinet for women!' 'Judge-ships for women!' For the avowed aim of every suffragist, down from John Stuart Mill to Mrs. Pankhurst, is the complete political equality of men and of women. The opening of the Parliamentary franchise to women is the encouragement, not the close, of a long agitation."

It is difficult to know how to treat this argument, except by the exclamation, "How awful!" For in fact there is no argument. It is our old friend the thin end of the wedge, with the usual absence of any attempt to show that there is any harm in the thick end. All the same arguments might have been used—probably were used—against the enfranchisement of working-men. Yet, though working-men have always



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

been eligible to Parliament and the Cabinet, they still form a small minority in Parliament, and their admission to the Cabinet has not been found to promote revolution. Such changes as are dreaded by Professor Dicey will happen very gradually, and whatever objections there may be to them at present will diminish as women acquire the political experience due to possession of the vote.

III. We are told next that women ought not to have the vote because they do not want it. To this, it would seem a sufficient answer to deny the fact. The number of women who desire the vote is increasing every day, and, though no means exist of ascertaining whether it has yet become a majority, there is a practical certainty that, if not yet the majority, it soon will be. But the proper answer is that the question is not so much whether women desire the vote, as whether it is for the good of the community that they should have it. And, oddly enough, this answer is given by the Professor himself, but it is given in rebutting the contention that women ought to have the vote because they want it. He has failed to perceive the double application of his words, which are as follows :

“My conviction as to the true nature of a Parliamentary vote led inevitably to the conclu-

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

sion that the expediency, or what in such a matter is the same thing, the justice, of giving Parliamentary votes to English women depends on the answer to the inquiry, not whether a large number of English women, or English women generally, wish for votes, but whether the establishment of woman suffrage will be a benefit to England?” (p. 8).

The question, therefore, whether or not a majority of English women desire the vote is, on the Professor's own showing, irrelevant.

IV. The strongest argument against women's suffrage is the argument that all government is based, in the last resort, on *force*, and therefore the vote ought to be confined to those who are able to use force. The argument is that, if all women are enfranchised, they will form a majority of the electorate, and laws may be enacted, by their votes, to which a large majority of men are vehemently opposed—laws, for example, dealing with temperance or with the suppression of vice. Such laws men might refuse to obey; and the majority, being mainly composed of women, would be unable to enforce its will. Hence the Government would be unstable, and might be upset by a successful revolution. The only way to avoid this is to confine the vote to those who can fight—*i.e.*, to men.



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

This view seems to involve a radical misconception of political facts. In the first place, it is scarcely conceivable that any law would be passed if it were strongly opposed by a large majority of men. We have to remember that, when women are first enfranchised, they will find a political system established which has been made by men, where the parties are divided according to the divisions of opinion among men, where all the candidates are men, and all the questions mainly discussed at elections will be such as have been considered important by men. The inertia of this state of things will make it impossible to change it suddenly. There will not be any sudden emergence of a large women's party, advocating the supposed special interests of women. Most women would, at first, obtain their political knowledge through the views expressed by men. Gradually, as they acquire more political knowledge, they will no doubt become more independent. But as they become more independent, they will also become better judges of what is feasible and prudent: they will realise that legislation which is detested, beyond a certain point, by a large section of the community, is unwise legislation, and they will avoid such action as might produce a conflict between men and women. An exact parallel to what is probable

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

may be found in the rise of the Labour party. There is much more apparent opposition of interests between labour and capital than between women and men; yet, although urban working men have had the vote for over forty years, a large majority of them still prefer to vote for one or other of what Socialists call the capitalistic parties. And as the Labour party grows in numbers, it grows also in wisdom, so that it cannot be seriously maintained that the Labour party affords a menace to public order. Yet the argument that government is based upon force, if it were valid, would have applied as much against admitting working men as against admitting women. For the "force" that is meant is not actual prowess with the fists, but the power of placing an army in the field; and it is obvious that if the richer third of the nation were to engage in a conflict with the poorer two-thirds, the richer third could hire mercenaries who would utterly annihilate the poorer two-thirds. Yet this does not happen. Why? Because neither the rich nor the poor are so wholly reckless as theorists suppose. Rather than plunge the nation into civil war, the poor moderate the burdens they inflict upon the rich, and the rich confine their protests to letters to the Press and diminution of charitable subscriptions. So it



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

would be if women were the majority of the voters. Both sides would have enough forbearance and enough common sense to avoid any such sharpness of opposition as could possibly shake the stability of the Government.

In fact, instead of saying that government is based on force, it would be quite as true to say that force is based on government. In a civilised community an armed conflict with the executive is too serious a matter to be lightly undertaken, and the powers of the executive are such that a conflict can hardly ever be successful. On the other hand, respect for the rights of minorities is in England so ingrained in our political traditions that it is inconceivable that they should be disregarded to such a degree as would produce any temptation to armed resistance. And in the particular application to women's suffrage, one is tempted to wonder whether those who speak of a possible conflict ever remember that it is men and women they are speaking of. When we consider the closeness of the relations of men and women, the daily and hourly need of co-operation between them, it seems the merest fantastic nightmare to imagine men ranged in one camp and women in the other. Long before this had happened, the necessities of private life would have compelled some sort

## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

of adjustment. The man's desire for his dinner and the woman's need of her husband's support are sufficient safeguards of the public peace in this respect. Thus the argument that government is based on force, and ought, therefore, to be in the hands of the strong, may be dismissed as one which takes no account of the actual facts of human life. A sex-war might provide material for a farce, but could not be conceived in sober earnest.

It might, on the contrary, be urged with more truth that, since the strong will always have a preponderating influence by virtue of their strength, it is specially important that the weak should have such protection as is afforded by the vote. The vote will still leave them in a position in which they will have to pay respect to the wishes of the strong, but it will do what is possible to remedy the inequality due to natural causes. Indeed, the whole progress from barbarism to the civilised state may be represented as an increasing protection of the weak against the strong. We no longer permit a man to steal a woman's property by means of his superior physical strength, but we still allow him to steal her means of livelihood by excluding her from professions and trades. The protection of the weak against the strong, so far as direct use of physical force is concerned, is undertaken



## Anti-Suffragist Anxieties

by the police; but indirect attacks, made by means of law and custom, cannot be prevented except by the protection of the vote. The comparative weakness of women, therefore, so far from affording an argument against giving them the vote, affords an argument in favour of giving them every protection against injustice which the laws can provide, and, as the chief protection, the right to a voice as to what the laws shall be.

The objections which are explicitly urged against women's suffrage are, of course, not those which weigh most with most men. Men fear that their liberty to act in ways that are injurious to women will be curtailed, and that they will lose that pleasing sense of dominion which at present makes "no place like home." The instinct of the master to retain his mastery cannot be met by mere political arguments. But it is an instinct which finds less and less scope in the modern world, and it is fast being driven from this stronghold, as it has been driven from others. To substitute co-operation for subjection is everywhere the effort of democracy, and it is one of the strongest arguments in favour of the enfranchisement of women that it will further this substitution in all that concerns the relations of men and women.

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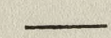
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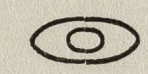
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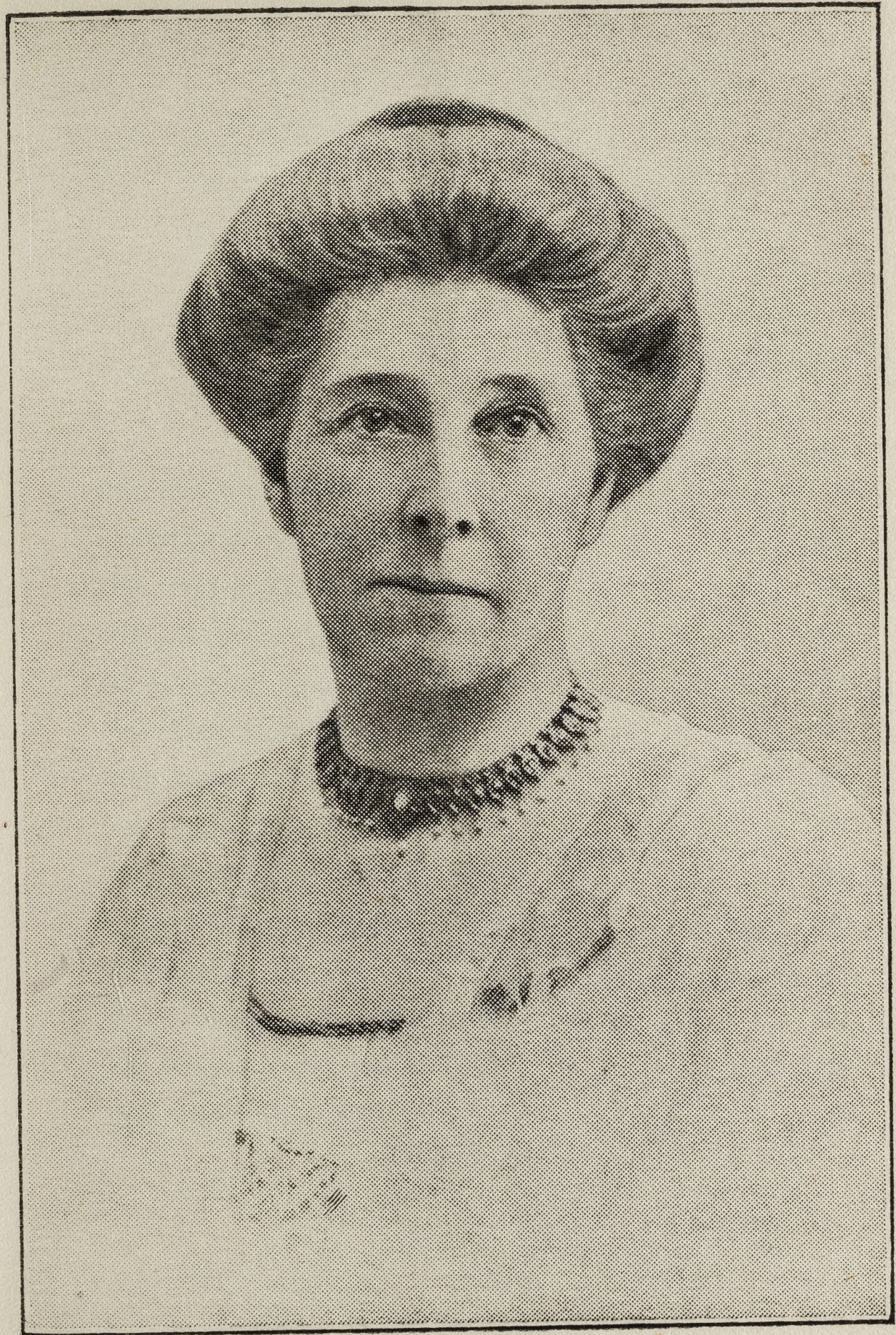


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## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
THE EXISTING BASIS OF THE FRANCHISE ... ..	7
LEGISLATION AND THE HOME ... ..	12
THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE ... ..	14
THE RIGHT TO LIVE ... ..	16
AN OBSTACLE RACE ... ..	19
THE STARVATION WAGE ... ..	22
THE DOMESTIC QUEEN ... ..	25
THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL MORALITY ... ..	28
TWO ASPECTS TO EVERY QUESTION ... ..	31
PUBLIC SPIRIT IN WOMEN ... ..	34
PATRIOTISM ... ..	37
THE LESSON FROM EXPERIENCE ... ..	40
THE STATUS OF WOMEN ... ..	47
THE VISION BEAUTIFUL ... ..	52



### The Existing Basis of the Franchise.

THE axiom of a recent scientific writer, that "there is no wealth but life," marks a revolution in our modern political thought. Until the nineteenth century, our laws and franchise were based on the assumption that the first duty of Government was the protection and representation not of humanity but of *property*: the vote was an appendage of property, exercised by any individual solely as the possessor of a material "stake in the country." So unquestioned was this view that, in the thirteenth century and after, *even a woman*, if she happened to hold property, might exercise, personally or by proxy, the right of voting. As long as it rested on this basis, the vote was rightly regarded as a trust exercised for the many by the few; and if the population in general had nothing to do with legislation, at any rate legislation concerned itself comparatively little with them. So long as they were content to lead laborious lives under the rule of their social superiors, they were alike unharassed and unhelped by Factory Acts, sanitary laws, compulsory education, Employment of Children Acts, and such necessary concomitants of our complex civilisation.

Early in the nineteenth century the middle classes awoke to the need of influencing their own government, and their demand for voting power took shape in the great Reform Bill of 1832. Doubtless this demand was met by the arguments familiar to us to-day—that the vote could not better their condition, that the ruling class was always ready and anxious to remove any injustice brought to its notice, that the stability of the country would be endangered by the ignorance of many middle-class men, etc. But the commercial element had become



conscious of its own strength, and, by threatening to rise in rebellion, obtained its vote, and thereby took an important step in the transference of representation from property to *person*. Further steps followed rapidly, for the larger the number admitted within the pale of government, and the more attention these were able to command for their needs and interests, the more obvious became the neglect and helplessness of those still excluded. The enormous commercial development of the middle of the century, with its ruthless exploitation of the artisans, convinced these in their turn of the necessity for some balance of power, and they obtained their enfranchisement (not without violence) in 1868. The extension of the vote in 1832 had still been based on a considerable property qualification; but in 1868 the grant of the vote to practically every male householder established *citizenship* as the primary qualification for self-government. There still remained unrepresented the great agricultural labouring class, which for another sixteen years suffered the consequences of being a negligible quantity. Then these also passed within the pale.

It is exceedingly difficult, owing to the number of limitations and conditions, to give a clear and concise category of those who are qualified under the present law, to vote for Members of Parliament.

There is

*I.—Owner's franchise*, acquired by men possessing freehold land or tenements of an annual value of 40s., for which the rent or income must have been received for six months previous to the last 15th July. (There are some circumstances in which a woman of property may confer a vote *for that property on* her husband).

*II.—Occupier's or Household franchise*, under which any Householder (except a woman, minor, criminal, or lunatic) may vote, independently of the amount of rent

paid, and whether or not the occupier personally pays rates (provided these have been paid by somebody—usually, in the case of cheap houses, by the landlord). The occupation of the premises must date from twelve months previous to the last 15th of July. If two occupiers desire to qualify jointly for the same premises, however, they can only do so if the rent amounts to £10 each.

*III.—*The occupation of land or business premises of the yearly value of £10, provided the occupier lives within seven miles of the borough, or, in the case of London, within 25 miles.

*IV.—Service franchise*, for those men whose business makes residence on the premises compulsory, and who, if they lost their employment, would also lose their residence, such as shop assistants who are compelled to *live in*; but this qualification only holds where the employer does not live on the premises, so that if women were enfranchised, it would not apply to domestic servants.

*V.—Lodger franchise*, which, if claimed, may be granted to a male occupant of a room, the value of which (unfurnished) amounts to £10 a year. Two Lodgers sharing a room may both qualify, if the value amounts to £10 each; and in certain cases the lodger vote is granted to sons living at home with their parents; but this depends largely on the judgment of the Revising Barrister, and the law itself is very indefinite on the point.

*VI.—University franchise*, for graduates (males only). For the election of Town and County Councillors the Ownership, Service, and Lodger franchises *do not confer a vote*; the Household and the £10 qualification do. In these elections women who hold the same qualifications as men are allowed to vote, as also for Boards of Guardians, and for Parish and District Councils. They are also eligible to sit as members of any of these local governing bodies, if qualified in the same way as men.



Speaking broadly, the Parliamentary vote is now possessed by every owner or occupier of house or business premises, and (under certain conditions) by lodgers; with the exception of criminals, lunatics, minors, and women.

It should be borne in mind by students of our democratic system of government that, with the gradual substitution of *personality* for *property* as the basis of voting power, the meaning and nature of the vote itself has changed. A democratic electorate does not itself make laws, conduct foreign policy, or remodel its Constitution; it merely indicates the lines on which it desires these things to be done, and elects those whom it considers qualified to do them. If the will of the governed is to be consulted at all, it is obvious that they alone can adequately express it: not a Solomon himself can understand the thoughts and needs of the humblest toiler in his temple so well as that man's self, however better fitted Solomon may be to give them form and effect. The object of our existing franchise, therefore, being the indication of the people's will (which a democratic Government exists to carry out wisely), ignorance and a narrow outlook on public affairs are less mischievous than they would be with a restricted electorate, because the personal motives and interests of one section are counterbalanced by those of others, and a rough consensus of opinion is obtained, which is perhaps the nearest approach possible to what we aim at in self-government. Obviously, however, this consensus cannot be fairly attained unless *all sections* of the nation are included; otherwise, the larger the number of voters the heavier the disadvantages of the voteless, the more inevitably will they be submerged, and powerless to make their needs and desires felt. This is precisely what has happened in the case of women, and it explains why their demand for the vote has become more insistent with each fresh increase of the male electorate.

It would be beyond the scope of this pamphlet to discuss the merits of a democratic as compared with other forms

of franchise. Many alternative schemes may be and constantly are suggested, but, inasmuch as our question is one of practical politics, we are concerned only with existing conditions and such reform as is not incompatible with these. Accepting, therefore, without question the existing basis of the franchise, we merely claim that it should be applied justly and without invidious distinctions—that citizens who fulfil the conditions on which the vote is granted, should not be deprived of it solely on the ground of sex.



## Legislation and the Home.

There was a time when the functions of Government were supposed to be limited to little more than the keeping of order and the protection of life and property. But the interpretation of even these functions must vary with the conditions of civilisation: the keeping of order in a small agricultural community is not the same thing as in a vast city; the need for regulations and restrictions increases rapidly when people are herded in crowds and competing fiercely in the struggle for existence. With the rapid growth of population, that devotion to individual liberty so strong in English character has had to be modified in obedience to the social instinct, lest liberty for each might imply slavery for all. Little by little even sturdy individualists have admitted a necessity for Government interference with personal freedom of action, of contract, and of competition, which they would have denied half a century ago. At that time, indeed, this interference would have been resisted as tyranny, because it would have been arbitrarily imposed on the people without their consent. It is astonishing how rule and restriction become endurable if self-imposed; and since Englishmen achieved *Government by consent* they have shown themselves willing to submit to limitations which formerly would have driven them to rebellion. Now, this necessary inspection and regulation of our homes, our labour, our children, our health—what we call domestic legislation—touches the lives of women more intimately and directly than it does the lives of men. The law decides what trades a woman may work at, what hours she may work, how long she must rest after her children are born, how and at what age those children may be employed, and a hundred other details. The extent to which legislation concerns itself with domestic affairs

found amusing illustration not long ago in a Parliamentary debate on the methods to be adopted for preventing little boys from smoking cigarettes, and on the penalties to be inflicted on a mother for not providing a fire-guard, or for taking her baby to bed with her; also in the spectacle of a Departmental Committee on questions of Coroners' Law gravely considering the suitability of flannelette as a material for children's underclothing.

Legal restrictions on private action are rendered endurable to men because they themselves *assent to them* (as voters), but women have absolutely no voice as to the laws affecting them and their children, which are imposed on them by men. Men arrogate to themselves the right and the capacity to determine for women the conditions on which they may be allowed to live and work. This is a dangerous power to give to any class of human beings, but the danger is greatest when the dominating class is liable to be competing in the struggle for existence with those for whom they legislate. However upright and well-meaning human beings—men or women—may be, they are not, and probably never will be, able to take a wholly unbiassed view of questions which touch their personal welfare and advantage; and where the interests of men and women conflict (as in labour competition they not infrequently must do), it is inevitable that the judgment of men will suffer from sex bias, even though they will often persuade themselves that what is best for men must, through them, be best for women also.



### The Struggle for Existence.

The extent to which women have entered and are entering the labour market is still inadequately realised. Whether the facts are to be approved or regretted, they must be first recognised and understood. Statistics compiled by the Right Hon. Charles Booth show that in 1841 there were employed in a certain comprehensive group of trades 1,030,600 males, and 463,600 females; fifty years later (1891) the numbers were 1,576,100 males, and 1,447,500 females. Whilst the increase of men was 53 per cent., that of the women was over 200 per cent. This increase is still going on. In 1901, in the same trades, the numbers were 1,652,422 males, and 1,762,445 females.

From time to time restrictive proposals are made which strike arbitrarily at the livelihood of thousands of women. Many years ago an attempt was made to stop women sorting coal at the pit-brow in the northern mining districts, such work, it was declared, being "unsuitable" for women. The workers themselves, alarmed for their livelihood, sent a deputation to London to interview the promoters of the Bill in Parliament. The robust, healthy appearance of the demonstrators and their spirited resistance to their own crushing out produced such an effect on the politicians that their attempt was abandoned. A similar crusade was started more recently against the nail and chain-making industry, which was represented as "degrading" and "unwomanly." Investigation showed that there was in this case also a reverse side of the shield; that the women engaged in the trade were on the whole healthy, athletic, and contented, preferring their independent work at little forges in their own backyards to confinement in factories; while they pleaded that they were thus enabled to keep their homes and families under supervision. Again, there are philanthropists who are anxious to abolish the

employment of barmaids, seeing clearly the degrading and injurious conditions undeniably attendant on the trade, but less troubled by the injustice of depriving 100,000 fellow-creatures of a means of livelihood.

The above attempts may at any rate be ascribed to benevolent motives. Others, however, are still less justifiable. The flower trade would be generally conceded to be one specially suitable for women, a large number of whom are engaged in it. Many of the better-paid and more skilled are employed in decorating houses for balls and receptions, between the hours of 8 and 10 p.m. It was recently decided to bring this trade under the Factory Acts, and as these Acts forbid women to work overtime, this artistic and better-paid designing work must, by this edict, be thrown more and more into the hands of men (foreigners, moreover, as Englishmen, for some reason, seem to have neither taste nor aptitude for the trade).

One more illustration—at present prospective—must suffice. The Rt. Hon. John Burns, in the enthusiasm of his crusade against unemployment (for men), has publicly declared that the labour of women, especially of married women, must be enormously curtailed; and not a few organisations of men—keenly alive to the benefit to themselves of lessening the competition of women—are clamouring for legislation in this direction.

The foregoing instances are cited, not primarily as grievances, but to illustrate the precariousness incidental to the livelihood of any class whose liberties and actions are absolutely at the mercy of others. The extent to which it is justifiable to handicap the labour of adult women by "protective" legislation is a question on which women themselves are divided in opinion; but assuredly it is one on which they have a claim to a voice. Until this claim is recognised, women must be for ever on the alert, ready at any moment to initiate costly and laborious public agitation in defence of the livelihood of themselves and their families.



## The Right to Live.

To the plea of the destitute—"We must live"—was once given the rejoinder, "I do not see the necessity." But this conclusion is hardly applicable to the female half of our nation, *en masse*, nor even perhaps to the millions of them for whom any sort of life is dependent on permission to labour. Those who maintain the right of men to give or withhold this permission, seek to justify themselves by the assertion that the well-being of the race requires the protection of its mothers. It is noteworthy, however, that the conception of legislative protection never goes beyond restriction: no one proposes to supplement "Thou shalt not labour" by adding also, "Thou shalt be maintained." Neither has it yet been proposed to hold an investigation into the habits of life of *fathers*, with a view to State interference with any actions or pursuits of theirs which may tend towards physical degeneration of the race. But three years ago an investigation was undertaken at the request of the Home Office, by medical officers of health, with the object of showing the effect of industrial employment before and after child-birth on the health of mother and child.

Even those who dispute the right of government to deny women freedom to earn an honest livelihood have hitherto been under the impression that the employment of mothers in factories was one chief cause of the high rate of infant mortality.

It appears, however, that there are still more important factors in the case, chief among them, in the opinion of the Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, being the neglect by Local Bodies of proper sanitation.

The enquiries show that while Glamorgan, Northumberland, Durham, and Monmouth have the lowest proportion of industrially employed married and widowed women, they also have the highest infant mortality. Gloucester, Berks., Oxford, and Hereford have a high proportion of occupied wives and widows, and a low infant mortality.

In Birmingham the Medical officer, Dr. Robertson, was assisted in his researches by Dr. Jessie Duncan, and the area selected for the inquiry comprised two of the most densely populated wards, in which great poverty prevails, the housing conditions are of the worst, and at least 50 per cent. of the married women go to work before and after the birth of their children. Twelve hundred homes were kept under regular inspection during the year 1908, with the following extraordinary result:—

"The mortality among the infants born in 1908 of all mothers employed either before or after child-birth, was at the rate of 190 per 1,000 births, while among those not industrially employed it was 207 per 1,000 births."

(*Dr. Robertson's Report, page 7*).

What these figures indicate is, of course, not that industrial employment is desirable for mothers or their infants, but that the mitigation of want and poverty resulting from that employment does more good than the work itself does harm. The statistics given are arranged so that they may be examined and tested in many aspects; but from every aspect the same conclusion is obtained. Close inquiry was made as to *why* the mothers went out to work. In the enormous majority of cases it was to supplement an insufficient income, only a very few working from preference. The earnings of the women made the difference between 20s. and 23s. income per week for the family.

It is this difference which apparently actually more than compensates for the deplorable deprivation of their



natural nourishment suffered by the infants of working mothers. Whilst the importance to infant life of this natural feeding can hardly be overestimated, yet the facts placed before us constitute one more solemn warning that legislative interference may easily create greater evils than it removes. The reports quoted above certainly go far to remove any shadow of justification for further Government interference with women's right to labour for themselves and their families.\*

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\*NOTE.—In the latest Report issued (of children born in 1909) the results are reversed, the figures being as follows :—

Mortality among infants of  
mothers industrially employed,  
194 per 1,000.

Mortality among infants of  
mothers not industrially em-  
ployed, 147 per 1,000.

This variation indicating the importance of big-scale enquiries extending over longer periods ; but from diagrams published with the Report it is evident, to quote the words of Dr. Jessie Duncan, the investigator, that "the influence of industrial employment is quite small when compared with the influence of acute poverty. It would seem, therefore, that in so far as the mother's employment reduces the acuteness of the poverty, it may even tend to improve the infant mortality."

## An Obstacle Race.

Whatever charm may attach in many minds to an ideal state of society in which every woman should be maintained without the need of engaging in any industrial competition, it is clear that such an ideal is beyond realisation for us here and now. Extremely interesting and instructive statistics have been compiled by Miss C. E. Collett, M.A., giving the proportionate numbers of men and women in England, and their distribution among classes and districts. Whilst in some working class areas men and women are approximately balanced (*e.g.*, men outnumbering women in Stepney and Bethnal Green), in Kensington and Hampstead the women are so much more numerous that 50 per cent. of them remain unmarried. This is confirmed by a writer in the *Times*, who points out that of the whole female population over 15 years old, not more than half are married at any one moment. Facing frankly, therefore, the fact that, under modern economic conditions, the preponderance of women and the increasing acuteness of the struggle for existence render it impossible for the women of our country generally to look to the men for maintenance, the question arises whether it is right or just that their field of choice should be limited to the less remunerative and less honourably esteemed careers, or whether they should be allowed to test their fitness, unhampered by any but natural disabilities, for honest work in any direction. Women ask for neither favours nor privileges ; simply for the removal of obstacles ; they are content to be judged as men are judged—willing to accept success or failure as the test of their fitness. If the world has no need of women as doctors, lawyers, scientists, lecturers, teachers, etc., the world will not employ them : if it does employ and welcome them, both they and the world have a right to the mutual benefit



which results. Yet how far we still are from accepting this seemingly simple proposition! In place of a fair field and no favour, women in pursuit of an independent career find a veritable obstacle race prepared for them. As a Government official frankly admitted, "The law handicaps women, and you've got to accept that to begin with,"—a somewhat striking admission from the oft-repeated point of view that it is a woman's weakness which prompts a man to "protect" her by restrictive legislation! It is undeniable, alas! that man has struggled to maintain a vested interest in all the more lucrative and reputable careers hitherto monopolised by him, whilst freely appropriating to himself many industries once considered as peculiarly woman's sphere, such, for instance, as the salting and preserving of foods, cookery, weaving, spinning, tailoring, etc. Remarkable as has been the widening of women's opportunities in the last half-century, it has only been achieved by a never-ending struggle, without which no single point of advance is conceded; and the surmounters of each obstacle are immediately faced with a further one.

Women doctors—the demand for them being proved—are now suffered to qualify and practise, but their exclusion from many advantages enjoyed by their male colleagues is still maintained: women may train as lawyers, but cannot appear in court for their clients: women accountants are prohibited from becoming "chartered": women teachers are denied by our ancient Universities the hall-mark of an equal proficiency with men in the highest examinations. It is not too much to say that there is no career in which a woman is not at some artificial disadvantage as compared with a man. Where the law fails to handicap them, class interests and social prejudices step in to keep up the obstacle race, as in a recent instance at Preston, where the governors of the Park School for Girls recommended the appointment of a woman doctor for the care of the pupils. The local medical men combined to raise an objection, on the ground that since there

was no medical woman in the town, the importation of one might interfere with the men's field of practice. In this case the decision fortunately rested with the Town Council, and the Town Clerk having ruled that Medical Councillors, being pecuniarily interested, could not vote, the appointment of a woman was carried by the casting vote of the Mayor. Women have no desire to condemn or denounce men for the human and natural tendency to put their own interests foremost in the battle of life: they merely object to having their own hands tied, and their lives and liberties placed unreservedly in the power of their competitors.



## The Starvation Wage.

Let us impress on our minds two salient facts: (1) That there are computed to be four to five million women wage-earners in our country to-day; (2) that these women, even when doing the same work as men, and doing it equally well, are seldom paid more than from half to two-thirds the wages of men. This holds good of nearly all occupations, from the higher grades—*e.g.*, teachers, inspectors, clerks, and the like—to the factory hand.

Where men inspectors are paid £400 to £800, women discharging the same duties receive £200 to £400. In factories, for identically the same work with the same machines men are paid 30s. to 40s., and women 18s. at most, the average being lower. Evidence was given before the Fair Wages Commission concerning payment for certain stitching on riding saddles, to the effect that "you cannot tell whether it has been done by a man or a woman." The men were slower at the work than the women, yet the men received 9s. 6d. for work which took them twelve hours, and the women 4s. 6d. for the same work done in ten hours. The rate in the one case was 9½d. per hour, in the other 5½d.

For the most part it is accepted as right and natural that women should be employed only in the inferior and worst-paid departments of all trades; a Trade Union official explained that women would not be allowed to do a certain trade process, *because* the 36s. earned at the work is "too good money for women." It is sometimes stated that men are paid higher on the supposition that they maintain a family: if any such basis were really adopted, the difference should be made, not between one sex and the other,

but between married and unmarried, and between young men and women living at home with their parents, and those compelled to rely only on themselves. The argument might apply to a social condition where all women were supported by all men; but is assuredly not applicable to facts as they exist.

Nothing arouses such anger among the opponents of Women's Suffrage as any assumption that the possession of the vote would improve women's wages. Certainly prophecy is a weak weapon unless based on experience; but the grounds for our expectation are these. Wages depend on three main factors: (1) Demand and supply; (2) organisation; (3) status of workers. The first we may treat as common to both sexes; the second has unquestionably been a powerful lever in forcing up men's wages; at present it is of little use to women, because without money they cannot organise, and without organisation they cannot obtain more money. It is a vicious circle. In the one trade where women do receive equal pay for equal work (cotton spinning), they belong to the same union as the men and reap the benefit of their united power; but in the majority of trades filled by women, they are too poor to combine effectively. A woman working for a starvation wage cannot afford even the few weekly pence necessary for membership of a union.

Experience, however, shows that a rise of status among workers may have the same effect as organisation. Trade Unionism among agricultural labourers has never been comparable in strength to that among town artisans, yet since their enfranchisement their wages have greatly increased. As voters, they have become a power to be reckoned with and considered. We must also bear in mind the decreasing reluctance of Government to intervene in the labour market for the purpose of securing a living wage to workers. Once this right of intervention



is admitted, the connection between votes and wages becomes a very practical one, and is illustrated by the recent Trades Board Act, by means of which the starvation wages of the nail and chain makers have been actually doubled. When this achievement was announced by Miss McArthur (to whom the credit for it is largely due) to a great gathering of the women workers, they are said to have laughed incredulously, crying out that it was too good to be true. Our opponents, of course, will rejoin, "See what can be done *without the vote!*" No one has ever denied that reforms have been and can be achieved without it; but that is no reason why the labour of agitation should not be lightened by the possession of direct and effective means. Doubtless a man with no plough to help him could dig an acre of land with a spade; but should he therefore not acquire the plough? Soldiers without firearms may defend or assail a position with sticks or stones, but rifles and bayonets are none the less to be desired.

### The Domestic Queen.

Woman as wife and mother! We come at last to the one sole sphere, her right to which is universally acknowledged—in which we are always assured she reigns supreme. Surely here, if anywhere, we shall find nothing to criticise, nothing to condemn! Thankfully bearing in mind the number of happy homes in which love and harmony rule, to the exclusion of any question of law or individual rights ("for if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law"), we recognise also that the ordinances of law and government are primarily required for the abnormal and exceptional, both in character and circumstances. If, then, we pierce through the halo of sentiment which, rightly enough, surrounds the marriage relationship, we find that even here, in her unchallenged kingdom, woman remains entirely in subordination to man, dependent on his pleasure, in the vast majority of cases, for the necessaries as well as the luxuries of existence, not because she might not have become economically independent, but because she has renounced independence in order to become for him housekeeper, life-partner, and frequently general servant. A woman recently told a Marylebone magistrate that for the past nine years she had only received threepence a day from her husband (a soldier) for the support of herself and two children. The magistrate said he could not send the man to gaol for not supporting his wife. He need only keep her from actual starvation. The same principle prevails, under different conditions, in the well-to-do classes. Few men consider themselves under any obligation to inform their wives of their financial position, or to allocate to them an income commensurate with that position. For the support of their joint household and family a man deals out to his wife what he pleases; rarely, indeed, has she at her disposal, to give or spend, one quarter of the means



which he dispenses without reference to her. Ask a married woman to support by a five-shilling subscription a cause or charity in which she is interested; in ninety out of a hundred cases she finds it necessary to ask her husband. If a man be of a lavish or improvident nature he constantly lives up to or beyond his income, and when he dies, leaves his wife and family penniless, unprepared and wholly unfitted to provide for themselves. This crying wrong to women is not one easily dealt with by law; it rests rather on the accepted status of womanhood, and can be reformed only as a result of a juster view of the relationship of the sexes.

In the guardianship of her children a married woman has still only secondary rights, and the father can by will dictate their upbringing in the religious faith he chooses, or appoint a guardian for them irrespective of the wishes of the mother, who must act with the said guardian. This "immemorial principle of British jurisprudence," as it has been called, was clearly stated by Lord O'Hagan in a well-known case. "The authority of a father to guide and govern the education of his children is a very sacred thing bestowed by the Almighty and to be sustained to the uttermost by human law." (*In re Meade's Minors* Ir. Law Rep. 5 Eq. 103); while in the decision of such an important question as that of vaccination the mother's authority and wish are entirely ignored. Only in the case of illegitimate children, where parental responsibility may be considered as undesirable and undesired, are the full rights and responsibilities of maternity recognised and imposed.

In most European countries, a man has no legal obligations whatever in regard to his illegitimate offspring; by the *Code Napoleon*, any enquiry into the paternity of such children was expressly forbidden.

The inequalities of the intestacy and divorce laws are well known. An instance has been cited in which a wife

possessed of £17,000 died without a will. The whole passed by law to the husband, who left it to a second wife, away from the children of the first. Had the *husband* died intestate, leaving a fortune, one-third only would have passed to the wife, the rest to the children. By English law also "a man may make a will by which he leaves his wife penniless, even when she has borne him children and is left to support them." ("Common Cause," May 5th, 1910.) Fortunately, men are nearly always superior to their laws and creeds; and it is encouraging to note the signs of progress to-day in their attitude regarding these questions. In the evidence given before the recent Commission on the Divorce Law, 1910 (of which two women were members), while some men publicly declare that they "would not give the right of divorce to the wife for continuous adultery only on the part of her husband," yet a much larger number of lay and clerical experts are bravely maintaining the equal moral standard. By thus translating into law and custom the honour and reverence which at present are somewhat hypocritically professed for wifeness and motherhood, we shall approximate to the loftier ideal of marriage which is inspiring our reformers. We hear much hortatory eloquence from distinguished men on the perils of a declining birth-rate and the modern evasion of the burdens of parenthood. More effective than threats or reproaches would be a practical recognition of the dues of motherhood, and an ungrudging admission of women not alone to the duties but also to the honours and dignities of equal citizenship. This, more than any other influence, would awaken and maintain in them, as in men, the sentiment of public and national responsibility.



## The Problem of Social Morality.

In considering the historic claim of men to rule and legislate for women, it is inevitable that we should sooner or later be faced by the question—how has this rule been exercised hitherto in that domain of social morality, which is of supremest importance to women? It is an inquiry from which women have shrunk, with an instinctive and well-founded dread of the discoveries it might involve and the painful responsibilities it might impose. From the moment when they began to take their share of public service and to study social conditions, the ignorance which they, no less than men, had assiduously cherished, was doomed. Every woman reformer must, like the blind restored to sight, endure the piercing pain of the light of truth, revealing to her not alone a world of beauty, but also of horror, with its appeal, equally imperative, to her soul. Possibly it is the suddenness with which the knowledge of evil ordinarily comes to a grown and sheltered woman which makes acceptance of it less easy to her than to the man, who has grown into it from boyhood with the familiarity which breeds indifference.

Searching among some old papers, I came recently on a faded yellow copy of the "Pall Mall Gazette"; and as I held it, experienced again the sensation of prostrating nausea—physical and mental—which most of its readers must have felt a quarter of a century ago. This, then, was how men cared for and protected women! The wave of horror sent sweeping through our country by that boldest act ever performed in the annals of journalism, carried on its crest through Parliament certain reforms

for the protection of child-womanhood, which no lesser force could have achieved. Then, exhausted by the shock, public opinion turned on its side and slept again, preferring the stagnation of the pool which conserves and conceals mud, to the turgid flood which struggles to wash it away. It needed an earthquake such as the revelations of Mr. Stead to procure by law *a maximum imprisonment of two years* (!) for the procurement or outrage of little girls between thirteen and sixteen years old; and even then, two easy loopholes of escape were provided for the criminal—viz., the provision that proceedings can only be taken within three months after the offence, and the excuse that the offender had "good reason to suppose" his victim over sixteen. In respect of money, no one under twenty-one is held legally responsible for parting with it; but the age at which a girl may "consent" to her own ruin still remains fixed at sixteen. A Bill just introduced into Parliament for raising the age of consent to nineteen, will, it is safe to predict, meet with strenuous opposition, as also will a proposal to make solicitation a crime in men, as it now is in women alone.

We cling to the conviction that an immense number of upright men are ignorant of the legal inequalities and indignities which they are responsible for inflicting on women; that if they did know of them, they would whole-heartedly echo the avowal of Mr. Gladstone: "Men have often been the most unfaithful guardians of women's rights to social and moral equality." For the most part, while the worst men do not desire to have the laws concerning social morality revealed or reformed, the best men avoid their consideration, and, judging their fellows by themselves, lay to their souls the flattering unctiousness that women's interests and honour are on the whole safe in their hands. I have neither space nor inclination here to enlighten and convert them by lurid revelations of the truth, such as have aroused thousands of modern women to the conviction that passive acquiescence in the existing condition of social morality



has become an unpardonable sin; that to accept the privilege of individual protection, at the price of the perdition and agony of others, is a baseness and cowardice on which no judgment can be too severe. Those who dedicate themselves to the awful task of enlightenment may well appeal to their fellow men in the words of Coleridge:

"I have told  
O Britons! O my brethren! I have told  
Most bitter truth, but without bitterness.  
Nor deem my zeal or factious or mis-timed;  
For never can true courage dwell with them  
Who, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look  
At their own vices."

Women are inspired by no Utopian hopes of revolutionising human nature, no blind confidence in any superior power of their own sex to accomplish a task in which men have so signally failed; but they recognise that this most gigantic problem of our civilisation—nay, of our national existence,—the problem which, of all others, most intimately affects both sexes,—demands the united judgment, intelligence and co-operation of our best, purest and most disinterested men and women.

### Two Aspects to Every Question.

The foregoing chapters have touched briefly on some (by no means all) of the legal disabilities and injustices under which women suffer, and for which, in the opinion of Suffragists, the most effective remedy would be that political representation which men esteem as their most valuable privilege. This examination of existing grievances is a necessary, though distasteful, task for anyone undertaking to show cause "Why women need the vote." But it is a relief to turn to another aspect of our question, and examine the benefits which not only women themselves, but the nation generally would derive from their full recognition as citizens, and of the claim established by their past services to their country.

Many people take the view that while men are by nature competent to deal with all public and national questions, the opinion of women is of value only when applied to matters solely affecting their own sex and the conduct of domestic life. Now if it is the case that the minds of the majority of women have hitherto been little occupied with large public questions, it is equally true that the majority of men are less experienced and well-informed on many of the points at which the State touches the private life and rights of the individual. Should we, therefore, be wise in attempting to differentiate these departments of government (a course which has been occasionally suggested), and leave either in the hands solely of one sex? On the contrary, there is not, we believe, one single domestic question, of however practical and intimate a character, in which the co-operation of men with women is not advantageous, whatever the ignorance of the individual man. It is not his technical knowledge, but his *attitude of mind* which



is of value; and it is the necessity for bringing his mind to bear on all sorts of questions which may not appear to concern him directly, which has educated him to that broader, more comprehensive outlook which we recognise, and which is now most illogically used as an argument against extending the same broadening education to women.

While dissenting entirely from any such separatist theories, it is nevertheless worth while to point out that the enormous majority of the measures introduced into Parliament deal with questions of equal importance to both sexes, and that the subjects with which women are erroneously supposed to have no concern (*e.g.*, foreign policy and national defence), occupy a very inconsiderable portion of the time and attention of the Legislature, the first of these, indeed, being almost exclusively in the hands of experts, and seldom, if ever, submitted to Parliamentary deliberation. Looking back a few sessions, beyond the burning questions of taxation which have caused the recent political crisis, we find the chief measures occupying Parliament and the country were those of Education, Licensing, Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister, the Children's Charter, Domestic Servants' Compensation, and Old-age Pensions,—all of them affecting women in at least an equal degree with men. Not only do we urgently need the woman's *experience* on these questions, but on many others also we need (as in the reverse case) the woman's *point of view* added to that of the man; while the effect on her nature and character of the call to study impersonal problems from a disinterested and altruistic standpoint must exercise the same educative influence on woman as it does on man. Hitherto public spirit has been regarded as an exclusively masculine virtue, except in the case of queens regnant, who have amply proved the prevailing view to be mistaken. It is not sex, but responsibility, which generates public spirit. Little of it has been shown by any class previous to its enfranchisement. Nowadays men are expected and

encouraged to qualify themselves to exercise the vote, but women lack this incentive to political interest. It is immensely to their credit that they have, nevertheless, in the last half-century, acquired for themselves channels of more or less effective influence in many directions. Patiently, laboriously, and under heavy disadvantages, they have taken on their shoulders a large proportion of the voluntary work—educational, philanthropic, charitable, and even political—of the country, and, steadily training themselves to proficiency, have performed it in a manner which has disarmed criticism.



## Public Spirit in Women.

The advance of women into the sphere of public service which marked the Victorian era did not, it must be owned, receive at first much encouragement or welcome from the majority of their brother-workers. They were generally regarded as intruders, and had to struggle not only for facilities for their own education and training, but for opportunities of serving their fellows even in subordinate positions. In this struggle, however, as women always gratefully remember, there were never wanting a few generous and enlightened men ready to brave public ridicule by acting as their champions in Parliament and in the country, without whose help it would have been impossible to achieve the remarkable series of reforms which marked the second half of the nineteenth century. For the information of a younger generation it may be worth while to tabulate some of these reforms, coupling with them the names of some of their chief pioneers:—

REFORMS.	PIONEERS.
Establishment of High Schools for Girls ... ..	Mrs. William Grey.
Establishment of Women's Colleges and Admission to Universities ... ..	{ Miss Emily Davies. Mrs. Fawcett.
Medical Degrees for Women	{ Dr. Eliz. Blackwell. Dr. Garrett Anderson. Dr. Jex Blake.
Training of Nurses ... ..	Florence Nightingale.
Protection of Wives from Assault ... ..	Frances Power Cobbe.
Protection of Married Women's Property ... ..	Mrs. Wolstenholme Elmy.
Abolition of State Regulation of Vice ... ..	Josephine Butler.

## ORGANIZATION OF WORK BY WOMEN.

For Street Arabs ... ..	Mary Carpenter.
Pauper Children ... ..	Miss Davenport Hill.
Domestic Servants ... ..	Mrs. Nassau Senior.
Emigration ... ..	Miss Rye, Mrs. Beddoe.
Temperance ... ..	{ Miss Lucas. Miss Isabella Tod.

## IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Admission to School Boards..	{ Lydia Becker. Flora Stevenson.
Admission to Boards of Guardians ... ..	Louisa Twining.

It is worth noting that all these honoured names are those of Suffragists, and that innumerable philanthropic workers have been converted (in some instances reluctantly converted) to the cause by practical experience of the great difficulty of achieving necessary reforms without the power of influencing legislation.

Some of us can remember the odium incurred by the earliest women students of medicine and the first candidates for School Boards and Boards of Guardians; but little by little the value of women's co-operation in national service came to be recognised, and the distrust with which they were regarded grew less. The collapse of all the prophecies of evils which were to follow their entrance into public affairs has encouraged reasonable men to tolerate, if not to welcome, further advances. A feature of the twentieth century is the co-operation of experts of both sexes on Royal Commissions and Enquiries, such as those on the Concentration Camps in South Africa, on the Feeble-minded, the Poor Laws, and the Divorce Laws. Much of the work of public hygiene and sanitation has been done by women, as teachers, inspectors, health visitors, and members first of vestries and afterwards of more important local governing bodies.



By the Qualification of Women Act of 1907 they were made eligible to sit on Borough and County Councils, and some twenty have already been elected. They may even be appointed aldermen or mayors. Shades of our grandmothers! What uproarious merriment and scathing satire would in their days have greeted the suggestion that a lady mayor would have to read the public Proclamation of King George V.! Nor have the public services of women gone unrecognised. The Baroness Burdett Coutts, and also, too tardily, in her extreme old age, Miss Florence Nightingale, have been presented with the freedom of the City of London; Miss Dorothea Beale with that of Cheltenham; and quite recently "Mrs. Councillor Lees" has become the first citizen admitted to that honour for Oldham.

In listening to the fulminations of Anti-Suffragists against the dangers of associating women in government, it is difficult to realise that all this and much more has actually come to pass, and that—

"What gave rise to no little surprise—  
Nobody seemed one penny the worse."

It would indeed be hard to say whether this development of public spirit among women has been of greater benefit to the community or to themselves. The sum of disinterested effort expended in human service has been doubled, while the workers themselves have been awakened to a wider outlook, more impersonal ambitions and more beneficent ideals than were possible to them a century ago.

## Patriotism.

Few words are oftener on our lips, and few, perhaps, less accurately used, than the word patriotism. Without challenging its relationship to the ideas commonly associated with it—"the Services," "the Flag," "Rule Britannia," Empire Day, Boy Scouts, etc—it is permissible to plead for the inclusion under the name of patriotism of other kinds of national service than defence and offence and popular demonstrations. To begin with, before you can defend a country you must have a country to defend; it must also be worth defending. A consciousness of this necessity has been recently causing searchings of heart among scientists and thoughtful people, who observe an increasing tendency in our nation to multiply from its least rather than its most desirable classes. Pace Mr. Roosevelt, the motives which have led to the restriction of families in the more prosperous and prudent classes are not all blameworthy. A quickened sense of responsibility for the health both of mothers and children, and the conviction that it is better to produce and wisely rear three children than to produce ten and bury half of them, are not to be deprecated and railed at; but it must be also admitted that such motives as luxury, love of pleasure, and fear of pain are potent in deterring many from contributing their due proportion to the population; whilst the thriftless, irresponsible, and often physically undesirable sections of the nation chiefly provide the coming generations. Lecturing and scolding at large will not avail to avert a national danger such as this. What is needed is to arouse in our citizens a sense of national responsibility strong enough to inspire the personal sacrifices demanded of them. It is obviously to the women of the country



that we must look for salvation in this direction, on whose willing devotion and self-sacrifice we must depend : but it is wholly inconsistent and unreasonable to appeal to them in the name of patriotism and public spirit, and at the same time to deny them the incentives to those virtues which are powerful in the case of men.

We look to women not only to provide the manhood for the country's defence and maintenance, but to train and inspire that manhood from infancy to the high duties expected of it; we look to them to be willing to yield up to the risk of wounds and death the lives for which they have agonised and which are dearer to them than their own; we demand alike of the single and the widowed their full share with men of the cost of defence and upkeep of the nation, and even of aggressive military enterprises for which they may conceivably entertain the strongest disapproval. In time of war we look to women to perform (at personal sacrifice and peril) that succour and tendance of the sick and wounded which is as essential a part of military service as turning the handle of a Maxim gun or purchasing stores for the Commissariat.\* All this share of national service is well and cheerfully performed by women; and yet they are denied the rights of citizenship on the ground (among others) that they cannot fight for their country. Division of labour is the sign of civilisation, and the absurdity of setting a student of science to do the work of a navy, or

\*NOTE.—Accounts have recently appeared in the press of a Women's Nursing Corps and a Women's Convoy Corps, thus described:—"This Corps is intended to fill a gap in the Territorial medical organisation. As that organisation now stands, the care of the sick and wounded is amply provided for in the fighting line and at the base, but the intermediate link between the clearing hospitals and the base hospitals is not provided. Mrs. Stobart hopes that the women's corps will eventually be able to supply it, and will be able to render good service in helping to convey the sick and wounded from the clearing hospitals a day's march between the fighting troops and the big general hospitals, where the men can be treated until they are again fit to take their places at the front. . . . At present the corps receives no assistance from the War Office. All expenses are borne by the ladies themselves, but no doubt as time goes on Mr. Haldane or his successor will consider it advisable to assist it by providing the equipment necessary to enable its members to prepare themselves for the work they propose to undertake for the national benefit.—*Daily Telegraph*.

a policeman to act as Chancellor of the Exchequer, would be readily acknowledged by those who employ this irrelevant physical force argument against Women's Suffrage.

It is beside the mark to argue that under a restricted franchise the married women of the country would not generally be qualified to vote. The question concerns the education and status of womanhood as a whole, and the way women are taught to regard their patriotic responsibilities. Hitherto they have been trained to consider motherhood as a private and personal duty only, and from such a standpoint it is unreasonable to question their right to restrict their families, provided they and their husbands prefer so to do. Modern science is setting before us a wholly different aspect of parenthood as a national duty. To the men of the country it can base its appeal on their responsibility as citizens; but to the women this appeal is weakened, if not nullified, by the fact that no such direct responsibilities are in their case acknowledged or conferred.

The whole problem is a new one for the European nations; and surely there is significance in the fact that, coincidentally with its recognition, has arisen the International demand for the admission of women to the full status of citizenship!



### The Lesson from Experience.

Every reform of any importance may be called a leap in the dark. If history repeats itself, circumstances always differ. Nevertheless, the study of past tendencies, experiments, and results, if not looked at through a microscope but in their just relation to other historic factors, is the safest, indeed the only safe guide we possess. With regard to the advance of woman towards social, political, and moral equality with man, the points on which we may profitably examine history are the value attached by woman to these advances; the benefits they have conferred, on her specially, and on humanity generally; and the relative weight of any disadvantages which (as in all human affairs) may have accompanied the good accomplished. The subjection of woman is seen in its extreme forms in the East; but even there we find divergencies enough to be instructive. In the adjoining countries of India and Burma we have a startling contrast between the Hindu or Mohammedan occupant of the Zenana, absolutely dedicated to domesticity, and the Burmese woman, who is socially, legally and economically man's equal. It is possible that the morality (using the word in its most restricted sense) of the Indian woman may be superior (if any merely cloistered virtue can be so described!), but in kindness, family affection, and maternal devotion the Burmese woman is no less admirable; and in every other desirable characteristic—industry, judgment, cheerfulness, humour,—we must accord her the palm; while as to the comparative happiness and innocent enjoyment of life observable in the two countries, there is a consensus of testimony in favour of the Burmese. Turning to the Western World, whilst it would be invidious to discriminate by name, yet the least

acquaintance with European countries will convince us that the foremost in civilisation and prosperity are those where women are permitted the widest scope for their mental and physical energies. Some indication has been given in these chapters of their steady advance in our own country, which is being followed in other European States and in America, with results admitted to be beneficial by those minds best qualified to judge. The late Professor Romanes is such an authority. He said:

“Among all the features of progress which will cause the present century to be regarded by posterity as beyond comparison the most remarkable epoch in the history of our race, I believe that the inauguration of the so-called woman's movement in our own generation will be considered one of the most important. For I am persuaded that this movement is destined to grow; that with its growth the highest attributes of the human race are destined to be widely influenced; that this influence will profoundly re-act upon the other half, not alone in the nursery and the drawing-room, but also in the study, the academy, the forum, and the senate; that this latest, yet inevitable wave of mental evolution cannot be stayed until it has changed the whole aspect of civilisation.”

To estimate the effects of the crowning step of political enfranchisement, we must look to New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Finland, and certain American States, taking careful note of the racial and political differences, which count for more than those of sex only.

Firstly, is the vote valued and used by women?

Statistics from New Zealand (1908) give the total adult male population as 295,446, of whom (in round numbers) 99 per cent. are registered as electors, and 81 per cent. actually vote. Of a total of 243,504 adult females, 99 per cent. are registered, and 78 per cent. actually vote, showing the women's vote to have been



about 2 per cent. below the men's. ("Morning Post," May 25th, 1910). A New Zealand observer comments on the figures as follows:—"The women not only recorded their votes—they took pains to prepare themselves to vote with knowledge and with judgment. Every political meeting held before the election consisted largely of women of voting age, all of whom took a keen interest in the subjects under discussion." (Stephen Guyon.)

In Australia, electoral figures published in 1903 showed that while the number of men on the rolls had shrunk in a little over three years from 86,000 to 76,000 (round figures), the women voters had increased from 68,000 to 71,000.

In Wyoming, after twenty years' trial, it was reported that 80 per cent. of women electors voted.

In Norway the numbers voting in the election of 1909 were: Women 72 per cent, men 70 per cent.

In Finland, in 1907, 55 per cent. of the votes given were by women.

We may now ask, what benefits have specially accrued to women from the vote?

Mrs. Napier (delegate from New Zealand to the International Conference of Women Workers at Berlin in 1903) reports: "No revolution but a steady evolution"; the legal standard of morality and the conditions of divorce made equal for both sexes. Women enabled to obtain recompense for slander without having to prove special damage. The profession of the law thrown open to women. . . . A Family Maintenance Act which prevents a man willing away his property without making suitable provision for his wife and children, etc.

So ardent an Anti-Suffragist as Mrs. Archibald Colquhoun, speaking in 1904 on Emigration, was forced to testify as follows:—

"There are many inducements to ambitious women to make the Colonies their home. In New Zealand women have the franchise, and, contrary to expectation, it has not turned their heads. . . . The legal position of women in Canada and Australasia is distinctly better than at home. The laws as to the protection of women's property are in advance of our own. . . . there are more liberal provisions on points connected with marriage, the custody of children, and the rights of married women."

The "Times" itself recently testified:—In Toronto two years ago the Woman's National Council carried on a strong campaign for pure water, and probably was the determining element in carrying a by-law for filtration. The recent victory for municipal honesty in Montreal was owing partly to the good work of Montreal women.

(How is it possible logically to contend that such good results may be achieved by the municipal vote, and no corresponding benefit accrue from the Parliamentary?)

One of the most useful things the women of South Australia have obtained is a law which enables the father of an illegitimate child to be proceeded against before the birth, and on due proof the Court orders him to arrange for a doctor, nurse, lodging and clothing for the babe. This law is said to have effected a distinct diminution of seduction and infanticide, and to have contributed to the fact that illegitimacy in South Australia is only about 3 per cent. ("Englishwoman's Review," October, 1906).



The "Melbourne Age" recently stated: "The first Australian women to receive the franchise were also the first to conceive and adopt a practical scheme for stemming the appalling death-rate of babies, which is common to all civilised countries to-day."

With regard to the effect on Home Life of Women's Suffrage, Sir John Cockburn (late Agent-General for South Australia) declares that it made no difference whatever to home life; husband and wife, as a rule, voted the same way. His experience was that the franchise was a family franchise, and the vote was given in the direction which was best for the welfare of the family.

Mr. Percy Harris (writing to the "Westminster Gazette" on "New Zealand in 1908") observes:—

"The women do not appear to have any more leaning to either Liberalism or Conservatism than the men; the party divisions seem about the same. Nor have political differences broken up the home; families are inclined to vote together, but it is quite common for a wife to hold opposite political views to her husband with no more disastrous results than if she had different views in music or art."

Lastly, of the general good effect on the country of the women's vote, the consensus of weighty opinion is such that it is hard to select only a few examples.

Mr. Seddon, when Premier of New Zealand, declared to a deputation of Englishwomen that the results of Women's Suffrage had been the passing of laws beneficial to the Colony, and that women had not been in the slightest degree unsexed, but were more highly appreciated than ever.

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, together with the Premiers of every separate State, publicly testified in 1909 to the beneficial results of women's

political equality with men; and a year later the Australian Senate cabled the following resolution to the English Government:—"That this Senate is of opinion that the extension of the Suffrage to the women of Australia for States and Commonwealth Parliament has had the most beneficial results. The women's vote in a majority of the States showed a greater proportionate increase than that cast by men. It has given a greater prominence to legislation particularly affecting women and children, although the women have not taken up such questions to the exclusion of others of wider significance. In matters of defence and imperial concern they have proved themselves as far-seeing and discriminating as men. Because the reform has brought nothing but good, though disaster was freely prophesied, we respectfully urge that all nations enjoying representative government would be well advised in granting votes to women."

In Norway the political representation granted a few years ago has been confirmed and extended by the Cabinet. The American States, after long experience, have re-affirmed and approved it, wherever tried. Every Governor of Wyoming for thirty-nine years has testified to its good results, and the Legislature has twice passed unanimous resolutions to this effect.

In Colorado, a published statement that no ill-effects had followed Women's Suffrage and that it was "noticeably more conscientious than that of men" was signed by the Governor, Governor-elect, and two ex-Governors; the Chief Justice and all Justices of the State Supreme Court, Denver District Court, and the Court of Appeals; the Attorney-General, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, all the Senators and Representatives in Congress, and a long list of distinguished citizens, including prominent clergymen. (Mrs. Julia Ward Howe; letter to the "Times," October, 1908.)



As opposed to this overwhelming testimony, individual expressions of adverse opinion may doubtless be collected, and in American politics, at any rate, Women's Suffrage has undeniably its enemies. They are of a kind, however, to reflect credit on our cause. The promoters of financial trusts and rings, the Tammany Hall party, and the immense power known as the liquor interest, are all deadly foes of the women's vote. Why? Because that vote can neither be purchased nor propitiated! A Finland peasant woman spoke for her sex when she said, "Now I have a vote I want to use it as a means to protect the things I esteem as the highest good in this world—my religion, my fatherland, and my home."

### The Status of Women.

We are sometimes told that in attempting to achieve a position of equality with men, women are in danger of losing something still more valuable—viz., a tradition of consideration and respect which apparently is the recognised reward for unquestioning subordination. If we ask to be shown more clearly the nature of this substitute for equal justice, we are met with the magic word, chivalry,—with vague allusions to opening of doors, raising of hats, yielding up of seats, and handing of tea-cups. And if we challenge the comparative value of these attentions, we are assured that they are symbols merely of a real veneration for womanhood which lies at the root of civilisation itself.

Now, women are certainly not prepared to sacrifice substance for shadow! Let us convince ourselves, if possible, of the genuineness of this professed respect for women as they are and have been under the social conditions hitherto assigned them! Do men actually respect women, or do they despise them?

The first thing to remember in regard to this traditional homage is that it is a matter of conventional observance, confined mainly to the classes in which such observances play a considerable part in life. There exists, indeed, a real and noble chivalry in human nature, which is the service of strength to weakness, and which may be found in all grades; but this chivalry does not depend on sex, and is a deeply rooted and permanent human virtue, closely resembling the "neighbourliness" of the good Samaritan. Traditional homage to womanhood, on the other hand, though it may spring from this true chivalry, is a plant which takes various forms according to



the fashions of different epochs, but is perhaps equally superficial in all. Neither men nor women are deceived by it; and hitherto the underlying contempt for the belauded sex has been acknowledged and acquiesced in by women themselves.

It is less than eighty years ago since the Hon. Mrs. Norton, whose shameful treatment by her husband first drew public attention to the legal wrongs of mothers, thought it no shame in pleading her own cause, to express herself as follows:—"The wild and stupid theories advanced by a few women of 'equal rights' and 'equal intelligence' are not the opinions of their sex. I for one (I, with millions more) believe in the natural superiority of man, as I do in the existence of a God. The natural position of woman is inferiority to man. Amen! That is a thing of God's appointing, not of man's devising. I believe it sincerely as a part of my religion. I never pretended to the wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality."

And a century earlier Lady Mary Wortley Montague declared: "God and Nature have thrown us into an inferior rank; we are a lower part of the creation; and any woman who suffers her sanity and folly to deny this rebels against the law of her Creator and the indisputable order of Nature."

Only from a few very extreme Anti-Suffragists do we hear to-day utterances quite so abject as these. Intelligent women are no longer satisfied to be considered inferior beings to men. Higher education, wider opportunities of development, the possibilities of honourable independence, have inspired them with confidence and self-respect. Association for common aims and ideals has kindled in them an *esprit de corps* formerly conspicuous by its absence. Unfortunately, this striking change of sentiment and outlook among women has not yet been fully recognised and accepted by men. It is true we no

longer hear within the House of Commons the abominable gibes and jeers which in every debate on a Suffrage Bill used to be well described as "the noble sport of woman-baiting." Public opinion has at least moved some paces forward in this respect. On the other hand, an eminent legal gentleman is not ashamed to declare to a gathering of Englishwomen that to give them political representation would lower the intelligence and education of the electorate, and that a smart uniform or a title would be the determining factors in women's votes. (Sir Edward Clarke.) A popular novelist proclaims that "It is always the woman, tradition tells us, who persuades the man to be a coward, to stay at home, to shirk a difficult or a dangerous duty." (Seton Merriman.) A renowned mental specialist, giving evidence at a famous trial of a woman, sends flying over the world his expressed regret "that the legal code, whilst taking into account the mental inferiority of minors, did not do the same for the inferiority of woman, whose mentality was undoubtedly restricted." (This in face of the fact that the lesser criminality of women is abundantly proved by statistics.) A member of a Board of Guardians recently declared he would resign every public office he held rather than submit to the rule of a lady, who had just been appointed chairman of a committee.

Can it be denied that among a large section of the very men on whose lips the cant of chivalry is readiest, such opinions as the foregoing are freely expressed between themselves, or that they are inclined to sneer when a different type of man testifies to a different experience? One of the most humiliating ordeals a woman can undergo is to listen to a debate among young men on any question touching the relations of the sexes. After being stretched upon the dissecting table of their youthful eloquence for an hour or two, an intelligent woman might be excused for carrying away the conviction that any radical alteration or elimination of so contemptible



a portion of humanity as her own sex must be an un-mixed benefit to the world! The very qualities which men subtly and sedulously encourage in women—frivolity, vanity, and devotion to display—are also those for which they jeer at and satirise them, and on the ground of which they pronounce them unfit for responsibility. It is true that many husbands and fathers, who take the pains to observe and appreciate the daily life and labours of their wives, feel a real admiration for their characters and capacities, and depend on their intelligent help and co-operation in affairs, to an extent which they often hardly realise; yet, in spite of this they will frequently join in the prevailing tone of disparagement.

“Do you really believe that *your wife* thinks and acts in that way?” asked a lady who was enduring remarks of this nature.

“No, certainly not,” was the indignant rejoinder.

“Then what right have you to assume that other women do so?”

The pertinent reproach drew forth an immediate apology; yet it is a fact that whereas the individual man, and not his sex, is held responsible for the credit or discredit of his actions, a woman's conduct is constantly ascribed to her whole sex, more especially when it is to be censured. A foolish action or utterance provokes the comment, “How like a woman!” whilst, *per contra*, the heroic deed or wise word is not allowed to redound to the credit of any but its author.

With an equal status would come also a juster individual estimate; and women would more easily find their fitting position and spheres in life; for, as Mill inimitably expressed it—“what women are by nature unable to do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them doing.”

In the face of theories and prophecies to the contrary, it is undeniable that gain, and not loss of status, has resulted from every increase of freedom hitherto achieved

by women. None of us wish to revive in real life the women so exquisitely portrayed by Jane Austen: amusing as they may be to read about, we should be ineffably bored by them. When men and women are brought into comradeship in public service and social effort, by the work as well as the play of existence, their mutual understanding and respect becomes a more genuine and lasting, because a better grounded, sentiment than the old tradition which spasmodically attempts to combine the goddess on a pedestal with a working partner in life's business.



### The Vision Beautiful.

Finally, what is the ultimate hope and aspiration which is stirring to the depths the minds of women all over the civilised world, and impelling them to the demand for a share in the direction and governance of human affairs? For this is the unmistakable meaning of what is vaguely termed the Woman's Movement, however various the particular forms it takes in different countries and under different stages of civilisation. Is it an ideal which can be transformed into a force for practical utility and human well-being, or is it merely the stuff which dreams are made of? Is this passionate altruism, which finds it impossible to acquiesce in the evil and misery which surround us, a guide to be trusted and obeyed, or a will o' the wisp luring us to destruction?

In the minds of many well-meaning and even high-thinking people, the answer would seem to be that it is both; a trustworthy guide up to a given point of progress, and from that point onward a dangerous illusion! The point of transformation, moreover, is invariably that at which we have arrived, and, like the foundation of the rainbow's arch, depends for location on the retina of the beholder.

How can women who have once awakened to the love of humanity, who have beheld the vision beautiful and dedicated themselves to the search for the Holy Grail, be content to model life on this halting hypothesis? They may admit that their ideals are improbable of realisation, that they will fail, as men have failed, to reform the world; and yet—and yet—

"The highest fame was never reached except  
By what was aimed above it."

And the arrows we fit to our bow must be freely chosen, of the best and latest fashioning yet discovered, tipped and feathered by the collective wisdom of the ages. In the everlasting battle against suffering, cruelty, and sin, women, in common with men, have successively employed the weapons of ministration, individual succour, organised effort for improved conditions of existence, regulated and discriminative charity. The results of these co-operative efforts have led by degrees to enlarged conceptions of the sphere of government and the duties of the community to its members. The more thoughtful and public-spirited women can see no sufficient reason why, at this particular point in the long and arduous "march of man," half the advancing army should be denied the weapons which by natural development have become the most suitable and effective for the present needs of the great campaign. On the other hand there are many, by temperament the less enterprising, who shrink from the increasing stress and strain of the fight, and would gladly be relegated to a less onerous sphere of duty. There is room and use for all; but unless all are accorded freedom to decide on what lines and by what methods they can best fulfil their purpose in the world, much waste of power must inevitably result. That one half of the human family should have the right to say to the other half, "This function alone shall be yours, and from other enterprises you shall be wholly excluded," is for the hand to say to the foot, "I have no need of thee."

Perhaps the most vital factor in modern politics is the growing conception of society as a living organism which can only continue to exist and develop if all its various parts are healthy and harmonious. Out of this conception are emerging higher ideals of the relationships both of classes and of sex—ideals of "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control," which have inspired poets and prophets; ideals of self-surrender and devotion which shall no longer, because of their one-sidedness,



imply a coincident fostering of selfishness or tyranny; ideals of social solicitude and service which shall open up a far horizon to the most confined personal career; ideals of patriotism which shall rescue us from fear of racial degeneracy; ideals of comradeship which shall recognise "one equal temper of heroic hearts," in which shall be neither bond nor free.

These are visions hitherto tacitly assumed to inspire men only, or at least to reach women only *through men*. They were to live

"He for God only, she for God in him."

This long-accepted conception of man ministering at the altar of life, and of woman subserving him in his ministrations, is destined to be superseded by a nobler ideal of equal comradeship and free service. Division of labour there will ever be, but this must be determined by personal and natural fitness and inclination, not by the mandate of one sex over the other. Law, rule, and the governance of human life are not functions concerning one half only of the human family; and as woman continues to grow in learning, thought, and sense of responsibility (as she has undoubtedly grown in the last century), she will cease to shrink, afraid, from the mark of her high calling, and

"Choose to walk high in sublimer dread,  
Rather than crawl in safety."

Such, most dimly indicated, is the vision which is inspiring those who are struggling to uplift the status of womanhood. It is futile to remind them that the mass of humanity moves on a lower plane, bounded by a narrower horizon; they will answer with Galileo, "Nevertheless, it moves." If they are humble, they are not abject; though they fail, they will never accept failure; because each step on the ascending pathway is in itself trivial,

they will not despise the firm foothold by which they climb, for thus only have heights ever been attained. A Revelation to men's minds—from Christ, Moses, Buddha, Plato; a Reformation of creed and conduct by a Luther or Savonarola; a Revolution for justice and liberty in modern England, France, or Italy—not one of these has changed the basic factors of human nature; yet few will deny that to the prophets and reformers whose souls conceived and whose hands performed these God-given tasks, is due (not individually but collectively) whatever of coherent progress is traceable in human history.

C. C. OSLER.



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