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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE EXTRACTS.—No. I.

The Late MISS LYDIA E. BECKER.

The General distribution of political power necessitates the giving of a share to women, because every extension of the franchise to classes hitherto excluded lowers and weakens the status of the classes which remain out of the pale. Agricultural labourers in counties, and women householders everywhere, are now excluded from influence over the Government. They possess none of those "little bits" of political power which those who would govern the country need to sweep into a heap by means of persuasion and offers of just measures and legislative protection. The larger the body of unrepresented persons in the country, the stronger is that body. If the unrepresented body consists of two distinct classes having interests not always in common, and sometimes apparently antagonistic, as in the classes of employers and employed, it is evident that if one class is admitted to the safeguards of representation, the one left out is in a worse position than before. It has obtained another master in place of a fellow-sufferer, and its interests will have less chance than ever of being considered, as they will have to withstand the rivalry of those belonging to the class just admitted to a share of those magical and all-potent "bits" of power.

It is because each "bit" is so small that it is safe to assign a bit even to the uneducated and indifferent elector. No man or woman, however stupid or silly, could do much mischief with the infinitesimal share of power comprised in his or her particular "bit." It is perhaps for this reason that so many intelligent women and men are slow to appreciate the value of a vote. Because the mere possession and occasional exercise of a vote seems a small thing in itself, is actually an infinitesimal factor in the sum of most people's experience, they imagine it is an equally unimportant matter to the interests of a class. One drop is an infinitesimal item in a shower, yet it would not be safe to say that the shower is unimportant because each drop composing it is a very small thing. It matters little or nothing personally to any individual woman whether she has a vote or not. It is of vital consequence to the interests of women as a class that they should have representative government.

Extract from "*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*," 1874.