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## COLONIAL STATESMEN AND VOTES FOR WOMEN

All opponents of Women's Suffrage take the strongest exception to any arguments in its favour which are based upon the experience of Australia and New Zealand. Several years ago, it was the fashion to sneer at these great self-governing colonies as lacking in political sagacity. To adopt this line of argument was soon found to be imprudent, and to-day the safer standpoint is adopted of saying that the mother country, as a Sovereign Imperial State, is totally different from the colonies, whose politics are, we are told, purely local or municipal.

Says Lord Curzon: "No precedent exists for giving women, as a class, an active share in the government of a great country or empire, and it is not for Great Britain, whose stake is the greatest, and in whose case the results of failure would be the most tremendous, to make the experiment."

### A Cowardly Principle.

Surely our national honour has sunk very low when a man of Lord Curzon's eminence thus cynically proclaims that our great country dare not make a great experiment unless France or Germany has proved it to be a success. It was not in this spirit that our history as a world-power was made, and if this is to be our attitude for the future, we must frankly confess ourselves a second-rate power.

### The Colonial Parallel.

Lord Curzon seeks for a precedent. There is no precedent perfect in all respects, for Suffragists must admit that there is a certain distinction between the United Kingdom and the colonies. The lessons of Australian and New Zealand politics, therefore, must not be pressed further than they legitimately go. But there are many exceedingly important respects in which the conditions are so similar that comparison is both reasonable and necessary. Domestic and social relations are in all essentials the same here as they are at the antipodes, and herein it is legitimate to quote the experience of those who have seen Women's Suffrage in operation.

Recognising the importance of these considerations, the Women's Freedom League has addressed certain questions to the Colonial Representatives deputed to attend the Imperial Conference of 1911 and the Coronation Ceremonies of King George V. and Queen Mary. These questions are based upon the statements contained in Lord Curzon's famous *Fifteen Reasons against Woman's Suffrage*. The answers received, taken together with other evidence based upon official records, constitute, as will be seen, a complete refutation of Lord Curzon's statements and prophecies, so far as they relate to the internal or social effects of women's enfranchisement. The questions asked were as follows overleaf.

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO THE COLONIAL REPRESENTATIVES AT THE CONFERENCE IN 1911.

1. Do you believe in the principle of Women's Suffrage?
2. Do you consider that the Enfranchisement of the Women of Great Britain would tend to weaken this nation in the estimation of Foreign Powers, or in any way be detrimental to our Empire, at home or in our Colonies?
3. Has the Woman's Vote in Australia and New Zealand had any effect on the community other than for good?
4. Do you consider that the women of Australia have deteriorated morally, mentally, or physically, or have in any way forfeited the respect of men, since they became voters?

Colonial Statesmen and  
The Principle of Women's Suffrage.

Lord Curzon said at a great meeting on May 18th, 1909, that his fifteen arguments are "sound, valid and incontrovertible."

Now Lord Curzon, as the old Oxford rhyme says, is "a most superior person," and he is somewhat addicted to laying down the law. It is the more interesting, therefore, to note that SIR SYDNEY OLIVIER, K.C.M.G., Governor of Jamaica, and official representative of the West Indian Colonies at the Conference, takes a very different view. "I think," he says, "that the political enfranchisement of women would tend to a truer formulation of the spirit and will of the nation; and as I believe the nation to be alive and progressive, I cannot conceive that such truer expression would be detrimental to this country or the colonies."

Sir Sydney Olivier does not come from a country where women vote. True, but neither does Lord Curzon!

On the other hand, the HONOURABLE JOHN MURRAY, of VICTORIA, specifically asserts his belief in Women's Suffrage, and the women of Victoria were enfranchised in 1908! Still more significant is the emphatic statement of the HONOURABLE ANDREW FISHER, Premier of the COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA:—"In reply to your letter of the 20th April, Mr. Fisher desires me to inform you that he has been an advocate of Women's Suffrage all his life, and **having seen it in operation in Australia, he is delighted with the results.** That it has been beneficial to the Commonwealth of Australia<sup>1</sup> he has no doubt."

Very striking, too, is the testimony of the HONOURABLE A. A. KIRKPATRICK, of SOUTH AUSTRALIA. After expressing his belief in the principle, he proceeds, in answer to Question 4:—

"Certainly not. The reform is so secure in Australia that I doubt very much whether one single candidate could secure his return to either House of Parliament in Commonwealth or State if he proposed to repeal it."

These are but a few of many who accept without reservation the fundamental principle of Women's Suffrage. Lord Curzon's dogmatic assertions seem to find no single echo in the views of these practical statesmen of undeniable experience and high imperial status.

<sup>1</sup> Women were enfranchised in Australia as follows:—South Australia, 1893; West Australia, 1899; New South Wales, 1902; Tasmania, 1903; Queensland, 1905; Victoria, 1908. For the Commonwealth as a whole the vote was granted to women in 1902.

Resolution of the Australian Senate.

This consideration of the general results of the reform in Australia cannot conclude better than with the resolution passed unanimously in the Australian Senate on November 17th, 1910:—

"That this Senate is of opinion that the extension of the Suffrage to the Women of Australia for States and Commonwealth Parliaments, on the same terms as men, has had the most beneficial results. It has led to the more orderly conduct of Elections, and at the last Federal Elections the Women's vote in the 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."

This resolution was cabled to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It would be rather interesting to know how many people, how many members of Parliament even, ever heard of it, and yet it constitutes an official answer, overwhelming in its specific statements, to all the anti-suffragist contentions, save in so far as they are based on the Imperial distinction. Not satisfied to speak through the lips of individual statesmen like those we have quoted—like Sir Alfred Deakin, Ex-Premier of Australia; Mr. Best, Vice-President of the Executive Council; Mr. Waddell, Colonial Secretary of New South Wales (formerly an opponent!); Mr. Peake, Attorney-General of South Australia; the Bishop of Tasmania; Sir John Cockburn; the Hon. W. Pember Reeves—Australia has actually adopted the unusual step of sending an emphatic official statement to the British Parliament.

The Alleged Deterioration of Womanhood.

It is necessary, however, to proceed from generalities to the special points raised by Lord Curzon. "Political activity," he says, "will tend to take away woman from her proper sphere and highest duty, which is maternity." In other words, he would have answered Question 4 with an emphatic negative. Strangely enough the specific facts are overwhelmingly against him. The Hon. John Murray, in his answer to this question, says:—

"It has certainly not had a deteriorating effect in any way, but has greatly enlarged their knowledge in political questions, without impairing their capacity or lessening their interest in home work."

The HON. E. L. BATCHELOR replies briefly, "Certainly not," and the answers quoted above from MR. FISHER and MR. KIRKPATRICK are similarly emphatic in this connection. "Emphatically 'No!'" says Senator G. P. Pearce, who, though the youngest of the Commonwealth Ministers in London, is the creator of the Australian Army and Navy.

In corroboration is the hard logic of official figures. Writing in *The Times*, of November 19th, 1909, Lady Stout, wife of the then

Premier of New Zealand, stated that "New Zealand could show the highest marriage rate of any European or English-speaking country except Hungary; a higher birth-rate except Italy, the Netherlands, and two Australian states. The birth-rate has been steadily increasing since 1899<sup>1</sup>; the lowest illegitimate rate except England, Ireland, and the Netherlands; the lowest infant mortality in the world." New Zealand is, of course, a young country, for which fact a certain allowance should be made, but the figures are a conclusive refutation of Lord Curzon's "incontrovertible" objection. Besides, Lord Curzon must know that a decline in the marriage rate or the birth-rate is due, in an advanced civilization, to a hundred converging causes, among which the possession of the vote could even theoretically exercise an infinitesimal effect at the most; in practice it is found that the moment women are enfranchised they devote themselves to the amelioration of the conditions under which children are born and nurtured. In corroboration of this view are the figures given in article "Population," by Sir Athelstane Baines, President of the Royal Statistical Society (1909-1910), in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (eleventh edition, 1911.) In the years 1874-1883, the death-rate of infants under one year in New Zealand was 117 per 1000 births; in 1895-1904, it sank to 79—the lowest in the world. For England, the corresponding figures are respectively 149 and 150. The least lesson suffragists may draw, is that the enfranchisement of women in New Zealand has not rendered women less interested in their home duties. New Zealand is not, it is true, a Sovereign Imperial State, but this, as Lord Curzon must agree, is not a differentiating factor as regards the rate of infant mortality. It is abundantly clear that enfranchisement has not made the New Zealand women worse mothers.

#### Men will Cease to be Chivalrous!

But, says Lord Curzon, "women, if placed by the vote on an absolute equality with man, would forfeit much of that respect which the chivalry of man has voluntarily conceded to her, and which has hitherto been her chief protection." All decent men in the country will indignantly deny this preposterous prophecy. The male inhabitants of these islands are not on the whole very different from those of Australia and New Zealand, and in those countries all the evidence such as is supplied by the answers above quoted is an emphatic repudiation in the light of history of Lord Curzon's insulting suggestion. We have put the question to Colonial statesmen of the highest distinction—to men like Sir John Cockburn and the Hon. W. Pember Reeves, and to women who have lived and worked in Australia and New Zealand: their unanimous answer is an indignant denial. More significant, perhaps, than this testimony, is the fact that when women were enfranchised in New Zealand it was at once decided that on polling day the public houses should be closed. "Rowdiness," says Mrs. K. A. Sheppard (President of the New Zealand Council of Women), "has become unknown." This was chivalry in a very practical form, which was also obviously a definite recognition of an old discredit.

#### Women will not Use their Vote.

Not content with this singularly infelicitous forecast, Lord Curzon plunges undeterred into the rash statement that women would

<sup>1</sup> Women gained votes in New Zealand in 1893.

probably not use their vote if they had it. If he really believed this, surely he should accept it in mitigation of his positive grounds for apprehension. Once again, however, figures are against him. The first election in New Zealand at which women voted, was held only two months after Richard Seddon's Government passed the Bill. In the short interval 78 per cent. of the eligible women had registered, and of this total no less than 85 per cent. voted. Previously only 60 per cent. of the male voters had gone to the poll. Since women gave a new stimulus towards the exercise of this national duty this percentage has increased to 78 per cent. (1905). Of those on the electoral roll, the percentage in 1905 was: men 85 per cent., women 84 per cent.

#### The Imperial Question.

So far then as the "incontrovertible arguments" concern internal matters, the relation between men and women, between women and children, the experience of New Zealand and Australia is a complete answer. And as we have contended, in these very respects, there is the greatest similarity between the home country and the colonies. It remains to consider whether the enfranchisement of women would be bad for this country in its Imperial relations. "The presence," says Lord Curzon, "of a large female factor in the constituencies returning a British Government to power, would tend to weaken Great Britain in the estimation of foreign powers." It will be remembered that this is the exact wording used in Question 2, addressed to the Colonial Representatives by the Women's Freedom League. On this we may quote first the significant answer of SIR SYDNEY OLIVIER, who, as Governor of an outlying portion of the Empire, must take a special interest in the point. He says:—

"I don't know: and I don't think the consideration is either relevant or important. Nations and persons are as strong as they are, not as they are thought to be: a false prestige is infinitely more harmful and dangerous than an unfounded discredit. Other people's errors do not matter to you except in so far as they may give you the advantage over them of a firmer stand in reality."

To the same question the HONOURABLE ROBERT WATSON, Colonial Secretary for Newfoundland, gives a definite negative, as also the Honourable John Murray and the Honourable A. A. Kirkpatrick. No single representative shares with Lord Curzon this apprehension as to our Imperial prestige.

Moreover, what is the actual basis of the apprehension? Are we to understand (1) that we shall really be less powerful? or merely (2) that foreign Governments will think we are? If the former is the true meaning, how is this loss of power to come about? Will our soldiers and sailors fight less courageously or with less skill because women are voters? The suggestion is manifestly absurd. Then it must be that the influence of women will be directed towards a general reduction of armaments. In this matter, the obvious fact is that among women there are the same differences of opinion as between men: in the Liberal and Labour camps, the Peace party has always been strong, and the women of this party will vote with them: with the Conservative party will go the Conservative women, headed by that most conscientiously Imperial body, the Primrose League. There is no shadow of reason for supposing that one party will gain at the expense of the other. To

imagine that women will be less ardent in defence of their homes and their children, or that men will be the less patriotic because women vote, is an unworthy and even a ludicrous aspersion upon the national character.

It would seem, then, that foreign countries will make the mistake of under-estimating our strength. Surely Lord Curzon would welcome such an error on the part of other nations—unless indeed he would imply that we maintain our supremacy at present by a game of bluff. If these are the alternatives, suffragists may well be content to leave the noble Lord impaled upon that horn of the dilemma which he may select.

### The Imperial Spirit in the Colonies.

Supporting, moreover, the views of the statesmen we have quoted, and emphasizing the logical absurdity of the "Imperial argument," are, as usual, the facts of colonial history since women have had the vote. We at home have not forgotten how Australia and New Zealand sprang to our support in the South African War, not one whit behind the colonies with exclusively male electorates. Still less have we forgotten how New Zealand was the first to come forward with the offer of a "Dreadnought" when the question of our Naval supremacy was raised in an acute form.

In this connection, a very remarkable speech was delivered by the Hon. W. Pember Reeves,<sup>1</sup> at a dinner given in May, 1911, by the Men's League for Women's Suffrage in honour of Miss Vida Goldstein, leader of the Suffrage movement in Australia. Mr. Reeves then stated that the period during which women have voted in New Zealand coincides precisely with the growth of a feminine Imperial spirit in that country. This spirit is not merely an emotional outbreak such as the anti-suffragist loves to forecast, but a serious recognition of participation in a great and glorious responsibility. It may be answered that Richard Seddon and his colleagues were responsible for this movement. No doubt, but the point is that women have been voters all the time and the movement has advanced none the less on that account. More than this, there has been a definite movement in New Zealand in favour of compulsory military training; alongside this, women have been demanding that they shall do their share by undergoing universal ambulance training. In time of war women could—let us not forget the Crimea and Florence Nightingale!—perform incalculable service in this department of ambulance and commissariat. That the Colonial women voters are prepared to do this service is a historic fact: does Lord Curzon imagine, or would he dare to imply, that the women voters of the United Kingdom would fall behind their Colonial sisters in this respect? That women dislike war in itself—just as all sane men do—is a fact; but if war comes, British women will be prepared to do and to suffer with men for their common safety and honour.

### Recent Legislation in Australia and New Zealand.

Finally, the anti-suffragist manifesto says, "The vote is not required for the removal of hardships or disabilities from which woman is now known to suffer. Where any such exist, they can

<sup>1</sup> Formerly Agent-General for New Zealand, Director of the London School of Economics in the University of London.

equally well be removed or alleviated by a legislature elected by men." At this point our opponents become merely fatuous. Any kind of government could remedy anybody's grievances if it chose: King John might have said the same to his Barons, or Lord Curzon to the members of Convocation in the University of Oxford. The plain historical fact, however, is that hardships and disabilities receive attention much more quickly and more effectively when their victims are voters. Male legislation has done much for women: no one contends that men, as a body, are deliberately unjust to women. But the legislature necessarily attends first to voters, and in removing hardships and disabilities it is obviously the stronger if it has the support at the polls of those whom it seeks to benefit.

This plain lesson of history is emphatically corroborated by the recent history of Australia and New Zealand. We have seen that the Australian Premier, the Honourable Andrew Fisher, "has no doubt that Women's Suffrage has been beneficial to the Commonwealth of Australia." Evidence from New Zealand is equally emphatic. In fact, to Question 3, the Women's Freedom League has not received a single negative answer. Mr. G. W. Russell, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, Christchurch, N.Z., said in July, 1907, "I trace nearly the whole of the progressive legislation of the country during the last fifteen years to this source" (Women's Suffrage). "I need not enumerate the outstanding measures, but will refer to three. They are: (1) Liquor legislation in the direct control of the people; (2) the Old Age Pensions scheme; (3) the rapid development of education. . . . The women's vote has been at the back of all three. With regard to the liquor legislation, I may add that, while I am not a member of the Prohibition Party, I fully sympathise with State control and cheerfully recognise that, as the result of our legislation, the liquor trade has been enormously improved . . . . Regarding the evils that were freely predicted . . . . such as dissension in families, 'Blue Stockingism,' neglect of home, &c., I can confidently say the prophets were wrong in every single item of their catalogue."

The Honourable GEORGE FOULDS, Minister of Education and Public Health (1907), said: "Without being revolutionary, their influence has been on the side of progress and clean government."

Such statements could be multiplied *ad infinitum*. But it will probably be of more service to give a list of a few of the legislative reforms in Australia and New Zealand since women had the vote, and due at least in some measure to their influence.

### A. Australia.

- (1). Improvement of laws dealing with gambling and drinking (*e.g.*, betting prohibited under the age of 21).
- (2). Minimum wage for women as well as men.
- (3). Raising the age of consent.
- (4). Regulation of hours of labour for wage-earning children.
- (5). Prohibition of smoking under 16 years.
- (6). Protection of children from indecent literature, and the suppression of indecent advertisements.
- (7). An Affiliation Act, extending the remedies against fathers of illegitimate children by making it necessary for them to contribute £10 towards the expenses connected with the mother's confinement.
- (8). A children's court established.

- CB
- (9). Appointment of women as inspectors of Government institutions.
  - (10). Prohibition of opium trade.
  - (11). Penalties for trading in prostitution.

#### B. New Zealand.

- (1). Testator's Family Maintenance Act, making it impossible for a man to will away his property until he has made suitable provision for his wife and family.
- (2). Conditions of divorce made equal for both sexes.
- (3). Elaborate Old Age Pensions Act.
- (4). Asylums for inebriates established.
- (5). Infant Life Protection Act, preventing baby farming.
- (6). Adoption of children legally regulated.
- (7). Opium Prohibition Act.
- (8). Labour registration offices controlled.
- (9). Juvenile Smoking Suppression Act.
- (10). Equality of wages for equal work between men and women.

This list does not purport to be exhaustive, nor does it claim to be the sole work of women. The contention is, and this is affirmed by innumerable Australian and New Zealand statesmen, that in all these matters—in fact in the general tendency of recent legislation—the interests of women have been unmistakably a motive force. Some of these problems have already been solved more or less by the men legislators of this country: some of the solutions in the Colonies are, perhaps, provisional, inadequate or even upon wrong lines. But the essential fact is that since women were enfranchised, Australia and New Zealand have seriously grappled with the difficulties which confront every civilized community, and not least the United Kingdom. We, too, have to face problems affecting the welfare of women and children of the poor and needy, of those who are mentally, morally and physically unsound. If these problems remain unsettled no schemes of Imperial Defence or finance, no Favoured Nation Clause or Preferential Tariff can save us from decay. Towards the ventilation and solution of social evils British women voters will address themselves without the shadow of a doubt, just as women have done in Australia and New Zealand. At the lowest their possession of the vote will compel the ordinary member of Parliament to obtain information of a kind which, at present, he can dispense with, and especially if he is to have a salary he will have to give some account of his stewardship, not only to men, but also to women.

In 1907, Sir JOSEPH WARD, K.C.M.G., said, "Woman Suffrage exists in New Zealand because it dawned upon the minds of thinking men that they were daily wasting an almost unlimited supply of mental and moral force." With these facts before them, how can the electors of the United Kingdom—HOW DARE THEY, as custodians of the greatest Empire the world has seen, refuse to admit into the national councils the insight, the practical knowledge, and the splendid enthusiasm of women, which have wrought so well for our dependencies beyond the seas?

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## Votes for Women and the Public Health.

### Women as Home Nurses.

A doctor is almost necessarily bound to be in favour of Votes for Women because his work brings him so frequently into contact with the important part of life that is controlled by women. As a student in hospital he studies the patients in the wards and in the out-patient departments, and cannot fail to be struck with one predominating fact in connection with children, namely, that it is invariably women who bring them for treatment and not men. It is the woman's part of the family life, her obvious duty, no doubt; but in a hospital or dispensary out-patients' department the massed effect of a large number of women and an insignificant sprinkling of men drives home the consciousness of this aspect of women's work with something of a shock. In nearly all illnesses and accidents in the majority of families, it is the mother who cares for the child, takes the doctor's instructions, and gives the needed treatment.

On leaving hospital as a qualified man and going into private practice, the doctor finds a similar state of things in every working-class home; when family

calamity, sickness or disaster has to be met, it is the mother who is there meeting it. Whatever nursing needed it is the mother who applies it; whatever the treatment required it is the mother administers it. Let those who are accustomed in case of illness to summon the trained nurse at once, realise—or rather dimly try to realise—what the performance of these services means in addition to all the other duties of home-keeping and with probably most of the handicaps and fewest of the conveniences for work. Wherever, in fact, the doctor goes, he finds women doing what is needed under the most difficult circumstances, and it will puzzle him to perceive any reason why the woman at home, doing all that is required, should not have a vote, and the man who goes to work out of the home, should. No doctor can regard a woman's work in her home and in connection with sickness with anything but feelings of the deepest respect. Unwearied watching, unwearied care and faithful observation of instructions, are the rule. And everywhere and always an earnest desire to do the best. Only very seldom, in an experience of a good many thousands of mothers, have I found any who did not desire to do their best. Lazy, slatternly and foolish mothers there are, of course, but even with these the emergency of illness will often call out fine qualities.

#### The Unrepresented Expert.

The doctor, after a little experience, comes to realise that the woman is the expert on home conditions, on the practical details of clothing and feeding, and on all that has to do with home life and the rearing of children. The father leaves this side of life to his "missus," but at election times he goes off to the polling booth to vote for this or that candidate whose election may seriously affect the home and child-life conditions of which the father is so largely ignorant. Laws affecting the Public Health, the Poor Law, the treatment of the sick and

insane, unemployment and invalidity, are the constant subjects of discussion and proposals for legislation. All of these matters and many others, such as all the Child legislation from the Children's Act to Medical Inspection, touch the home directly, modify its life and ought to be guided and discussed in the light of an expert knowledge of home conditions. But while the women who make and guide the home life have no effective means of enforcing their views on these matters, the men, who are largely uninformed on them, have votes and so decide what laws shall regulate the home. This state of things causes legislation and administration to be formal and artificial instead of real and human.

#### An Example of How Not to Do it.

An Act exists, for instance, whereby necessitous children may be fed out of money provided by the Education Authority. The amount which may be spent is clearly and necessarily laid down, the forms for returns which must be made have been elaborated, and it is possible in a large town for an accurate weekly return to be issued stating the number of meals issued, with their cost per head calculated to the decimal of a penny. But there is no effective organisation for (a) securing that all children in need of food shall be discovered and shall get it, (b) that the meals provided shall be satisfactory as regards quality and quantity, (c) that the supervision at meal times necessary to preserve the order and manners essential to good digestion and sound nutrition shall be forthcoming. Nor is there any provision for providing different food for children of four and those of fourteen; both classes usually get the same; nor for maintaining standards of cleanliness and decency with regard to premises and methods of serving the meals. I have myself seen school dinner centres in London, at which the food was served out of a bucket, and hundreds of plates and bowls "washed up" between batches of children in one



small tub of filthy water! At many feeding centres the children race through a meal in five to ten minutes, sometimes in less. Adequate supervision is, in fact, usually lacking.

These are matters of organisation as important as any definition of exact cost, and susceptible of effective control by the laying down of standards below which conditions shall not be allowed to fall, together with powers to provide the necessary officers to do the work. But this practical, actual, and human organisation is not incorporated in the Act; the formal provisions are. Again, with regard to the selection of children for feeding: in practice this depends largely on the whim or the preconceptions of the Head Teacher. A teacher who does not believe in "pauperising people" with "State aid" will discover very few children needing food, a "socialistic" teacher will discover very many. There is no simple machinery provided to make the discovery of all necessitous children certain. Faced by facts such as these (and deeper investigation by the reader will only discover more and more of them) one cannot fail to draw the conclusion, that those who framed the Act of Parliament—with the best possible motives—and are responsible for the administrative measures based thereon, were ignorant of actual child-life conditions among the class it was sought to serve. The whole matter is one of small details, the daily insistent details with which every poor home-keeping woman is acquainted; but because women have not votes, the details never come up for public examination and comment, and do not affect elections. The men know of some of the facts, the women know them all and have them engraved on their minds and hearts. The men are informed to some degree, but the women are experts. And because the experts are shut out from the election, and cannot make their voice heard in Parliament, we have unreal formalities of Acts of Parliament instead of realities.

### The One Weapon that Commands Attention.

The conferring of votes on women would not make every working-class woman keeping a home into an ardent and capable statesman or politician, but neither does the conferring of a vote on a man work this miracle. But votes for the workers have secured the attention of the statesman and politician for problems of the workers' life, and votes for women would secure attention for the women's side of life, and for the representation of that practical expert knowledge of the bed-rock conditions of living which is beyond shams and pretences and formalities because it is so close to actual facts. Partly this will come as the result of education, but education of a kind which cannot be given unless women have votes. A good thing indeed will it be for legislation when this education is more general.

### Real Difficulties v. Red Tape.

The Medical Inspection of School Children is another example of legislation in which the formal predominates over the real. By the Act putting Medical Inspection into force the inspection becomes compulsory, but Medical treatment is not only optional, but no method is proposed for seeing that it is effective even when formally applied. The difficulty with many thousands of poor families lies not in not knowing that a child is ill, but in not having time or energy or money to take it anywhere, and in not having correct knowledge of where to take it. The woman with a houseful of little children who cannot be left, or with a sick husband or a child (whom she has to care for and support), the woman who is a widow and supports her children by her own work, have difficulties none of which are contemplated in the Act. The woman's point of view, in fact, is left out. The scheme is excellent in broad outline and has many good points, but it does overlook many of the practical difficulties that the expert

opinion of women, had it been consulted, could undoubtedly have pointed out.

And more and more every day is legislation coming into the home, more and more is it coming close to the family and individual, and the opinions of the woman who is the expert on the detail work of this side of life are shut out from consideration because she has no vote. The danger is a serious one and a plain one. It is easy to construct ideally useful legislation, but difficult to make it real. It is easy to spend thousands a year on feeding schemes, but not so easy to be sure that this feeding has its effect on individual children. It is easy to medically examine children, make entries on cards and in registers and file certificates, but not so easy to be sure that the ailments discovered by inspection are so treated that children will be improved in health. And these considerations apply to every kind of legislation which touches the home; every effort at social reconstruction which is founded upon efficiency of the home and of the individual, needs the expert criticism of the experts of the home—needs, in fact, expert criticism from the Woman's point of view. If the Public Health is to be builded soundly and well, it can only be with the co-operation of women directing the application of legislation to the details of life.

### **Criminal Parenthood.**

So far I have considered the matter only from the standpoint of the nation as a whole. Let me give one example of the effect of present conditions on women themselves. Some time ago I had a baby brought to me by its mother for treatment for a skin eruption. What the mother thought comparatively trivial turned out to be congenital syphilis. I did not mention my diagnosis at first, but asked what had been happening to the family for the last two years. They had been bad years for the family, it appeared; the man had been unemployed, and the mother hard put to to make the few casual

shillings cover cost of the three or four children's food and clothes. In search of work the man had gone a long way on tramp, had found work in a distant place and stayed there some months. There he had fallen a victim to ordinary temptations and contracted that very ordinary disease, syphilis. Very probably he did not realise the nature of the complaint. Being also affectionate and fond of his wife and children he returned home at the earliest opportunity. The result was the diseased baby. I thought it was my duty to tell the mother the nature of the illness in order to impress on her the urgency of treatment. She naturally resented the illness and left her husband, taking the baby with her, but leaving the older children.

The mother went to another part of London and worked as a charwoman, trying to support herself and send money to the other children. She found that she could not send enough, that the others were starving slowly without her, as well as growing up neglected and uncared for. No practical means (although there are formal or imaginary legal means) existed that would enable her to get the children away, and compel support from the husband. For the sake of the children she was driven back to the home and to the prospect of another diseased baby. The man would not or could not understand the necessity of treatment, the woman could do her utmost to prevent the catastrophe she feared, but the house was too small for her to have a separate room.

The case seemed to me to argue pretty forcibly for such intervention of women in politics as should secure the provision of a simple machinery for dealing with such cases, or preventing such cases. The man and woman were quite normal ordinary people, and therefore the results were almost inevitable; the only unusual feature was that the wife, in addition to resenting the conditions, fought against them. The woman's point of view, backed up by Votes for Women, would be able to prevent such catastrophes.

**Man and Woman in Co-operation.**

In every sphere of our life the co-operation of woman is needed, in none more than the framing of those laws that have to deal with our health, our schools, and our homes. Women have a different point of view from men, and have a different knowledge about such matters, therefore their co-operation is essential. Real and human legislation would be the outcome of this co-operation for the simple reason that the human race is made up of two sides, the male and the female, and the help of both sides is necessary.

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**JOSEPHINE BUTLER**

*A Cameo Life-Sketch.*



BY

**MARION HOLMES.**

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# JOSEPHINE BUTLER

*A Cameo Life-Sketch*

BY

MARION HOLMES

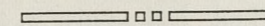
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# Josephine Butler.

## A CAMEO LIFE-SKETCH.

By MARION HOLMES.



### A By-Election Scene.

**I**N the autumn of 1872 there was a by-election in Pontefract. In a large hay loft over an empty room a woman was speaking to a deeply interested gathering of her own sex. Suddenly great clouds of smoke rolled up from the room below, and sounds of anger came in ever-increasing volume. Then through the trap-door appeared face after face, full of fury. Listen to what the speaker herself says of the scene :—

“The bundles of straw beneath had been set on fire . . . man after man came in until they crowded the place. There was no possible exit for us, the windows being too high above the ground, and we women were gathered into one end of the room like a flock of sheep surrounded by wolves. . . . It is difficult to describe in words what followed. It was a time which required strong faith and calm courage. Mrs. Wilson and I stood in front of the company of women side by side. It was not personal violence that we feared so much as the mental pain inflicted by the rage, profanity and obscenity of the men, of their words and their threats. They shook their fists in our faces with volleys of oaths. We understood by their language that certain among them had a personal and vested interest in the evil thing we were opposing. It was clear they understood that their ‘craft was in danger.’ The new teaching and revolt of women had stirred up the very depths of hell. We said nothing—we simply stood shoulder to shoulder, Mrs. Wilson and I, and waited and endured . . . .”

### A Generation Afterwards.

Rather more than thirty years after this—and many other similar scenes—had occurred, there was flashed along the telegraph wires the news of a peaceful death in a remote north-country village, and the next morning the whole press of the country bristled with special eulogistic memoirs. "A great saint had passed away, one who would live long in minds made better for her presence, in pulses stirred to deeds of daring rectitude, and in the grateful memory of many a forlorn and fallen sister, whom she had redeemed by the power of sympathy and love."

It needs no great perspicacity to guess that the saint of the press memoirs bore the same name as the reviled speaker of the earlier scenes. History repeats itself in never-ending cycles. Pioneers and reformers from the beginning of time have had stones flung at their heads in life, and laurel wreaths laid at their feet in death. So it is no cause for wonder that Josephine Butler, who was hooted and cursed and ostracised,—not only by the men whose vile trade she was opposing, but by her own friends, by educated people, by those high in office—who was hunted and driven through the streets in the latter part of last century, is to figure now in one of the stained glass windows of the Lady Chapel in Liverpool Cathedral; chief in a group of women famed for their good deeds—daughters whom the Empire delights to honour.

### A Dubious Distinction.

Josephine Butler set her hand to work that was bound to bring a plentiful crop of abusive opposition in its train, for she struck at a system that pandered to the worst passions in men. The State Regulation of Vice, against which she led a long and strenuous crusade, is an attempt to secure the health of men of unclean lives by a surgical outrage upon women who are their partners in immorality, *or upon any other women* whom the officials who work the system may choose to suspect and denounce.

This system, which was introduced very largely throughout Europe by the first Napoleon, was adopted in England first in 1866 by the passing of a tentative Act, then more fully in 1869 by the passing of the Contagious Diseases Act. Our country thus had the dubious distinction of being the first—and including her Colonies—the only nation, daring at that time to put the Acts on the Statute Book.

By these regulations the authorities were empowered to send any woman to prison for refusing to undergo the surgical operation prescribed by them. The first refusal was punishable by a sentence of one month's imprisonment, with hard labour; for the second refusal a sentence of three months' hard labour could be imposed. In cases of actions under the common law by respectable women for outrage under this Act, the last Clause of the 1866 Act provided that the woman should not recover damages if the official

had offered her money sufficient, in the opinion of the magistrate, to make amends.

### Legislative Creation of a Slave Class.

It is easy to see what a state of terrorism this licence could bring about. As pointed out in the famous Women's Protest, which was issued a few months after the passing of the Acts, it placed the reputation, freedom and persons of women absolutely in the power of the police. The merest suspicion on the part of an officer was sufficient justification in the eyes of the law for arresting a woman, taking her to the examination house, and there compelling her to undergo the degrading and painful surgical outrage. Large numbers of women, many of them of good character, chose prison rather than submit. It is stated in *The Shield*, the organ of the Abolitionist Society, that two girls went to prison five successive times, before the medical men, magistrates and police who worked the Acts would stop pursuing them. In the same paper there are terse but terrible records given of girls driven to suicide, of innocent women dragged by the police through the public streets appealing vainly for help to the passers-by. No wonder that any heart that contained a spark of the love of justice and liberty was set afire, hearing of these happenings. No wonder that many women, when they realised what these Acts meant for their sex, found that no price was too heavy to pay for their repeal!

### A Reformer in the Making.

Mrs. Butler was a born leader and reformer. Her gracious personality was calculated to win friends for any cause she championed, while her "gift of tongues"—for she was a speaker of great power—made her public work peculiarly effective. She possessed, too, a spirit of indomitable perseverance and optimism that was invaluable in a leader of—what looked at first like—a forlorn hope. Her enthusiasm and faith never failed through all the long and bitter years of struggle. When the spirits of her most faithful helpers were beginning to flag, Mrs. Butler cried shame upon those who talked of surrender. "Surely," she wrote, "we have not forgotten the reformers, confessors and martyrs of all ages, with the very meanest of whom we shall be unworthy to claim relationship if we give way to weariness."

Her early life and training had tended to develop in her a keen sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate members of society. She was brought up in a home of progressive thought and under the influence of a father—John Grey, of Dilston—who was himself a keen reformer and a personal friend of Clarkson, one of the most energetic workers in the abolition of the Slave Trade. From quite early days Josephine Grey, who was born on April 13th, 1828, heard of the sufferings of those who were in a

state of bondage, and the recital of these keenly awakened her feelings, as she herself says, "especially concerning the injustice to women through this conspiracy of greed and gold and lust of the flesh, a conspiracy which has its counterpart in the white slave owning in Europe."

#### A True Helpmeet.

Her marriage to a man of peculiarly noble character, George Butler, son of the Dean of Peterborough, deepened and strengthened her desire to help her generation. The first few years of her married life were spent in Oxford, where her husband acted as tutor, examiner and lecturer in the University. Here they met many leading people, and Mrs. Butler says:—

"In the frequent social gatherings in our drawing-room in the evenings there was much talk, sometimes serious and weighty, sometimes light, witty and brilliant, ranging over many subjects. It was then that I sat silent—the only woman in the company—and listened, sometimes with a sore heart, for these men would speak of things which I had already resolved deeply in my own mind, things of which I was convinced, though I had no dialectics at my command with which to defend their truth. Every instinct of womanhood within me was already in revolt against certain accepted theories in society, and I suffered as only God and the faithful companion of my life could ever know. Incidents occurred which brought their contribution to the lessons then sinking into our hearts. A young mother was in Newgate for the murder of her infant, whose father, under cover of the deathlike silence prescribed by Oxford philosophers—a silence which is in fact a permanent endorsement of injustice—had perjured himself to her, had forsaken and forgotten her, and fallen back with no accusing conscience on his easy social life, and possibly his academic honours. . . . My husband suggested that we should write to the chaplain of Newgate, and ask him to send her to us when her sentence had expired. . . . She came to us. I think she was the first of the world of unhappy women of a humble class whom he welcomed to his own home. She was not the last."

#### A Heavy Cross.

But though the Christ-like work of rescue and compassion was begun in this way, it was Sorrow's heavy hand that drove her out into the highways and by-ways on her martyr-like crusade. In 1864 her only little daughter, Evangeline, was killed before her eyes. Leaning over the balustrades in her eagerness to welcome her parents, the child overbalanced and fell into the hall below at their feet. This terrible happening filled Josephine Butler's heart with a greater yearning than before to help those whom life had battered and bruised. "I was," she says, "possessed with an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own, to meet

some people more unhappy than myself—my sole wish was to plunge into the heart of some human misery, and to say (as I now knew I could) to afflicted people—'I understand; I, too, have suffered.'"

#### "Inasmuch—"

In 1865 her husband was appointed Principal of Liverpool College, and it was in that great seaport that she began an organised and systematic attempt to help the flotsam and jetsam of the outcast sisterhood.

"It was not difficult to find misery in Liverpool," she writes. "There was an immense workhouse there—a little town in itself. On the ground floor was a Bridewell for women, consisting of huge cellars, bare and unfurnished, with damp stone floors. These were called the 'oakum sheds' and to these came voluntarily creatures driven by hunger, destitution, or vice, begging for a few nights' shelter or a piece of bread, in return for which they picked their allotted portion of oakum.

"I went down to the oakum sheds and begged admission. I was taken into an immense, gloomy vault filled with women and girls. I sat on the floor among them and picked oakum. They laughed at me, and told me that my fingers were of no use for that work, which was true. But while we laughed we became friends. . . . The result of my visit was to draw down upon my head an avalanche of miserable but grateful womanhood. Such a concourse gathered round our home that I had to stop to take breath and consider some means of escape from the dilemma by providing some practical help, moral and material. . . . We had a dry cellar in our house and a garret or two, and into these we crowded as many as possible of the most friendless girls who were anxious to make a fresh start. This became inconvenient, and so in time my husband and I ventured to take a house near our own, trusting to find funds to furnish and fill it with inmates. This was the 'Home of Rest' which continued for many years and developed, about the time we left Liverpool, into an incurable hospital, supported by the town."

#### An Imperative Call.

Several crowded years followed: years filled with good deeds; but through them all an undercurrent of unrest and disquietude was running through her mind. A very brief debate had taken place in the House of Commons on the occasion of the passing of the first Act dealing with the State Regulation of Vice, in 1866. Mrs. Butler was one of the few persons who read it, and in one of her early speeches she tells of her first conviction that her life's work was predestined. "It was in that year that the knowledge first broke upon me that this system, which I had so long regarded with horror, had actually found a footing in our England. It seemed to me as if a dark cloud were hanging on the

horizon, threatening our land. The depression that took possession of my mind was overwhelming. I found a record of those days in an old manuscript book, and in turning over its leaves, I found a note of that debate in the House, the date, and a written presentiment, which I could not escape from, that, do what I would, I should be called to meet this evil thing face to face—a trembling presentiment, which I could not escape from, that, do what I would, I myself must enter this cloud."

No wonder she shrank from the ordeal. The details of the subject that she had to handle were so repulsive, so degrading, that to any refined, sensitive woman it meant of necessity an ever-present martyrdom. But, luckily for suffering womanhood, her sense of duty and her love for humanity triumphed; she buckled on her armour for the fight, and her husband consecrated her banner of revolt with the invocation, "Go—and God be with you!"

#### An Insult to Women.

In 1869 the full Acts were passed, and an appeal to lead the fight against them was sent to her from a group of medical men who had for some time been making strenuous efforts to prevent this "Crowning Crime of Christendom," as it was called.

"The experience gained during their efforts," she writes, "had convinced them that in order to be successful they must summon to their aid forces far beyond the arguments, strong as these were, based on physiological, scientific grounds. They recognised that the persons most insulted by the Napoleonic system with which our legislators of that day had become enamoured, being women, these women must find representatives of their own sex to protest against, and to claim a practical repentance from the Parliament and Government which had flung this insult in their face."

#### The Necessary Weapon of Castigation.

But the repentance was long in coming, naturally. The insulted members of the community being denied the one weapon which alone can rouse the Parliamentary conscience to a sense of sin, were condemned to wage a war that was prolonged and bitter in the extreme. Needless to say that Mrs. Butler and her colleagues were staunch and fervent supporters of the enfranchisement of women, for they were handicapped at every stage in their fight by the unrepresented condition of the victims of the legislation with which they were at war. Speaking years afterwards on this subject, Mrs. Butler said:—

"For twenty-one years I worked, with my dear fellow-workers, in a public manner against these hateful laws. . . . During these years there was one thing which made our battle harder than it would have been—we had to fight outside the Constitution. We have been knocking at the door of the Constitution all these years, and there are men who even now tell me that they would give us

anything in the way of justice but the Parliamentary vote. . . . The prayer which I now offer is that the veil may be taken away, and the selfishness—the perhaps unconscious selfishness—may be removed from the hearts of men who deny women equality, and keep them outside the Constitution. Think what we could do in the cause of morality; think of the pain and trouble and martyrdom that we might be saved in the future if we had that little piece of justice."

Mrs. Butler also tells how, in 1873, when the crusade that she led was in full swing, Mr. Henley, a Member of Parliament who had till then been opposed to granting the parliamentary vote to women, voted in favour of it. He told her that the experience he had had of the injustice which Parliament (not excluding even the good men in Parliament) was capable of inflicting on women, had convinced him that women must labour for, and obtain, direct representation on equal terms with men.

#### Mazzini's Views.

But perhaps the most interesting of all the testimonies quoted by her as to the necessity of votes for women is that contained in a letter from the famous patriot Mazzini.

"Can you doubt how eagerly I watch from afar, and how heartily I bless the efforts of the brave, earnest British women who are striving for the extension of the suffrage to their sex, and for the repeal of the vice-protecting Acts, which last question is but an incident in the great general question of justice to women? . . . You cannot fulfil your task without *liberty*, which is the source of responsibility; you cannot fulfil it without *equality*, which is liberty for each and all.

"Your claim to the suffrage is identical with that of the working men. Like them, you seek to bring a new element of progress to the common work; you feel that you too have something to say, not merely indirectly, but legally and officially, with regard to the great problems which stir and torture the soul of mankind."

These words were penned over forty years ago, but they might be a quotation from a speech by Mrs. Despard herself, so perfectly do they express the ideals of the women who are engaged in the great fight of to-day.

#### The "Arguments" of the Opposition.

All the features of virulent abuse and persecution which have always attended a war waged by right against might, by virtue against vice, marked this campaign. Public meetings were broken up by organised rowdism. Mrs. Butler was hunted from towns and hotels, stoned, howled down by hooligans and roughs of the worst description. But in spite of that, or perhaps partly because of it, she won support wherever she appeared. Women flocked to her standard, the best men ranged themselves on her side; for she



wielded the finest weapon in the whole armoury of war—a just Cause.

#### Response from the People.

Her first public meeting on the subject was held in Crewe, where there is a great manufactory of locomotives, and a mass of workmen. From the beginning the working classes rallied round her enthusiastically; naturally, for the majority of the victims of the legislative abuse she attacked was of themselves.

"I scarcely knew what I should say at this meeting, and knew not at all what I should meet with," she writes. "A friend acquainted with the workmen led me after work hours to their popular hall, and when I had delivered my message, a small group of leaders among the men bade me thrice welcome in the name of all there. 'We understand you perfectly,' they said; 'we in this group served an apprenticeship in Paris, and we have seen and know for ourselves the truth of what you say. We have said to each other that it would be the death-knell of the moral life of England were she to copy France in this matter.'"

Meetings in Leeds, York, Sunderland and Newcastle followed that in Crewe, and so great was the power of her eloquence that within three weeks after the first little propagandist effort, the working men of Yorkshire and Lancashire had organised mass meetings in all the big towns, and agreed on a programme of action.

#### The Women's Protest.

Towards the end of 1869 the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was founded, and on the last day of that year, their solemn protest appeared in the *Daily News*. It was widely copied by the press, and the signatures to it included such names as Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Mary Carpenter, Mary Priestman, Agnes McLaren, Ursula Bright, Margaret Lucas, all the most prominent women in the Society of Friends and many others. An influential "roll-call" indeed! These were names that not even the most callous or prejudiced M.P. could belittle, and they had their effect in rousing some of them to a sense of the women's sentiments on the matter. A perspicacious few even scented danger. "Your manifesto has shaken us very badly in the House," a leading member remarked to Mrs. Butler. "We know how to manage any other opposition in the House or in the country, but this is very awkward for us—this revolt of the women. It is quite a new thing; what are we to do with such an opposition as this?"

This Protest pointed out that as far as women were concerned the Acts removed every guarantee of personal security which the law had established, and put their reputation, freedom, and their persons absolutely in the power of the police. It further showed the danger of making the path of evil easy for men, "inasmuch as a moral restraint is withdrawn the moment the State recognises and

provides convenience for the practice of a vice which it thereby declares to be necessary and venial." It also pointed out that before rushing into experiments of legalising a revolting vice, the Government was bound to try to deal with the *causes* of the evil, which were moral, not physical.

#### A Way they have in the Press.

After the first shock induced by this powerful and unexpected manifesto, the opponents of the reform gathered their forces for an organised stand against the women's demand. The publicity given to the protest was followed by a great conspiracy of silence in the press, "which continued unbroken," says Mrs. Butler in her "Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade," "until the autumn of 1874, when a well-known ex-Cabinet Minister spoke powerfully at a public meeting on our behalf. This silence could not be in most cases attributed to a regard for the feelings of readers, for statements in favour of the Acts were constantly admitted. . . . We felt more and more that publicity was one of the necessary conditions of success for us. The stratagems of our opponents only raised deeper indignation because they were covert and secret."

In describing an immense mass meeting that was held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, and which was addressed by men of such eminence as Jacob Bright, M.P., William Fowler, M.P., Professor Sheldon Amos, Mr. Thomasson, her husband (the Rev. Canon Butler) and others, she says: "About 6,000 people attended that meeting, and yet, except in a local and partial manner, it was unnoticed by the Press."

That the Press still follows this ostrich-like policy of pretending that a movement for reform does not exist because it chooses to ignore it, many strenuous workers in the cause of Liberty to-day know to their cost.

But, in spite of the boycott by the newspapers, the work of propaganda and education went on apace. Great meetings were continually held up and down the country; petitions were signed, and literature dealing with the subject was scattered broadcast.

#### "Educated" Hooligans.

In Glasgow the medical students seem to have upheld the traditions of their fraternity with their usual enthusiasm. Judging from quite recent experiences, the style of argument adopted by these hilarious youths is one that is handed down from one generation to another with unabated vigour and enjoyment. Mrs. Butler speaks of their "noise, violence and rudeness" at a meeting that she held in that city. Eventually the police had to be called in to quell their exuberance, and numbers of them were locked up for the night.

"They were punished," explained a Bailie to her the next day,

“for the offences of barking like dogs, mewing like cats, crowing like cocks, whistling, and rattling their sticks.”

#### By-Elections.

A campaign of opposition to candidates who were against the repeal of the vice-protecting Acts was carried on energetically at by-elections by the Abolitionists. One very strong advocate and practical supporter of the opposed system was defeated three times at three different places in his attempt to enter Parliament. It goes without saying that the reformers had to run the gauntlet of the coarsest abuse and calumny during these contests, for political cupidity and anger at opposition are then at their highest. I have already mentioned an incident that occurred at Pontefract. At the Colchester by-election in 1870 Mrs. Butler had to be moved in the dead of night from her hotel to obscure lodgings, as the mob threatened to set fire to it.

This particular contest, however, proved to be somewhat of a turning point in the crusade. Colchester was looked upon by the Government—a Liberal Government was in office then, by the way—as a safe seat; but, after a hotly contested fight, the Government nominee—who was a strong supporter of, and had, indeed, administered the Regulation System during his rule as Governor of Malta—was defeated by a big majority. “The moral of this election,” says Mrs. Butler, “was not lost upon the Government. They learned that this question was not one with which they could trifle or ignore.”

#### The Usual Government Panacea.

Meantime great pressure was brought to bear from the Trade Unions and various organisations of working men. Leeds, Newcastle, Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool were all to the fore. Petitions were poured into Parliament. Such was the effect produced that at last the cumbersome legislative machine made a slight move. Needless to say it followed the line of least resistance, and moved in the direction in which Governments generally move when a question is raised by the people on which the members of the Government themselves have little knowledge and less conviction. It appointed a Royal Commission to consider the matter.

Josephine Butler was called to give evidence before the Commission. In a letter to her husband she gives a vivid picture of the ordeal. It was a severe one, for she was the only woman present before a large and august assembly of peers, bishops, members of Parliament, representatives of the military and naval services, doctors and others; a large majority of her questioners were hostile, and the subject was a serious and difficult one to handle. “To compare a very small person with a great one,” she

says, “I felt rather like Paul before Nero—very weak and lonely.” The Commission—which never had the support of the Abolitionist Associations—ended, as most Royal Commissions do, by presenting an abortive report, which managed to face both ways at once, by pronouncing itself hostile to the Abolitionists, while at the same time it condemned the compulsory treatment of the persons of women, which is the centre and core of the whole system of the State Regulation of Vice.

#### Growth of the Movement.

By 1874, a large number of eminent men and women had ranged themselves openly on the side of the fighters. For it was soon recognised by the best that this was no question of a sex revolt. “It was a campaign for justice, for the assertion of constitutional liberties, for the equality of the rights of citizenship for both sexes, a protest against the creation by legislative enactment of a slave class; and it was this aspect of the movement which won for it the support of men like Mazzini, Victor Hugo and William Lloyd Garrison,” says *The Tribune*, in its eloquent tribute to Mrs. Butler’s work. It is impossible to enumerate the host that rendered yeoman service. The Society of Friends, with Mr. Edward Backhouse, their president, was always to the fore with its support. James Stuart, M.P., William Fowler, M.P., Jacob Bright, M.P., Professor Francis Newman (brother of Cardinal Newman), Henry Broadhurst, M.P., Henry J. Wilson, M.P., and hundreds of others, all gave of their best aid.

It was in this year—1874—that Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Stansfeld, who was an ex-Minister of the Crown, spoke at a great public meeting in Bristol, an event which attracted the attention of the whole country. Some dozen different societies had also by this time sprung into being, having committees and correspondents in more than six hundred towns.

#### Going Further Afield.

It was of course inevitable, seeing that the system against which the crusaders were fighting was an international one, that they should extend the field of their operations as time went on. In March, 1874, a few friends of the Cause met to confer together at York.

“Having hitherto,” says Mrs. Butler, “felt themselves in a battle for the Abolition of the State sanction of vice in Great Britain only, they had become aware that a large and powerful organization on the Continent was seeking to increase the efficacy of the vice regulations, and for that purpose was appealing confidently to England to take the lead in organizing under all the Governments of Europe an international scheme for the application of these regulations to every country and to every seaport throughout the world.”

It was promptly decided at this Conference that the war should be carried into the enemy's camp, "by establishing relations with leading opponents of the system in France, Belgium, Italy, Prussia, &c.; by stimulating opposition in these countries and holding international congresses."

#### A Fearless Missioner.

Naturally, no better agent could be found for the purpose than Mrs. Butler, so in December of that year she started out on the first of her Continental missions. I have no space in this short review of a life so crowded with activities as her's was, to do anything like justice to the extent and the value of the work that she accomplished in connection with this international movement. Her missions in France, Switzerland, Italy, &c., succeeded in rousing the attention of the most eminent politicians, and in winning the support of such men as M. Aimé Humbert, M. Jules Simon, Signor Giuseppe Nathan, and others. Indeed, she became as well known on the Continent as in her own country, and many pathetic stories are told of the love and admiration that were showered on her by the unfortunate sisterhood she befriended. She visited the hospitals and public registered houses and probed into and exposed their iniquities and inefficiencies. It is not too much to say that this gentle Englishwoman became somewhat of a terror to the police authorities of the various countries she visited. Largely as a result of her work the first International Congress took place in Geneva in 1877; it was attended by over 500 men and women delegates, representing the most advanced minds of Europe and the United States.

#### Victory at Last.

The first gleam of victory dawned in this country in 1883, when a resolution, condemning compulsory examination, was brought forward in the House by Mr. Stansfeld, and carried. In accordance with this resolution the Government suspended the operation of the Acts, but they were not finally repealed until 1886. Mrs. Butler's account of the debate in the House is full of interest. It contains, too, an anecdote with a moral that will appeal with peculiar force to the women who are conducting a crusade for political liberty to-day.

"We have arranged," she says in a letter to her son, "for a great meeting of prayer; we shall hold it close to the House of Commons during the whole debate, if there is one, and all night if the debate lasts all night. We have invited about twenty of our best friends in the House to join us. Some of our Parliamentary friends counselled this course, saying that it was well that all the world should know with what weapons and in Whose name we make war, even if they scoff at the idea, as of course so many do."

In a later letter she says:—"I did not remain in the Ladies' Gallery, but came and went from the prayer meeting to the Lobby of the House. We saw John Morley take the oath and his seat. . . . I then went to the Westminster Palace Hotel, where we had taken a large room for our devotional meeting. There were well-dressed ladies, some even of high rank, kneeling together with the poorest, and some of the outcast women of the purlieus of Westminster. Many were weeping. . . . I felt ready to cry, but I did not, for I long ago rejected the old ideal of the 'division of labour,' that 'men must work and women must weep.' A venerable lady from America rose and said, 'Tears are good, prayers are better, but we should get on better *if behind every tear there was a vote at the ballot box.*' Every soul in the room responded to that sentiment."

#### A Plea for a Better Way.

As some persons have supposed that the opponents of these Acts objected to any measures for the diminution of the special diseases which they were supposed to check, it may be as well to point out here that Mrs. Butler in her first pamphlet on the subject pleaded earnestly for a better and more scientific way of dealing with the matter. She suggested that the provision of ample free hospital accommodation, worked on a *voluntary* basis and as far as possible by women doctors, would be more likely to lead to a decrease of disease than any compulsory system. Such a plan would also tend to lead more definitely to reformed lives as well as cured bodies, as there would be a better chance of moral influences prevailing with the inmates than under the old degrading system.

#### Other Work.

Although the work of this arduous campaign will ever remain the greatest monument to Josephine Butler's memory, it did not constitute her only sphere of activity. She worked hard for the higher education of women, and was President of the Council for promoting that purpose from 1867 to 1873, in company with Miss Clough as Secretary. She also lent all her influence to assist the passage into law of the Married Women's Property Act.

Her literary work included a *Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, a book which gave abundant proof—if it were needed—of the deep spirituality of her nature. She also wrote a volume of "Recollections of George Butler"—a beautiful pen-portrait of a saintly man—and many pamphlets dealing with social and political problems. "The Constitution Violated," an appeal to the principles of Magna Charta, which was issued in the early seventies, was perhaps the most weighty and widely read of these.

**Full of Years and Honour.**

She died on December 30th, 1906, at the age of seventy-eight, and the world is greatly the poorer for her passing, as it is the richer for her living. She has bequeathed to it the record of a noble work nobly done, and the memory of a life that must ever be an inspiration and a hope—a life replete with deeds of charity, kind love and stainless days.

“These riches shall not fade away with life,  
Nor any death dispraise.”

MARION HOLMES.

May, 1911.

Those who wish to know more of the life and work of Mrs. Josephine Butler are advised to read “Josephine Butler: An Autobiographical Memoir,” edited by Lucy A. and George W. Johnson, of which a second edition is being published this month, 2/- net. J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., Bristol; Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., London.

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# Woman in the Nation.



BY

**Mrs. DESPARD.**

PUBLISHED BY THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE,  
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## VOTES FOR WOMEN.

# Women's Freedom League.

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### CONSTITUTION.

**NAME.**—The Women's Freedom League.

**OBJECTS.**—To secure for Women the Parliamentary Vote as it is or may be granted to men ; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

**METHODS.**—The objects of the League shall be promoted by—

1. Action entirely independent of all political parties.
2. Opposition to whatever Government is in power until such time as the franchise is granted.
3. Participation in Parliamentary Elections ; at By-elections in opposition to the Government candidate and independently of all other candidates.
4. Vigorous agitation upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned.
5. The organizing of women all over the country to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom.
6. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods, such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence, and deputations to public representatives and other bodies and their members.

**MEMBERSHIP.**—Women of all shades of political opinion who approve the objects and methods of the League, and who are prepared to act independently of party, are eligible for membership. All members must approve, though they need not actually participate in, militant action.

## WOMEN IN THE NATION.

The question is often asked, especially now when "storm and stress are in the air"—Why are women out? Why do they not leave politics to men ; at least, until some of the more contentious problems get settled? If only they are patient, by and by they will be given what they want.

Considerable stress is frequently laid upon the word "give," as if the right of citizenship, which is really the right to serve the community, were something which the electors of the country held in their hands. Something which, of their grace and bounty, they can bestow. In fact, we are told that it is not wise to annoy the men. Put them in a good temper and keep them there if you can, and then possibly, you will have your way. All which savours to some of us of the ancient ways of slavery that are slowly passing, never again to return.

The truth is that women have begun to feel in quite a new way not only their significance in the body politic, but also their actual power. With frank, wide-open, sometimes critical eyes, the young woman of to-day looks into the face of her brother, and at that gaze of hers some illusions are beginning to drop away. I heard of one the other day. The scene took place before the girl's parents, who had always treated her as a human being. A young man whom she had admired for some time asked her to marry him. She answered frankly :

"I like you: I have liked you for several years. But before I promise to marry you, I must lay down certain conditions."

"Yes!" he said, not without surprise.

"First," she said: "I must have a regular allowance. I shall have to give up some work if I marry you. I am not going to keep your house without a distinct understanding that housekeeping is work and is worthy of reward."

Still looking surprised, he bowed his head.

"Then," she went on, "I belong to a club and I shall spend the evening there occasionally, perhaps about once a week."

"I don't like clubs for women," he said.

"You have a club," she suggested.

"Yes; but I am a man."

"And I am a woman."

"We may have children."

"I hope we shall have children. If my baby wants me I shall certainly not go to the club or anywhere else."

He gave in; they married in due time, and I hear it is a successful and happy marriage. Many such little indications have come to me, all pointing to the fact that women are beginning to claim a human right—a true independence. And it is precisely this spirit which is behind the demand that women are making to take their place in the nation.

Why are we out? Because we are citizens; because we belong to the nation. We will not pretend that we are pleased with the men's franchise laws or with the way in which their Parliamentary procedure is conducted. The air just now is full of rumours. Noise and speculation greet us on every side. We look out on a sort of political chaos. Quarrels are being waged between Lords and Commons; between rival parties; between the wild men and the respectable men within the parties. And we women, standing outside, ask, "Where do we come in? We are outside with a sad and urgent crowd, poorly-fed and miserably-conditioned children, unemployed fathers, sweated, stunted workers, women driven to the streets for a livelihood. When are our legitimate wants to be attended to?"

While the men are wrangling about party, we bid them to our homes. We wonder if they are proud of the city-slum dwellings and of the rural hovels in which an enormous number of our children are being reared. "The Stately Homes of England"—ah! how few they are, as regards the great mass of the people! What Shelley wrote early last century is true now:

Birds find rest in narrow nest,  
When weary of their winged quest;  
Beasts find fare in woody lair  
When storm and stress are in the air;  
All things have their home but one—  
Thou, O Englishman, hast none!

The answer to which will be, "That is so like a woman! It is not the business of politics to interfere with home-life. Can legislation do away with the evils from which we suffer? Will the nation be made moral by Act of Parliament?" I wonder if a little fear lurks behind these questions! As a fact they arise from ignorance of the meaning and the scope of law, which is generally looked upon as a means of enforcing order and making crime feared. That is the poorest conception of law. Indeed, one reason for the misery that surrounds us, is that such poor and false interpretations are current. It is disobedience to the laws of nature, which means the law of God, that has created our perplexities and is keeping them alive. Had we learned the true art of living—were we in harmony with nature and nature's changeless laws—there would be no need of magistrates, police-courts, prisons, and all the paraphernalia of miscalled justice.

The women of the nation have had nothing to do with the making of the laws. They are made by men. Women are called upon to obey them, and of late it has begun to force itself upon them that this is unnatural and wrong: that if we are to have sweeter manners and purer laws, the force of the whole nation, women as well as men, must be thrown into the work. The men ask why we women are out. We answer because the business of the nation is our business.

More especially is this the case now, when politics are entering upon our home-life.

Public opinion, that potent instrument for good or for ill, has forced its way into the man's castle, into the woman's home. The child, once literally the chattel of the father, is receiving the attention of the State, which insists on its education, which, through doctor and nurse, inspects and reports upon its condition, though without (so illogical are statesmen) doing anything practical to improve it. Towns are being planned, land laws are being altered; new taxes, which seriously affect women, are being imposed. And, while all this is going on, while more is being proposed, the women of the nation are kept outside, humbly to receive from the hands of men that which they may choose to give them. We are out for justice. Equal opportunities of education and training with men, our brothers; equal moral standard; equal reward for our work as women in the nation, not slaves of the men of the nation, we demand these things. We have a national song whose chorus runs, "Britons never shall be slaves." It has occurred to some who have studied our national characteristics that, until we add to that, and sing lustily and with goodwill, "Britons never shall be masters," the slavish spirit, which is born no less of masterhood than it is of servitude, will continue to reign amongst us. Daring ourselves to be free, let us dare to set others free. Then, and then only, shall we, of the nation, have our feet firmly planted on the road that leads to freedom.

Not for our own sakes only is the demand for justice made. It is made for the sake of the community. We do not forget that nations have fallen into decadence, and finally into decay, through the enslavement of their women. Slave-mothers in Rome, in South America, in India, were factors, no doubt, in that absence of virility which gave over these nations as a prey to their conquerors. To bear and rear a fine and healthy race, capable of holding its own in the world, we must have women healthy of mind and body—women vigorous and pure and independent, and this we can only hope for when women are free.

Women are sometimes reproached with the sad problems that face us—such, for instance, as infant mortality; and some two or three years ago the Archbishop of Canterbury read a homily to the women of the nation on the decline of the birth rate, reproaching them with their want of patriotism. Alas!—while the present condition of things lasts, it is well that the birth rate should decline. Let us keep the babies who come to us! It is woman's fault, say the men, that we do not. Give us the material which will make healthy childhood possible before you blame us. Now it is with us much as it was with the Israelites in the land of Egypt, who had to make bricks without straw.

They ask us why we are out? Why we resort in numbers to the towns where elections are being held? Why we oppose the Government that has again and again denied our just demand? We answer that the cry of the child, that the call of the future is in our ears and that we are forced into the open.

It is for these reasons, because we belong to the nation, as we belong to the family; and, in truth, the nation is only the larger family, because the business carried on by the House of Commons is our business, concerning us and our children quite as intimately as it concerns the men; because the questions which are, or which ought to be, before the country are our questions; because woman's point of view, her knowledge, training and experience are wanted in the State; because of our love for the children, our passion for righteousness, our great hope for the future. We are out demanding recognition, claiming our true place in the nation.

And when it is obtained, as, doubtless, in spite of timid men and Anti-Suffragist women, it will be soon; when the first victory—this removal of sex-disqualification, is won, what will our next step be?

That is what some timorous men are asking, and a variety of answers are given. The Liberals say: "They will vote Tory to a woman! And then"—I believe Mr. John Burns made this prophecy—"we shall go out into the wilderness for forty years." The Tories say: "They are Socialists—this uprising of the women may mean Revolution." The Socialists say: "They are reactionaries; they will put the clock back by generations," and yet almost all of them admit that the thing being just is bound to come about, which reminds me of debtor and creditor. Says the creditor: "Give me the money that is due to me." Says the debtor: "Wait a bit! What are you going to do with it?" That question concerns the owner of the money and him alone.

Meanwhile, we the women of the nation, with our newly-acquired power in our hands, what answer have we to give? None of us are prophets, but one or two things we know, for in this great movement of ours we have been learning much. Discontent with things as they are; that is one lesson the time has taught us: the divine discontent that will not let us rest in our own sheltered corners while our brothers and sisters are suffering from ills that wise administration of the nation's resources might heal. Another lesson regards men. In the conflict we have seen there more clearly than ever before. They have revealed themselves to us, in their nobility and in their pettiness. Never shall I forget the scene in the lobby of the House of Commons on the night of the second reading of the Conciliation Bill with the type of members who came and went. It is an indelible memory. Through our clear-eyed perception of men and their motives the mask of illusion has fallen. We shall be able to judge men better when, as candidates, they present themselves before us. The time may even come when character will be considered before money and appearance, before party and service to party in a chosen representative of the people. Yet another and a still more important lesson. Rising from the subjection of the past, looking at ourselves, as well as at the men, with eyes from which the scales of convention have fallen, we have been learning courage, self-reliance, the strength that comes of combined action, loyalty one to the other. "Speaking the wisdom once they dared not think"—the women of the nation that is to be will go forward into a world that belongs to them and to their children. "Looking emotions once they dared not feel" they will make that world beautiful with their presence. And no one can deny that these are the elements—love, loyalty, wisdom and courage—which are needed, now more than ever, to purify politics and to redeem society.

We are in a strange and fateful period. Mighty forces wrought out in the silence and hitherto little felt, are coming up in strength like big waves on a rising tide, and to some it may seem that our civilization is threatened. The cry of the worker for justice, the cry of human beings for the space, the air, the light, the independence through which a human life may become possible—these are being heard, and with them comes a dull reverberation of resentment against those who are deaf to the demands. Even the long-suffering electorate are growing impatient with party strife, and bitter with hope delayed. It is into this seething sea of change that women have entered. So is the nation whose destinies they must help to mould. It is indeed the consciousness of what their uprising means, which makes men in some instances as keen as the very foremost amongst the women to see this first phase of the

conflict at an end. "It seems too hard," said to me, only yesterday, one of our finest champions, "that we should be obliged to give our force to gaining for you this elementary act of justice, when so much is waiting for us all to do." And I answered with a sigh, as I thought of the great host outside. "Yes, I agree with you!"

And yet, when I come to think it over calmly, I saw that all that has come to pass is part of a great plan. Women are to take openly, no more in obscurity or on sufferance, their part in the life of the nation. Mothers, workers, thinkers, politicians, scientists, artists, inventors, they must go forth and all doors henceforth must be open to them. Not that they may dominate, but they may form part of a great harmony: not that they may receive the lip-homage and semi-ironical worship of the men who, for a brief season, are infatuated with their charm, but that, through knowledge and the wisdom that comes of sorrow nobly borne, they may serve their generation. "All knowledge," said a modern mystic, "is a revelation of the self to the self."

Society has to learn itself before it can be properly balanced. And this true and perfect balance will then alone be possible when truths, ancient as humanity itself, are brought into living manifestations.

"So God created man in His own image—male and female."

Therefore, I would that all would hail with reverence and hope this seemingly strange portent that has appeared on the horizon of our modern life; the emergence of woman into politics. It is only because of its strangeness that men are holding back. And if I may judge from my own experience, that sense of strangeness, that dread of the unknown is swiftly passing away. In a very short time, it will be so natural that all of us, both men and women, will wonder what the disturbance was about.

Sometimes in my happy moments, looking forward years ahead, I have a dream of electoral contests, as they will be in the new time. I see not shouting, gesticulating crowds but assemblies of men and women, grave, earnest and determined, filled with the consciousness that the business on which they are engaged is of profound importance to the nation. I hear not names or party cries, but the forecast of measures that the people will require their representatives to carry through. There will be no canvassing in these elections, for the use of personal or class influence over the electors will be sternly repudiated. Those who wish to understand will read the literature prepared for the occasion and attend the halls where the coming Parliamentary business will be discussed.

I see further now all these men and women will continue, throughout the life of the Parliament they have chosen, to watch its proceedings, so that when the next elections come round they will be able to judge by their actions those who come before them.

Given such an electorate; given the House of Commons which they would elect, may it not be possible for the country to tackle abuses, to force forward reforms and to create such administration as would change what now seems a chaos of contending forces into a beautiful social order?

So at least runs our dream. Utopian it may be called. We care not. It is a dream worth living for, dying for, working for.

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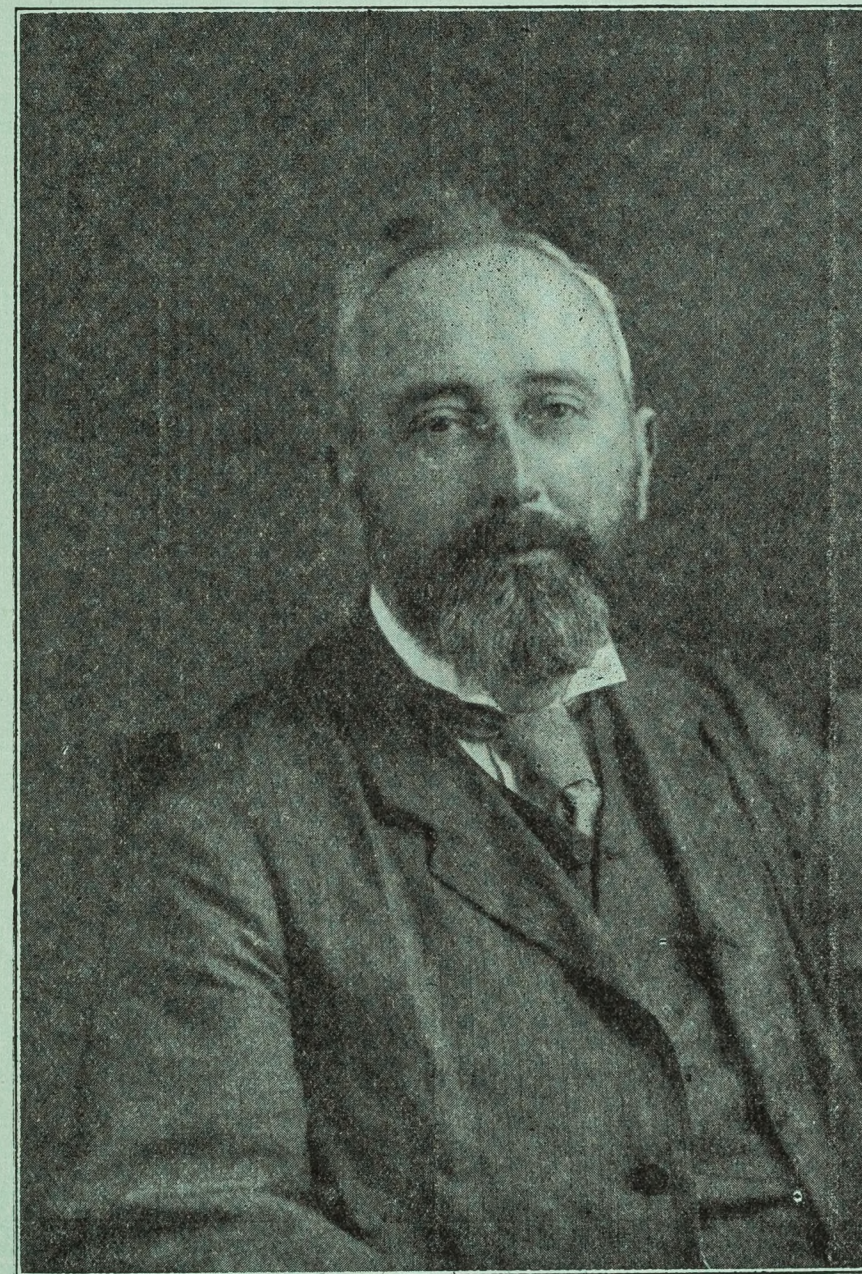
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BY



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## Right of Petition.

### The Defence at Bow Street

By Mr. T. M. HEALY, K.C., M.P.

On Thursday, August 19th, 1909, eight members of the Women's Freedom League (Mrs. Despard, Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson, Miss Irene Tillard, Mrs. Edith Cranstoun, Mrs. Lilian Hicks, Miss Lily Boileau, Miss Janet Bunten and Mrs. Clarendon Hyde), were arrested at different times in Downing Street (where they had gone to present a petition to Mr. Asquith) and charged with "obstructing the police in the execution of their duty."

The case, remanded till Friday, August 27th, came before Mr. Curtis Bennett at Bow Street. Mr. Barker prosecuted for the Commissioner of Police; Mr. T. M. Healy, K.C., M.P. and Mr. Evans (instructed by Messrs. Baker & Baker) appeared for the defence.

Prosecuting for the Crown, Mr. Barker's points were:

- (i.) That while the Commissioner of Police did not deny the right to petition, the defendants were not in Downing Street to present a petition, but to "foist" themselves on Mr. Asquith.
- (ii.) That their "petition" was not in proper form, and in fact was called a "remonstrance" on the printed sheet.
- (iii.) That even assuming they were exercising a constitutional right, they were not exercising this right reasonably.

Police evidence of the arrests was given, and Mr. Healy, after his cross-examination of these witnesses, felt it was unnecessary to call any witnesses for the defence.

#### Mr. Healy then addressed the Court

on behalf of the defendants. He said:— May it please your Worship, I would like at outset to make it perfectly clear that by challenging the action of the Police, so far from blaming their behaviour, I give them highest praise

for the manner in which they have discharged their functions; and I would like to make it clear that none of my clients have anything but compliment to offer to the Police for the way in which they have discharged what I am sure was to them a painful task. Now, sir, I trust, having freed the officers if they were in any way apprehensive that any such suggestion would be made, freed them of any charge of undue procedure so far as they were concerned, I now address myself to what are facts in this case.

Sir, I would at the outset say that the opening of my friend, if he will allow me to call him so, Mr. Barker, has been entirely displaced by the evidence of his witnesses. He felt oppressed by the fact that there is of ancient right in this Kingdom

#### A Right to Petition.

It is not merely a right of petitioning members of Parliament, or a Parliament as a whole, but there is the ancient right of petitioning the Sovereign. And since recent developments of the constitution, I apprehend that none of His Majesty's ministers would wish an embarrassment of the King by throwing upon the subject the duty of seeking the "sacred person" of the Monarch himself rather than resorting to his Ministers for the purpose of presenting a petition.

Accordingly, at the very outset of the case Mr. Barker said, on behalf of the Police—the Police Commissioners—that they did not challenge for one moment the ancient right, both by common law and by statute, to petition for redress of grievance.

Now before I show you what the Police view of that instruction and that construction be, I would like to call your attention to what the right of the subject is. Mr. Barker suggested that we had extracted from Erskine May the word "remonstrance." Nothing of the kind! It is enshrined in the

#### Statute of Charles II.

It existed before Erskine May, and it will exist, I suppose, when he is forgotten. And that Statute is the Statute which would seem to a large extent conversant with the case of members of Parliament. But as it contains the word "remonstrance," though, no doubt, sir, you are familiar with it, I would refer you to it. It is the 5th of the 25th of Charles II. It is "An Act against tumults and disorders upon pretence of preparing or presenting Publick Petitions, or other Addresses to his Majesty or the Parliament."

Now this is an Act in diminution of the common law and in diminution of public right, but recognising its existence; and that is its importance. And I mention it because of the suggestion that I take leave to think absurd, that a petition must be in form; that the person who has no power of reading or writing, the man of no letters in the days of Charles II., that

that man, in order to present the petition, should have gone to a scrivener; hired an attorney; employed counsel, and approached the Sovereign or his Ministers in some sort of form. It is not so. The enactment is "That no person or persons whatever shall, from and after the first of August, one thousand six hundred sixty and one, solicit, labour, or procure the getting of Hands, or other Consent, of any persons above the number of twenty or more, to any Petition, Complaint, *Remonstrance*, Declaration, or other Address to the King, or both or either Houses of Parliament, for alteration of matters established by law in Church or State, unless the matter thereof have been first consented unto and ordered by three or more Justices . . . ."

That was the cutting down of the right. What does the next section say, section 3? "Provided always"—and you must remember, sir, that we were then living in the days of the Stuarts,—"Provided always that this Act or any thing therein contained, shall not be construed to extend to *debar or hinder* any person or persons not exceeding the number of twenty aforesaid to present any *public or private grievance or complaint* to any member or members of Parliament after his election and during the continuance of Parliament, or to the King's Majesty, for any remedy to be thereupon had;" and so on.

There, sir, you find in those days when popular liberty and public right had not received the development which they have since had, there you find in favour of a disfranchised people, for that was the point—Parliament was elected by a handful—there you find that the general body of the disfranchised classes received a right; and what was it? not to put forward a petition in writing or engrossed, but to put forward any remonstrance or any private complaint, both to the King's Majesty and to every Member of Parliament.

Sir, that was the state of the law when the Revolution broke out. And what was the first act of the Commons of England when the Revolution had been carried? Sir, I think anything more remarkable than the recognition of this power of petitioning for rights cannot be conceived. And it must be remembered that what had been contested here, what *is* being contested here, is the right of the policeman to come between the subject and his Sovereign; to come between the subject and the Sovereign's chief officer. I say, sir, until the Bill of Rights be repealed, and until the Statute of Charles II. be repealed, I say there is no such right in any policeman or any police officer.

Now let us see what

#### The Commons of England

thought of this question of petition. The reign of James had intervened. I care not now whether that king had declined these petitions. There is the case of the seven bishops, which

would lead me to suppose James Stuart, late King of England, had declined the reasonable petition of the subject. But if he did, the Commons of England and the Peers of England saw to it that as a part no longer of the vague common law of this land, but as part of its embedded constitution by statute, this right should be asserted and preserved. The 1st of William and Mary states "That it is the right of the subject to petition the King, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal."

Sir, I intend to call no evidence in this case. I intend to rely upon the evidence of the police, and upon that evidence I intend to ask you to discharge these prisoners.

But now let us examine the facts. So strong is this right, so strong has its course been through the long and perilous years in which the liberty of this land was established, that in his very opening sentences the able lawyer who represented the Crown did not dare to deny it. "No!" he said, "We do not deny your right to petition the Sovereign. We do not deny your right to present petitions to Parliament. We do not deny your right to approach the King's Majesty through his officers. All we say is this, that

**You shan't do it!**

that you shall do it not as *you* desire to do it, but as we, we the police, desire that you shall do it." That is not the Act of William and Mary. There is nothing in the Act of Charles, saying you shall petition the Sovereign at such times as the Metropolitan Police Force of London, within the Metropolitan jurisdiction, shall appoint.

I will deal, sir, therefore, with the charge that is brought against these defendants before I examine further the state of the law on this subject. What is the charge? The charge is not that they obstructed the highway. And I confess that if a charge of obstructing the highway had been brought, I should have a different case to meet. The charge that I have to meet is not a charge of obstructing the highway; for you must assume, sir, that there has been no such obstruction as they are not so charged. You must assume that, because the charge has not even been made. Therefore, these are innocent petitioners, not charged with obstructing the highway, and you cannot, I respectfully submit, in examining a charge of obstructing the police, you cannot go into the question of any alleged obstruction of the highway until in fact they have been convicted of such obstruction. You could not now on this charge find them guilty of obstructing the highway. There is a suggestion put, a suggestion of obstructing of the highway. But if I take the case of Mrs. Hyde and Miss Buntin, the thing disappears, because it is proven that there was nobody whatever in the street when Mrs. Hyde and Miss Buntin stepped out of some passage (I do not quite know the names of these sacred

precincts), and came up to present a petition. They were seen coming out, emerging from these passages, these sacred places; and the moment they came they were challenged by the constable, who was good enough to convey to them the message that had been delivered the night before from Mr. Asquith's messenger. They said "We have a petition to present;" and did he say "Show me your petition?" and really, Sir, it would be a charming state of the law if a policeman has the right to say to any petitioner, either approaching Parliament or approaching his Majesty or His Majesty's Ministers. Some policeman dressed in a little brief authority takes upon himself to say "Having read your petition, I respectfully say it is not on parchment; it is not engrossed, and it does not end with a prayer, and I bar your passage to the Sovereign." That was the case, if I remember, put by the Crown; that these petitions were not in form, and failing in form, just as a false note in music offends the ear of the *maestro*, the offended constable lays hands upon the petitioner. Sir, that case has disappeared; but it was made, and the fact that it was made has not escaped my recollection.

Therefore, sir, you are asked to state here that there is

**An obstruction of the Police**

in the discharge of their duty. What is the duty of a policeman in connection with petitions? I should imagine the duty of the officers of the law is to give facilities for the law being carried out. Why, sir, I come into this court as a stranger; I have never been here before. I have not even proved before you that I am a barrister. Am I to understand that at the door of this Court the policeman could obstruct my approach to your Worship's tribunal, and say, "Satisfy me of all the punctilio of your position, and if you do not go away, in the discharge of my duty to keep the approaches clear to this Court, and to vindicate the dignity of the Court, I will put you into the lock-up next door!"

Now remember, sir, I know very well, and I will not fail to grapple with the fact, that we are dealing with a body of women engaged in persistent struggle for their rights, or what they conceive to be their rights. A body of women, violent in conduct and large in number, approached the Long Parliament in 1642, hundreds strong, and their petition was respectfully heard, even in those perilous times. Therefore it cannot be a question of sex. What then is it? Is it the misconduct of these ladies that is leading to turmoil in our streets, and disorder in front of our public offices? or is it the contumacy and disregard of his high functions of the King's Minister? Will you determine that, sir? Will it be part of your function to say that if I, waiving my right of personal approach to the Sovereign (which I think every subject has, within limitations), try and make my obeisance to authority, and approach the Minister delegated by His Majesty to do his

office, it rests with the ordinary policeman in the street to pass judgment upon the question of my constitutional right, and that the policeman should make himself the vehicle of the impatience of the Minister, and dependent upon that Minister for his commands? Because I entirely exonerate the police; I say every step taken by them was taken at the instance of the person to whom the law gives me the right of petition and the right of approach. If that right ought not to exist, Mr. Asquith has a large majority, let him

#### Repeal the Bill of Rights,

and then, sir, these ladies will no longer have any grievance. I therefore ask, what is the duty of the police officers of this country? When I approach that question let me remind you of the state of the law as I conceive it to be dealing with this question.

Before the Trades' Union Acts, there was nothing so far as I apprehend the law, to prevent any person standing in front of a dwelling in this country to beset it. The Act of 1871 is now repealed, but the fact that it had to be enacted shows how the law then stood.

Now let us see, although there is no charge of obstruction here, let us see that even if we had not to present a petition, and even if our case was not *bona fide*, how the law stands as to persons outside a Trades' Union. The repealed Act says (it is the 34th and 35th Vict., ch. 32), and the fact that we have the statute to make these acts illegal is I believe important to remember at the outset,—“Every person who shall do any one or more of the following acts, that is to say, (1) Use violence to any person,” . . . . I skip any needless words . . . . “(2) threaten or intimidate any person in such manner as would justify a Justice of the Peace, on complaint made to him, to bind over the person so threatening or intimidating to keep the peace; (3) molest or obstruct any person in manner defined by this section with a view to coerce such person, (4) being a master to dismiss or to cease to employ any workman, or being a workman to quit any employment or to return work before it is finished,”—and a number of other things—“shall be liable to imprisonment.” Then “A person shall for the purpose of this Act, be deemed to molest or obstruct another person in any of the following cases; that is to say, (1) if he persistently follow such person about from place to place; (2) if he hide any tools, clothes, or other property owned or used by such person, or deprive him of or hinder him in the use thereof,”—and now thirdly, and this is the important part,—“if he

#### Watch or Beset

the house or other place where such person resides or works, or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place, or if with two or more other persons he

follow such person in a disorderly manner in or through any street or road.”

So that it took a statute so recently as 1871 to provide that watching or besetting a house was an obstruction. That Section, that Act altogether is repealed. Then there was a criminal intent; there was a desire to injure; and although, undoubtedly, there was a desire to injure in all these cases, still it took a statute to make them illegal.

Now let us look at the Act of 1875. Now this section, sir, I am going to read to you is repealed by the Act of 1906. It is the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 38 and 39 Vict., ch. 86, and the VIIth Section is repealed. Here is the VIIth Section:—“Every person who, with a view to compel any other person to abstain from doing or to do any act which such other person has a legal right to do, or abstain from doing, wrongfully and without legal authority, (1) uses violence to or intimidates such other person or his wife or children, or injures his property; or, (2) persistently follows such other person about from place to place; or, (3) hides any tools, clothes, or other property owned or used by such other person, or deprives him of or hinders him in the use thereof; or, (4) *watches or besets* the house or other place where such other person resides, or works, or carries on business, or happens to be, or the approach to such house or place;” in other words, following exactly the repealed Statute of 1871. Now that VIIth section is gone; and it might be argued that that VIIth section was only intended for trade purposes; but even supposing it has general application, it is gone. How was that section disposed of? It was disposed of, sir,

#### By Mr. Asquith himself.

His first act, I may say, on coming into office, was to pass on the 21st December, 1906, an Act to provide for the regulation of Trades' Unions and trades disputes, and here is the proviso as it is now. Section VII. of the Conspiracy Act is repealed, from “attend at or near” at the end of the section, and instead it is enacted “It shall be lawful for one or more persons acting on their own behalf or on behalf of a Trades' Union or of an individual employer or firm in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides, or works, or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working.”

What is the consequence of all that class of legislation? That the law of England never prohibited anybody except in furtherance of a trade dispute or trade combination from watching or attending in front of a house or place, and that that prohibition, even as regards Trades' Unions, is repealed.

Because the law of England never contemplated the case of persons being

#### Compelled by a Liberal Government

to watch and beset the Houses of Parliament, or to watch and beset an official residence, or to watch and beset the palace of His Majesty for the purpose of doing a legal act, merely of presenting a petition. So that as I apprehend the state of the law, taking the whole code from 1871 to 1906, its result is this: that the whole of the law as regards watching and besetting houses and making such watching and besetting an obstruction has been repealed, and the law of England remains as it was before the 1871 Act was passed. And remember, that all that which the law struck at then was this: an illegal combination besetting a house for the purpose of coercing, for the purpose of intimidating; and even that prohibition against coercion was repealed by Mr. Asquith; and it is the gentleman who allows your house and mine to be beset by a trades' union in furtherance of a trades' dispute, involving it may be loss of trade and almost certainly intimidation; it is he, who though he will allow men to beset your house, objects to gentle ladies standing in front of his own official residence, which he is paid large sums to occupy, for the purpose of humbly presenting a petition that they may get the vote which every policeman enjoys. Sir, I trust that outside these walls the manufacturers of England, who have made its name famous in arts and in commerce, will well mark the procedure of the author of the Trades' Union Act of 1906, and that whereas combinations of the most powerful kind may regiment and brigade themselves in front of their factories, their workshops, their residences, the one man who objects to a similar right being developed for a lawful purpose is the author of that great Statute of freedom for the working man. And how does he propose, sir, to render himself immune from the bacillus with which he has infected every factory, every workshop, every employer in all broad England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland? When approached by educated women against whose character no reproach can be made—ladies of station; I admit that none of them have ever figured on the dancing stage; I admit that they are all English by birth and none of them French,—he proposes to find security and repose for himself in his own home by ordering the police to arrest them. I now seek to discover the methods by which it is suggested the Act of Charles and the Bill of Rights have been set aside as regards English women. Sir, it is done under the

#### Prevention of Crimes Act.

*Prevention of Crimes?* The crime for which Englishmen spilt their blood, the right of petitioning the Crown, the right of petitioning Parliament, the right of petitioning every individual Member of Parliament, and the right of doing that in an orderly and respectable manner. Because, sir,

it has been decided, as you know, in *Beatty v. Gillbanks*, and that sort of case, the skeleton army and the Salvation Army case, that the riotous act of one section of the community cannot render illegal the legal action of another section; even although on the sands of Eastbourne the collection of the Salvation Army might cause an obstruction, and might provoke what was called by the sinister name of the "Skeleton Army" to divide them and attack them, yet the duty of the police was not to scatter the Salvation Army, but to preserve its rights intact; and its duty was to defeat those who sought to assail those rights.

Now let us see what I will call the

#### Asquith Magna Charta

—the Prevention of Crimes Act. Now the first Act, as you know, sir, the Act of 1871, is 34 and 35 Vict., Ch. 112, "An Act for the more effectual Prevention of Crime." Let us see the class of persons for whom it was intended. I will only read the rubric, sir. "Amendment of the Penal Servitude Acts; Penalty of Holders of Licenses getting their livelihood by dishonest means; Convicts holding licence notify their residence to police; Registering and photographing criminals; Punishment for certain offences; special offences by persons twice convicted of crimes," and it makes such persons subject to police supervision. "Penalty for harbouring thieves." Forgive me, sir, for not reading to you the next rubric: I will not offend the ladies' ears by reading it; and the next section is the section which is amended by the other Act, so as to constitute the alleged crime in this case, and it follows after the section which I cannot read. Now what is it? Section 12: "Where any person is convicted of an assault on any constable when in the execution of his duty, such person shall be guilty of an offence against this Act, and shall, in the discretion of the Court, "be imprisoned," and so on. Now, sir, there can be doubt whatever, I respectfully think, in a case of this sort, that it gives summary jurisdiction in the case of an assault on a constable, and I take it would be this: a man is being arrested, and the culprit, the accused, assaults the constable who is affecting the arrest. Some person assaults the constable. The man is there. He is in uniform, and he is engaged plainly and clearly in the discharge of his duty, which would be some duty of a police nature. And remember, sir, that any assault, whether committed on a policeman or not, is in itself a crime. Now then, the assault being clear, and the Magistrate's jurisdiction attaching in 1871 in the case of assaults, the Act of 1885 was passed. And it gives the same remedy with a diminished penalty, in the case of "resisting or wilfully obstructing" any constable in the execution of his duty. Now, sir, resisting firstly. I look at the charge; there is no suggestion that we resisted the Police. We thank Mr. Asquith for that. He is entitled to all the recognition which

I can afford him for diminishing our offence into this attenuated form. The section, however, is not obstructing the police, but resisting or wilfully obstructing; and that word "wilfully" contains the whole *mens rea*. Why do not they charge us in the summons with an offence within the section? We have been arrested illegally, and we are here under an illegal caption, because this great Home Office, or whatever be the office which has the duty of framing charges against women engaged in presenting petitions to the Sovereign, has not the wit to follow the Statute. And just as they are defying the Bill of Rights and defying the Act of Charles, they do not seem even to have the capacity to frame an ordinary charge correctly according to the Statute, for we are merely accused of "obstructing" and not "wilfully obstructing."

Is that a good charge? The police case is closed. I am going to call no evidence. Sir, when you think that

#### All the talent of the Cabinet

has been decanted into this case, and you can imagine all the Cabinet sitting round a table in order to compass the destruction of the Women's Freedom League, yet the whole of their united wisdom cannot frame a police summons correctly.

Now what is this? What is this law which these ladies are now charged with violating? I will assume, sir, for the purpose of my present argument, that the Bill of Rights, the Act of Charles and the common law right of petition does not exist; and I am now asking you to say that even if I could not take my stand on the sure foothold and foundation of ancient right, that I am not within the mischief of the Prevention of Crimes Amendment Act.

I will now assume that I have no petition; that I am standing on a street gazing at the stars, which I suppose will be the next offence. Have I incurred the penalty of the Statute? Why, sir, the first essence in the case of every criminal is to establish the *mens rea*. You asked me a question a moment ago to which I said I should humbly defer an answer till I was addressing you. You said "Supposing I have dropped a portmanteau by accident on the ground. Is that an obstruction?" That would be on the question of the obstruction of the highway. I quite agree if this was a charge of obstructing the highway, the course and bent of my argument would be somewhat different, but can anything be called an obstruction which, upon my placing my hand upon it, moves away under its humble petticoats? These ladies, the moment they were touched by the hand of the law, gladly accompanied the officer of Police. And you put the case of a physical obstruction to me, and I answer you, sir, the point would be well made if we were dealing with the obstruction of the highway. Of course I will look at the matter in another aspect, which probably may be present in your Worship's mind. You may say to me this, "Yes, but the obstruction of the highway may obstruct the constable."

A thief, two thieves, have snatched a portmanteau. One may drop the portmanteau to enable the other thief to escape; and that would be an obstruction of the constable in the discharge of his duty, in effecting an arrest. I quite agree with you, sir, if I may humbly express that concurrence. But where was the obstruction here? Is there an obstruction to arrest in the case of any of these women? Why, sir, every one of them yielded like

#### Lambs led to the slaughter.

Therefore, what is the obstruction of the police in the discharge of their duty? But above all, where is the *wilful* obstruction of the police, which is the Statute? "Wilful obstruction of the police in the discharge of their duty;" where is it? Let us leave the sacred precincts of Downing Street, and the presence of the Prime Minister. Let us assume that you give an order in your Court, presiding as you do over the fortunes and the peace of millions of His Majesty's subjects, larger perhaps than the whole kingdom of Ireland or Scotland in point of inhabitants. Suppose you gave an order to arrest any person in this Court room for causing a disturbance, and the person submitted to the arrest, would you then find judicially, or as a juror, that the person submitting to the arrest had wilfully obstructed the police in the discharge of their duty? You must press it to that. "Oh," it will be said, "the sacred person of the Prime Minister!" These ladies had the audacity to come with litters of paper to Parliament; actually, sir, a cardboard case has been mentioned. The cardboard case (*producing*)! There is the lethal weapon, and inside of it there is a scrap of paper of most awful potency. A scrap of paper—a "missile" it was called. A missile! Now I will assume that each and all of these ladies were possessed of this lethal weapon. And I will assume with the police that every one of them stood in Downing Street not by the hour, not by the minute, not by the second, but by the week and by the day.

#### Whose fault was it

that they were there? Whose fault is it that the beggar at the gate has to wait for the crumbs from the rich man's table? Do you think these poor women enjoy waiting in the rain? Is it likely that day after day these faithful women stood for hours in hail, rain or sunshine, before the walls of the fortress of the Prime Minister's residence, to cause him any annoyance, or to do more than to vindicate their rights as British citizens? And if they were not heard, if they are delayed there for days and weeks and months, would a British jury say that the fault was in the women who waited, or in the man who would not do his duty and see them? I do not put it any further than was well put by Miss Boileau, "Mr. Asquith," she said, "we have a petition for you; we have waited six weeks to present it."

Why, sir, if that accusation could have been made against Charles I. by Cromwell, or against James II. by his subjects, that the women of London had stood outside the gates of Whitehall, while Charles I. kept them there in rain and snow, in sunshine and in hail, little would history compassionate the fate of that beheaded monarch.

They are still the women of London. They are still the seekers after freedom. They are still the seekers after the franchise, and they are still knocking at the gate of authority, and they will knock until it shall be opened unto them. And who is to blame them for this state of things? Who is the person guilty of the real obstruction in this case? It has been said on Mr. Asquith's behalf—and I am sure that Mr. Barker did not act in this matter for the Prime Minister without his most precise instructions—it is said "Mr. Asquith will not see the ladies." I wonder, sir, what the King of England would have said—because, let this be remembered, and let every subject of this land take it to heart, that the same right that their forefathers had in the days of William and of James and of Charles resides in every humble citizen in England whether he lives in St. Giles' or in St. George's. What is that right? To approach, if need be, with his grievances, the "sacred person" of the Monarch of this realm. But, sir, because the duty of the Monarch, owing to the huge increase in our population, and the huge increase in his other duties, has now been delegated, and justly and properly delegated, to his officers, am I to be told that the humble suitor after justice is in a worse position than he would be before the seraglio of the Grand Turk? Because, as I understand, reading Eastern affairs, the Grand Vizier is always open to take the petitions to the Sultan. Sir, it is not so long ago—and I hope I may mention a public fact connected with the Sovereign—it is not so long ago in my country since his Majesty, accompanied by his gracious Consort, received in his own person in a far western province the petition of the inhabitants in person, and from his own royal tongue ordered the discharge from an Irish prison of the husband of one of these unhappy petitioners. There you have recognised within this last three years by the King of England himself the right of personal approach.

**These women are inconvenient.**

"But these women are inconvenient." Yes, sir, everybody seeking justice is inconvenient. The London crowd was inconvenient to Charles I.; the London crowd was inconvenient to James II., until they rapped at their palace gates with a mailed hand. And, forsooth, is it the breed of men and women that prostrated monarchs in the dust that are to be refused access by the puny ministers of modern sovereigns? Sir, one has only to state the proposition to see its absurdity. Of course there is inconvenience. I gladly grant it. Now, sir, consider the case not from any statement of mine, because

I am going to call no evidence, and I must rely for my facts upon the statements as they emerge from the mouth of the lawyer for the Crown. What is the inconvenience complained of? That the King's minister in his good advisement made up his mind six weeks ago—he made up his mind not to see these ladies. And there was no more to be said. Having the police at his beck he could do that—shut out these women. He could say "I will not see them." And you, sir, are asked to say on the evidence upon which I am now going to rely, the extraordinary evidence given, that the coming of these ladies after the refusal of Mr. Asquith was an obstruction of the police. What was the evidence given? I have been, sir, possibly your indulgence may acknowledge it, in some curious situations and places in my career, but never since I became acquainted with the interstices of the British Constitution have I heard such evidence to support a case as was given by the very courteous Superintendent. He said "The reason I acted was this." How splendidly it would read in Clarendon's History of one of the Stuart Kings! "The reason I acted was this: The night before as I was walking up and down the street I saw a messenger emerge from the official residence, and I heard him say to one of these ladies, '*Mr. Asquith won't see you. He has nothing to add to what he has already said.*'"

Now, sir, from the point of view of your judicial position, you must take it that the evidence was not given for nothing. You must take it that a

**Decisive Crisis of Criminality**

arose the moment Mr. Asquith sent out his footman to make the announcement. Now that in the officer's mind was decisive. He had got the refusal of the Prime Minister; therefore once that refusal was granted, all further standing in the vicinity of Downing Street became illegal. Is that so, sir? The case of "Goldsmid *v.* Chaffers" has been mentioned, and I do not in the least intend to encounter in any way any of the authorities laid down in that case. I quite accept the law; it is upon that basis I am arguing. Sir Julian Goldsmid was a private individual. There is no obligation, I quite grant, in a private member of Parliament to present a petition; but he received it. He *received* the petition, and that is the extraordinary thing about Chaffers and Goldsmid; because the action was brought not for refusing to receive, but for refusing to present. And I venture to think, sir, if you take the humblest member of Parliament that comes from the most forsaken region of these kingdoms, I venture to think there is not one of them that has denied the right of petitioning. But remember this is not merely the question of the petition to Parliament. Mr. Asquith occupies a dual position. He is not merely a member of Parliament. He is the King's great officer, and I can approach him not merely *qua* a member of Parliament; I can approach him as the

**Representative of the Sovereign;**

because I have the dual right in this case. It was said here, and I frankly acknowledge it, "That every right must be exercised reasonably." Well, sir, it would require no authority for that proposition. I quite agree that if the four million citizens of London, gathered *en masse* into Parliament Square, if it were physically possible, or filled the approaches to Buckingham Palace, or even filled the approaches to Downing Street, I quite agree if you could show anything approaching to the nature of riot or tumult, then, sir, the question of obstructing, not the Police in the discharge of their duty, but obstructing the thoroughfares of London, would very well come into view. And upon that let me cite for you the Statute of 1839, the Metropolitan Police Act, section 52: "It shall be lawful for the Commissioners of Police from time to time, and as occasion shall require, to make regulations for the route to be observed by all carts, carriages, horses, and persons, and for preventing obstruction of the streets and thoroughfares within the Metropolitan Police district, in all times of public processions, public rejoicings, or illuminations, and also to give directions to the constables for keeping order and for preventing any obstruction of the thoroughfares in the immediate neighbourhood of Her Majesty's palaces, and the public offices, the High Court of Parliament, the Courts of Law and Equity, the Police Courts, the theatres, and other places of public resort, and in any case when the streets or thoroughfares may be thronged or may be liable to be obstructed."

You are dealing there with the street or the thoroughfare; and that brings me to this Sessional Order of the House of Commons, which says "That the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis do take care that, during the Session of Parliament, the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open, and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall," and so on. How does that effect the situation? Am I to be told this: that a petition is like a writ which should not be served upon a member of Parliament going or coming from Parliament? Why, sir, the very fact that it is a petition to Parliament or a complaint which Parliament may redress, makes the very occasion when the member is proceeding to the House of Commons the fittest occasion on which to present it. But is it an obstruction? Well, sir, I do not know. I am never likely to be an officer of State; but I do think that if a lady approach me with a paper, that I would receive it from her with courtesy; and no further or other question in this case arises. They were there, the Prosecution said,

**To "foist" themselves**

on the Prime Minister. Well, sir, I have never "foisted,"

so I do not know exactly what "foisting" means. But if there is a new use of the word, if this word to "foist" has any meaning of a new kind, I would like to know what it is. But surely these ladies did not want the Prime Minister to take tea with them. They did not want him to examine their bonnets; they did not want him to pass any judgment upon their crinolines, or any matter like that. As I understand, the very highest that it can be put on the evidence of the Inspector is this: one of them said "Mr. Asquith, we have a paper here which we have been waiting six weeks to hand you." And how was the "foisting" done? I will remark this. This is the terrible crime. An attempt was made to present the Prime Minister with a petition; and he replied, "Don't be silly; go away." He did not charge them with obstructing; he did not charge them with molesting; he did not charge them with foisting themselves. Was that obstructing the police? And therefore, sir, what you have here is a thing that is abhorrent to the English law, but which is well-known to French law, the *Droit administratif*. This is the attempt to import the *Droit administratif* into English jurisprudence. In other words

**The great man is inconvenienced.**

Some silly women are "foisting" themselves upon him, M. Clemenceau, or whatever gentleman who has succeeded him, can very soon settle those things in Paris, where they have the *Droit administratif*. They have no Bill of Rights, or Act of Charles II. in Paris; but the French Minister has a *Droit administratif*, and he very soon sends any person who tries to present him with a petition to the cells, because the French law differs from English. As Canning said to Napoleon about trial by jury, "We like it," said he, "because it is sometimes found inconvenient to the Crown." Now then, I admit that Mr. Asquith has been inconvenienced. I fully admit it. Let him change the law. Let him repeal the Bill of Rights. Let him repeal the Act of Charles. Let him say "Nothing in petticoats shall approach within a hundred yards of Downing Street."

Now, sir, that is the whole case. I thank you very sincerely for the great courtesy with which you have listened to me. I say the charge is bad. But even if the charge were accurately made it is not supported. Should you think otherwise, sir, I will ask you on this high constitutional question to state me a case to the King's Bench Division, and then we will see what his Majesty's judges think of the Bills of Rights and of the Act of Charles II., and whether the rights of millions of English subjects are to be swept away at the bidding of a casual and ephemeral Prime Minister.

Who are these women? Are they criminals? Are they the persons within the Criminal Law Amendment Act? I agree they are inconvenient. So were the men who pulled down the Hyde Park railings to get this franchise. It was



very inconvenient. They have not pulled down any railings, but they have armed themselves with a piece of cardboard and a piece of paper, and they knock at the Official door, and they stand in rain and hail and shine in front of the Official residence, and they say "Great men of England, receive our prayer." And the great men of England say "I refer you to the police."

Sir, I have, I trust, analysed the state of this law as best I could. It is not for you, sir, and I am sure you would not for a moment consider such a duty rested upon you—it is not for you to consider the convenience of Ministers. If these ladies laid a finger on the police I would not stand here to defend them; but is it then a crime for an English woman to stand silently, humbly, asking and awaiting justice? Is that an obstruction to the police? If they were there to applaud Mr. Asquith or the Liberal Party, would they be removed? But because they are there simply asking for right, which is the common property of every man in this land, forsooth, humbly to claim the suppliant's right is to obstruct the police in the discharge of their duty. To that, sir, I ask you to enter your emphatic and judicial negative.

The Magistrate deferred his decision for a week, and then on Sept. 3rd said: — I wish to say that I agree that everyone has a right to present a petition or remonstrance to the Crown through the proper officer, the Home Secretary, and also to any member of Parliament, in whose power it is to rectify any abuses or grievances as laid down in Sir Erskine May's book, page 522, but I am not prepared to differ from the ruling that a member of Parliament is not compelled to receive any such petition or remonstrance. It has been decided in the case of *Chaffers v. Goldsmid* that no member in the case of such petition or remonstrance is bound to accept same. I am of opinion that in the presentation of any such petition or remonstrance there must be reasonable conduct on the part of those seeking to present such, and it was not reasonable conduct to picket the official residence of the Prime Minister or the private residence of any other member, which had been done in this case, nor was it reasonable to continue to do so after the communication which the Prime Minister addressed to them and which was presented to them through Superintendent Wells.

And, further, I am of opinion that the defendants and each of them by refusing to obey the lawful request of Superintendent Wells to go away from Downing Street, resisted and obstructed that officer in the proper discharge of his duties.

And, lastly, I am of opinion that Superintendent Wells had in his discretion, as Chief Acting Officer of the Police for the District, authority to order the apprehension of the defendants.

Each of the defendants will be fined 40/- or in default seven days, and if you will state your case in writing and submit it to me I will consider it.

At Mr. Healy's request the magistrate stated a case which will be heard before the High Court in November; meanwhile he allowed the defendants (who gave no undertaking of any kind) bail on their own recognisances.

6

PRICE ONE PENNY.

## WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN FINLAND.

— BY —



**MADAME AINO MALMBERG.**

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# VOTES FOR WOMEN.

## Women's Freedom League.

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### CONSTITUTION.

**NAME.**—The Women's Freedom League.

**OBJECTS.**—To secure for Women the Parliamentary Vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

**METHODS.**—The objects of the League shall be promoted by—

1. Action entirely independent of all political parties.
2. Opposition to whatever Government is in power until such time as the franchise is granted.
3. Participation in Parliamentary Elections; at By-elections in opposition to the Government candidate and independently of all other candidates.
4. Vigorous agitation upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned.
5. The organizing of women all over the country to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom.
6. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods, such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence, and deputations to public representatives and other bodies and their members.

**MEMBERSHIP.**—Women of all shades of political opinion who approve the objects and methods of the League, and who are prepared to act independently of party, are eligible for membership. All members must approve, though they need not actually participate in, militant action.

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## Woman Suffrage in Finland.

BY MADAME AINO MALMBERG.

It is a usual misapprehension abroad that the granting of full political rights to the women of Finland was only one of the typical quickly vanishing phenomena of the revolution of 1905, not a result of previous work and of a deeply felt claim for justice. The opponents of Woman's Suffrage outside Finland have also predicted the most terrible consequences to our poor country from this foolish experiment, and they seem to find but little consolation in their belief in the ultimate failure of such sudden revolutionary whims.

It is true that the events of 1905 were "sudden and revolutionary," just like the outburst of a sweeping thunderstorm, but they were also as natural and unavoidable as thunder and lightning when the air is saturated with electricity, because they were the logical outcome of incessant work and much suffering.

The most important political change for the Finnish nation, brought into effect, but not created by the revolution, was the proclaiming of general adult suffrage on July 20th, 1906. The sex disability was abolished, and the women of Finland have now the same rights as the men to vote and to be elected into the Finnish Diet.

However, before I can give a more detailed account of the present position of the Finnish women, I must say a few words about the work done before the revolution.

The systematic work for the rights of women began in Finland in 1887, when the Finnish Women's Association (Finsk Koinno-förening) was established. In 1892 another association, The Union, was founded, working for the same end, but with a slightly different programme. Men, as well as women, could be members of the Union.

Before such associations were possible, there had naturally been in Finland, as in other countries, many warm-hearted pioneers, who had given their work and their heart's love to the

great idea without ever having the joy of witnessing the victory that was to follow the struggle. They dug the ground and laid the foundation upon which the building of freedom was to stand.

In this short pamphlet, however, I must concentrate, and only speak about the time when the work was systematically carried on.

When trying to characterize the period between 1887 and the revolution of 1905, I find it suitable to divide it into two epochs, the first running from 1887 to 1899 and the second from the said year to 1905.

Up to 1899 the Finnish nation was divided into two political parties—the Fennoians and the Ivecians—who were engaged in a fierce struggle as to which of the two native languages, Finnish and Swedish, should be supreme. The language question had gained such dimensions that there were hardly any departments of social or political life that it had not invaded, with the result that it strangled nearly all other interests. How thoroughly the language hatred had poisoned our blood is clearer than ever now when we have had some years of rest after the terrible times of Russian tyranny. During those unhappy years we really forgot that we had two languages, and there was only one Finnish nation fighting for its life. But no sooner had the political sky begun to clear up than we were trying our best to revive the old hatred again.

Before 1899 the woman's question—and to some extent also the temperance question—were almost the only important expressions of intellectual life that had power enough to unite members of the different political parties to co-operation for the same purpose.

Both the Finnish Women's Association and the Union had put a definite demand for Women's Franchise on their programmes, but during that earliest period the question of franchise did not come into the foreground. The chief reason, I believe, was to be found in the lack of real political interest outside the everlasting language question.

It is true that Women's Franchise had been discussed in the press now and then—for the first time as early as 1873, and in 1887 two governors of Finnish provinces raised the question again, but it had no power to attract attention outside rather a small circle. In 1897 a resolution demanding votes for women was introduced in the Diet, but there was no hope of passing it. The municipal vote in the country districts had been given to women as early as 1863, and in towns in 1872; but it seemed to have no effect whatever upon the question of political votes.

In 1889 the first pamphlet dealing with Woman's Suffrage was published in Finland by a well-known champion of women's rights, but even she did not think it advisable to extend the

demand for citizenship so far as to claim the right for women to be elected into the Diet.

Though the direct work for Women's Suffrage was rather insignificant at that time, much was done indirectly by incessant labour for the improvement of the social position of women which was to create a public opinion in favour of equal rights for both sexes.

The most important part of that work was the improvement of the education of girls. In the middle of the eighties, the first co-educational schools were established, and their effect upon the women's question can hardly be overrated. The opponents of the women's emancipation seemed to understand by instinct what a strong weapon such schools may prove to be in woman's struggle for freedom, and the old arguments against any progress towards liberty, predictions of a ruined family life, a deep degradation of the women, a total destruction of the moral order of the world, &c., were heard in different variations from all the dark corners of Finnish social life, but they could not extinguish the fire of enthusiasm which the champions of co-education had kindled.

The co-educational schools became popular, and even those who formerly opposed them fiercely, now send their children to them.

The fact that boys and girls came to know each other in serious work where they had an opportunity both of competing and of collaborating, abolished in a practical and natural way the feelings of supremacy and of subjection which, in spite of all good theories, had been long prevailing even among quite youthful members of both sexes.

At the University of Helsingfors, where the number of women students has been ever increasing, the same sense of equality and good comradeship soon gained ground, and as a fact to be proud of, I may mention that there has never existed in Finland that hostile feeling between students of different sexes which has been a disgraceful feature in the University life of many countries.

Girls receiving the same amount of knowledge as boys they were quite naturally drawn to many occupations that had hitherto been shut to them, and they could now try their energy and develop their faculties in various branches of work. In Finland it was naturally easier than in the great countries of Europe, the nation still being young and without traditions which make all innovations so difficult among the old leading nations of the world. Besides Finland is a poor country, where everybody has to work. We cannot afford to have too many theories and prejudices.

Thus practical work and teaching went hand in hand all the time, influencing opinion in a subtle, invisible way.

So long as the woman's question was theoretical only, its opponents used to point out all sorts of practical impossibilities. These were now proved to be false, and at the same time the foolish fear of sex-war, which was often spoken of in the beginning of the campaign, was completely removed.

I have been deliberately dwelling upon the woman's question among the educated classes only, because there is not much to say about the movement among the working classes before the year 1899. The two women's associations had done a good deal of educating and awakening work among the peasant women, but the mighty Socialistic movement, which was to give a character of its own to the woman's question, was still in its cradle.

Then there came the terrible turning point in the national life of Finland in 1899, when the solemnly ratified rights of the country were violated by the Russian Government.

Like a bolt from the blue the mortal blow against the Finnish constitution fell upon the whole nation. It had at first an almost stupefying effect upon everybody, because it came so absolutely unexpectedly, and because there seemed no reason to justify it.

After recovering from the first shock the question arose quite naturally, what was to be done? There were two ways to choose—either to yield or to fight for our rights by all possible means. Of course, there were many dubious characters who understood at once that now their golden opportunity had come, and the worst elements of the nation quickly rose to the surface, but I am glad to say that for the great majority of the Finnish people there seemed to be no doubt which path to choose. They did not hesitate, though they knew only too well that it meant for so many of them economic ruin, prison, exile, and sufferings of many kinds.

And so they began those long years of struggle and endless woe, when the fight often seemed quite hopeless and the future grew darker day by day.

But at the same time it was a period of wonderful political awakening and hard training, and for the women of Finland it was the time when they could prove that their work for the country was just as important as that of their brothers.

In times of deadly peril you do not care very much about the profound wisdom that draws a sharp line between the fields of action of both sexes, telling us what sort of work men always ought to do, and what is suitable for women. Women, like men, had to do all they could in the fight against the common enemy, without having any time to think if they were ladylike or not. They worked hand in hand with the men, and very soon it became evident that men or women alone could do nothing, but both together formed a power that was unconquerable.

In the meantime, the political horizon grew darker day by day, and the constant violent attacks upon the most vital rights of Finland clearly showed that the existence of the Finnish people as a nation was threatened. Many there were who gave themselves up to despair, but others seemed to have their strength redoubled. At last the day came when passive endurance would have meant the same as a total abolition of all self-respect and sense of honour in the nation. The righteous wrath of the people had reached its climax and found expression in the deed of the young hero Eugene Schauman, the William Tell of Finland, who slew the oppressor of our country, the Russian Governor (General Bolorikoff) in June, 1904, and at the same time gave his own life as a sacrifice, for the sake of freedom.

After that the horizon began to clear a little. People could breathe again, but at the same time the want of political freedom was felt more and more keenly.

A presentiment of a coming change began to grow in a subtle way and people felt a desire to meet and to discuss the situation.

In the autumn of 1904 persons belonging to different parties sent an appeal to both the women's associations asking them to arrange a meeting for discussing what was to be done in order to gain votes for women. The Union was glad to meet the wishes of the petitioners, and a great meeting was arranged in November, 1904.

This meeting was an interesting event in the history of Woman Suffrage in Finland. It opened the eyes, or perhaps I had rather say the hearts, of many, and made everybody understand that the claim of full citizenship for women was not any longer an interesting problem only, the pros and cons of which were to be discussed and analyzed; it was an inevitable demand. Two different currents of opinion were for the first time placed opposite each other. There were those who called for franchise for women on the same conditions men had had it up to the present time. The Socialists, however, who formed the great majority of the meeting argued that the whole system of franchise must be altered.

It must not be forgotten that the conditions of social and political life in Finland at that time were vastly different from those of any other European country. The abolition of sex disability was not in principle opposed by any political party as a whole, because the immense pressure from outside, and the constant danger in which we lived, had had a radicalizing effect even upon the most conservative elements. Besides, the women had really proved that their work was by no means of less importance for the welfare of Finland than the work of Finnish men. It seems to be always the case that a short time of hard experience can teach a good deal more than centuries of ease,

when people have time to build up most complicated theories on the simplest questions.

Perhaps there was another reason besides that made the men of Finland understand the claims of women better than before. During those times the men themselves had experienced what it meant to have only duties, but no real rights. The Russian Government had clearly shown that the rights and laws of Finland, be they ever so solemnly sworn and ratified, meant as good as nothing; arbitrariness was the only ruling principle. The Finnish men suffered deeply from it, and the hard lesson was not taught in vain.

The progress of the principle was triumphant indeed, but yet the question of woman's rights was only a beautiful theory, the realization of which lay somewhere in the unfathomable future. If anybody had told us that our most daring dreams were to come true in about a year, it would have sounded like sheer madness to most of us.

The Diet, consisting then of four estates, was to assemble the following year, 1905, and petitions on Woman's Franchise were to be handed in, but nobody expected any practical results.

Fate was, however, to alter the whole political aspect of Finland in a short time. On the last day of October, 1905, the so-called Great Strike broke out all over the country almost simultaneously with a strike in Russia.

What was then the Great Strike? It was revolution, bloodless revolution.

All work stopped on the same day all over Finland. Factories, schools, offices, telegraph, railways, private work—everything came to a standstill as if by the order of an invisible power. Without words, without explanations it was clear to everybody that we had now arrived at a turning point; we should either gain everything or lose everything. There was nothing between the two extremes.

People met in great masses, they wanted to interchange ideas, they wanted to see each other. It was impossible to be alone, because now, perhaps for the very first time, it became a living truth to everybody that we were all members of a great family, responsible for each other. There were no strangers, no enemies, no upper class, no lower class any more. We were brothers and sisters. Even the difference of age seemed to have disappeared. Children were seized by the same spirit as their parents. In Helsingfors, for instance, where a keenly hostile feeling had always prevailed between Russian and Finnish school children, the pupils of both nationalities were now seen walking together hand in hand, in long processions through the streets singing the Marseillaise, each in his own language, but each with the same all absorbing enthusiasm.

As one man the whole nation had risen claiming full human rights for each of its members.

Often I have heard the questions: Who led it? Who arranged it all? Nobody; it was the spirit of the people who led, who arranged, who gave the calm courage to meet death if needed.

Great meetings were held every day at Helsingfors, and representatives were sent to St. Petersburg to express the wishes of the Finnish nation to the Grand Duke of Finland. The principal claims were *restoring of law and general adult suffrage for men and women.*

Everything was granted in St. Petersburg, and an Imperial Proposition to that effect was laid before the assembled old Diet, which was ready to meet the wishes of the nation most loyally and unanimously.

Thus every Finnish man and woman twenty-four years of age received the right to elect and to be elected to the Diet, which consists of one chamber with 200 members. There are only the following exceptions who are not allowed to take part in the elections:—

1. Persons on active military service.
2. Those under guardianship.
3. Those who during the last three years have not been registered in Finland.
4. Those having, from other reasons than poverty, not paid the taxes for the last two years.
5. Those receiving personal support from the Parochial Relief Board, where this support is not merely an occasional one.
6. Those who have left their property for the benefit of their creditors until the respective estates have been sworn to.
7. Those who have been sentenced for vagrancy until the end of the third year after their release.
8. Those who in consequence of a court of law's sentence must be considered as having lost their bona fides, or have been forbidden employment in the Civil Service or to plead at the Bar.
9. Those who have been convicted of having at election for the Diet, bought or sold a vote or made endeavours in this respect, or by force or threats infringed electoral liberty; this restriction to be in force until the end of the sixth year after the court of law's sentence in the matter.

But before the law had been finally passed there was a time of about nine months (till the end of July, 1906), during which reaction already began to make its voice heard. Concerning the

citizenship of woman, it must, however, be admitted that the reaction was very weak. Here and there somebody tried to remind us of the trite phrases that women were not yet "ready to receive those rights" they ought to be "educated for their new responsibilities," &c. Some kind souls even told us that it was our duty to give up all claims of Suffrage because the welfare of our native country was in danger. Of what sort this mystical danger was we were never told.

Those voices were silenced so effectually that they lost for ever all desire to utter their opinions on that question.

In this connexion I cannot help mentioning with some pride that the very oldest arguments against the rights of women, those which were common in Finland some twenty years ago, and which I suppose do not sound quite unfamiliar even in Great Britain, were never uttered then. I mean the terrible prophecies that women would lose their womanly charm, "des Ewigweibliche" would disappear for ever, and women would become unsexed—and on the other hand the indisputable proof of woman's disability to use their votes, that they cannot become soldiers! The hard years under the Russian scourge had taught even the most stupid some truths which made him hesitate a little before using the old platitudes.

The first elections to the new Diet took place in the middle of March, 1907. The interest shown was unusually keen, and great masses of men and women were seen at the polls from early in the morning till late at night.

Nineteen women, belonging to different parties were elected.

The first Diet was dissolved in the spring, 1908, and new elections took place in July that same year. There were many who had predicted that the number of women would decrease now, on account of the great reaction in the political life, but the prophets were wrong. Instead of nineteen, twenty-five women were now sent to the Diet.

It was curious to see how those who had predicted that in consequence of Woman's Suffrage a certain political party would gain a majority, were absolutely mistaken. The Liberals, who had been afraid that women would strengthen the Conservative element were just as wrong as the Conservatives, who thought that Socialism would become dangerously strong because of Woman's Suffrage. It has caused no change whatever in the relative strength of each party, because the women voters, as well as the women members of the Diet, are divided among the different parties in same proportions as men.

But there are departments of social life where the consequences of Woman's Suffrage have already been felt, and where they certainly will be most important. All questions relating to the family, to the position of women and children, to general morals, &c., have aroused a keen interest among the women

without regard to parties. In the Diet most petitions handed in by women dealt with the above-named matters; for instance, women's right to Government appointments, the rights of illegitimate children, the raising of the age of consent and so on.

In the Diet the woman members have, like the men, been elected on to many committees, and proved to be good and conscientious workers. Their position—not only in the eyes of law, but in practice—is the same as that of their men colleagues, and Finland has never had to regret that Finnish women have gained full citizenship.

As political rights were finally given to the women through a sudden revolution, there are now many curious anomalies in the Finnish legislation. Thus, for instance, a woman who is eligible to the Diet cannot be a member of a town council, not to mention many other examples of the same character.

But these are all facts of less importance now that we have the machinery in our hands, and it only depends upon ourselves to alter what we consider wrong and absurd.

In general it must be admitted that the results of Woman Suffrage in Finland have been only good and beneficial, and there is no political party in Finland that would wish to diminish the rights once gained by the Finnish women.

Heavy clouds are again gathering on the political sky of our country. Day by day the reaction in Russia is growing stronger, and the thousands of gallows which the Russian Government has erected in that unhappy country do not seem to satisfy the bloodthirsty monster any longer. Its eyes are turned once more to Finland—and we understand what it means. Finland has had a rest of more than three years, and the hard times will begin again, perhaps more perilous than ever. But we shall meet them more calmly and much better prepared than in 1899, because the number of Finnish citizens is more than doubled now. Women are no longer in the position of children, but have the rights, the duties, and the responsibilities of full citizenship.

That will give strength in the coming struggle.

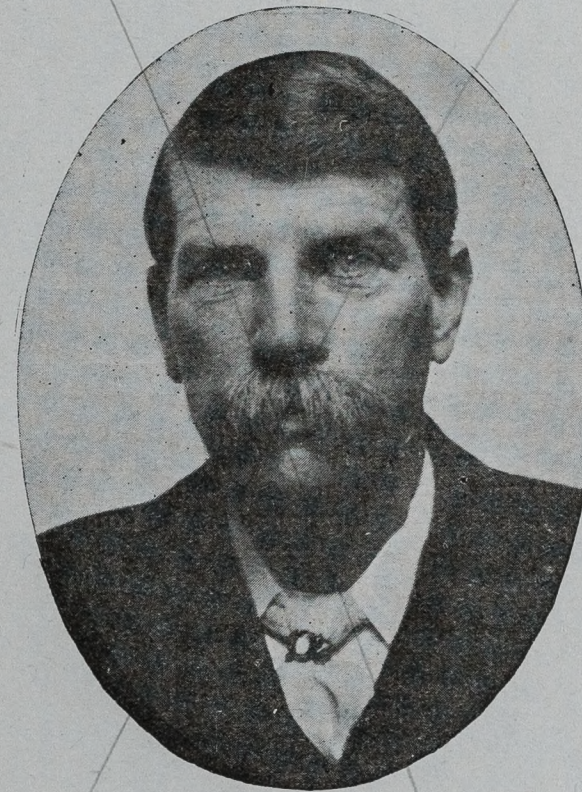
PRICE ONE PENNY.

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Wrongly  
bound in?

# WORKING WOMEN AND THE VOTE

FROM A MAN'S POINT OF VIEW.



BY

**JOHN CAMERON GRANT.**

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## Women's Vote and Men

By Henry W. Nevinson

No one could wonder if the Suffragists now said little about the object of their contention. When a contest is hot and the danger mortal, it is not easy to meditate on the far-off land for which you are fighting. As old-fashioned Americans would say, you can't climb Pisgah with a Hotchkiss. Amid the dust and tumult of the conflict, one has to assume the promised land, or even to forget it. For the Suffragists the struggle has now become so intense, its phases change so fast from day to day, and such elements of abhorrence and indignation have been added, that the ultimate hope and result of it all cannot be much spoken of. In the midst of tactics and manœuvres, in defence and attack, in law courts and police courts, in prison cells, during the pain of hunger strikes, and under the abomination of stomach-tubes forced against their will down their throats or nostrils, the women who are fighting for political rights in this country have hardly time to remember the full significance of their aim. They are obliged to take all that for granted, and to argue about it now seems a little irrelevant, a little uninteresting. The Vote to them has become a symbol, a summary of faith—something for which it would be glorious to die, something assured and indisputable that needs no demonstration. It is to them what the Cross was to the Christians.

In speaking of Suffragists, I am here thinking only of the "Militants." As is well known, there are many other excellent, long-established and recent Suffragist bodies, which spend a great deal of energy in dissociating themselves from the "militant" societies. But for the moment the "Militants" are the only Suffragists who count, because they have realised the old saying in Mill's "Subjection of Women," that "the concessions of the privileged to the unprivileged are seldom brought about by any better method than the power of the unprivileged to extort them." Or again (if one may quote a still earlier advocate of their cause), they remember Mary Wollstonecraft's words, that "Prudence is ever the resort of weakness, and they rarely go as far as they may in any undertaking who are determined not to go beyond it on any



account." And so, if victory is won, it will be the "Militants" who win it, not because they do this or that, but because they have no reservations. I do not mean that it will be theirs to receive the enemy's surrender and enjoy the fruits of victory. Quite the contrary. When the moment comes, the other Suffragists will smilingly enter the field over the wreckage of battle and assure us they always knew reasonable methods would prevail.

From women Suffragists engaged in such a conflict for political rights as now claims some attention even from the Liberal Government and its gaolers, we ought not to demand repeated statements of the advantages they expect for women from the franchise. They will tell us if we ask them, but all has now been said, and the pressure of immediate events is too acute for abstract arguments on what Mr. Asquith, speaking of his deceptive "pledge" to Suffragists, has called "a remote and speculative future." We men, however, who cannot be so deeply and personally involved in the struggle, and who, by reason of our sex, necessarily escape the worst ignominy of the mob and the most shameful outrage of Government torture—we have still the opportunity for calmer and more extended views.

Assuming, as we may, that political rights will be given at all events to the tax-payers among women within the next few years, we are bound to consider how the change will affect ourselves as well as women. Most men in opposing women's suffrage dwell entirely on the harm it will do to women—the loss of womanliness and feminine influence, the overthrow of chivalry, and the reduction of "the strength that lies in woman's weakness." But these tender and sentimental arguments are due only to the natural unselfishness of the opponent's nature, just as the fear that women will not vote enough "Dreadnoughts" and will somehow shock our Indian Empire is due to the householder's habit of thinking in Continents. Being plain, practical people, we others are bound to consider ourselves as well as the women and the dangers to which they and the Seven Seas will be exposed. We must not allow any exaggerated or chivalrous consideration for womanhood to blind us to the question of our own interests, nor must we lose our sense of proportion in pity for dear, shrinking and womanly qualities exposed to the storms of freedom. When we hear the male Anti-Suffragist talk like this, we naturally feel very brutal and inferior; we also feel much inclined to be sick; but let us restrain our feelings and look the probable future in the face, for it concerns ourselves.

In outward politics—in elections and legislation, probably we shall not be conscious of so much change from the women's vote as is either hoped or feared. The best experience we have to judge from is the case of Australia and New Zealand, where the people are of our own stock, living under similar laws, and confronted with much the same kind of problems, except that theirs are on a smaller scale. Mr. Pember Reeves has described the absolute calm with which the women's franchise was there received. A

chapter upon the subject in his "State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand" shows that nearly all women use the vote, but there is no fuss or disorder, and very little effect on the balance of parties or the tone of public life. Priestcraft has not been strengthened, as some prophets feared; the functions of the State have not been unduly extended; and nothing has been done to impede progress. On all general subjects there has been hardly any distinction between the women's vote and the men's. In fact, when Mr. Pember Reeves' book was published (1902) the only legislative changes that could be definitely traced to the women's franchise were some restrictions on drink and the raising of "the age of consent" by three years.

Both are significant, for a husband's drunkenness and the seduction of girls specially concern women. It seems likely that in this country, when women get the vote, we men may have stricter limitations placed on our drinking and debauchery. The abuses surviving from the Middle Ages are also probably more numerous here than in the Antipodes, while the political sense of our women will be all the keener after their present struggle for the vote. The women may insist upon legislation giving a wife the right to draw a share of her husband's wages, as in Germany, and introducing new provisions in the divorce laws, so as not to leave them an indecent farce for the rich and a useless mockery for the poor. I can even imagine them securing a law under which a mother might for the first time be declared at all events part-parent of her own legitimate child.

The effect of legislation of that kind would be to make it a little more difficult for us men to break all the vows and oaths we take in marriage; such as that promise "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," which I suppose is the commonest lie in the kingdom. As we have promised all our worldly goods, the law under women's franchise might perhaps induce us to give five shillings in the pound. It is possible also that laws in which women have a voice will make it more difficult for us to live by sweating women's work, more difficult to escape the allowance to a mother for our bastards, and more difficult to keep a wife with us in the workhouse against her will.

But, after all, laws are only made for evil-doers, or exceptional cases, and comparatively few of us haunt the workhouse, or have bastards, or debauch girls, or starve our wives, or take their children from them. If legislation were all that women's franchise would effect, it would be well worth fighting for certainly, and many of the ancient abuses to which women are subject for want of legal status would be removed, but I doubt if it would have aroused the present enthusiasm, profound as religion, and undeterred by martyrdom. My own belief is that, on the purely political side, the chief result of women's franchise as far as men are concerned will be a general elevation and increase of political interest. That result has been noticed already in Australasia, and during the recent by-elections in this country many electors have for the first

time realised that there must be some value in a vote which women are ready to die for. My friend, Mr. Prevost Battersby, writing in the *Morning Post*, regrets this tendency. He thinks the interest in politics is already excessive, and perhaps he feels an artist's horror of the subject. Like one of the old Greek poets, Mr. Battersby is "a follower of war and of the Muses." So am I, and yet I do not regret the stir, the questioning and the zeal by which the presence of the woman's vote will transform the stagnation of much in our political life. As for the languid indifferentist who sniffs at public interests while cloistered in the aloofness of his artistic treasury, certainly Mr. Battersby would never deplore his extinction. For Mr. Battersby knows as well as I know that only in countries where national feeling is high and the public conscience intensely sensitive can either wars or Muses be worth the following.

But I will agree with him that the political interest, unless we extend the term past recognition, is not the main thing in life. All the great teachers have insisted that the main thing is the condition of the soul, and as we pass from politics into that region we may just notice one great change which will be equally wholesome both for the politics and the souls of us men. I mean the disappearance of feminine influence from the back stairs. Among the Anti-Suffragists there are two or three clever women who say they have enough political influence already. So they have, and a most poisonous influence it is; I do not mean necessarily in its results, but in its methods. They call it indirect, by which they mean what other people call back stairs, and we all know the social intrigue and assorted flattery through which it is exercised. When woman's influence openly enters the front door of politics with the vote, we men may gradually see ourselves deprived of those charming entertainments at which the hostess almost imperceptibly cajoles the judgment of hesitating editors or politicians. We may see ourselves deprived of many such flattering attentions, and we can only comfort our regret with the knowledge that the dose of poison in politics and in our own souls is being proportionally reduced.

Coming a point nearer to the centre of things, we may expect that women's franchise will sooner or later effect some change in our own everyday manner to women. In all sorts of subtle ways the inferiority of women is now impressed on us from babyhood. The very fact that we are brought up by mothers and nursemaids has something to do with it; for, if only by long stress of habit, mothers and nursemaids are inclined to make most of the male, and it is a very uncommon nursery in which the son is not crowned king above his sisters. The position has the further sanction of what was once considered divine revelation. Writing, I think, with entire seriousness, Sir Thomas Browne says:

The whole World was made for man, but the twelfth part of man for woman. Man is the whole world and the breath of God: woman the rib and crooked piece of man.

No one now takes the story of Eden thus literally, but the

unconscious impression of it has remained fixed in the habits and thoughts of our people, whose education was long almost limited to the Old Testament. Milton's line upon the first man and woman—"He for God only, she for God in him"—has for many women obscured all the beauty and power and freedom of the poet's works. And the idea at the root of it still survives, as we see by the storm whenever a woman dares to assert the separate existence of her soul by adopting some form of religion different from her husband's, or by consulting any other man upon the subject. In denouncing the Suffragettes, a well-known minister in London lately reached his climax of abuse with the word "Bipeds!" It was a relic of the Mosaic story of Creation still pervading religious thought.

But it is said that the evil effect of this doctrine of women's inferiority, decreed by heaven and inculcated by nursemaids, has long been mitigated by the usages of chivalry, and if women are granted political equality, the blessings they receive from chivalry will be lost. I recognise the beauty of the chivalrous ideal as much as anybody. The conception of the courtly knight killing dragons without fear, and honouring women without reproach, is always attractive, and it makes a far better training for Sunday-schools than the older doctrine of woman as a spare rib. But when people begin to talk about the loss of chivalry owing to the vote, I have the same sense of sickness as when they talk about the loss of womanliness and about woman's weakness being her strength. I much prefer to remember the definition given by a young curate in Whitechapel when he was taking a party of working people round the picture-gallery. Coming to a picture representing a knight heavily clad in armour releasing a beautiful woman bound to a tree and not at all heavily clad in anything, he became conscious, perhaps, of the shock to the habitual decency of the poor, for he hurriedly exclaimed: "That, my friends, represents the glorious days of chivalry, when knights rode about the country rescuing fair damsels from other people's castles, and carrying them off to their own!"

Though rapidly conceived, it is the best definition of chivalry I know. I remember it with satisfaction whenever I see the men in the Tube spring up to offer their seats to pretty and well-dressed women, but remain profoundly occupied with the politics of their paper while a worn-out and draggled creature with a baby and a roll of butter sways from the straps against their knees. I see no reason why this chivalry should ever become extinct, vote or no vote. For there will always be plenty of well-bred men who can rise to that pitch of heroism and politeness, provided the vote does not have the effect of making all women hideous, which is against likelihood and the experience of our Colonies.

Chivalry would be safe even though Mr. Asquith, in a fit of repentance, proposed plural votes for women. What serious people mean by chivalry is, I suppose, the special courtesy and consideration due to all women as such, because they are in some

respects physically weaker, in some respects more sensitive, and surrounded with the halo of danger and pain from actual or possible motherhood. We honour them for that, just as we like an old soldier for his medals and a young one for his uniform. But the idea that true chivalry will decline seems to spring from the notion that a vote will make women, not only equal to men, but the same. You might as well say that a poplar is the same as a church because it is equally high. All the old-fashioned attempts to prove that women are the same as men, and should have the vote for that reason, were beside the mark. It is just because they are different that the votes of men cannot represent them.

Chivalry has become a mawkish word, but the honourable idea still lingering in it will remain; and so will good manners, and the natural attraction between men and women. It is a fine old saying that "the King's Government must be carried on." But Nature has a much more important thing to carry on than the King's Government, and we may be quite sure she will go through with it, not suffering the country to be depopulated because women obtain the right of walking to a polling-station once in five years. For us men, I think the standard of manners towards women will even be raised, and our efforts to win approval will become more strenuous. Suffragists who carry sandwich-boards and sell their paper in the streets tell me that already the manners of the working people towards them show a visible and audible improvement. The poor are always more sensitive and quicker to politeness than shop-assistants, Liberal stewards, and others, of the middle-classes, because they are nearer to suffering and less trammelled by snobbery; but the improvement due to women's claim for equal rights will gradually spread upward. The complacent sense of natural and legalised superiority, so bad for us all, whether we are dukes or only men, will be shaken when the law and constitution refuse to recognise it. This alone will make us men more agreeable, besides increasing our chance of heaven, and in every class throughout the country a finer respect will be paid to every woman when she is no longer debarred from equal citizenship. For respect generally varies directly with power.

The loss of our assumed superiority would, as I said, make us more agreeable. It would also, one hopes, save our character from the invalid atmosphere of all that nursing, coddling, soothing, tending and comforting, which we have regarded as the special function of women so long that their life is often a perpetually occupied hospital or madhouse. Dr. Johnson said a man should never put himself out to nurse, but that is exactly what almost all the male sex does. We live in a sanatorium with female attendants. We have whined, "A ministering angel thou!" till we have secured for ourselves a continuous supply of amateur nurses, much as we have made women moral by killing them physically or socially if they were not, and then maundering over the charm of their purity. We shall have to give up some of our notions upon woman's self-sacrifice, self-abnegation and self-

devotion, in so far as they mean sacrifice, abnegation and devotion for the benefit of our own precious selves. But consider how much we shall gain by deliverance from that languid and hospital air in which we rot at ease! Everything, like the vote, which breaks down our comfortable doctrines of women's subservience and dependence on our own well-being, tends to deliver us, as though into the open air of day. Let us deliver ourselves at all costs.

How one sympathises with the man in James Stephens' poem of "Nora Criona"!

"I've looked him round, and looked him through,  
Know everything that he will do  
In such a case, and such a case:  
And when a frown comes on his face  
I docket it, and when a smile,  
I trace its sources in a while.

"He cannot do a thing but I  
Peep and find the reason why.  
For I love him, and seek  
Every evening in the week  
To peep behind his frowning eye  
With little query, little pry,  
And make him, if a woman can,  
Happier than any man."

. . . Yesterday he gripped her tight,  
And cut her throat—and serve her right.

Besides gaining a more agreeable temper than is there described, and freeing ourselves from the fractiousness of invalids and spoilt children, as we lose our legalised assumption of superiority, we men will also receive an added and peculiar zest in winning a woman's affection and trying to keep it. The difficulty must in most cases increase, but that alone will heighten the joy of triumph. As equal opportunities open to women (and the vote is a symbol of equal opportunities), fewer of them will be willing to marry "any one." The thing will be less of a "trade," to use Miss Cicely Hamilton's word, and in the end it will be so much the better for "any one"—who is not very nicely treated now, as I think she has remarked. If women reach such a position that they will marry only the men they want, we shall have to put ourselves out to win them. Sex is powerful but insufficient, and there is nothing more amusing than to watch the average sensual man overwhelmed at finding his average sensual charm thrown away upon a woman who demands ever so much more than that. We shall have to develop other powers of pleasing, and for many of us that will imply a great effort—an effort which must be maintained even after marriage when the woman enjoys equal opportunities of slamming the front door if she can endure us no longer. But difficult as we may find the struggle, it will surely be very improving for the condition of our souls, which we have agreed is the main thing in life. Nor, indeed, as I suggested before, could we seek a more

splendid triumph than to win and hold the affection of one whose demand for equality almost amounted to "antagonism."

One of the Suffragists has told us that a working woman, speaking of her husband in a London back street, said the other day: "He's a saver, and he don't knock me about much, but somehow he never thinks as a woman counts." It is a fair summary of behaviour among the better kind of men. They work and practise thrift; they do not knock women about much, and perhaps they do not even join in the foul laughter of *Punch* and Members of Parliament over the anguish inflicted on women by the Government's "forcible feeding." But, blinded by long habit, they somehow never think that a woman counts. The woman's vote will help to remind them. For the vote is not only another assurance that the day has come when, in Napoleon's phrase, the career is open to the talent; it is above all things a symbol of personality. When women obtain it, we shall be obliged to recognise, as they are beginning to recognise now, that their happiness, like our own, lies, if anywhere, in the realisation of self, and not in self-suppression, self-abnegation, or any of the other dismal virtues we have imposed on them for our own comfort. The assertion of self, the fulfilment of function, is the final object of life. It may not bring happiness, but without it happiness is impossible, and for women, as for men, the methods of exercising it are infinitely varied. A Winchester master, whom we will call the Worm that Turned, once wrote in his report: "This boy has no special aptitude, power, or qualification; will make an excellent parent." We see the fine satire of it when applied to a future father, but it is very much the view we hold of most women, though it does not in the least follow that a particular woman's true function is motherhood, any more than fatherhood may be a man's.

Self-realisation in place of self-suppression—that has been the moving principle of the last two or three generations both for men and especially for women. It is no new principle, being at least as old as Aristotle, but it has been kept in the background by rulers and preachers. I do not deny that its revival will effect great changes in our lives, but I am convinced that the changes will be for the health of our souls, as nearly all change is. What increase of happiness women themselves gain from the growing rights of personality falls outside my present subject. But how great that increase will be may to some extent be seen from the extraordinary happiness of the women who are now engaged in fighting for the Vote, which, as I said, is their symbol of personality. They are transformed; they are raised above themselves; in the midst of shame, mockery, violence and Government torture they remain tranquil and full of joy. There is a well-known saying of Nietzsche that a good war justifies any cause. The Suffragettes are enjoying all the advantages of a good war now, but they have the further advantage of a far-reaching and profoundly significant cause which will need no justification when it is won.

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## The Economics of Woman Suffrage; Why Working Women Need the Vote.

The Economics of Woman Suffrage! The whole movement is practically bound up in a word—Economics! They are what make many women, and, I am proud to say, not a few men work and toil and struggle, nay, even feel ready, if need be, to fight for Woman Suffrage.

Modern conditions of life postulate, as a means of living, the possession of capital or wages. The vast majority of us are interested in wages of some sort or another; it is with the majority that I have to deal.

It is the question of daily living that affects women. It is the question of gaining daily bread for themselves, and often, alas, for little ones dependent upon them, that gives such importance, such vital importance to this struggle; a struggle that we know will never end except in the victory of woman and the achievement of her right to earn her living as best she may, unhandicapped and unhindered by the survival of any of the cruel and unjust restraints imposed upon her in her daily work, simply because she is a woman.

The golden rule of industrialism is, "Equal wages for equal work!" Why for doing the same work should woman, as a rule, be paid from one-third to three-quarters, generally the lesser amount, of the wages paid to men? Men, why do you blindly permit this state of things to continue, which has in it the seeds of deadly danger to your own economic independence? How many a well-paid man has been ousted by a shockingly under-paid woman, only those know who have been brought into practical touch with this subject!

Here we have arrived at the question, that to-day is always with us; why do working women need the vote? In the next few pages I propose to develop some of the "whys": some of the reasons as to why they specially need the vote; reasons, most of them, that do not touch their more fortunately placed sisters.

### Not a Party Question.

It is as a Conservative that I write these words—as a member of that party that gave the working-man a vote and placed the Factory Acts upon the Statute Book; a party that has initiated at least two-thirds of the social legislation of this country, and whose three successive Premiers have advocated the cause of woman when no leading voice from the other side had ever made itself heard on

their behalf. But indeed, indeed this is something greater than any party question; the appeal is to Englishmen of all parties and classes, in the name of justice, in the name of humanity, in the name even of common sense and self-interest, to give woman the Parliamentary vote whereby she may help herself. Except from self-help, there is nothing for her—no sunrise wherefrom she may seek and attain salvation; no new economic day that can possibly dawn for her except through the possession of the vote and its exercise. Her Mecca is the ballot box; all else but sand and desert and deceiving mirage.

But to return to the more immediate subject of this discussion: Why do Working Women need the Vote?

#### **Powerlessness of Women's Unions.**

My first reason is the powerlessness of their unions, however effectively organised and controlled, if the women that compose them do not themselves possess the parliamentary vote.

In the Textile Workers' Unions there were 96,000 members, probably to-day there are more. Practically the whole of these 96,000 women, many of them skilled, cultivated and worshipful as women, and as good law-abiding citizens, for all the direct influence they can bring to bear upon their parliamentary representatives, are not worth the most shameless example of a male voter that ever disgraced his sex—the keeper, for instance, of a house of ill fame or the trafficker in the dishonour of his sisters.

Whatever be the glowing words used, voteless women and their wishes are practically treated with contempt.

I may instance, as proof of this, what occurred a short time ago, when the women at a labour congress wanted some change, some question of their own considered. They were told in effect what I have just said of them, though the language used was not so direct and homely, and as a result the women's unions, heart-sick and hopeless, have agreed that, without the parliamentary vote, for all the real effect they produce, they might as well not exist. Let us now consider what this state of things means—what it means, not only to the women themselves, but also to the whole country.

Man's gregarious and common instinct for self-protection has given rise to Trade Unions. I am not discussing here the advantages or disadvantages to the country of the methods and means by which some of these Trade Unions are governed; I allude merely to the fact of their existence; and it must not be forgotten that through their existence large bodies of men have been in the past protected from cut-throat competition, and have had their general position greatly improved. The previous legalising of Trade Unions and the lowering of the Male Franchise by Lord Beaconsfield's Act of 1867, often called the Second Reform Bill, put a lever into the

hands of the working classes which they were not slow in using to their advantage. For the Trade Unions to have a legal status and to have the vote was to have great potential political power, and the possession of political power, if properly organised and combined, as its organisation and combination was effected by the Trade Unions, was equivalent to getting almost anything they chose to demand from the successive governments of this country. The result was that for a time the male workers were economically protected, and imagined that they would be permanently protected; but they counted without their chickens, or rather, I should say, their women-folk.

In a well-to-do and prosperous community such as England has been during the past two reigns, the birth-rate, at least that of the working classes, keeps up steadily, and the percentage of workers becomes greater than the increased percentage of work that can be provided for them. This is especially the case if any artificial restriction is placed upon the free exchange of labour. Here we had a curious state of things, in that the one half of the labour community was endowed with political power to protect its labour and used that political power, quite ignoring its sister half, which every year was forced more and more into the labour market; not upon terms of equality (which would have sustained the whole market at a constant if slightly lower wage), but first as a subordinate or slave, and later as a rival, and a rival, moreover, untrammelled by any scruple or responsibility of combination.

#### **Effects of Women's Cheap Labour.**

Following this state of things we had great economic and mechanical improvements coming into being, with the result of making the masters of industry ever less and less dependent upon the skilled unit or industrial worker, and capable of carrying out most industrial processes through the means of what was and is practically raw and unskilled labour.

I am not here speaking from any theoretical point of view, but from the point of view of an engineer and employer, who, with my partner, am largely occupied, as indeed are all others placed in a similar position to myself, with the question of the cheapening of production. As in the vast majority of industrial processes the most expensive item is labour, it is, of course, the first item upon which are concentrated efforts for its reduction. There is practically only one way to reduce this item, and that is by mechanical improvements and the introduction of automatic machinery. Owing to this economic factor, woman's enfranchisement has to my mind been rendered a certain necessity, and is daily becoming more and more urgent.

Men got their vote, got their political power, organised their Trade Unions, and said to the employers of labour: "Now we want

such and such a rate of wages or you can close your factories." For years the masters put up with this state of things, now in many industries the answer is coming back: "You have got your vote, you have got your Trade Unions, but you forgot the women! You thought you could do without them; well, you have not given them the vote, you have compelled them to go out and sell their labour at the best price they can get, and we have this vast fund of unorganised labour to draw upon. The advancement of modern science has enabled us to dispense largely with skilled labour; with skilled labour we will dispense and put unskilled women in your places!"

To take only a single instance in proof of the foregoing statement, I may mention the case of one factory where 75 per cent. of the men have been discharged and women taken on in their stead. There are others where hardly a man is now employed, where many were once in full work. Automatic machinery that merely requires feeding and such attention as any boy or girl can give it, in many instances settles the question of Trade Unions and strikes most effectively.

There is, moreover, another thing forgotten, and that is that women with proper training can easily be made just as skilful, if not more skilful than the skilled workmen themselves; and we are building up a huge voteless army of industrial workers to perpetuate and make more cruel the injustice that is always the reward of those who have no political power or direct political influence in the making and passing of the laws under which they labour.

Now there is nothing that working women want less than to displace their brothers: nobody is so keenly alive to what is meant by the wolf coming in at the door than those who are engaged for the most part in the life-long struggle of keeping that animal beyond the gate. There is nothing that attracts more sympathy and gains often more kindness and practical endeavour to help stave off the evil hour than the knowledge among work people that some brother workman's house is to be broken up. The poor feel more for each other than the rich in these matters, and I am firmly of opinion that why a great many thinking, working women want the vote is not only to raise their own wages, but to keep work from being taken away from their fathers, brothers, and friends. For they feel, and rightly, that the displacement of one man at 40s. per week is by no means compensated by his replacement by four women at 9s. per week, or most likely 6s. per week, even if this replacement always came about.

#### Restrictions on Women's Work.

I will now take another reason why working women need the vote; why they think it absolutely necessary that they should have the vote. It is to protect themselves in industries in

which they already have a footing, and to enable them to enter other industries admirably adapted to them, but which under present conditions they are not allowed to enter, if by any possibility they can be excluded. I can give an instance of this from my own experience.

Some years ago I wanted a girl to learn to operate a new machine similar to those hitherto usually operated by men. I arranged for her teaching with one of the male operators of that class of machine, and neither he nor I thought there was anything very terrible about it; but he reported the fact, and shortly afterwards, to my astonishment, we were threatened from headquarters with a strike in the works. To make a long story short, I interviewed the secretary of the particular trade union concerned, and that gentleman informed me that if I so much as allowed a woman to lay a finger upon that particular machine, whatever his union could effect by itself or in sympathy with other trade unions would be effected against the offending firm.

This gentleman is now a member of the House of Commons, and a nice sort of law-maker, at least in my opinion, for matters connected with women, should those matters in any way, real or imaginary, affect the interests of men.

My space is not sufficient to quote more than one other instance, which should suffice.

At the present moment the question of allowing a woman to make her living as a compositor is affecting the printing trade, especially in Scotland. So far the masters have stood firm, but I understand that the male compositors have obtained the necessary two-thirds majority to bring their own and kindred trades out on strike, should such a step be deemed necessary. In plain language, it means that male compositors object to female compositors, and are making every effort to put the woman's means of livelihood under interdict. In my opinion at least, this is simply foolish. One cannot stop or resist economic pressure by legal or semi-legal methods. For a while the flood may be held back, only to make the results more terrible when the barrier bursts. *The whole question appears to me not to be one of men or women, but one of wages and the necessary political power to protect one's wage value.* Give women the vote; make them regular members of a regular Union, and then by all means, if they under-sell their fellows, treat them as they deserve. But to deny them the vote, to deny them the Union, to press them with hunger, and then to attempt to prevent them taking what wages they can get, and to attempt to prevent the masters from drawing on this fund of slave labour, is perfectly futile.

Similar endeavours to restrain and restrict women in the effort to make their livelihood have occurred with regard to barmaids, acrobats, florists, hospital nurses, midwives, pit-brow workers, Cradley Heath workers, factory workers, home workers, and

married women workers. Women will never get fair play, at least that is my opinion as a man, and the opinion also of a good many women, until they have the Parliamentary vote, when, if only in small measure, at least in some measure they can bring their influence to bear directly upon those who have the making of laws.

Another reason why working women need the vote is that they can more nearly equalise the wages paid for a similar output of work. Equal pay for equal work is, as I have said, the golden rule of industrialism, and some means should be taken to prevent the manufacture of similar goods by men and women, for the making of which the men are paid at from two-thirds to one-third more than their female fellow workers.

There would be some excuse for this if the men's work were sold in one market and labelled "Men's Work," and the women's work sold in another market and labelled "Women's Work, Inferior Goods," but this is not done. The goods pass into the same warehouse, and once in the warehouseman's hands no expert on earth could tell which was the woman's work and which was the man's, and they are sold to the public at the same price. This, I maintain, is a deliberate fraud, not only upon the women but upon the public itself.

As for individual instances of injustice, they can be multiplied indefinitely. A woman's husband dies, and she, being a brave, skilful and energetic woman, applies for and gets his place for the sake of her children. She does more and better work than he has done, it is acknowledged that she does better, but yet she is paid half her husband's wages by her employer because she is a woman, and it is not right to give a woman the same money as a man.

Again we have women, and this in one of the dangerous industries, getting very low wages compared to the men on the plea that certain of the work was done for them. The women offered to get this part of the work done on their own account, and pay for it themselves on condition that they got the same wages as the men. I need hardly say that this very (in the eyes of employer and workmen) outrageous offer was not accepted.

#### Direct Power of the Vote.

Another and very cogent reason why working women need the vote is to bring direct influence to bear politically upon their employers. The Government is usually regarded as a model employer and sets the standard, as it were, of employment through the country, and there is no worse discriminator or offender in the whole rank of employers than the Government. Talk about sweating! The British Government can give points to the worst -Inski or -Offski in his den in the East End. He who acts through another acts himself. The best average wage for skilled women working at the Pimlico Clothing Factory is 15s. per week as compared with 23s. the lowest wage given to men, but the home work at

piece-work rates is even far worse paid than this. A woman and her daughter working together were in one case able to earn only 3s. 1½d. per week by making Army shirts, and so on, and so on. My space here will not allow me to go further into this sordid question, but it is familiar, doubtless, to a good many of those who may read these words.

With regard to the post office, educational department, and posts in government factories and inspectorships of factories, the same old story is repeated, and the women indeed come off badly as compared to the men. In all cases they are paid about one-third upwards in comparison with that which the men get, and largely because they do not possess the parliamentary vote.

The simple way to put an end to the whole difficulty is to give women the vote, and so cut away at its very roots the cause of the wrong.

#### The Undesirable Alien.

Another reason why working women need the vote—one of the deepest and most bitter reasons of them all—is a question which could be developed to any extent, but upon which I must here touch only in the very briefest and most general terms.

It is the question of the undesirable alien. This question deeply affects the poorer and less well-protected of our sisters, and is one upon which working women, I know, earnestly desire the vote in order that they may put an end to the danger once and for all. I refer, of course, to the protection of themselves and those dear to them from the organised villainy to which they are constantly exposed from a class of men, I am thankful to say, almost always of foreign origin, who traffic and batten upon the weaknesses and necessities of our mothers' sex. This is no light danger and no light evil, as will be apparent to anyone who will take the trouble to go into the matter. So hideous are the unreported wrongs connected with it, that for this cause alone, if for nothing else, I would work hard to get my sisters the vote, and together with them, make a clean sweep of it and its agents in England, by laws as terrible in their severity, I had almost said ferocity, as it would be possible for human creatures to enact.

#### Married Working Women.

Another reason why working women need the vote is that legislation of some sort should by their help be passed with regard to the disposal of wages in the case of married men and married men with families. It is only right that a certain definite proportion of the man's wages, in the case of married workers, should be secured to the woman weekly, if she herself is not a worker, but is occupied in looking after his house and family. The measure would have to be carefully thought out and contain every safeguard to prevent what is only intended to compel the unfair minority to act justly, from becoming a burden and a trouble to the just majority.

The working woman who stays at home and manages her household gives a great deal of labour, and almost always unpaid labour, towards the common good of the household, and it is only fair that in return a certain fixed proportion of the wage-earner's wages should go towards providing food and household necessities for his wife and children, if she has any.

In the majority of instances men and women arrange amicably enough as to what this proportion shall be, and if everyone were like the majority, there would be no need for legislation, but I regret to say that there is a very considerable minority for whom some such legislation is certainly necessary..

Cases are not unknown in which from the pocket of the father, out of the pound or two a week, only a very few shillings, indeed, find their way towards the support of wife and children.

People may say that legislation in this matter, apart from its being unnecessary, is altogether wrong, as casting a slur upon the whole working class. One might as well say that it casts a slur upon the people of England that there should be any law against murderers.

It is sometimes said that a married woman working at home is not really earning any wages in what she does for her household, seeing that she is not doing work which would be paid for. The answer is very simple: let her go out and do the same work for her neighbours, and it will very soon be found that it has a market value plus the value of her keep.

At present, as a general rule, the husband hands over to the wife the money to buy the bare necessities for the next week, whereas what should be handed over is the money to buy the necessities for the next week plus a certain sum for work done, plus a certain other sum for boots, insurance, doctor, &c., a fund from which the children could be supplied as things were wanted; whereas now money for them is got out of the father as and when it can be asked, demanded or coaxed.

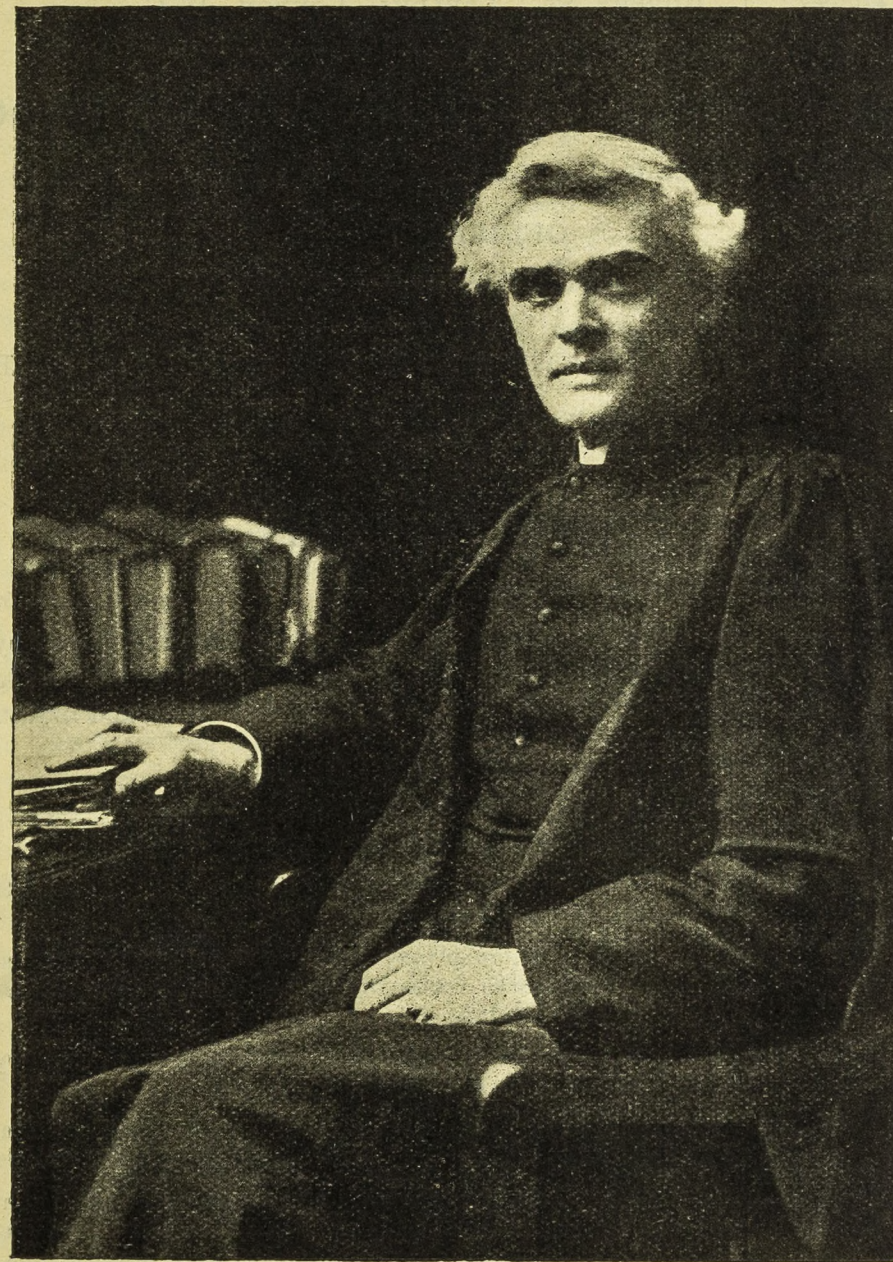
Working women need the vote because they feel that they all pay taxes indirectly, and that many of them pay taxes directly: and woman being instinctively a better economist and more capable of the management of affairs which come within her own sphere, her sex regard with absolute abhorrence the incapacity and waste too often shown in our present systems of dealing with pauperism, lunacy, idiocy and prison management.

Given a free hand, a committee of working-women—and of course by working women I include all women workers—would effect great economies and make short work of many grave abuses. Women hate stupidity almost more than crime, and our present male management of so many things, though seldom criminal, is almost always stupid.

JOHN CAMERON GRANT,

## Some Economic Aspects of the Women's Suffrage Movement.

— BY —



[Photo by permission of Lena Connell, 50, Grove End Road, St. John's Wood.]

**The Rev. R. J. CAMPBELL.**

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# VOTES FOR WOMEN.

## Women's Freedom League.

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Hon. Secretary.

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Mrs. BILLINGTON-GREIG.

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### CONSTITUTION.

**NAME.**—The Women's Freedom League.

**OBJECTS.**—To secure for Women the Parliamentary Vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

**METHODS.**—The objects of the League shall be promoted by—

1. Action entirely independent of all political parties.
2. Opposition to whatever Government is in power until such time as the franchise is granted.
3. Participation in Parliamentary Elections; at By-elections in opposition to the Government candidate and independently of all other candidates.
4. Vigorous agitation upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned.
5. The organizing of women all over the country to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom.
6. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods, such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence, and deputations to public representatives and other bodies and their members.

**MEMBERSHIP.**—Women of all shades of political opinion who approve the objects and methods of the League, and who are prepared to act independently of party, are eligible for membership. All members must approve, though they need not actually participate in, militant action.

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## Some Economic Aspects OF THE Women's Suffrage Movement.\*

THE Women's Suffrage Movement has now become a political force of such vast proportions that it is no longer possible for serious politicians to ignore it, nor will it be much longer possible for them to resist it. The day is past when it could be disposed of with a sneer. It has survived ridicule, misrepresentation, persecution, and is now within sight of victory. How much the determined militant agitation of the Women's Freedom League and the Women's Social and Political Union have contributed to this end it would be difficult to say, but my own opinion is that it has had more to do with it than any other factor in the situation. History seems to prove that—in this country at any rate, and probably in most others also—no far-reaching political reform has ever been secured without some amount of law-breaking. Why laws should be considered *sacro-sanct* without reference to their origin, no sensible mind can say. In a constitutionally governed country laws imply the consent of the governed, or, to say the least of it, the unfettered opportunity of all the citizens of the state to make their will effectively known in the selection of those who are to legislate for them. That is a right which up to the present the women of this country do not possess, and they are therefore under no moral obligation to obey laws which have been made for them by the other sex. The objection is often raised to the tactics of the Women's Freedom League and kindred societies that they do not pursue their agitation by constitutional methods. Why should they? They have not even a limited franchise; and, as we all know, in the field of political action, privilege usually yields, not to persuasion only, but to fear. One wonders how long it would have been before the franchise would have been extended to the working classes if their then rulers had had nothing to fear. The same consideration holds good now. The Women's Movement is succeeding because its opponents are having cause to be afraid of it. One evidence of that fear is the reiterated statement that the violence of the Suffragists has put their cause back a generation or so. That is sheer nonsense, and does not impose

Present  
Importance of  
Movement

\* A lecture delivered at the Horticultural Hall, Westminster, Feb. 10, 1909.

upon the public in the least, not to speak of statesmen. Those who make it would do nothing for Women's Suffrage in any case, and their contention therefore, only amounts to saying that a cause which they dislike has received a much needed check. Why, they ought to be glad of it! But how far it is true will soon be proved. The Liberal Party dare not go to the country at the present moment, whether on the question of the Lords or anything else, because they know the Women's Movement is now strong enough to make their defeat at the polls an absolute certainty. The probability is that at the next general election both of the great political parties will compete for your favours, unless, indeed, the present Government may try to avert disaster beforehand by including Women's Suffrage among the measures to be proposed for the coming session. This does not look as though your methods had failed; on the contrary, they have made speedy success inevitable.

Lest I should be misunderstood on this point let me say, before addressing myself more directly to the subject of my address, that I am not expressing unqualified approval of all that has been done by the militant Suffragists.

But how little many people realize what is really at the back of this mighty movement! One often meets intelligent public spirited men and women who have almost no idea of the true inwardness of the demand for the political enfranchisement of women. It is not merely the fruit of an academic desire to share equally with men in the rights of citizenship. That in itself would be a thoroughly worthy reason for the agitation which is going on, but it is not the deepest reason, nor the one that carries most weight with the women themselves, especially the working women who are furthering the progress of the movement. The demand for political enfranchisement is the outcome of a desire for wider, fuller life and a determination to get rid of the material disabilities which stand in the way of realizing it. Most of these material disabilities are due to economic maladjustment, and I ask you to allow me to indicate one or two of them and suggest how the granting of the vote would further the application of suitable remedies.

Economic  
Status  
of Married  
Women

Let us start with the question of the economic status of the married woman. At least eight millions of the women of this country are engaged in domestic occupations as the housekeepers of their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. The actual number of married women is stated to be about 5,700,000. One and a quarter millions are widows, many of whom have families dependent upon them—how many I do not know. We have here a total of about seven million women who are either married or have been married, and are responsible for the care of the home and the bringing up of children. I leave out of count for

the moment the question of the position of the large number of married women who are so situated that they have to work to help to support the home, owing to the fact that the husband's earnings are insufficient for that purpose. But let us confine ourselves in the first place to the lot of the ordinary married woman who is not the actual bread-winner of the family, but looks to her husband to fulfil that function. How does she stand in regard to financial arrangements? She is absolutely at her husband's mercy. He may give or withhold as he chooses; no one has any power to compel him to disburse to his wife anything more than will suffice to keep the home going in reasonable comfort in accordance with the standard of living to which the family is accustomed. To be sure the law will step in if the husband and father refuses to recognize his obligations in this respect, but a glance at the police court news in the columns of any daily newspaper will suffice to show you how much that amounts to. No, the husband is the wife's paymaster, and she is immediately dependent upon his bounty. If he be a man of integrity and generosity she may not be conscious of any hardship; but if he be otherwise she is in evil case. When she marries she gives up her freedom and initiative to a very great extent; henceforth she becomes subject to the companion she has chosen and who holds the means of life. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." It is an economic maxim, and also a common-sense proposition that he who owns the means of life owns the labour too, and that is just the situation as regards the ordinary relationship of husband and wife in nearly every rank of society in this country at the present moment. It is just as true of the middle as of the working classes—the wife is under the husband's control because he pays her and he pays her what he pleases. I think I am not far wide of the mark in saying that as a rule, whether in the households of the poor or in those of higher social grade, he allows himself a greater latitude than he extends to her. He has the money, and therefore he calls the tune. Anything involving expenditure, even if it be only a pleasure trip, is his to grant. He may, of course, place his wife above the necessity of asking such minor favours, but he need not do so unless he feels so disposed. In the majority of households the wife has to work as hard as the husband—probably harder, for her hours of labour are not fixed—but she has no recognized right to any standard wage as remuneration for her services, consequently—no matter how well a married couple may agree—the power of the husband over the wife is felt and realized by both all the time, because of the material advantage thus placed in his hands. Fortunate indeed are the married women who have private means!

Some of the members of this audience, of both sexes, may be quite shocked to hear me talk in this unpoetic way of the

sacred estate of matrimony; but I put it to you one and all, is not the restriction real in any home where the husband can hinder the wife's desires by the simple expedient of withholding supplies? She cannot control him in the same way, for material reasons. Now why should he have this power? The work done by the wife is just as necessary to the home as that of the husband. If the wife were not there some one else would have to do it, or home would cease to be home. The wife, therefore, has a right to the same economic status as the husband, and to a properly secured scale of remuneration for the arduous and important work she does. This is one of the most necessary and urgent reforms of the future. When a woman accepts the responsibilities of married life she must at the same time be guaranteed a fair equivalent for her services and a just and equitable share of the family income. Moreover, she is entitled to her own *peculium*, as the Romans called it, her own wage over and above the needs of the household to be expended as she pleases. This must not be a matter for the discretion of the husband, but a due recognition of the dignity of wifehood. If the British working man has a right to keep back out of his wages whatever sum he requires for his own personal use and enjoyment outside the family circle, his wife has a right to the same thing, and it will lose nothing by being legally enforced instead of left to the husband's good will. Turn matters the other way round, gentlemen. If your wife were your paymaster you would not love her any the less for having your personal worth to the family and the State acknowledged by having a part of your common income guaranteed to you over and above what your wife may think fit to allow you. I contend that mutual respect and affection would lose nothing, and perhaps gain something, from a constitutional recognition of the principle that the labourer is worthy of his (and her) hire. But, ladies, understand clearly that so far as you are concerned it is never likely to be recognized until you get the vote. Even where the husband is a good man your comparative helplessness may at times be rather galling; but if he be a bad and selfish man the situation may be hell. There is many a married woman in this land to-day who would not live with her petty tyrant another hour were it not for the fact that she has children, and is not prepared to expose them to want or to leave them in his brutal hands. I say that kind of physical slavery, with all the abominable abuses that go along with it, will have to come to an end, and it can only come to an end when the community as a whole, acting through the legislature, places a proper economic value upon the services of the wife and mother, and grants her an independent financial status carrying with it the full rights of citizenship. Achieve the latter, and you will soon be sure of the former.

It may be objected that there are serious practical drawbacks to the establishment of such a drastic economic change as this. I know it. There are many cases in which husband and children would require to be protected against an idle, incompetent, heartless, or dissolute wife and mother. Those cases abound already, and to give such women the right to a fixed share of the husband's earnings would be a grave injustice, and only add to a mischief which is already bad enough. Quite so, but as things are now the wife has little or no protection against a *husband* who behaves in this way. He can be dismissed from his situation for improper conduct, and his earnings cease; but his wife cannot dismiss him on this account, and her income ceases along with his, through his fault. This is the situation where the wage earner is unworthy. It could not be so very much worse under a system where an unworthy wife might be able to insist upon her right to a share of the family income and then proceed to squander it. She could not be dismissed like a dishonest shop-assistant. The law would, therefore, have to provide safeguards against such a contingency; but if so the safeguards ought to be provided also the other way round. Where a husband cannot be trusted, his wages, or an equitable share of them, should be paid direct to the wife before he touches them. And perhaps the day is not so very far distant when the right to work, involving the duty of doing a proper amount of work, will be admitted by the State. When that day comes, the dismissal of a husband from his employment will not carry along with it the starvation of wife and child.

The next point to be observed is that of the economic status of motherhood, and this is a far more difficult and debatable question. It required to be considered along with the one we have just discussed, but it is not the same question, and the problem it implies is not so easy of solution. The right of a housewife to her maintenance and personal remuneration is one thing, the right of a mother to adequate provision for her and her offspring is another. The former may be insisted on by the State and charged on the husband, the latter involves some amount of immediate financial responsibility on the part of the State, which raises intricate and far-reaching problems affecting the national resources as a whole. The husband and father only comes into consideration in so far as he and the home are affected during the child-bearing period. Has the State an immediate interest in the kind of children that are being born, and the way those children are being reared in infancy? Of course it has, though we are slow to see it. We take the child when he is old enough and make him go to school; we quarrel over the particular brand of religious dogma that is to be imposed upon him; we are even beginning to think about the duty of

feeding him when he is insufficiently nourished. I admit we are very slow about the last-named duty, but we are beginning to take it into consideration. But is this enough? Ought we not to begin farther back? Would it not be wise to do something to ensure the physical efficiency of the mother before the child is born, and the proper feeding of the infant before it is of school age, not to speak of the kind of home into which it comes—to live or die as the case may be? In a word we shall have to face the question of the proper equipment of motherhood, financial or otherwise. I cannot spare time to go thoroughly into this complicated theme to-night, but permit me to state one or two facts about it. One in every seven of the children born in this country dies before it is a year old, and the death rate among infants shows no great sign of decreasing. The majority die within the first three months from birth, and a majority of these in the first week. Naturally, too, the death rate is overwhelmingly greatest in densely crowded areas and industrial centres where a large proportion of the mothers are engaged in manual labour. Here are some instructive figures taken from a report recently issued by the London branch of the Christian Social Union. An inquiry into the condition of the employment of working women after child-birth yielded the following results:—

It was shown that a majority of these women carry on their employment right up to the time of confinement, and resume it in from ten to fourteen days. This is specially true of women engaged in household duties and home industries. Out of six hundred and thirty-eight women in this class four hundred and thirty-three worked right up to the time of confinement. The committee conducting the investigation found that the mortality among hand-fed children was very much greater than among those who had been nursed by the mother—230·4 per thousand as against 145·1. The report states that “expert opinion is justified in the great stress which it lays upon the importance to the child of its natural food, and the serious effect of hand-feeding upon the infantile death-rate. The contention that mothers should not engage in employment other than that imposed on them by their domestic duties also finds support in the figures,” for the death rate is much higher in those cases where the mother has to help in earning the family income. As to the reason given for the entrance of the mother into the labour market, the “low wages” and “irregular employment” of the husband were the chief.

When we consider that there are over a million married women at work in England to-day these figures are rather serious as indicative of what is going on in every crowded centre of population. There is nothing more important to the communal well-being than that of ensuring as far as possible that our future

citizens shall be well born. What prodigal folly to allow them to come into the world under such conditions as I have just indicated! And delicate and dangerous though the problem may be, especially in its economic aspects, we are bound to grapple with it sooner or later. The Malthusian may not unreasonably enter a *caveat* against encouraging the reckless begetting of children for other people to maintain. But that is exactly what we do now. We do it with the pauper class, which avails itself free of charge of the services of our workhouse infirmaries, and it is notorious that the poorest, most ignorant and most improvident classes in the community are just those who seem to have the least sense of responsibility as to the number of children they bring into the world. I am not so sure as some of my brother clergy seem to be that small families are a token of degeneracy in the more comfortable classes; but, whether or no, there is no question that it is sheer folly to allow the poorest and most ill-nourished sections of the community to go on adding to the population indiscriminately without taking some measures to see that the children thus born are likely to be a benefit and not a burden to the State in days to come. It is my belief that by raising the general standard of comfort and intelligence we should put an automatic check upon this kind of recklessness. But even if it were not so it would surely be wise to do our best to see that those who are born are physically fit for the struggle of life, and therefore able to contribute later on to the commonwealth instead of being a drawback to it. I hold that the endowment of motherhood, carrying with it as it ought to do an efficient system of public inspection and supervision, would not be more likely than the present system, or want of system, to lead to the rapid increase of large families and the consequent impoverishment of the whole community. Better face even that danger than let the existing state of things continue. As to the methods by which it could be done without releasing the father from his responsibilities one might have a good deal to say if time permitted. My strong opinion is that aspect of the question is not wholly intractable. But it is not a question the deciding of which should be left to one sex alone. It is vital to the welfare of the nation, and the direct responsibility for its solution ought to be in the hands of women as well as men.

We now come to the consideration of the urgent problem of female labour, especially unprotected, unorganized, and consequently ill-paid labour. It is not given to every woman to exercise the functions of wife and mother. There are not husbands enough to go round. There are over a million more women than men in the United Kingdom, so that even if all women were willing to enter into the state of matrimony, they cannot all do so. The lot of the unmarried woman dependent

Women in  
the  
Labour  
Market

upon relations for her bread used to be a very sad one, and still is in many cases. She was the butt of the cheap ridicule of all the shallow minds who failed to see the pathos of her situation. Of late years this has been altering. We are beginning to find that the bachelor woman thrown upon her own resources is able to compete effectively with men in fields of service which formerly she never thought of entering. Life is becoming fuller and more interesting to her, and, whether we like it or not, we have got to face the new economic situation which her enterprise has created. Then, too, we have to deal with the fact that the majority of young women have to earn their own living somehow before getting married, and more and more of them are demanding to be fitted for a career independent of the hazards of matrimony. Every woman ought to be trained to serve the State in some other way than household duties, so that she may have something to fall back upon in the event of the death of the bread winner; or, as is quite possible, she may be one of the numerous class who prefer professional or business avocations to that of managing a household, even though married. This may sound revolutionary, but we shall have to accustom ourselves to it. The oft-repeated saying that woman's sphere is the home does not necessarily hold good of every woman, and it is not fair to assume it. A woman may be a good wife and mother without confining herself altogether within the four walls of her house; she may be conscious of the possession of abilities which require another sphere for their exercise. Why should she not have it; and why should she not receive such remuneration therefrom as will enable her to delegate to others the ordinary drudgery of housework? Hitherto we have been accustomed to speak as though all women were much alike in their talents and preferences, that is that they all preferred housewifery and the management of babies to anything else. But it is not so; women have proved themselves capable of competing successfully with men in almost any sphere and the supposed psychological differences between them are more a matter of training than anything else.

Status of  
Women  
Workers

Here then is a comparatively new and ever-increasing problem for us to take into account. Woman is pressing into spheres of action hitherto reserved mainly for men. This statement, of course, requires to be qualified by the humiliating acknowledgment that the women of the poorer classes have always had to do menial labour to obtain bread for themselves and their children. *Their* case is not new. But broadly speaking the observation holds good that women are now proving themselves able to do anything that men can do. But how are they treated in the labour market? With the exception of literature and the stage there is practically no vocation in which they are

not systematically underpaid as compared with men. As yet they have hardly got their foot into the learned professions, and almost all the more highly salaried appointments in these are the perquisites of the male sex. Women teachers are paid, as a rule, from one-third to one-half less than men receive for precisely the same work. The same thing applies to clerks and typists. This is generally stated to be due to the fact that the man may have a family to maintain, whereas the working woman has only herself. But as every tenth woman in the country is a widow this contention does not hold good. As a woman the widow can only gain the customary price of individual subsistence, whether she has children to keep or not. As we come lower down the social scale the disparity becomes more apparent, especially as we enter the ranks of unskilled labour. The revelations of the Select Committee on home work, recently issued, ought to draw public attention to the comparative helplessness of the large class of women who have to accept starvation wages, and work day and night to keep body and soul together for themselves and their children. The Committee in its report is far too gentle with the employers who profit by this evil. Take the cardboard and matchbox makers. The former are paid at the rate of ninepence to fifteen pence a gross, and out of that the workers have to find glue, paste, and string for tying up the parcels, at a cost of a penny or twopence a gross. One witness told of two sisters working together who managed to make between them two gross a day, at a shilling a gross, with the same deductions for material; in one week they only earned four and sixpence between them. Twopence halfpenny a gross is paid for match boxes, and even less, with similar deductions for paste and string. Much objection is raised, and rightly, to the competition of married women with men in certain fields of industry. But mere prohibition is not enough in such cases; it may often amount to sheer cruelty. The real remedy is the creation of wages boards for every legitimate occupation, and to pay women in the same terms as men for the same work. Married women can only be fairly excluded from the field while the husband is in full work or drawing out of work union pay. One part of the duty of such wages boards should be to see that work is fairly distributed, so that one family is not left starving while husband, wife, and children in another are all earning.

But such a remedy is not likely to do much until the women themselves are able to bring pressure to bear directly upon the legislature. So far the trades unions have done comparatively little for them; they are without the vote, and therefore are almost a negligible force. It is said that women lack the faculty of combining in their own interests as men do. No doubt there

is truth in the statement, but things are changing in this respect. That it has held good so long is the result of the comparative isolation of women. To them hitherto the "man" has constituted the world; to him they have had to look, or have been supposed to look for bread and home. Their children also have absorbed their energies, and kept them more or less under the dominion of their paymaster. The present political agitation for the vote is going to change all that, and among its first economic fruits will be the establishment of the principle that women have a right to the same remuneration as men for the same kind of work. If married women are to be disqualified from competing with men in any particular sphere they will have to be compensated, as I have already pointed out, by having their share of the family income properly apportioned as a fair equivalent for the domestic services they render, and the State will correspondingly be called upon to give them adequate recognition and protection in return for their fulfilling the functions of motherhood. All these questions hang together, and it is quite impossible to deal properly and thoroughly with one without handling the others also.

The  
Social  
Evil

There is only one point upon which I wish to say anything to-night, and that is the most difficult of all, because it is the one which the public is least willing to face. I mean the sex question, especially as regards the moral degradation of large numbers of women through the pressure of economic forces. I mention this subject most reluctantly, as it is such an unsavoury one, and almost impossible of treatment in mixed assemblies. But there has been far too much false modesty about it, and a great deal of downright hypocrisy. It is time that we said straight out, for all men and women to hear, exactly how matters stand. The real immodesty consists in pretending that things are all right when we know they are not; it is more than immodesty, it is wickedness. Have you ever taken the trouble to ask yourselves why it should be that an army of women in London, as well as in every great centre of population throughout the land, should be subsisting on the wages of shame—some of them casually, some systematically and continuously? Why should there not be a similar army of men acquiring money in the same way? The answer is that the men have the money already and the women have not. Most of these poor creatures are driven on to the streets by sheer poverty, and they look less to the men of their own class for their hire than to the propertied classes above them. Even where poverty is not the direct cause of prostitution the desire for an ampler life is. Most women have narrow lives, and like men, they crave liberty and excitement; but, unlike men, they have not the means to gratify their desires. Hence we have the melancholy spectacle of

members of one sex hiring themselves to another for money. There are some marriages, as you very well know, where the motive is much the same as that which underlies prostitution. But how do we set about counteracting the evil? By moral suasion chiefly, which is the equivalent of the advice that used to be given to young people to cultivate the virtues of industry, perseverance, and such like, and they would eventually prosper like Dick Whittington and become Lord Mayors of London. I give full credit to all such admirable institutions as the Vigilance Society, and the work of such noble women as Mrs. Hugh Price Hughes and her mission sisters. But all these efforts combined, and a thousand more of similar character, will never solve this problem, for they do not touch its primary cause. I know what will solve it—the economic independence of women, and nothing else. I have already shown you what I mean by that, and I have sufficient confidence in the natural purity of womanhood to believe that if every woman was assured of a self-respecting livelihood we should have cut at the root of this stupendous evil, the most menacing of all to the future of civilization. Some time ago I took occasion to refer in a speech to the Shop Assistants' Union to the fact that such miserable wages are paid to young women in some establishments that they are practically driven to eke out a subsistence in the manner to which I have just alluded. If, instead of making haste to deny it, respectable tradesmen had set to work to find out whether it were true, it would have become them better. It is absolutely true, and not only so, but the practice is connived at by those who profit indirectly by it. It is difficult, almost impossible to bring it home to the real offenders, who put the temptation in the poor girls' way; but let me tell you what we *can* do. Let those women who are more fortunately situated, the women whose custom is worth a good deal to tradespeople, try to make friends with the young people who serve them in the large or small establishments in which their purchases are made. I admit you may find it difficult, for many reasons; but try it, and when you succeed you will come upon some startling revelations. Ascertain the amount of the wages they receive—not the best paid only, but the worst—and how much on the average is stopped out of these wages for fines and such like. Learn what conditions are insisted upon as to dress and general appearance, and then form your own conclusions; enlightened public opinion will do the rest in time. And one outcome of such public opinion will be the granting of the Parliamentary vote to your sex. The vote means power, and with the granting of power will come the possibility of dealing effectually and at first hand with this crying abuse. One prolific cause of it is what is called "seasonal" labour. A dressmaker's assistant, for example, can never earn much more than twelve shillings a week even during the busy

season, and during the slack season, lasting four or five months, she may earn little or nothing. A large proportion of the workers have to be discharged, and the wages of those retained are reduced. What happens, or is like to happen, to young women who are thus left without resources after being employed at a rate of remuneration which affords practically no opportunity for saving? The whole system is wrong, and will only be altered when the women of this country take the law into their own hands.

These are, to my mind, some of the greatest of the economic questions which lie at the back of the Women's Movement to-day, and constitute the urgency as well as the justice of their claim to the Parliamentary vote. Get the vote, and the practical remedy for these evils will soon be found. I am one of those who believe with all my heart that the entrance of women into politics will prove a humanizing influence and a great additional moral force. Their practical ability has already been amply demonstrated, and surely they know their own business, and are better fitted to legislate upon matters affecting their own sex than men can be. The political goal is now within measurable distance; let us therefore prepare ourselves for the struggles which lie beyond its immediate attainment. That is but the beginning of a great moral and economic advance, in which I trust most, if not all of us, may live to play our part.

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# SUFFRAGIST TACTICS. PAST & PRESENT.

BY



**TERESA BILLINGTON-GREIG.**

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**SUFFRAGIST TACTICS: PAST  
AND PRESENT.**

When the spirit of revolt among women manifested itself in the political world, it was met by almost universal condemnation. The public, the Press, and the politician united with the older school of Suffragists in indignant and scandalised protest. The little group of rebel women responsible for the new tactics was condemned as a body of hooligans, fanatics, and disreputable notoriety-hunters. Caricature and lampoon greeted their every effort. The attitude of the Press varied from stately and unsparing protest in publications of consequence, through ridicule, misrepresentation and contemptuous familiarity, to gutter abuse. The officials of the orthodox Suffrage Societies hastened to repudiate the rebels anew after every act of rebellion. Sympathetic members of the House of Commons withdrew their support from the principle at stake, such support being based evidently not on conviction, but on an assumed universal pledge of women to behave as good girls. According to the agonised predictions of conventional Suffragists and the jubilant announcements of their foes, the methods of rebellion succeeded in putting back the Suffrage movement at least a couple of hundred years in the space of a few months.

But this could not last long.

**The spirit behind the new rebellion was too strong,**

and its appeal too universal, for the first tumult of abuse to silence it; the very tactics condemned irresistibly begot questionings, and the woman's obvious right, and still more obvious need, could not but bring justification. A few months sufficed to bring about a change. The hysteria of shocked convention died down, and people began to think. The members of the Suffrage Societies ceased to resent the indictment of their own old policy contained in every justification of the new, and out of the fulness of their past experience found some measure of excuse for the impatience of the law-breakers. The responsible press-man going out to seek for a notoriety-hunting hooligan discovered generally a mild-mannered and lady-like woman of parts, and in time became honest enough to say so. Even among the politicians there were some who saw behind the unwomanly proceedings the justification of a great sense of injury. The public, stirred from the first by curiosity, began to find something admirable in the pluck and originality of the rebels.

It is worthy of note, as an indication of the basis of public opinion, that it was

**The personality of the agitators,**

not any acceptance of their tactics, which first produced the change. In spite of strong sex and party prejudice, in spite of shocked decorum



and misinterpretation, the personality of the Neo-Suffragist triumphed. It was recognised that these women were in deadly earnest, and that they were absolutely convinced of the moral justification and political soundness of their course. Differing in character, social status, and capacity one from another, they shared two things in common—a determination to end the political subjection of women, and a conviction that the only way to that goal was by sacrifice, revolt, and protest. They flung themselves against an unsympathetic world; and the world recognised their courage. They set themselves to defy convention, to shatter smug hypocrisies, to carry by assault the strongholds of prejudice, and to gather the forces of success from personal suffering and popular condemnation. Such action, if it be strenuous enough to awaken life in the dead depths of our racial soul, wrings from us its own triumph. We may not agree; we must admire. So the Neo-Suffragist ceased to have personal insult poured upon her; her motives were admitted as pure and public-spirited; her object was worthy of all praise; but her methods continued to be met by kindly admonition and good advice, and brought upon her the charge of mistaken overzeal. This is still the attitude of large numbers of men and women—they admire the agitator, they resent the wrong against which she agitates; but they condemn the methods of agitation.

#### Objections to Tactics.

Three classes of objection are formulated against the tactics of revolt for which the Women's Freedom League and the Women's Social and Political Union are responsible. The first class is put forward by those who temperamentally and by training are opposed to the practice and advocacy of violence; the second class is voiced by the sentiment of sex or party; and the third is due to ignorance of history, and of the issues involved in the struggle. The third class is the most important, and can only be met by an inquiry into the position of women and a survey of the history of the Suffrage movement. The two minor classes of objections can be shortly disposed of. The non-resistant and conservative opposition is incompatible with human liberty. To deny women the right of protest, even of violent protest, against the denial of a right, is to condemn the means by which all our present liberties were gained, and to throw the weight of one's support upon the side of those forces which make for tyranny and slavery. Rebellion is not only justifiable, it is necessary. The responsibility for the struggle, suffering, and loss which rebellion entails must rest, not upon the rebels who seek a right—their liberty—but upon those holders of power who refuse that right to argument and reason, and thus make violence imperative.

That objection to the tactics of rebellion which is

#### Based upon sex-sentiment

takes the quasi-chivalrous guise of condemning in women what it

extols in men. Men may fight; women should suffer. For a woman to be brave and daring under the goad of a great wrong, for her to forget because of it such petty things as deportment and convention, is, in the eyes of these opponents, for that woman to be unwomanly. It is useless perhaps to point out that an artificial and arbitrary conception of what a woman should be bears very little relation to what a woman really is, and that the appeal to such a conception is mere unreasoning sentiment. "Womanliness" in the past was very much a matter of coercion. But even in the days of the worst servitude the natural woman's capacity for rebellion was not entirely curbed by ducking-stools, whipping-posts, and gossips-bridles. She struggled for her personal liberty as fiercely as man struggled for his. Her isolation and her double bonds made her fight the harder, and she has still much to win. But there is no cleavage along the line of sex between the human needs and passions of men and women. The methods of the oppressed, whether men or women, must always be the methods of rebels. No other way is left open to them. The kind of sentimental objection which would bar women from any active protest against injustice, is itself bred of the wrong we resent. It sets up a lower standard of need and liberty for women than is accepted for men; it is akin in its chivalrous pretence to humbug; and it supplies emphatic proof of the need of the purification of revolt.

The biased judgment of the partisan has produced

#### Another sentimental objection

to the tactics of the Neo-Suffragists. The policy of rebellion consists of agitation by protest, and direct opposition to the Government in power, and it is the anti-Government activity which is here condemned and misrepresented. The motive and policy of the attack upon the present Government are represented as being directed by anti-Liberal feeling. This is not true. The name of the party which happens to be in power matters not at all to those who are denied the right of self-government. To them all administrations are alike, tyrannies. The Neo-Suffragist recognises the need of Government intervention before women can be enfranchised; she recognises the power which resides in the existing Government at any time. The Government of the day, she says, can enfranchise women, and if it refuses to do so it must be regarded as an enemy, and those to whom it denies freedom must make war upon it. Upon this basis has been built up the anti-Government policy, which has supplied a rallying-ground for women of every political creed. The fact that the Liberal Government was first attacked is a non-essential—a mere matter of chance. The coming into power of the present administration and the ripening of the rebellion among women happened to synchronise. But the policy sweeps away parties, and lays bare the relation between the fettered subject and the ruling power. It is not party or anti-party; it is anti-autocracy.

### The greater objections

which have still to be met seek to show that the tactics of rebellion are unnecessary, premature, and harmful, that they are illogical and unprincipled, and that they are doomed to failure. These objections can only be silenced by reference to history, and by an examination of present conditions. Such an enquiry gives a complete and emphatic justification to rebellion. By the failure of other methods, by precedent, by principle, by need, and by the present wonderful promise of the movement, the women who instituted the campaign of protest are justified in full measure.

When in 1867 the first organised Women's Suffrage Societies came into existence, they set for themselves the task of

### Securing a parliamentary majority

in the House of Commons. By every available method of constitutional agitation they sought to break down prejudice and bring conviction to the individual. The pioneer Suffragists assumed that argument and reason would finally triumph, and strong in this belief, devoted their powers to the presentment of an irrefutable case. During the twenty years in which they were building up the desired majority, they evolved a theory which has done much to prevent the attainment of their end. It might be aptly called the theory of good conduct, for it limited the Suffrage propaganda to the mildest persuasion, the politest and most dignified advocacy, and condemned all warmth, all vigour, all attack, as unworthy of the woman's cause. It succeeded in giving the whole movement a character of shadowy unreality, the influence of which infected both the Suffragists and the politicians they had set out to convert. Studied moderation of speech under all circumstances, an over-patient dignity, and an attitude of pleading for privilege, rather than one of claiming a right, became universal on the side of the advocates of women's liberty. The natural result on the side of the politician was an attitude which was a mixture of good-humoured toleration and contempt, tempered in personal or social relation with a superficial chivalry. So that by the time that the real educational work of converting a majority of legislators had been accomplished in the eighties, this pernicious doctrine of decorum had also accomplished much. It had produced among politicians that unstatesmanlike irresponsibility with which the House of Commons has ever treated women's claims.

The parliamentary record up to this time had been

### A record of failure,

it is true, but not a record of humiliating failure. The House of Commons had indeed refused to remove the sex disability, but it had not done so with insult and contempt; and a sense of progress remained, while every change of administration brought more pledged supporters from the constituencies. Hopes ran high in the days which preceded the Reform Bill of 1884. From the state of opinion in the

Commons and in the country this measure was expected to be made the vehicle for the enfranchisement of women. But in spite of widespread propaganda and enthusiastic demonstrations, the traditional spirit of the Suffrage movement had its effect. Not only were women not included in the Reform Bill, but when an amendment to include them was moved, 104 pledged supporters broke their pledges at the bidding of Mr. Gladstone, and did so apparently without any sense of their own dishonour. These men flung their broken pledges in the faces of the women of the country, and the organised Women's Suffrage Societies bore the insulting betrayal without a single adequate protest.

Up to this point the tactics of education and argument had not only been necessary, but would have been effective, had they been adopted in a less obsequious spirit. But with this first great betrayal came

### The imperative call for change.

The only fitting and adequate reply of women Suffragists to the Liberal betrayal of that year would have been a great act of organised defiance and protest. The gage should have been flung down with decisive challenge. The educational policy of securing a majority in the House of Commons should have been supplemented by an energetic fighting policy for forcing that majority to keep faith. The old policy alone was insufficient. The 104 broken pledges proved this emphatically. With them should have ended the period of reliance on argument and the individual Member of Parliament.

But the policy of pleading for privilege continued for twenty years after events had called for change. The insulted Suffragists clung tenaciously to their

### Doctrine of decorum.

At any cost women must preserve their external dignity, and a policy of protest and attack was supposed to be incompatible with it. Where the old shibboleths alone were not sufficient, party feeling effectively damned up the waters of rebellion. So strong were tradition and prejudice that, to be quite fair, the average Suffragist never dreamed of the tactics demanded by the position. The hour having passed in which strength and success might have been found, the movement deteriorated into the merest shadow of an agitation. The spirit and power were gone out of it. The repeated betrayals in the House of Commons by a series of despicable tricks and evasions, the strange helplessness of professing friends, the contemptuous baiting by enemies, raised only a few scattered personal protests, quite ineffective and insufficient. As insult after insult was heaped upon them, as year after year they suffered betrayal, the prospects of the statutory recognition of women as citizens surely receded. An agitation without spirit is dead: the public neither knows or cares about it; the politician, measuring it by its capacity to help or punish—by its emotional and voting strength,

contemptuously ignores it; prejudice and indifference combine to close against it the great avenues of the Press. A movement that does not resent and punish betrayal is doomed.

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that during the twenty years through which this unresented betrayal continued cleavage after cleavage took place in the ranks. An ill-defined sense of dissatisfaction crept into the Suffragist body, and

#### **The ineffectiveness of the traditional policy**

was half-consciously recognised. But convention was too strong for the real needs to be seen and met. Still incapable of the assertion of rights, the dissatisfied women devoted themselves to service. Some women gave their time and efforts to the strengthening of men's political parties, and some toiled for the community in the avenues of service which were open to them. Apart from the passion for self-devotion which has always influenced women, this movement towards wider service was dictated by a new policy of persuasion. It was felt by many women that woman's capacity and usefulness in politics must be proved before political sex-equality could be won. Man, they said, had been forced to acknowledge woman's right to vote. Logically, this should have been sufficient, but as it was not, he must be taught that it was expedient that women should vote. So women set out to give years of loyal service, and thus win liberty. But twenty years of energetic and capable administration for the community, twenty years of valuable work by the auxiliary societies into which women formed themselves to do service for the political parties from which they were shut out, demonstrated the error of this assumption.

#### **Liberty was never won by pleading,**

and cannot be purchased. So unappreciative of the public work done by women have men continued, that at the beginning of the twentieth century they were robbed without protest of the opportunity of educational service. The work of women has never been acknowledged at its full value either in the industrial, social, or political world. The opinion still survives among men that women are fore-ordained for service, that theirs is not work to be acknowledged and repaid, but a sort of divinely imposed duty. The attempt to win liberty by pandering to this relic of past oppression was a folly foredoomed to failure.

Meanwhile the great extension of legislation in social and industrial areas, and the pressure of public business—increasing with the growth and activity of the electorate—have produced

#### **Additional difficulties and dangers for women.**

An agitation for the liberty of an unrepresented section of the community is always handicapped. The voter can move the legislative machine. He possesses the necessary motive power. But the legislative machine is not made to answer the demands of the non-voter,

and far greater force is therefore required to produce motion. If the demands of the electorate, and the mass of routine business increase, the more completely is the non-voter overwhelmed, both in Parliament and out of it. When to these universal disabilities of the unrepresented is added the enormous unreasoning sex-prejudice which bars the way for women, some conception of the parlous position in which women found themselves at the beginning of the twentieth century will be obtained. The methods and work of the old Suffrage Societies, judged in the light of these conditions, are found to be absurdly insufficient. The fundamental outlawry of woman's position, and the need for drastic action, had never been realised from the beginning, so that the tactics always were essentially inadequate. But the passing years made them ludicrous. Changed Parliamentary procedure brought no change to the Suffragists; the upheaval in the political world produced no change in them; the peril and suffering of women in a great industrial transition left them still the same. They concentrated their efforts upon pleading for, and registering,

#### **The pledges of private Members of Parliament,**

over whom as non-voters women had no control, and whose opportunities of voluntary service were every year more restricted. They continued to plead in a pretty monotone while a hundred clamorous voices of organised electors assailed the legislature. They continued to use the drawing-room long after the political centre had shifted to the street corner and the park. They were beached high and dry among the antiquities while the tide of time flowed onward. Only a numerous body of plural voters could have won their will with the means the Suffragists used.

But it is not alone by the inadequacy and failure of peaceable methods in the past, and by the demonstrated certainty of their greater failure in the future, that

#### **The tactics of rebellion are justified.**

They are justified also by the history of human liberty as recorded in the chronicles of the nations. Every agitation for liberty has won success by revolt and sacrifice. Our own history, from the days of unlimited monarchy until to-day, is a record of rebellions from which liberties have been reaped. The liberty of the subject, liberty of speech, and religious liberty are all harvested from the same field of human labour—the field of revolt. Existing authority has never hastened to extend freedom, and every franchise reform has been preceded by a greater or less degree of organised disorder. The seeker after liberty must suffer for it. We recognise this in reference to the past. Our highest worship is given to those who made the history of the past glorious and became law-breakers for the freedom of the people. That the women who are rebels and law-breakers to-day are carrying on the same fight and suffering for the same human liberty is not recog-

nised. Yet it is folly to condemn in them what is extolled in their prototypes.

Only the methods of rebellion are adequate when freedom is arbitrarily denied. It is suitable enough to plead for privilege, and to see to it that no offence is given to those from whose hands it is sought.

**But it is no privilege that women seek.**

It is a right. They demand the restitution of those equal powers of citizenship which they enjoyed with men in earlier days. They demand that the principles of Government applied to their brothers shall be applied to them, and that arbitrary control and taxation of women by men shall cease. The exclusion of a class from the right of self-government by absurd legal expedients is not an immaterial injury, it is a grave and monstrous injustice, which prejudicially affects the whole life-economy of that class. In the case of women, the sex-relation and the condition of economic dependence in which a majority of women live has introduced disturbing factors. The results of their political degradation are, therefore, not so easily seen by the superficial, for they cannot be regarded as outlaws pure and simple. The condition they occupy is both better and worse. It has some of the advantages of the favourite and some of the degradations of the serf. But, however gilded by generous sentiment, or obscured by economic issues,

**The condition of sex-subjection persists,**

and it is one so revolting to the inheritor of modern opportunities and powers that rebellion is inevitable. The greater knowledge the women obtain of themselves and of men, the greater becomes the sense of injury under which they writhe. They feel the marks of the wrong in themselves; they find them, as they move forward, ever and again in the men as well as the women of the race. The spirit of rebellion grows with every advance of knowledge and humane feeling. Every forward step in education, every growth of social ideals, makes the arbitrary subjection of a sex a greater evil by comparison with the new standards of humanity. The older Suffragist from her narrow groove looked on the liberty she sought as a privilege; the Neo-Suffragist resents its denial as shameful and unwarrantable tyranny. She feels the goad of powers and duties and needs urging her to rebellion. No other weapon is commensurate with her wrong.

If men were perfect beings, and they had hedged women round with the protection of untainted love, woman's right of self-government would still remain, and with it

**The need for rebellion against benevolent tyranny.**

Men have the right to possess themselves, and to govern their own lives. But women are not so protected. They are driven to the struggle for political power by the imminence and magnitude of their present needs. The lot of the labouring woman is nearly akin to slavery. Hundreds

of thousands of British women cannot earn a living wage; by the work of their hands they cannot live in decency. Sweated industry exhibitions and social investigations have piled up the direful facts for the public during the last ten years. Because of their sex women are specially penalised in the labour market. They are under-paid almost universally, and all the best-paid avenues of employment are closed against them. Man has not protected woman in industry; he has exploited her. Always she has suffered as a worker because she was a woman; always she has been handicapped by restrictions and injustices imposed upon her because of sex. She has always had a double need for political power, but at the present moment her need is increased a hundredfold.

**Every day legislation comes nearer to her**

and to her work. So long as she is voteless this legislation cannot express her needs or provide her with protection, for she is unable to influence or control it. Labour laws for women should not be made by men alone. Such laws cannot be either just or justifiable. They are but a new tyranny, however benevolently intended. Meanwhile greater numbers women are steadily entering the labour market, and, as a result, the competition becomes keener and wages tend to fall. Yet at the same time so utterly oblivious of the real needs of women are male legislators, that proposals are afoot to close against women two or three large avenues of employment. Such conditions as these are surely justifications for revolt. Working women need political power. They must have it. When the protection of industry and life is in question, the matter becomes too serious for the petty politeness of kid-glove agitation. The red-tape laws that are broken by protest are as nothing to the peril and need of the unprotected women who break them.

If it were work or starvation, work or death, rebellion would be the natural impulse of self-preservation. But there is

**A worse alternative than death.**

The choice is work or shame. And on the heels of shame treads death—not only for the individual, but for the race. This forcing of clean women into a life of sordid pollution would justify a rebellion of blood and steel. The evil is by no means wholly an economic one, but the barring out of women from wide avenues of employment, and the under-payment and irregularity of the work they are permitted to do, are potent factors in the production of our despised sisters of the street. The elucidation and solution of this great question of sex cannot be accomplished by man alone. Such attempts at repression, prevention, or direction, as men have made up to the present, have always made women the victims. The greatest wisdom, the clearest mutual understanding between men and women, the tenderest trust and inspiration, will be needed to give humanity a clean and sure solution. To this end political sex-equality and women's right to live by labour

are necessary preliminaries. The rebellion which will hasten the day of their establishment is a sacred duty.

What

#### **Methods other than those of rebellion**

are there by which women can win freedom? Education has been tried, and has failed. Service has not brought its return. Reliance on argument and reason has left a record of betrayal. Decorum, in accordance with the most conservative notions as to woman's sphere, and all the polite arts of persuasion, have bred only weakness and contempt—a fitting progeny. Woman's boasted influence has won for her but broken pledges and an annual appearance in a screaming farce played in the legislative assembly of the nation. Are these things what we seek? Or do we seek liberty, and the power to save ourselves and to help humanity, the recognition of our human status, and the co-equality of woman and man? For the first can be won by convention and quiet pleading, but the last can only be wrought out by revolt. There is no power in the hands of those shut out from citizenship and burdened by sex-oppression but the power of rebellion. Constitutional methods of redress are denied them by the denial of their right. They have to win their liberty with the things which serve the free as the mere trappings of power—or they have to rebel. And as trappings are not weapons, nor the expressions of desire the power to execute it,

#### **The unenfranchised are inevitably driven to revolt or submission.**

With the constitutional power shut off there is no other way.

There is left in the mind of the mass one infallible test through which these tactics promise to pass triumphantly—the test of success. All the doleful prognostications have so far been falsified. The Women's Suffrage Movement is more vigorous, more popular, and more respected than ever before. The question of women's citizenship is in the forefront of politics. New life thrills the veins of a corpse. Every section of a movement that was almost lifeless is now active and growing.

#### **Women are aroused**

to an extent never reached in this country before. Sophistries and pretence and courtesy will never put them to sleep again. The boycott of the Press has been broken down—a work that baffled the efforts of the best Suffragists for a generation. No methods but those of rebellion could have achieved this task; no other methods will prevent the advantage gained from being lost again. In this age, numbers, or vigour and originality are needed to open the door of the newspaper world. Propaganda has invaded the stage and the pulpit, and the

public gathers to learn its lesson before the footlights and the altar. The politician has become serious or angry—serious because of the constantly-gathering public support and the new spirit of the agitation, or angry because he is either too masculine or too partisan to welcome the promise of success which now enthuses the women's movement. Such anger is a sure sign of progress. The movement which inspires it is strong enough to be dreaded, and can no longer be treated with contemptuous indifference. This progress is due to the Neo-Suffragist rebellion, and again it is justified.

The aim and object of the

#### **Women's Freedom League**

is to force the legislature to establish equal voting rights for men and women. The Suffragists of the old school have painfully set up the necessary parts of the machine. But the problem of motion has escaped and baffled them. It is the work of the Neo-Suffragist to-day to produce that motion. The pledged majority of Parliamentarians must be made to vote. To eliminate the dangers of evasive trickery, and to ensure the preservation of the enfranchising measure from the perils of abandonment under pressure, it is necessary that a Bill shall be introduced by the Government, and have its strong support. This end can only be attained in one way—the way of vigorous, well organised, rebellious agitation. Such a course of attack as shall build up a big, popular, living movement, carrying its forces of numbers and its strength of appeal to sentiment and principle

#### **Against the Government in Power**

until it yields, will be strong enough to command success. Strength and life—the capacity to hurt or help—are the only things that count in politics. If a movement does not possess them it can be safely flouted and forgotten. Every Government candidate must be opposed at every by-election. His personal professions are of no account to women, the fact that he is a Government nominee, and will support the administration which refuses to enfranchise women is everything. Insistent demand in season and out of season—for the non-voter is always out of season—backed up by every kind of constitutional and unconstitutional protest is necessary to carry the day. The refusal to pay taxes, the refusal to acknowledge man-made laws, must be used to enlighten and enthuse the people, and must be explained and vivified by every art of propaganda. The forces which must be brought into play are the great

#### **Primary forces of emotion and numbers,**

and they must be wielded with incessant vigour. No other policy than that of rebellion can raise the forces; no other policy can pay the price;

no other policy can be used by non-citizens. The principle of liberty justifies it; the need of women sanctifies it; it *must* be. Rebellion gives the only possibility, the only probability, the only certainty, of that freedom of self and power of service which the women of the nation seek.

TERESA BILLINGTON-GREIG.

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## TALKED OUT!

BY

ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

(Being a verbatim report of the Speech at Exeter Hall,  
March 8th, 1907.)

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WHEN, some weeks ago, the Women's Social and Political Union fixed a demonstration for the date of the second reading of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, I could not help feeling that the unhappy speakers would be in the position of the coster in Mr. Sims's admirable melodrama of 'The Lights of London.' Some of you may remember the street-vendor in that play who sells ice-cream or hot potatoes according to the state of the weather, but who, in the deplorable uncertainty of the English climate, has frequently to go out equipped with both, so that he has constructed a barrow fitted up with a freezer at one end, and a burning stove at the other. We had to arrange our oratorical wares in complete ignorance of the political atmosphere, whether we should have to congratulate ourselves upon the second reading, or condole with you over the freezing of our hopes.

But I cannot agree with some of the speakers that these hopes have really been frozen; on the contrary, I think we have gained a great victory. Look at that poster of the *Pall Mall Gazette*,

suspended from our platform, and wholly devoted to the announcement that our Bill has been talked out. Look at all the papers, full of the same subject. It was only the other day that the *Times* declared that by your noisy methods you had proved your unfitness for public life. I pride myself on having been the first man to maintain that, on the contrary, only now had you proved you understood how to make British politics. And very wonderfully and rapidly you have made them. A Women's Suffrage debate is far from novel in Parliament: it has often enough held its languid course, feebly rippled by the witticisms of Mr. Labouchere. But when has a Women's Suffrage debate proceeded in a Parliament guarded by policemen? Why, we read that when the police saw half-a-dozen girls come out of an A.B.C. shop, they began to think of sending for reinforcements! When has a Women's Suffrage debate had the ear of Europe—nay, of the world? The Bill has been talked out. And Woman is called the talking sex. The Bill has been talked out! Very well, we are here to talk it in again. They may talk it out, but your processions can walk it in. They may arrest you, but they cannot arrest your movement.

You should be feeling victorious, I say, not defeated. Patience! Your movement dates precisely from the day on which the *Times* said you had proved your unfitness for politics. The B.P. period—the Before Prison period—doesn't count. And the A.P. period—the After Prison period—is yet young. John Bull must have time for digestion. But I cannot agree with the *Westminster* "Wobbler" as to the form this digestion must take—that Women's Suffrage must be first made a clear and definite issue at a General Election. How *can* it be? Both parties are *for* it. How can either obtain a clear, definite, and exclusive mandate from the country? Balfour and Campbell-Bannerman both declare that the measure is right and just. Woman between the Conservatives and the Liberals is like the donkey who starves between two bundles of straw.

But she must cease being a donkey. She must learn to unite. She is divided against herself. (Cries of "No.") Yes, look at Mrs. Humphry Ward's letter in to-day's *Times*. Sad as I was to see that letter, I yet was pleased to think some new arguments would be forthcoming from such an intellectual source, for the case against Women's Suffrage is so feeble that we speakers in its favour have to make our bricks without straw. The opposition is indeed in a pitiable position. Women already may vote for poor-law guardians, for municipal committees, for members of the school board, for the County Council—and all this the opposition has suffered more or less patiently—but some mysterious magic attaches to the M.P. This fearful and wonderful being is too holy for the touch of woman. But Mrs. Ward has found an argument, which the *Times* applauds as that of a female Daniel come to judgment, to which the *Pall Mall* devotes an ecstatic

leader, to which even the *Westminster* draws reverential attention. It is that if women had votes they would have Power without Responsibility for action. I may be deficient in intelligence, but I am absolutely unable to understand what this wonderful argument means. I have had a vote all these years, and never have I felt this mysterious responsibility, or been called on to take the faintest action. It would seem that Mrs. Humphry Ward can only refer to War. But she explicitly denies that. She says that War is only one of the many fields of action into which women cannot enter, and on which the existence of the State depends, and that we all know what they are. As I neither know what they are nor understand what they have to do with the question, I looked into the *Times* leader for enlightenment. But it only repeats, parrot-like, that there are many kinds of action. I consulted the *Pall Mall* oracle—there are many kinds of action, it echoes oracularly.

Mrs. Ward reminds me of the little girl who cried out: "Oh, mother, there are a million cats in the garden." "Oh, my child," said the mother, "you mustn't exaggerate." "Well, there are six cats." "No, no; where do you see six cats?" "Well, there *is* a cat." There is only one cat—War. But if there is a war, women have to pay the war-taxes. And if they do not go to war themselves, they have to see their sons go—which is worse. The joke about Mrs. Ward's great discovery is that the soldiers and sailors who do fight have no vote! And if women are to be debarred from Imperial affairs, as Mrs. Ward claims, how about the Primrose League, which is nothing if not Imperial? Does the distinguished authoress realize that the vote denied to her may be exercised by a convicted felon after he has served his sentence? Is she satisfied to be classed legally with infants, paupers, lunatics, idiots, and peers? This catchword of "Power without Responsibility" is Mrs. Humphry Ward's best contribution to fiction.

But if women as a whole are divided against themselves, still sadder is it that there should be divisions even among the Women Suffragists. We need, above all, unity of temper and of programme. When I last had the privilege of speaking upon this platform, some of our oldest workers took umbrage at a portion of my remarks. What was my offence? Merely that, in the innocence of my heart, in my ignorance that these ladies were not first and before anything else devoted to the cause of Women's Suffrage, I had said that Women's Suffrage must be run as an end in itself, quite regardless of Party lines. And it appeared that they were Liberals. They put Liberalism first and Woman only second. As if any cause could be safely left to the whim and mercy of a single Party! I am only an amateur politician, but I was very pleased to find Mr. Keir Hardie afterwards telling them the very same thing. If any Liberal is shocked at the idea of damaging a Liberal Government, she must remember that ministries are here to-day and gone to-

morrow, and to-morrow it might be the Conservative Government that came in for our attacks. I am not a woman, I need scarcely observe, but I am prepared to sacrifice my own politics to woman and womanhood, because the question seems to me far bigger than any other at present on the horizon of either party. Still more, then, should a woman say to herself, "The first political question for *me* is that I should be recognized as a political unit. If I am not worthy to be a voter, then at least I will not be made use of as a tool." Mr. Birrell has never come out boldly for Women's Suffrage, yet the other day he utilized a meeting presided over by his wife, to send a partisan message. But either woman is fitted to play a part in politics or she is not.

Of course, should either Party definitely affix the recognition of Woman's Rights to its programme, I could understand our whole movement pinning itself *pro tem.* to that Party. But when has Liberalism done this? Never—not even with its present huge majority. The ladies who cling on so desperately to the Liberal party afford a pathetic picture of unrequited affection. They will never desert "Mr. Micawber," who for his part continues to assure them that something will turn up, but who takes no steps whatever to turn it up; indeed, rather, as our American friends say, turns it down. Did "Mr. Micawber," when he wrote the King's Speech, in his accustomed grand style, say a single word about Women's Suffrage? And what about the Liberal Conference at Newcastle? Was not the success of Women's Suffrage there by such a small majority almost worse than a defeat? The fact is that both Parties are glad enough to have women's work—the Tories through the Primrose League, the Liberals through the Women's Liberal Federation. But when it comes to paying them for their work—ah, that is another matter. Their labour has been taken, as woman's labour is always taken, at the cheapest possible rate. Woman has been sweated by both Parties; it is time she tried to drive a better bargain.

It is true that Campbell-Bannerman is ready to vote for the Bill, and we must be thankful for small mercies. But it is not my notion of a leader that he should follow a follower. If Campbell-Bannerman had any true sense of the significance, the historical importance, of this measure, he would hasten to immortalize himself by fathering it. A lady said to President Roosevelt the other day, "If you can bring about Women's Suffrage you will be greater than Lincoln. He emancipated the black man, but you can emancipate the white woman." What an opportunity Campbell-Bannerman has missed! I am sure that unless he gets this reform through, the Tories will jump at it. After all, they have a much better chance of passing Liberal measures than the Liberals. They have the support of the House of Lords. That is, perhaps, why all the real Radicals are found on the Tory benches.

By whom was the last great Suffrage Act passed—the Household Suffrage? Why, by Mr. Disraeli, in 1867.

When that Bill was passing through the House, John Stuart Mill moved as an amendment almost the very measure that the House has considered to-day. That great apostle of our cause demanded that in the grant of Household Suffrage the occupier should have the vote regardless of sex. You can imagine the hullabaloo it evoked, what a godsend it was to all the comic papers; you have only to read them to-day to see how well a joke wears! A woman who wanted a vote was supposed to be a sort of lower creature who chewed the quid and divided the skirt. But nevertheless there was a very grave and memorable debate, and with John Stuart Mill were found no less than 73 other righteous men who voted for this amendment. 196 voted against. Where were the other 400? As usual, neglecting their duty.

This epoch-making debate took place in 1867—exactly forty years ago. Forty years of Wandering in the Wilderness; it is high time we entered the Promised Land.

Four years later—in 1871—when the Ballot Act was passed, Mr. Gladstone said in the House of Commons that there could be no harm now in woman's voting. Mr. Gladstone meant that, now that the old rowdiness and publicity attaching to elections had been abolished, the last excuse for refusing to enfranchise woman had been equally swept away. Thirty-six years ago, then, there was not a vestige of a reason left for refusing woman the vote. Yet the logical animal, man, has gone on thirty-six years as a passive resister. Women unborn in 1871 have now got girls of their own, and if the women we see on this platform had not begun to wake things up, their granddaughters and great-granddaughters would probably be doomed to go on passing annual resolutions and awaiting the chivalry of their lords and masters. It is a strange thing that English ladies should have to go to prison to-day to bring home to Englishmen the words of the last four Prime Ministers in succession—Gladstone, Salisbury, Balfour, and Campbell-Bannerman.

But what other way is open to them? "Ah, if you had only been moderate and reasonable, we should have listened to you," lots of men will tell you to-day. Well, I have consulted the pages of history. Writing of a Women's Suffrage campaign carried on nearly twenty years ago, an impartial historian says: "The agitation for Woman's Rights was conducted with great sobriety, steadiness, and moderation." And you see the result. Twenty fruitless years. Surely it was time to try insobriety, unsteadiness, and immoderation. It is true the *Times* will then seize upon your behaviour to prove the utter unfitness of woman for political life. If you act moderately, no one will ever trouble to give you



a vote, and if you act violently you are not fit to have it. "Them as asks shan't have, and them as don't ask don't want."

Even if you go to prison—what does that prove? *Mr. Punch* told you the other day that if any woman went to prison, that did not prove that the women of this country wanted the suffrage. Far from it. It only proved at most that this particular woman wanted the suffrage. And, however many ladies went to gaol, it only proved that precisely this number of ladies desired the suffrage.

Now this argument, like so many things in *Punch*, is no joke. It is a serious argument, and, what is more, a sound one. The only way of answering it would be that each prisoner should be elected by a constituency of suffragettes to represent them in gaol. Thus, a House of Ladies would be sitting in Holloway. The only question, however, is—whether Holloway is large enough to hold all the representatives of all our feminine constituencies. The same difficulty, we know, attaches to the House of Commons, which is likewise quite inadequate to the number of its members. But, then, the House of Commons relies, as we have seen, upon its members neglecting their duty. You could never rely upon that with the women.

But if, pending the establishment of this representative assembly in Holloway, we admit that every prisoned "suffragette" represents nobody but herself, then how can any argument against women at large be drawn from her behaviour? How can the *Times* say that the behaviour of this or that individual Amazon in hurling herself upon our police proves the unfitness of all other women for public life? Either the women in gaol do represent womanhood at large or they do not. If they do, how dare you deny women the vote? If they do not, how dare you say their behaviour proves women are unfit to have it? The cause of Female Suffrage stands quite apart from the merits or demerits of the new tactics. They are merely the town crier's bell, the "Oyez, oyez," to draw your attention. But the actual matter is one of logic and justice, and those men who argue that the cause of woman has been damaged by the noisy demonstrations of our gaol-birds are merely finding a new reason for their old antagonism. The wolf in *Æsop* had always a pretext for eating the lamb. The only reasonable thing to do on this argument would be to refuse the vote to those noisy, unwomanly females who went to gaol, and give it to all the women who didn't; and I am sure there is not one of the prisoners who would not be content on these terms to have secured the vote for her sisters and for all future generations of her suffering sex.

If, however, the womanliness which these females have failed in has been displayed by the ladies of the Women's Anti-Suffrage movement, then the sooner such womanliness is emancipated away

the better for all of us. The worst that you can say about our police-pummelers, after all, is that they are too manly. But these anti-suffragettes, alas! are not manly enough. Their action is redolent of all that sneaking mutual hatred of woman by woman which was unhappily engendered by woman's old over-dependence upon man. These women are guilty of treason to their sex. They are trying to set back the current of Evolution. It is ridiculous to suppose that what woman once was she must always remain. Eve might as well have remained a rib. Did Evolution say its last word when woman came out of the harem, when she dropped the Oriental head-veil from her face, and looked eye to eye upon life? Who knows what further heights she has to scale? Why do we always hear of Man and Superman, and never of Woman and Superwoman?

If you want to see the weakness of the "anti-suffragettes" you have only to imagine one of them going to prison for her ideal. The thing cannot be imagined; she has no ideal, no living fire flowing in her veins, nothing but a barren negative, nothing but a sluggish satisfaction in old superstitions. That is the saddest feature of a state of slavery: the slaves actually come to prefer their condition. It is well known that when the American slaves were emancipated, many petitioned their masters to be kept on as before—just as these women are petitioning men.

But if some of woman's worst foes are found in her own sex, some of her best friends are found in mine. This is no duel of sex—heaven be praised! This is only a duel between prejudice and reason. And no sex has the monopoly of either the one or the other. And so I have the pleasure of informing you that some of us have established, this last week—as a counterblast to the Women's Anti-Suffrage Movement—a Men's League for Women's Suffrage. But the sympathy of this body is not meant to be merely platonic. We propose to be an active political force. For, unlike the "anti-suffragettes," we shall consist mainly of voters—our guns will be loaded. Our organization will be divided into several classes—like *The Times' Library*. In Class A are those voters who put Female Suffrage before every other question; who, whatever their personal politics, will vote against, or at least refrain from voting for, the candidates of any Government that refuses to grant it. To this superior class I belong. And under the present iniquitous system of plural voting I have no less than four votes. In Class B are those who will not vote against their own party, but will support Female Suffrage in all other ways. By this means we hope to circulate our views all over the country, and to defeat the publishers of the Anti-Suffrage petition. The subscription is only one shilling—net. By this organization our fighting strength will be increased by a new battalion—nay, by a Territorial Army spread all over England.

But I do not believe the organization will live long. It will be swallowed up in the earthquake of its own success. But, be the fight long, or be the fight short, the issue is not for a moment in doubt. If it is dispiriting to fight a hopeless fight, it is heartening to know that we cannot possibly be defeated, because we are in harmony with all the upward forces of human life. Woman is bound to be emancipated; even woman herself cannot prevent it. She can only delay the great moment. No country is free while a single class is governed without representation. What, then, shall we say of a country in which half the population is legislated for like dumb, driven cattle? We shall not rest till this barbarous handicap of sex is wiped out from the statute books of civilization.

Women's Freedom League

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# ONE AND ONE ARE TWO.

BY

ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

(Being a verbatim report of the speech delivered at Exeter Hall, on Feb. 9th<sup>1907</sup> at the Demonstration of Women's Suffrage Societies.)

THE proposition that we are here to maintain is so simple, so clear, that when one is called upon to justify it, one scarcely knows what to say. The fact is, it is not our business to justify it; the onus of proof lies on the other side. How do *they* justify their monstrous proposition that one half of the human race shall have no political rights?

When Wilberforce started his campaign against slavery, it was scarcely Wilberforce's business to defend the proposition that no man has the right to make a chattel of another. The burden of proof lay on the slave-holder. How dared *he* violate elemental human rights? We, too, appear here not as defendants but as plaintiffs; not to beg and protest, but to demand and denounce. We accuse! We accuse the opposition of barbarism and injustice. We call upon Parliament to redress this historic wrong.

Our case, I say, is so simple, that it is like having to prove

that one and one are two. Indeed, this is precisely what the opposition denies. It says that one and one are not two; that in politics one man and one woman are only one, and man is that one. Savages are notoriously bad at arithmetic, but in the Colenso of civilization it is written that one man and one woman are two persons. Like most simple truths, this axiom of spiritual arithmetic has taken the human race a long time to arrive at; but, thank heaven, we are there at last! Woman is a separate and individual personality; a human soul, and, what is more to the point, a taxpayer. Even marriage cannot extinguish her. She is no longer a mere appendage to her lord, united and fused, like Campbell with Bannerman. The Married Woman's Property Act gives her the right to her separate property; with property goes taxation, and with taxation must and shall go representation.

What are the reasons for refusing this representation, for depriving half the qualified population of political power? Is this half, then, exactly the same as the other half, so that the other half sufficiently represents it? Quite the contrary. Woman has a peculiar relation to a number of problems; her standpoint, her interests, differ vastly from man's. How dare we, then, leave her out of the reckoning? Take only the last great political measure with which the male half of the population has been grappling, and which they have discussed with such masculine balance, such freedom from hysteria—I need hardly say I mean the Education Bill. If ever there was a subject on which woman had a right to a voice, it was surely this. You all know what happened to that Bill—what was the result of all those months of sane masculinity, all those torrents of temperate talk in both Houses of Parliament? Nothing; absolutely nothing. If anything could show the utter unfitness of men for public life, it was surely this mammoth fiasco, this monumental example of male mismanagement.

Yet I have nowhere seen the suggestion that the sex should be disfranchised. On the contrary, it is felt that the masculine method of HOW NOT TO DO IT is so marvellous, and the world we see around us so satisfactory, that the feminine touch might jar all this exquisite machinery, upset all this wonderfully happy world. And yet an unprejudiced observer might well conclude that our Constitution would work not only better but with a fairer balance of powers, if the House of Lords were replaced by a House

of Ladies. The Commons, having settled affairs from the man's point of view, might more justly have their ideas revised by an elective Chamber of the other sex than by a mere irresponsible body with the same masculine prejudices in an even crustier form.

The Prime Minister has hinted darkly that a way will be found of dealing with the Lords. I do not know if this is what he is hinting at. It would enable him to right two wrongs at one stroke. But, alas! I am afraid he will do justice neither to the Lords nor to the Ladies.

What is it that prevents his bringing in a Bill for Female Suffrage at once, in this very Parliament that is opening? He is in favour of it himself, and so is the majority of the House. The bulk of the representatives of the people are pledged to it. Here, then, is a measure which both parties deem necessary. A sensible woman would think that the first thing a Parliament would do would be to pass those measures about which both parties agree. Simple female! That is not man's way. That is not politics. What is wanted in Parliament is measures about which both parties *disagree*, and which, in consequence, can never be passed at all. I declare I know nothing outside Swift or W. S. Gilbert to equal the present situation of Women's Suffrage.

In 'Gulliver's Travels,' in the school of political projectors in the island of Laputa, there is a most ingenious doctor, who directs that every senator in the great council of a nation, after he has delivered his opinion and argued in favour of it, shall be obliged to give his vote directly contrary. Really there is something of this spirit in the present House of Commons as regards Female Suffrage. Perhaps a little analysis will enable us to understand this paradoxical situation. The majority have promised to vote for Women's Suffrage. But *whom* have they promised? Women. And women have no votes. Therefore the M.P.s do not take them seriously. You see the vicious circle. In order for women to get votes they must have votes already. And so the men will bemock and befool them from session to session. Who can wonder if, tired of these gay deceivers, they begin to take the law into their own hands? And public opinion—I warn the Government—public opinion is with the women.

It is true that there is still a certain opposition in the country

to Female Suffrage, but how faint, how half-hearted, compared with that ancient opposition to woman's higher education or to her wider sphere of work. It is the last sullen struggle to keep her exclusively a domestic animal. But the gibes and sneers are a mere feeble echo from the past. The fact is that woman's battle is practically won. To-day, when woman has done so brilliantly in medicine, in mathematics, in science, when a woman has made the most interesting discovery of our day—radium—the stale old flouts and jeers go off like mouldy Christmas crackers. The battle is won, I say, and it is time the enemy accepted their defeat. The vote will be the legitimate reward of woman's proved capacity in almost every sphere of work.

The legitimate but, mark you, not the logical reward. Our domestic grandmothers had as much right to a vote as our scientific sisters.

To have an opinion upon politics is not incompatible with the strictest domesticity, knitting not excluded. Nay, knitting her husband's socks gives woman the very leisure for forming wise political opinions. There is nothing essentially womanly in being ignorant and careless of the affairs of one's country. Our late Queen, who had no little to do with the affairs of her country, was a peculiarly domestic woman; indeed, quite early-Victorian. We demand this vote for woman not because of her manly capacities, but because of her womanly capacities. To mix up this question, therefore, with the question of keeping woman domestic is really a vulgar confusion. The most domestic of women may surely be allowed to leave the hearth once every four years or so, to record her vote. Her husband can even be in attendance, since he has to record his vote too. It is really less dangerous than her visit to the dentist.

But it is said this will lead to domestic quarrels. As if a couple who wish to quarrel had any need of politics. Think of the centuries in which domestic discord has got along without Female Suffrage! As a matter of fact, husband and wife are generally of the same politics, and when they are not, the possession of a vote by the wife would rather promote harmony than discord. The husband would not be left with the last word—the battle would be drawn.

But the bitterest enemy of woman is not man—it is woman, alas! A number of ladies declare they do not want the vote. Poor

things! There are ladies in China who are content to have their toes crippled. There are ladies in Turkey who are satisfied with a quarter of a husband, or even an *n*<sup>th</sup> share of a husband. But this would not justify these Chinese and Turkish ladies in keeping back their sisters who had evolved higher—who wanted a natural foot or a whole husband apiece. Besides, the vote is not compulsory. Those ladies who do not wish to exercise their right will have full liberty to stop at home, knitting, or reading *The Lady*. No band of janissaries will drag them to the polling booth; and even if they were dragged there, the ballot is secret. There is always one last resource—they can spoil their voting papers.

The paradox is that a good many of these ladies are members of the Primrose League, a League which for about a quarter of a century has been petted and pampered by Prime Ministers, whose members have been addressed as saviours of their country by all the leading lights of Toryism. These dissenting Dames tread the primrose path of politics, yet reckon not their own rede. These defenders of domesticity are found on political platforms, they pack the Albert Hall, they interfere in elections more or less illegitimately—yet they shrink from the legitimate influence of a vote. They remind me of those ladies who get their alcohol surreptitiously from grocer shops, but would be horrified to deal with a wine merchant. But the logic of facts cannot be evaded. The first lady who wore a primrose was the first suffragette. The Conservative Party, which has fostered and profited by all this feminine activity, is logically bound to crown it with the suffrage.

But there is another class of ladies, who, while desiring the suffrage, object to the present methods as unwomanly. They *are* unwomanly—and therein consists the martyrdom of the pioneers. They have to lower themselves to the manners of men; they have to be unwomanly in order to promote the cause of womanhood. They have to do the dirty work. Let those lady suffragists who sit by their cosy firesides at least give them admiration and encouragement. *Qui veut la fin veut les moyens*. And undoubtedly the best means are not the most ladylike. Ladylike means are all very well if you are dealing with gentlemen; but you are dealing with politicians. Hitherto I have kept away from political platforms; this is my maiden speech. But twenty years ago I used this very subject as the backbone of a political satire. Twenty

years ago—twenty years of ladylike methods—and how much further have they brought us? Was there the faintest progress till the other day, when a married lady went to prison to prove that she was not the same person as her husband? In that old novel of mine, Female Suffrage was passed by the Conservative Party. The prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. But I warn Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that, unless he hurries up, my words will come true. Possibly even the House of Lords will initiate the measure as a last act of spite against Sir Henry before he abolishes it.

It is true those unladylike methods are not the only new ones which might be brought into play. The fault of the old methods was not that they were ladylike, but that they were unpolitical. They exercised no pressure upon the Government. In politics only force counts. But how is a discredited minority to exercise force? The late Mr. Parnell supplied the answer. The minority must stand between the two parties, throwing its weight into either scale as opportunity offers. But does our movement possess a Parnell? Apparently, yes. The tactics which I heard the *late* Miss Billington expound were those of a Parnell in petticoats. But, alas! the task is far harder than that of the great Irish leader. He, at least, was inside the House, he and his men. The ladies are outside—with policemen in between. What possible influence can they exert on the divisions? It would appear that we are face to face with the old dilemma. To get a vote woman must already have one. But there is a little loophole. Every now and then the party in power has to venture outside its citadel to contest a by-election. The ladies are waiting. The constituency becomes the arena of battle, and every Government candidate, whether he is for Female Suffrage or not, is opposed tooth and nail. For every Government—Liberal or Conservative—that refuses to grant Female Suffrage is *ipso facto* the enemy. The cause is to be greater than mere party. Damage the Government—that is the whole secret.

Are these tactics sound? In my opinion, absolutely so. They are not only ladylike, they are constitutional. They are the only legitimate way in which woman can bring direct political pressure upon the Government. Important as may be the questions which divide the parties, woman is justified in thinking that there is none so important as her own exclusion from a voice in any of them.

And so I would venture to advise those ladies who meditate martyrdom to choose a male victim instead. Far better than to put yourself in prison is to keep a man out of Parliament. It may be said women ought to oppose only those candidates who are against Female Suffrage. But they are so difficult to find. There never was a cause with so many champions. Why, there are elections in which both candidates swear devotion, and what is poor woman to do then? No, let her remorselessly pursue the Government; there will be at least this advantage, that the candidate, having nothing to gain by declaring himself in favour of Women's Suffrage will be reduced to telling the truth. Then we shall know where we really are. Open foes are better than false friends.

But although these tactics are sound, I trust woman will not have to fight every inch of her way. I trust that man's chivalry and justice, which have awakened in New Zealand, Finland, and other outlandish places, will not much longer lie dormant in the so-called centres of civilization, and that, hand in hand, man and woman will try to work out the problems of the social order. There is no problem upon which an intelligent woman cannot throw some new light, and in neglecting woman's help, men are not merely blundering in what they do do, but blundering still more badly in what they do not do; in the terribly important provinces of life which they leave untouched by legislation. We men require this Reform as much for our own sakes as for women's sakes.

Ladies and gentlemen, strong as the Women's Suffrage Party is in brilliant women of our London world, its life-sap comes, I venture to think, from where so much of the energy, the wisdom and the earnestness of England reside—from the Provinces. Were it only a metropolitan exotic, a society luxury, it would soon pine away. But its roots go deep into our national soil, and draw their sustenance and vitality from all those myriads of obscure underground working women. These working women are *not* womanly, they are *not* domestic. True, they still weave and spin for man, but no longer by their own hearths. They must leave their homes and their babes to become machines in a world of machinery. And we men, we hypocrites, who prate so much of womanliness and domesticity, what care have we had for these? No vote can make them so unwomanly as not having a vote has made them. Perhaps, on the contrary, the vote may be the only means of

bringing them back to womanliness. For only since the working men in these dismal towns have had a vote has their lot become at all human. What Christianity cannot do, what charity cannot do, what all the thunder of your Carlyles and your Ruskins cannot do, a simple vote does. And so to these myriads of tired women who rise in the raw dawn and troop to their cheerless factories, and who, when the twilight falls, return not to rest but to the labours of a squalid household, to these the thought of Women's Suffrage, which comes as a sneer to the man about town, comes as a hope and a prayer. Who dares leave that hope unilluminated, that prayer unanswered? Surely not the most powerful Liberal Government of our generation, supported by the most powerful Labour Party of any generation. That would be too cruel an irony, too bitter a disillusionment.

For fifty years now woman has stood crying: I stand for justice—answer, shall I have it? And the answer has been a mocking "No," or a still more mocking "Yes." To-day she calls upon Parliament to have done with this flabby friendliness, this policy of endless evasion. To-day she cries: I *fight* for justice, and I answer that I *shall* have it.

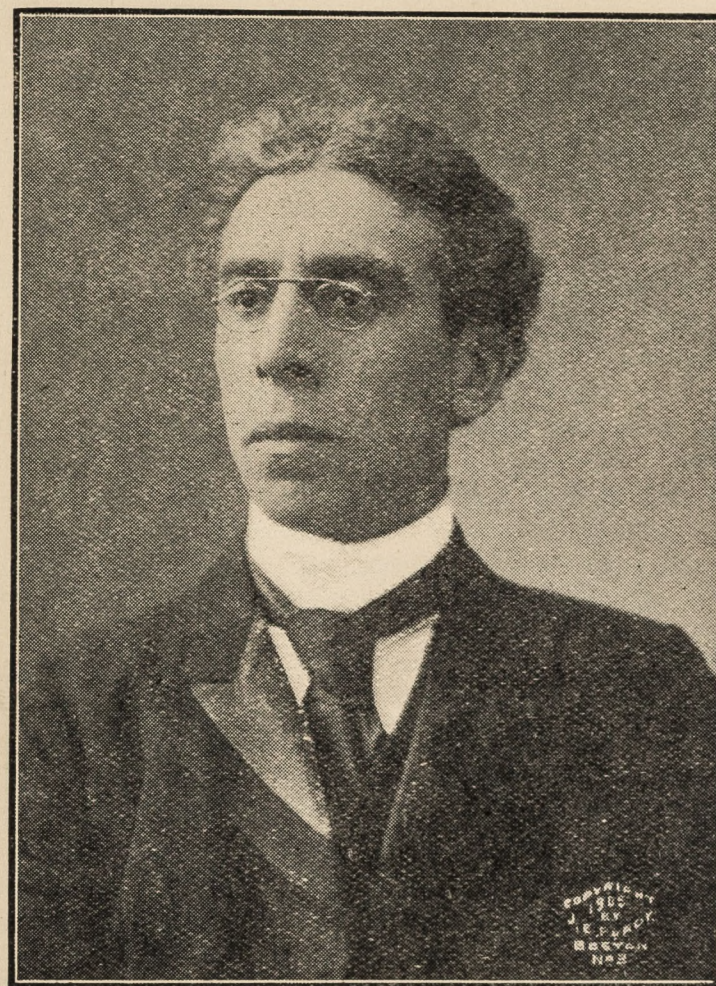
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VOTES FOR WOMEN.

## THE LORDS AND THE LADIES

BY



**Israel Zangwill**

(SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE ALBERT HALL, DEC. 11TH, 1909)

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## The Lords and the Ladies.

By Israel Zangwill.

(Speech delivered at the Albert Hall, December 11th, 1909.)

**L**ADIES do not go to public-houses and Cabinet Ministers rarely take refuge there, so that even Suffragettes are probably not familiar with a scene frequent enough on a Saturday night in those haunts of beer and jingoism. Before a brilliantly illumined bar and an admiring crowd of mates a Sir Oracle in corduroys holds forth on politics. Suddenly the door swings open, a woman's face peeps in, a face ominous, menacing, charged with reproachful reminder of another broken promise. Sir Oracle stutters, flushes, grows dumb, and with a hasty gulp at his glass sneaks out with the relics of his wages.

Not less undignified and humiliating appears to-day the position of the Liberal Party. We are at one of the most dramatic moments in the history of England. Lord and Liberal face each other in the centre of the stage, the limelight full upon them. The whole world is gathered in audience. The Liberal defies the overbearing autocrat in words worthy of the people's hero. Nothing seems wanting to the dignity of the scene. Alas! into this thrilling tableau rushes the figure of a woman—not to throw herself between the villain and the hero, but to tug at the hero's coat tails and to remind him that heroism begins at home. So far as his treatment of her is concerned, he is as great a scoundrel as the villain he is challenging. In vain his eyes flash and his breast swells with righteous democratic passion. Every noble sentiment he utters she echoes against him, every weapon of his is a boomerang that recoils on his own head. What might have been

an heroic drama has become a farce. Mr. Asquith, who with such aristocratic insolence kept the members of the Women's Freedom League four months day and night at the street-door without ever a word of answer, is a truly comic champion of the rights of the people against lordly privilege. As a believer in those popular rights, I deplore this farcical element of weakness in the Liberal case against the Lords as presented yesterday from this very platform. But I console myself by the reflection that a Liberal Party which has already thrown Liberalism overboard so far as women are concerned is no fit representative of the sacred cause of freedom, and that this cause even if defeated to-day can never die but will soon create and inspire for itself some new and nobler political incarnation. Mr. Asquith urged last night that no true Liberalism is possible till power is taken from the Lords. We say that no true Liberalism is possible till power is given to the ladies. It has been the fear of the pseudo-Liberal Cabinet that were they to accord this power to the ladies, they would be ousted by the increased conservative vote. These sordid calculations of election agents take the place of Liberalism. What a caricature of statesmanship! These calculations may not even be correct. But even if they are, I confess that if I were a high old Tory I should be more afraid of the diffusion of the democratic spirit through Female Suffrage than rejoiced over the immediate profits to my party. The sea, sweeping over the broken dyke, might deposit a little treasure-trove at my feet but I should be far more concerned for the fate of my seaside mansion at the next high tide. Every extension of trust in the people is good for Liberalism, just as every reaction to force, whether in conscription of men or in feeding of women, is to the profit of Toryism. But the purblind politicians of the Liberal Party said, "Perish Liberalism, so long as the Liberals remain in office." Had the Government put upon its programme "Votes for Women" the Liberals would now have had the best women in England behind them in their constitutional struggle. And these ladies would have been far keener than the male voter to see that their new and precious possession, or potentiality, the vote, suffered no depreciation in value at the hands of the Lords.

The Government tried to cover up its illiberalism by pretending it had received no mandate for Female Suffrage. What a flimsy excuse! As if it were possible to foresee at the polls all the contingencies which may assail a Septennial Parliament. Just as "the function of an Opposition is to oppose" so the function of a Liberal Government is to carry Liberal measures. As I have always contended for this view,

imagine how pleased I was to find it endorsed both by Mr. Asquith and Lord Morley. Mr. Asquith last night let out that the Liberal Party had not put Old Age Pensions on their programme at the last election, while Lord Morley, speaking in the memorable debate in the House of Lords and protesting against the accusation that the Budget had had no mandate from the country, urged that the particular mandate received by a Statesman at a general election—say the Disestablishment of the Church, or the Maintenance of the Corn laws—"carries with it no exclusion from that Parliament doing any other thing which it considers itself right and fit to do." And he wound up still more emphatically: "I say that a party so chosen is not and cannot be fettered in any of the matters with which it thinks fit to deal." Of course neither Mr. Asquith nor Lord Morley was thinking of Female Suffrage. But did I not say that every argument against the Lords is a boomerang that recoils on the Liberals by way of the ladies?

But even in this election the Liberals are not putting the simple issue of Female Suffrage before the electors. The Liberal ladies, it appears, have asked Mr. Asquith to renew his old promise to allow a private amendment to a Government Reform Bill "so that Female Suffrage shall not stand worse in the new Parliament than in the old." What a mild request! We have heard of the daughters of the horseleech who cry, "Give, give!" These must be daughters of the sucking-dove (if a sucking-dove can have a daughter). But mild as is the request of these Uriah Heeps in petticoats, to grant it would be impossible. It is not possible in these circumstances that "Female Suffrage shall not stand worse in the new Parliament than in the old"—for the simple reason that after a Reform Bill a Government dissolves and therefore such a measure is only brought in when its period of office is expiring. In a new Liberal Government, therefore, Female Suffrage cannot but be four years further off, four years worse off, than in the old, even on the hypothesis that this problematical amendment would be carried. But impossible though the request of the Liberal ladies was, Mr. Asquith did not undeceive them. He gravely promised that Female Suffrage should be "no worse off in the new Parliament than in the old," and these poor deluded ladies received the promise with pathetic satisfaction. Outraged as we more open-eyed suffragists are, it is some consolation to remember that, on Mr. Asquith's and Lord Morley's own showing, no mandate is necessary. Mandate or no mandate, Reform Bill or no Reform Bill, you can force Female Suffrage from the new Parliament.



Your great demonstration to-day reminds me of the great procession to Hyde Park, when it was my privilege to ride on the box-seat of a coach. At the top of Victoria Street I was espied by an Anti-Suffragist lady who still retains her friendship for me, but who was apparently pleased to see me looking very sad. Was it hopelessness of the cause, she asked me hopefully afterwards, hopelessness at the crowd's apathy? "No," I replied, "hopelessness of the crowd." For in truth at that moment I had been thinking that in all my travels through the world I had never seen a sadder sight than this English crowd—there, in the very shadow of the Houses of Parliament—these serried rows of faces, faces pale and pinched, pressing against faces savage and sensual, hooliganism cheek by jowl with hunger. As our procession moved along between these lines of peering, pitiable faces, that from my post of vantage seemed to stretch in an endless avenue, I had a nightmare sense of miles of animalism and anæmia. And the thought came to me then, as it had come to me often before—so this is the Anglo-Saxon people that possesses and rules nearly a quarter of the globe! And I asked myself once more, "How in heaven's name did this people become paramount? What is the secret of its success? Where is its greatness?" And then like a flash the answer came to me, "Here is its greatness—here in this procession. The women of England—their pluck and resolution, their sacrifices, their martyrdoms—here is the spirit that has built up the British Empire." It is this spirit formerly in the men that now seems to find shelter only in the women. For while the men are lying awake in their beds trembling at a German invasion, women are calmly sleeping in prison, dreaming only of a vote and a voice in those affairs which they are quite confident will never be managed by Germans, but which they are equally confident can be better managed by women and men in partnership than by men in monopoly.

But we are told all these struggles and sacrifices are vain—that they have even put back the cause. Tell that to the politicians. Honest people know better. They know the difference between a winning cause and a cause in its decay; between bloom and mildew. There are no dead flies on Female Suffrage. Liberalism, in the stress of its severest struggle for centuries, occupied this great Hall yesterday. But Female Suffrage occupied it the day before and occupies it the day after. Mr. Asquith has been simply sandwiched between Suffragettes. That does not look like a lost cause. Lost causes do not come to the Albert Hall. The home of lost causes, as Matthew Arnold told us in a famous apostrophe,

is Oxford. And Lord Curzon, that pillar of Anti-Suffrage, is the Chancellor of Oxford University. The mark of a lost cause is as clear as the mark of consumption on a human face. A lost cause is some creed outworn, some loyalty outlived, something that seeks to survive its own death. Such a cause is Anti-Suffrage, an attempt to perpetuate an obsolete and outworn view of the rôle of women in the civil polity. But our cause is a new birth of time, and to it belongs the future. The wheel of history never really goes back. Back-peddalling can slow down a bicycle or even stop it. But the back-peddalling brake has this peculiarity, that no amount of back-peddalling can make it go backward. And so it is with the wheel of history. Those who make the frantic but impotent effort to reverse its direction are, like the dreamers of Oxford, mere survivals from an age that has passed. Their dream, like so many mediæval dreams, is not without a beauty of its own, and in its own time was not without a basis of truth. It was a dream of woman's place at the hearth of man's service, it was a poetry of domesticity. But it was a poetry that forgot the prose facts, and with the evolution of modern life these facts began forcing themselves more and more upon the attention, till at last it was impossible to harmonise them with the old idyllic conception. Woman did not remain in the home. Hunger forced her into the factory or even the mine. The industrial development took her from spinning at the hearth to spinning by steam. Even when she belonged to the higher strata of society, the death of her lord and protector often left her face to face with practical contingencies, if not harsh necessities, for which her education had supplied no training.

When a lady of this sort tried to earn her own living, says an authoress of 120 years ago, she had to reckon with the sneers of "females of the cast of people of style." What an excellent description of our own Anti-Suffrage party. Even as late as fifty years ago, observes Lady St. Helier in her recently-published *Recollections*, the world would have shuddered at the idea of ladies becoming milliners, florists and dress-makers. Surely we all remember that shudder up to five years ago.

There is a school of historians which maintains that it is economics that lies like a skeleton behind all history, and certainly it is the economic change in the position of woman that lies behind the demand for Female Suffrage, and that is absolutely certain to bring it to pass. For if a lost cause is an attempt to make life go backwards, every cause which is part of the forward movement of life is marked for victory.

And Female Suffrage is on the great high-road of female evolution. Towards this goal woman has been toiling for centuries. Her fight to win each successive mile has been no less bitter than her present struggle. Her entry into the Medical Profession was perhaps even more vigorously resisted. Her eligibility to the County Council was the subject of as fierce a contest. Even her riding on a bicycle or an omnibus-top was once a scandal. Perhaps it was the bicycle and the garden-seat that carried her furthest forward. But mile by mile—afoot or a wheel or aloft—she has won her way and every one of the milestones bears with ever-lessening figures the words "To Westminster."

But not alone is Female Suffrage on the high-road of female evolution. It is on the high-road of male evolution. For men's politics too all over the world are becoming increasingly democratic—the vote is extended to an ever-widening circle, and an ever-lowering social status. You cannot go much lower without at last coming to woman. It is often said that Female Suffrage would lead to Adult Suffrage. It is far more likely that Adult Suffrage would lead to Female Suffrage. We do not indeed welcome this road to it, for we know it is longer. But anyhow, since Female Suffrage stands at the cross-roads of two main lines of human evolution, each of itself leading straight to it, the idea that humanity will not arrive at it may be absolutely dismissed. Mankind cannot possibly miss its way. Indeed the pioneers of civilisation are already there. What a humiliation for Englishmen that these pioneers should be Finns, Australians or Americans.

It is really rather more important than being first at the Pole, North or South. Much as I admire our Shackleton, still more admirable would be an Unshackleton. But be we first or be we last, arrive we must. For while the Anti-Suffragists are engaged in a vain attempt to roll Time backwards, we have Time as our forwarder and friend. Every moment that ticks away is our ally, every day is on our side, while against Anti-Suffrage fight the stars in their courses.

What can be more sustaining than such a conviction? Many years ago I travelled through a sub-tropical wilderness. The journey necessitated rising each day before sunrise and riding long hours through the heat ere we could arrive at the well which marked our camping-place for the night. By sunset we were all so worn out, that we could scarcely sit our horses, and our one thought was to arrive at the camp which had been set up by the negroes and Arabs who travelled in advance. At last, mounting some ascent, we would catch

sight of the white tents gleaming afar. Distances were very deceptive and it sometimes took two hours' hard riding to reach them. But from the moment we caught our first glimpse of them, the aching passed from our limbs and the perspiration cooled on our foreheads. There were the tents—there was rest, there was home. Every moment of that last stretch, hard and long though it was in reality, was soothed and sweetened by that welcoming whiteness. So it is in this movement of ours, in this forward ride of humanity. There are the tents! Not for a single moment is our goal hidden, our course uncertain, our arrival dubious. We ride always in sight of home and rest. No false path, no fog, no precipice. Tired we may be, but never for an instant does our heart sink. There before us is the white gleam. Only a little further. Let us push on. Let us push on.

ANONYMOUS

# THE WOMEN'S BILL IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

## TEXT OF THE BILL.

TO EXTEND THE PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE TO WOMEN OCCUPIERS.

*Be it enacted, etc.:*

1. Every woman possessed of a household qualification, or of a ten pound occupation qualification within the meaning of The Representation of the People Act (1884), shall be entitled to be registered as a voter, and when registered to vote for the county or borough in which the qualifying premises are situate,
2. For the purposes of this Act, a woman shall not be disqualified by marriage for being registered as a voter, provided that a husband and wife shall not both be qualified in respect of the same property.
3. This Act may be cited as "The Representation of the People Act, 1910."

The above is the text of the Woman's Suffrage Bill, introduced by Mr. Shackleton, and read a second time on July 12th, 1910. It is known as the "Conciliation Bill," from the fact that it is framed in such a way as to secure support from suffragists of all political opinion, and thus offers a practical solution of the question on non-party lines. All friends of the movement welcome such a solution, for it is recognised that unless and until the government of the day consents to make Woman's Suffrage a government measure, and to carry it through as such, this is the only possible method of advance.

The Bill in question was drafted by a strong committee, consisting of members of all political parties, who are satisfied that it "(1) meets the objections of Liberal and Labour members to any increase of the ownership or plural vote; (2) satisfies Unionist opinion as a cautious and moderate advance; (3) is a simple measure which can be debated without an undue demand on the time of the House."

The practical effect of the Bill would be to place on the parliamentary register those women who are already entitled to vote at municipal elections. Enquiry has shown that these are about 1,000,000 in number, and distributed among all classes of society in such a way that each class is fairly represented in proportion to its numbers.

*[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*

The Second Reading was debated on July 11th and 12th, and in spite of strenuous opposition from the most prominent members of the government, the result of the division was as follows:—

For the Bill...	...	...	299
Against ...	...	...	190
Majority for ...			109

It should be noted that this majority is larger than that given by the present House of Commons for the Budget of 1909 (*i.e.*, 93), or for the Veto Resolutions (*i.e.*, 103).

We have repeatedly heard, during the General Election and afterwards, that the whole policy of the government is to be directed to securing "that the will of the people as expressed by their elected representatives in Parliament shall prevail." Since the House of Commons has so decisively shown its desire that this Conciliation Bill should become law, we call upon the Government to carry their own principles into practice, by giving facilities for its passage during the present session. Otherwise, while seeking to destroy the Veto of an unrepresentative House of Lords, they will obviously be guilty of themselves placing the Veto of a non-elected cabinet on the declared will of a large majority of the House of Commons.

We print here points from the speeches made by some of our supporters in the Debate.

**Mr. SHACKLETON** (Labour): I would like, first of all, just to say what the Bill contains. The householders will amount to about 90 per cent. of those who come under this Bill. The occupier can vote if she inhabits a house, even a single room, and however low its value, provided that she has full control of that house or room. Then there are those who occupy premises valued at £10 per inhabitant. This will bring in a large number of small shopkeepers and typists and other people, who have offices of their own, and will also enable women living together to rank as joint occupiers, provided the house is worth £10 for each occupier. Married women are not excluded altogether, though few will, in fact, be qualified, since husband and wife may not both be registered in respect of the same premises. There are cases like those of sailors, fishermen, or commercial travellers, who can rarely use it, and they may ask to have the wife made tenant of the house, so that the household vote may be left in her hands. . . .

If this House could but realise the heroism to be witnessed among the women of the working classes, their sympathies would be enlisted in support of a measure such as this. Many a poor widow left with children has to face the battle of life and provide

shelter and food for her family. In her efforts she joins in the responsible work of the State and of her district, and yet she is debarred from exercising the vote which is given to the male occupier. Many widows are left with their families as the result of mining disasters and other accidents. Surely these women are entitled to have a voice in settling the laws of this country along with the male kind. Has the Chancellor of the Exchequer ever recognised in his official capacity what it must mean to a widow who has to work and budget for the maintenance of the home and children? It is an easy matter for the right hon. Gentleman to make a Budget when he has the money to budget with. He would find it much more difficult to perform the duty if he had to budget with 15s., 18s., or £1 a week. I have seen these women struggling under their responsibilities, and I have always felt that it was a considerable hardship upon them that they should be debarred from taking their proper place in the affairs of the country.

**The Right Hon. R. B. HALDANE**, War Secretary (Liberal): If you look at the whole history of this question you will see that there has been a steady growth and development in the position which women have taken. Our common law has been the subject of great change. There was a time when women practically had no separate personalty from that of their husbands, and when they could not get any position in the State at all; when they were excluded from the Universities, shut out from the professions, and from all power of moulding public opinion. But what is the state of things to-day? Step by step and foot by foot that position has been modified, and in many cases altogether changed. To-day, when you see women taking an increasing part in public life year after year, and taking that part as much in the affairs of Empire as in affairs at home, when you have on every hand the manifestation of an intention that that part should not only be not restricted, but that it should be increased, how is it possible to come forward to-day and use arguments which would have been applicable if you were dealing with a state of things in which the soil was unbuilt upon and the edifice of the emancipation of women had not risen to heights which have become very considerable? . . . Every month brings forward some new phase of this great social question upon which the interest of women is so intense. The practical problems of to-day are problems which are bringing women more and more into contact with them. There is hardly one phase of legislation which is not followed by an organisation on which women are more and more represented, and in which women handle these questions on what I will call the concrete side. If that is going on more and more year by year, have we not reached a stage at which it is quite impossible to deal with these questions on

the footing you could do ten or twenty years ago? It seems to me that this question is becoming almost an urgent one—urgent because of the character of the problems with which we are dealing. Everyone knows that the position of women in point of remuneration, of their wages, is not as good as is the case with men, and I cannot dispute what was said by the hon. and learned member (Mr. F. E. Smith) that that is to some extent due to the fact that women cannot associate themselves together with that force and with that authority which is given by the fact that people possess a certain political footing in the State. If for that reason alone I should like to see that happen.

**The Right Hon. ALFRED LYTTLETON**, late Colonial Secretary (Conservative): One thing is perfectly certain, it cannot be right with one voice gratefully to accept from women political assistance and to charge them and to commission them authoritatively to advocate political causes, and with another voice to deprecate their political existence, and to refuse them their most elementary political functions. I say such a position cannot be right. I go even a little further, and I think to ask these services with one voice and deprive them of political existence with another is going dangerously near to sacrificing the standard of personal honour.

The position which I am taking up is stronger when you look at it from the point of view of the State than it is from the point of view of the individual. Opinions may differ very widely and very materially as to the wisdom of the recent trend of events. No one can possibly deny—indeed, it is absolutely true—that the State and the municipality have, rightly or wrongly, been constantly enlarging their spheres of activity by encroaching on spheres which were originally occupied by individuals or by other parties. It is only necessary to mention education, the care of the poor, sanitation, public health, housing, effective legislation on the hours of labour, trade union legislation as affecting women, to see that every one of these subjects exhibit, as they do, the very centre and core of our domestic legislation.

Is there anyone on this side of the House so besotted with personal vanity as to say that on these subjects great assistance has not been obtained from the counsel and influence of women?

In regard to the argument which my hon. and learned friend, the member for the Walton Division, put forward as to the men of the East, I may say that nobody had more to do than I had when I was at the Colonial Office with the natives of the East. They were quite unaware of the existence of the Prime Minister or of the gentlemen who sit on these benches or on the benches opposite; yet, though many millions of them were ignorant of the existence of this House, they showed a passionate loyalty to the Great White Queen.

**LORD HUGH CECIL** (Conservative): One of the previous speakers spoke about going down to the arena, and I gathered that when he went to the polling booth he felt rather like a gladiator. Nothing could be more serenely tranquil than the polling booth in which I recorded my vote. There were the usual party representatives outside, and the usual officials inside. I went in and asked for my paper and marked it. I did not come forth from the polling booth reeling, mopping my brow, and crying "This is no woman's work." The higher faculties of my brain were not required. I feel quite unable to understand why that process of voting is one which any intelligent woman could not exercise quite as well as I can. It is a serenely tranquil, an austere refined, and from beginning to end a thoroughly ladylike occupation.

It may be said that voting is a simple matter, that anybody can make a mark on a piece of paper and drop it into a box, but that there is all the mental preparation that goes before, and all the powers of decision that are bound up in the political influence which the vote implies. But all that women have already. It is only this actual technical process of giving a vote that they have not got.

**Sir ALBERT SPICER** (Liberal): It appears to me that this Bill and the claim of the women is, after all, a simple demand for the rights of citizenship on the part of those who are bearing their share of the responsibilities. Why is it necessary they should have the vote? Surely it is fair to say it will bring them the political status which will be in harmony with their industrial and educational position. It will give her the direct means of obtaining influence in legislation on questions in which women are specially interested. It will secure for women, as for men, the attention of Parliament to their wants and wishes. It is said they can obtain those to-day. I put it to right hon. and hon. gentlemen, when they are in the middle of an election contest, do they not pay far more attention to the claims and desires of those who have votes than to those who have not? We try to be as polite as we can, but, after all, the things in which we are really interested at the time of a political contest are the wishes and desires of those who have votes, and, with the growing increase of women in the professions and industries, it does seem to me they are entitled to the vote.

**Mr. WILLIAM REDMOND** (Nationalist): We see in Ireland as you see here in the local life of the country most wonderful service given to the general community by women in matters of local

government and everything appertaining to the interests of the people, such as education, health, and other things affecting their daily lives. In Ireland, as in this country, women do an incalculably great work, and render great service, and under these circumstances it is perfectly absurd in my opinion for hon. members in this House to get up and speak in this lordly way of women, as if they were really inferior beings. I think it is a monstrously unjust and unfair state of things that whereas some of the most worthless outcasts of the population—men who have disgraced the name of manhood in every way—are allowed at an election time to use the vote, and to raise their voice as to how this country is to be governed; ladies, at the same time, of the highest attainments, who give their services from morning to night to strengthen the nation, to make the lives of the people happy, and to train the youth of the country, have not even the same privilege and the same voice as the outcasts. That seems to me to be something which ought not to prevail in a country boasting of civilisation. . . .

The Australian example is a good example. I do not care whether you poll the ministers or representatives of one Church or another in Australia—I do not care in what light the matter may be looked at—it is conceded all round that the enfranchisement of women in the Commonwealth of Australia has done much for the public welfare, and has served the community immensely.

**Mr. KEIR HARDIE** (Labour): It has been said by the hon. Member for the Walton Division of Liverpool that there is no strong or considerable volume of opinion among the women of this country in favour of their enfranchisement. I would ask what evidence is to be accepted on this point if the evidence which is available is not sufficient. There is not a body of organised women in the country, no matter what their political or social status, that does not demand the franchise, and that does not support the present Bill. The Women's Liberal Federation supports it, the Women's Unionist Association supports it, the Women's Representative Guild, representing nearly 26,000 married women, and the Women's trades unions, representing 180,000 women, support the Bill, and if that be not evidence of the opinion of the women of the country upon the point I do not know what the word "evidence" means. . . .

I respectfully submit that with that evidence behind it we have no right to assume that the women do not want the vote, and we have every right to assume that they accept this Bill, and that the women of the country are behind it and give it their support. . . .

We know exactly what this Bill proposes to do, and we know exactly the number of women whom it would enfranchise, and

approximately we know the class of women who would be enfranchised. I have taken the trouble, as I wish every other Member had done, to make investigations in regard to my own constituency. Naturally, the class of women who will be enfranchised is according to the class of constituency. My constituency is composed almost exclusively of working people, but so are the bulk of the constituencies in the country. The number of constituencies in which the middle classes and the wealthy people predominate is very small. There are in my constituency 2,686 women municipal electors. These would be mainly enfranchised if this Bill became law, and the highest estimate which had been made on an examination of the register of the middle-class women—I do not speak of them disparagingly at all—does not exceed 1 per cent. Therefore over 2,000 of the 2,600 who would get the vote are working women, widows for the most part whose husbands have been killed at their work or whose husbands have died comparatively young—widows, working spinsters, and others of that type who have the franchise now. It is these who would come on the Parliamentary register if this Bill were to become law. . . .

The hon. Member for the Walton Division commented on the fact that if a woman broke the law her husband was responsible for the payment of the fine, and he pointed out that this showed women's superior position under the existing law.

It did not seem to occur to him that the same thing is true of a man's dog. If it breaks the law the dog does not bear the punishment: it is his master. It is that very fact that women are protesting against, being relegated in the eye of the law to a position of inferiority. They are asking for equality in the eye of the law, and this Bill is one way of achieving it.

**Mr. WALTER M'LAREN** (Liberal): We are also told that it is not for us to pass this measure because no other great country has accepted it. It seems to me a strange argument to come from the mouths of Englishmen that we are to look to other countries for precedents. We create precedents, we do not follow them. Hon. gentlemen who speak in that sense if they had lived in the time of Simon de Montfort would have said that we should not have a House of Commons because no other first rate Power had one. That is exactly the same argument. We do not need, in this country, to be beholden to other countries. It is our privilege and our pride that we set the example to other countries, and as we have undoubtedly, in this country, placed women already in a greater political position than in any other country in the world, so it is our right and our duty and our privilege to lead the civilised world in this respect also. . . .

If you want to know what is the force of this agitation as compared with the agitation for the reform of the franchise in 1866 and 1884, I say, with a perfect recollection of those two agitations, that the agitation now is more real, more alive, and more determined than the reform agitation of 1866. Though I was a boy at that time, I remember my uncle, John Bright, who took an active part in that agitation, saying that in 1866 it was like flogging a dead horse to try and arouse an interest in Parliamentary reform. Even in 1884 there was, on the part of agricultural labourers, nothing like the demand for the franchise that there is on the part of the women at the present day . . . .

It is one of the unfortunate saddening features of political life just now that there seems to be a constant disposition on the part of men either to get something or to say that too many burdens are being put upon them. That is not the view women take. The view that women take is that they claim to be given an opportunity to do, to be, and to serve. I believe that they would introduce into the politics of this country a new element of devotion, heroism, and self-sacrifice, and of real earnest thought for the good of their country.

**Mr. CHANCELLOR** (Liberal): When we deal with measures affecting women, or affecting any other class of the community, can we deal effectively with them unless we can deal with them from their point of view? We may be as generous as we like. We may be desirous of doing the utmost justice, but we are likely to make serious mistakes if we exclude their views. I suggest that the wider the experience, the deeper the insight and the greater the knowledge gained from experience we can bring to bear on any proposals which this House sets out to deal with, the more likely are our measures to be effective for the purpose for which they are introduced, and the more likely are they to be a settlement of the various questions as they come up.

**The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR** (Conservative): My view is that a democracy, properly understood, is government by consent, broadly speaking. The idea that you can give to every citizen in this country of a given age exactly the same weight in the councils of the Empire, or that if you did give them precisely and exactly the same weight, that we should get on better than now, seems to me to be rather visionary; but I do think that whenever you get to

the point that a class feels itself as a class excluded, and outraged by being excluded, then those who believe that democracy, properly understood, is the only possible government for any nation at the stage of political evolution which we have reached, must consider whether the government which is by hypothesis not a government by consent, can be turned into government by consent. I do not speak of the whole class of women, because it is hard to know exactly what their views are, but I think that everybody must feel that the number of ardent spirits who are doing admirable work in public life at this moment, and who think they ought to have the same rights as are given to every male occupier, is a large and growing number which cannot and ought not to be ignored, and a number which, so long as you ignore it, will prevent your being able to say with any truth that our government is government by consent. I say that when women have begun, or any large and important section of women have begun, to feel that they suffer under hereditary disability, it is your business to consider the situation, and to see if you cannot remedy the grievance. . . . .

We are told by some that women are incapable of rising to the height of all those considerations which influence Imperial politics; they are good enough to manage New Zealand, but they cannot manage or help to manage the Empire; they are good enough in this country to look after our municipal affairs, but they are not good enough to manage our national affairs; they may have a vote for dealing with the police, but they must not have a vote for dealing with the Army—rather a subtle distinction. I venture to say that there is not the slightest ground for thinking that at all events the women enfranchised by this Bill would be less competent to deal with those great Imperial questions than any other class of the voting population. . . . .

They may do everything connected with the active political life of a country in which political life glows in every section of society—they may do everything in connection with that life except the single formal operation of putting a cross after the name of a candidate. Talk of logic, Is that logic? Talk of the bar of sex, Is that where you wish to draw the distinction between the duties of the sexes? Talk of any change of this sort being injurious to the future of women as women; if the future of women as women is injured by their being mixed up in political life, their cause is lost already. They are mixed up with it; they are daily more and more mixed up with it. You who oppose this Bill are yourselves urging them to mix themselves up with it. In these circumstances you cannot complain if they feel that by this exclusion under the existing law there is a hereditary slur upon their sex. That is a policy which might have been justifiable, and I think was justifiable, in times gone by, but with the development of political instincts, political institutions, and political discussions, it is tolerable no longer. . . . .

**Mr. KETTLE** (Nationalist) : I rather fear it is not historically accurate to say that the conception of political freedom so far as it exists in this country has come about by the peaceful pressure of agitation. The Prime Minister said it has been a noble tradition of this House always to listen to justice and never to listen to violence. I cannot but regard it as an unhappy coincidence that the passage of one of the most important Franchise Bills should have been accompanied by the pulling down of the railings in Hyde Park. I do agree with the Prime Minister that violence is to be deprecated. The charge I have to make against the Prime Minister is this, that being confronted in the country with a state of feeling which practically amounts to a dormant revolution, he has not, by his attitude, endeavoured to meet the demand which lies behind that wave of feeling to give some hope that this cause, which is held so much at heart by these vast organisations of women, shall come to success. I hope we have now come to better days and that argument and agitation will prevail. But in the interests of historical accuracy I think it is, perhaps, permissible at this moment to recall a two-line description of the fashion in which freedom has been obtained according to Mr. Rudyard Kipling,

"Axe and torch and tumult, steel and gray-goose wing,  
Wrung it inch and ell, and all slowly from the King."

**Sir ALFRED MOND** (Liberal) : We are told that we are letting loose a vast horde of voters—a vast body of womenkind who are going to interfere in our politics, and then only heaven knows what is going to happen to the Empire in the future! One would think a great many hon. members have never seen an English woman, that they have no relatives, have never fought an election. The women to be enfranchised vote now for county council and municipal elections, and yet they are pictured as a horde of creatures who, as parliamentary voters, are going to displace man's sovereignty and dismember the Empire. . . .

The only argument I have heard throughout the whole of the debate which has any power at all was that all government was based on force, and, if you allowed women to have the franchise, they might pass laws, but they would be physically so weak that they could not coerce the minority, and government would therefore come to an end. I think there is a very false analogy in the whole of that argument. This force has not only been the force of the majority of the country, it has been the force of the minority; when tyrants governed the country, they were in the minority, but they were rich enough and powerful enough to obtain troops to keep down the rest of the population, and they certainly managed to govern by force. The Romans were certainly in the minority throughout the Empire, but, with a better organisation and being better armed, they managed to govern by force. The real fact is government

rests on force, but not on force by a majority of voters, but at the hands of an Executive. If the Executive has control of the armed forces of the country, it can very soon coerce a minority of voters.

**Mr. RUNCIMAN**, President of the Board of Education (Liberal) : This Bill would give the right to some women to express their views in an election, but there is nothing sensational or evil in that. The right hon. gentleman the Leader of the Opposition pointed out that they labour now under a sense of grievance. I for one want to see that grievance removed; not because I believe it would have a very large effect on our Imperial affairs; in only one effect am I absolutely certain that it would to some extent affect the complexion of this House. I believe if you had a large number of women voters on the register it would be impossible for any party which has as a candidate a man of bad character to succeed. I am quite sure we do not want them in this House, and one of the ways of keeping them out of this House is to have a large solid block of the electorate who will take no part in their election. My own point of view is that women are just as stable, and that they are guided far more by their opinion and judgment in moral causes than men. On the whole, you will find that women voters, so far from being fluid and uncertain, may be relied on even more than many of the men who compose constituencies not far removed from this House. It is because I believe that that element would have a good effect in the selection of candidates and a steadying effect upon many constituencies that I am in favour of woman suffrage. . . .

It is said that Imperial politics are outside woman's normal sphere. It is no more possible to draw a circle round the sphere of Imperial politics than it is possible to draw a circle round woman's legitimate activities and interests. Imperial politics travel far outside the Government and control of armies and navies. Housing, education, the care of small children, and of the feeble-minded, the regulation of women's and children's labour—these are all subjects peculiarly within woman's province; and once you have invaded her province you are in justice bound to give woman an equal right to express her view on these great questions.

**Mr. PHILIP SNOWDEN** (Labour) : I want to deal not so much with the general question of woman suffrage as with the arguments advanced in opposition to this particular Bill. I support the Bill for the best of all possible reasons—namely, that it is the only Bill which can unite the various sections of opinion which are in favour of the extension of the suffrage to women. That is the best recommendation of the Bill. We cannot carry a Woman Suffrage Bill



except by a compromise of that kind. We can get no Government to take up this question. The present Government is hopelessly divided on it, and if we had a Unionist Government they would be disunited. Therefore, it is only by a Bill which will be a compromise that we will conciliate the differences of opinion, and that we can hope to carry the measure into law. . . . .

Practically speaking, the passing of this measure will give the Parliamentary vote to the women who have the municipal franchise at present. Four-fifths of the municipal voters are women who have to earn their own living. The Home Secretary showed his most intimate knowledge of working-class life and conditions by the figures which he gave and misquoted from Mr. Charles Booth's account of the occupations of the women householders in London. In giving the figures to the House, let me say I am inclined to think that there is a larger percentage of women on the municipal register in London who are not of the working class than is the case in most of the large towns of the country. Take the occupiers of London and you find that 51 per cent. of the women are working for wages and, according to the Home Secretary, these were the only women who were entitled to be regarded as working women. Another very large and important class of working women the Home Secretary ignored altogether are the 70,000 widows of working men who are housekeepers, women who take in lodgers, women who have grown-up children to whom they act as housekeepers; they account for 38 per cent. of women occupiers, so that in those two classes you have 89 per cent. of the present women occupiers. I come to another large class still to be accounted for. There are 5 per cent. who have only one servant, but in that number there is a very considerable number of lodging-house keepers, and the servant is really a domestic help employed in earning her means of livelihood. So that 94 per cent. of women occupiers in London who earn their living belong to the working classes. . . . .

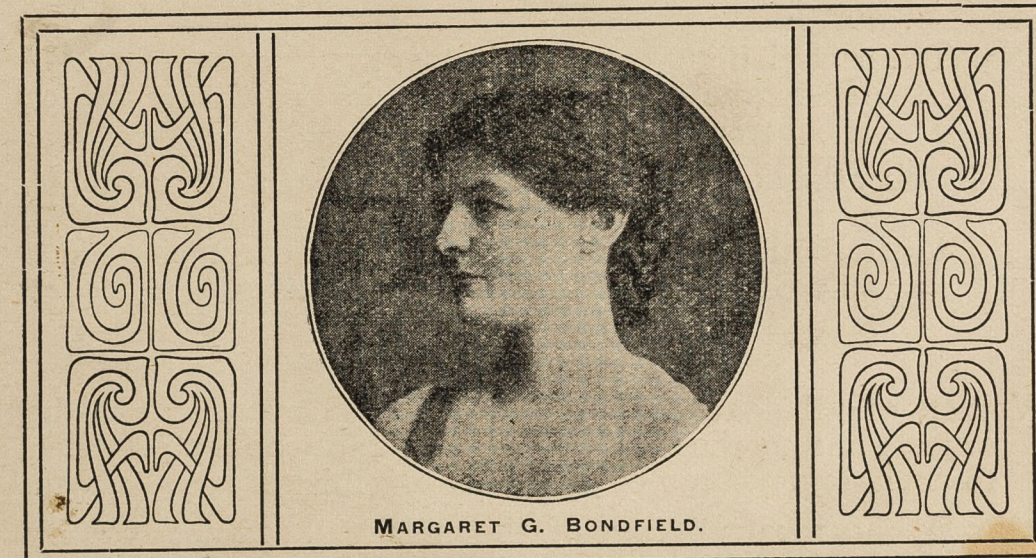
I know the women who are fighting the battle of their sex, and desire to pay my tribute of respect to their heroism, devotion, and high-mindedness. I know something—at least as much as a man can know—of how they feel that the political status of women, even of the most accomplished and public-spirited women, is lower than that of the most degraded and ignorant man. I know, too, how tens of thousands of women are longing for the passing of this Bill, that they may have an opportunity of working in other great causes and standing side by side with men as comrades and friends in helping to solve the great problems of human misery. I do not speak to women; I speak to men; and I appeal to the men of this House to rise above political prejudice and masculine bigotry, and to honour themselves by honouring and respecting the womanhood of the nation.



TERESA BILLINGTON-GREIG.

**Q VERBATIM REPORT OF  
DEBATE ON DEC. 3rd :: 1907  
Q SEX EQUALITY (TERESA  
BILLINGTON-GREIG) VERSUS  
ADULT SUFFRAGE (MAR-  
GARET G. BONDFIELD) :: :: ::**

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MARGARET G. BONDFIELD.

## Votes for Women.

### WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE.

(Formerly W.S.P.U.)

*Hon. Secretary:*  
Mrs. E. HOW MARTYN, B.Sc.

*Hon. Treasurer:*  
Mrs. DESPARD.

*Hon. Organising Secretary:*  
Mrs. BILLINGTON-GREIG.

#### OBJECTS.

To secure for Women the Parliamentary Vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

#### METHODS.

The objects of the League shall be promoted by:—

1. Action entirely independent of all political parties.
2. Opposition to whatever Government is in power until such time as the Franchise is granted.
3. Participation in Parliamentary Elections in opposition to the Government candidate and independently of all other candidates.
4. Vigorous agitation upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned.
5. The organising of women all over the country, to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom.
6. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods, such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence, and deputations to public representatives.

#### MEMBERSHIP.

Women of all shades of political opinion who approve the objects and methods of the League, and who are prepared to act independently of party, are eligible for Membership.

All members must approve of, though they need not actually participate in, militant action.

(15) 324.30941  
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¶ VERBATIM REPORT OF  
DEBATE ON DEC. 3rd :: 1907  
¶ SEX EQUALITY (TERESA  
BILLINGTON-GREIG) VERSUS  
ADULT SUFFRAGE (MAR-  
GARET G. BONDFIELD) :: :: ::

MISS : ISABELLA : FORD : IN : THE : CHAIR

MANCHESTER :

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1908

# SEX EQUALITY VERSUS ADULT SUFFRAGE.

THE CHAIRMAN:

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I would first explain the object of the meeting to-night, as I am in the chair, and I have a very great respect for the office of chairman. I consider it is an office in which one has to speak as little as possible, and the object of the Chairman is simply to announce what is going to happen and to be absolutely impartial. So that I would just announce what the object of the meeting is, who has got it up, and what is going to happen. The two Societies—the Women's Freedom League and the Adult Suffrage Society—have got up this meeting in order that the question may be aired as to what is the most practical course to pursue in order to obtain representation for rather more than one-half of the human race in Great Britain, and it is as to whether it would be better to alter the basis of the franchise and bring in Adult Suffrage, or whether the quickest way to obtain that Adult Suffrage, and the most practical way, is to destroy the sex disability first, so that when Adult Suffrage arrives women may not be left out, as has often been the case. That simply is the question to be discussed to-night. The two speakers will be Mrs. Billington-Greig, the Honorary Organising Secretary of the Women's Freedom League, and Miss Bondfield, who is the Assistant Secretary of the Shop Assistants' Union and President of the Adult Suffrage Society. (Applause.) Mrs. Billington-Greig will open for half an hour; Miss Bondfield will answer her in another half an hour; then the opener will have a quarter of an hour and Miss Bondfield another quarter: Mrs. Billington-Greig will have ten minutes, Miss Bondfield ten minutes, and Mrs. Billington-Greig will then close the debate in another five minutes. Then there will be a collection. (Hear, hear.) Yes, that is the most necessary part of the meeting, and I am going to make special appeal for it, because meetings like this are expensive. I come from the North. Meetings are not so expensive there—rents are high in London, and everything is very expensive. I shall make a special appeal for the collection when it comes. Then there will be a resolution that will be put to the meeting, and you will be able to vote for it or against.

Then the meeting will close, and those I hope who are of one way of thinking will have been converted to another way of thinking, and those who are now of another way of thinking will have gone round, because it is extremely beneficial to see everything from both points of view, and I think that those who are prejudiced on one side ought especially to listen to the arguments of the other side. I speak with feeling, because I am a very prejudiced person myself, and therefore I endeavour to listen always with patience and respect to the arguments of my opponents, and I expect you to do the same. (Applause.) I will now call upon Mrs. Billington-Greig to open the Debate.

Mrs. BILLINGTON-GRIEG :

Madam Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen, the resolution to which I am going to speak to-night, and which I hope is going to be carried, is to this effect :—

“That the immediate granting of the Parliamentary Franchise to Women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to Men is the speediest and most practical way to real democracy.” (Cheers.)

(I would like to remark at once that if you applaud too much you will limit the speaker's time.) The first condition which I want to emphasise is this, that at the present time there are not anywhere else in existence so many contradictory franchise conditions as we have ourselves to compete with, but the gravest, the most serious, the most fundamental, the most far-reaching of these particular anomalies, contradictions, or injustices, lies in the fact that, whatever the conditions may be for the male half of the race, no franchise rights whatever are granted to the female half of the race. (Shame.) That is the gravest, the most far-reaching, and the most unjust of all existing anomalies. Other anomalies shut out for a time certain classes of men—some small minority of men may even be shut out permanently—but the thing which to-day prevents this country from even approaching a condition of democracy in which the people shall govern themselves—is that, whatever franchise conditions exist, women are not allowed to benefit by them. So the sex disability, the bar which shuts out women, is the gravest and most serious block with which we have to contend. Where women themselves are concerned this is the primary consideration. It may be that they object to the franchise conditions laid down by men; it may be that they approve of them; but whether they approve or condemn, the primary and most important fact—the funda-

mental fact—the fact they cannot get beyond is this, that they are not allowed to benefit under them. If the franchise is restricted so that only earls and dukes should be allowed to vote—who do not now vote at all—or if it is extended so that every man is allowed to vote, the women similarly qualified will still be excluded until there is removed from our Statute Book the disability of sex. That being so, the thing on which women have to concentrate is the bar which says that no woman is capable of being a citizen, and no woman can be allowed to be one, whatever her qualifications or capacity. That is the thing against which all women must concentrate, because until it is removed no women at all can ever be citizens. This, therefore, is the primary consideration to women, and the primary consideration it ought also to be to all democrats. This being the primary consideration, the thing we have to discover is how the reforms it involves are going to be carried into effect—how that principle of sex-equality which we need is going to be placed upon the Statute Book; how it is going to be made impossible for any future franchise conditions to be altered, for any future franchise to be established, unless those franchises include equal rights for women.

If it be wrong to shut out any section of the people by arbitrary laws or rules, it is wrong to shut them out whether those rules are perfect or imperfect; it is wrong to shut them out all along the line. Now, I do not think that here, in this audience, I need to demonstrate the fact that women are entitled to equality in politics—that any denial of equal rights to women is a serious injustice. I take that as proved to this audience, and I proceed to point out that, if this particular disability is an evil and an injustice, *it is not only an evil under a new franchise condition, but it is here to-day, and ought not to be allowed to remain.* So the existing franchise conditions in regard to men in the main are not essential to women; they are secondary considerations. The primary thing is that women shall be allowed to vote on the same terms as men both now and in the future. That right being established, women's interests are secured for all time. Not only do they secure power and status now, but it is made impossible for any future franchise measure to leave women out. That being so, it appears to me that the first thing women ought to do is to get that general principle—equality of voting right—placed upon the Statute Book. Once that is done, it is absolutely certain that, when all men obtain votes, all women must have votes alongside of them. And that brings you in a logical and certain fashion to complete democracy.

Now, let us consider the immediate benefits to be obtained by the carrying of the principle of sex equality in voting into effect. The first thing will be this, that now—not in the future, when the country is ripe, perhaps, for half a hundred other great reforms—but now, immediately, as soon as ever the Bill has passed through the House of Commons, women will be recognised in politics as the equals of men. That will be the first, the greatest, the most important result. The recognition of women as equal in citizenship will establish them, not only in politics, but also in social and industrial life as of a higher status than they are at the present moment. That status, that recognition of equality and the status which follows it, will have an effect upon the whole spirit of the age, will have an effect upon women themselves and upon men, and will secure the future—that being a most important and a most serious point. Further, I would like to mark again that, whatever the future may bring in the matter of altered franchise conditions—a wider franchise, a franchise based merely upon human existence, a franchise based upon intelligence, a franchise based upon anything at all—the principle of sex-equality having been carried, this franchise will apply equally to both sexes: women will not in any future time be shut out by any restrictive legislation or prevented from benefiting in any franchise that may be granted. Those who believe in a conservative franchise and those who believe in an absolutely unlimited franchise must realise that an essential of any just franchise is, that women should equally benefit with men.

The fact upon which a number of our opponents concentrate is that, as soon as the principle establishing the right of women to vote on equal terms with men is placed upon the Statute Book, so soon as that happens, a certain number of women will be placed upon the rolls. Upon the kind of these women, the number, type, and class, the greater part of the opposition to this particular measure is concentrated. I would point out to you that the principle of sex-equality being absolutely essential to the establishment of true democracy—that the principle of sex-equality being absolutely essential to just government of the nation—if the carrying out of that principle now meant the enfranchisement of only one half-dozen women, it would still be just; it would still be necessary. (Applause.) The thing that matters is the principle. The principle being established, all women ultimately will have the vote. On the other hand, the attitude of this country as regards complete universal Adult Suffrage for men and women is not at all certain. May I point out, further, that these women who would be enfranchised immediately cover in a very representative

manner the several great classes in society. (No, no.) We are told that under this particular principle, under the first application, the immediate application of it—leaving entirely all the further and latter applications alone—only propertied and middle-class women would be enfranchised. (Hear, hear.) Now, I would point out to you, in the first place, that if only duchesses and millionaires' wives would be enfranchised, even the Socialists would have no right to deny them equal liberty with men. (Hear, hear.)

Further, however, these are the facts under the first application of that particular principle. The women who would be enfranchised are first, the women property-owners—the bugbears. I would point out with regard to these women property-owners, that women who are rich in their own right are not anything like so numerous as the rich men who vote now, and whom you do not seek to rob of their right. They are not so numerous, in the first place, because they are not allowed to inherit equally with men. They are not so numerous, in the second place, because they have not the same opportunities of entering the commercial world and making huge fortunes out of the labour of others. Second, you have the women-householders. Now, the woman-householder is undoubtedly chiefly of the working class. A census taken in fifty towns in Great Britain gave 82·4 per cent. working women, who either worked for their living or whose living was earned for them by children, or who worked in the house and kept lodgers, and so on. That means that, for the householder franchise the majority in the country will be of the working class. Then you have the latch-key vote. The latch-key vote will bring in a new class of occupier—the occupier of a single room; and this particular decision will apply to women even more generally than it applies to men, because very many men voters do not look after their own rooms and take no real control over them—the landlady of the house going into those rooms and doing personal service for the men. But the women who have lodgings are very often unable to pay for such service and have to do it for themselves. This being so, every woman who occupies a room under those conditions, whatever the rental—every such woman will be entitled to become a voter. Then, we have the ordinary lodger vote. That again is very largely a working-class vote, because numbers of women amongst the better-paid working-class women—I do not mean well-paid, but the better-paid—those women who are teachers, managers of stores, nurses and so on, those women often pay a sufficient rental—more than 4s. per week for the bare room—to qualify them as lodgers. Then, again, you have the service franchise, a wholly working-class vote, that will apply

to caretakers and so on, who have their own rooms as part of the return for their work. Each of these existing franchises applies to men now, and would apply equally to women.

Now, because some women, and some men, disapprove of the difference in numbers that would result between the men and women electors—seven and a-half million men being on the Register, and perhaps only two million women coming in under the new Bill—we have various expedients suggested for putting off the granting of sex equality until some changes are made in the franchise. We get a number of people who say: “Yes, I believe in sex equality. I think men and women ought to have equal rights, but I do not think women should be plural voters;” or, “I do not think women without property should vote;”—“I do not think women *with* property should vote;” and so on, *ad lib.* Now, I want to point out that any suggestion for putting back the granting of a measure of justice to any section of the community is in the first place suspicious. Any suggestion for putting off the granting of a measure of liberty because of certain things which have not been done, or should be done, cannot be defended as a matter of pure principle. It becomes a matter of expediency, and very often of questionable expediency. Now, this principle is being treated just in that way by a large number of people. I want to deal briefly with the people who want us to ask for a special franchise for women, who say: “Why should not all married women have votes because their husbands have?” These people want to make special Bills which will give women a special franchise on a special basis. I object to these plans just as much as I object to the plan of giving women a smaller franchise than men. I want an equal recognition, even if it is limited, or if it is not quite so fair as it might be, because of the wrong conditions which men have made. Now, those conditions being what they are, I am prepared—and I think a large number of women are prepared—to even submit to having two million women voters alongside of seven and a-half million men, rather than endanger our demand by asking for a special franchise, or postponing the issue until the country is ripe for other franchise reforms. We say a special franchise only for women is insulting: it puts them aside as a special class. We say it is unstable: being given on no basis of principle, it can be taken away just when you want to use it most.

Then, passing on to the Adult Suffrage plan of solution, we say here in the first place, it is not fair or just to ask women to wait until men have mended their own bad franchise conditions. (Hear, hear.) In the first place, because it is a matter of principle and it is scarcely sound policy. In the second place, because men have shown no great hurry to

mend these bad conditions. It is particularly dangerous to women—this demand for immediate Adult Suffrage—if it is the all-or-nothing issue upon which we have to fight. If we ask for Adult Suffrage we have no longer sex equality as the cry. We are asking for an altered condition of voting, a change of basis for the electorate. That, I would point out to you, is not essentially a matter which has anything to do with sex in equality, which, whatever the condition of voting, shuts women out entirely. Now, let us consider where the danger comes in. The first danger comes in here, that the moment you come before the public with a demand for Adult Suffrage, half the public misunderstands your demand. One half immediately interprets Adult Suffrage, as I saw it interpreted in some Socialist papers, as Manhood Suffrage. Some people are so used to think of men as the governors of the world and of women as the governed, that they immediately suppose that it means Manhood Suffrage. That is one danger, but not the only one. There is this further danger. You know at the present time that the opposition to the enfranchisement of women is strong, so strong that although the agitation has been in existence for more than 40 years, sex prejudice and selfish interest have been strong enough to make it impossible for the Suffrage Bill to pass through the House of Commons. (No, no and applause.) I want you to take the people of this country as they are. The people of this country at the present time are very much more interested in the franchise conditions and in the enfranchisement of women than they were five years ago. That is chiefly due to our efforts. But at the present time, you know as well as I do, that a great, serious body of opposition to the enfranchisement of women exists, and that this body of opposition is opposed even to the enfranchisement of what would be called by the Adult Suffragists the limited number of women who would immediately benefit. If this is so, I want to know what chances there are that when you take a universal suffrage measure into the House of Commons, that measure is going to be passed. The same thing that happened in Austria might equally well happen in Great Britain. If the Liberal Government has really made up its mind to introduce a Manhood Suffrage Bill, and if the Adult Suffragists are active enough—they have not always been active in the past—but if they are active enough to introduce an amendment to include women, that will be ruled out in the British House of Commons. This would follow because an Opposition that refuses to enfranchise women on the same terms as men would emphatically refuse to swamp the existing male electorate with a majority of women. The only way in which we shall ever win complete womanhood suffrage for

the women of this country is by gradually educating the people of this country to believe in the principle of sex equality and by making the environment conduce to that end. And the way to do that is to get women enfranchised now, so that the people will come to recognise the necessity and the justice of it, and will not be appalled at the idea that so many women are going to be on the Register. If you do it on the other line, you concentrate and combine the opposition, you bring the opposition against women, the opposition against the married women's vote—and there is a lot of that in the House of Commons—into line with the opposition to any wider franchise, and with the opposition to the majority of voters being women. All the opponents are united by this policy. The work of a good general should be to divide his enemies, not to unite them, and by taking this measure you absolutely unite every kind of enemy that is against every kind of franchise reform. Another danger—and I would impress this upon you: you do not ask for sex equality; you ask for sex equality only upon certain given conditions. You say you do not care anything for sex equality to-day, and if you have a limited franchise for eight hundred years, you will still continue to care nothing. You only care for sex equality under the conditions of universal suffrage. That is a most grievous want in the policy, and it proves that the sex equality claim is not strong enough in the minds of those people who can wilfully put it back to a time when certain conditions will be established. I point out, however—and this argument is that upon which I am going to base my statement—that the majority of the people who advocate waiting until universal suffrage is established and trying then to gain a complete womanhood suffrage all at once—those people do not think as much of women's equality with men as they think about some other reforms. Now, I have only a limited time in which to conclude, and what I want to say is merely a *resumé* of the points I have tried to make. The first point is that the first thing for women to consider, the primary thing for women and democrats to consider is, that the gravest bar to real democracy, to true national self-government, exists in the sex disability, and that this should first of all be abolished. The second point, I want to impress upon you is, that the existing franchise conditions are really non-essential, whether they are bad or good, to the women who have no power to alter them, and the best way to win that power is to gain equality of voting right and then make changes afterwards. The next point is that, under this first establishment of the principle, the women who would be enfranchised, whether they were working women or non-working women, are entitled to the vote now, and no one has a moral right

to deny it to them. The further point is that, though this is the case, and the number of women is non-essential, luckily it happens that the great majority would be working-class women. And then, wherever a universal suffrage demand has been made in a country where men were voters and women were not voters, that demand has been translated into meaning Manhood Suffrage. It happened in our Colonies, in Austria, in America, and other countries. It is always the result when women have no votes and men have some, and it is a perfectly likely result under such conditions, for the men have the power and the women have not. Therefore in all probability, if we adopted the demand for Adult Suffrage, and asked for votes for all men and all women, we should be putting off Women's Suffrage indefinitely, and should have to put up with a really limited franchise measure, this being the result of asking the Government to enfranchise all women at once. And so, on a basis of principle and on a practical basis, I submit that the way of establishing sex equality is the way in which women should work. (Prolonged applause.)

Miss BONDFIELD:

I want, first of all, briefly to ask my audience to bear in mind certain definitions that I am going to give them, so that there will be no confusion of thought in the subsequent discussion. In the first place, when I use the term "Adult Suffrage," I mean manhood and womanhood enfranchisement. When I speak of the limited Franchise Bills, I mean the Bills introduced by Mr. Bamford Slack and others and Mr. Dickinson's No. 1 Bill. I want, first, in replying to Mrs. Billington-Grieg, to take the point which she raised, that the most serious primary question is that women should be allowed to vote on the same terms as men. We are both agreed absolutely on the main principle—that women should be allowed to vote: we are both agreed that women should be allowed to vote at the earliest possible opportunity: but it is when we embody our principle in an Act of Parliament that we differ as to methods.

In order to properly explain my position, I must bore you somewhat with details of the terms upon which men hold the franchise to-day. In the first place, we have one hundred different Acts of Parliament dealing with franchise and registration, and we have seventeen different sorts of franchises. We have the ownership vote, the leasehold vote, and the University electors' vote, representing 690,056 electors. Then a great vote is centred in the occupiers' vote; in the counties, that includes over three million, and in the boroughs over two million votes. Then there is the

service vote, which is a form of the occupation vote. The test for the occupation vote is, that you must occupy, as owner or tenant. Where it is a sole occupancy, there is no money test, but where there is joint occupancy there is a £10 test limited to two occupants for county constituencies; but there is no limit in the borough constituencies, provided you can show £10 per head. The lodger vote is quite an inconsiderable portion. There are altogether two hundred thousand voters. It is generally considered to be an extremely inferior franchise, because it must be claimed annually and it does not carry with it the right of successive occupation. I shall differ slightly from Mrs. Billington-Greig's distinctions. The service vote is the vote given to an occupier who occupies by virtue of his service, and is not permitted to live elsewhere. It covers the case of schoolmasters living in the schoolhouse, stationmasters living on the premises, and butlers who live over the coachhouse, but it does not apply to the butler who lives in his master's house. Structural separation of the premises affects the question. Then we come to the latch-key vote. That is a most interesting franchise, and I am inclined to think that the latch-key decision given in the case of *Kent v. Fittall* has done more than anything else that has lately happened to rouse feeling in this connection. I am going to quote one or two instances. Remember that in the case of *Kent v. Fittall*, the judges laid down that the proof of "no control" was sufficient to entitle the lodger to a vote, and the "resident landlord" did not disqualify unless he proved some kind of control over the room. I should say, before passing from the case of *Kent v. Fittall*, the decision applied only to that particular case. In the case of *Douglas v. Smith*, where the man was struck off the rolls because there was a resident landlord, the Revising Barristers held that he must have exercised control, in spite of the fact that he said he did not, and this man lost his vote. The case of *King v. Bell* decides that Barristers must exercise their own discretion. This has placed enormous power in the hands of the Barristers, and it depends entirely upon the bias of the Revising Barrister whether he puts people on or knocks them off. We can cite cases to show that frequently the bias of the Revising Barrister is a foregone conclusion. I want to direct your attention to one or two.

The Conservatives brought forward objections to twenty-eight men, residents of the Hopton Almshouses, Holland Street, and to forty women occupying the Edwards Almshouses in Burrell Street. The Liberal agent said that about eight or nine years ago the residents of these almshouses were placed on the list through the instrumentality of the Conservatives, who were now objecting because these old

people's views did not harmonise with the opinions of some new trustees recently appointed. Mr. Edwards, Conservative agent, said that the people were receiving disqualifying alms left under a will (dated 1730), the charity being administered by trustees under the supervision of the Charity Commissioners. The names were struck off. The Conservative agent said that the case of the Edwards Almshouses was stronger, because the inmates were perfectly destitute and the trustees included the Poor-Law Guardians. These forty names were also struck off.

Then at Fulham, we find the Revising Barrister there decided that it was entirely at the discretion of the Town Clerk as to whether he issued a notice at all to landlords.

Mr. Percy Tindall Robertson, in the Haggerston Division, decided that the possession of a latch-key was quite unimportant, and the question was as to what "control" really meant.

At Walworth, an attempt was made to strike a man off the rolls because he had received 14 pints of milk for the use of a child under treatment at the hospital, and in that case the Barrister decided that the milk was part of the medical treatment of the child, and not charity.

In the Dulwich Division, *Costigan* had been excused from the payment of poor-rate on the ground of poverty. The Revising Barrister was at first inclined to hold that the fact that the voter had been excused from the payment of a quarter's poor-rate did not disqualify him, but after perusing the report of a case decided in 1871, he was bound, he said, to hold that the relief was a disqualification.

Mr. Radford, Liberal agent, Islington, said that they were dealing with three lists—Hackney, a portion of Islington, and a portion of the Shoreditch list, and they found three different ways of dealing with the question. In Hackney the old ones were left on the list and the new ones had to claim as lodgers; in Islington everyone had to claim as a lodger again; and in Shoreditch everyone was put on as "latch-key" occupiers. He understood that the Barrister required certain evidence, and he asked that learned gentleman to assist them by stating what sort of evidence he would regard as substantiating the claims in question. Again the Barrister decided that he must take every case on its merits.

I could multiply these instances to the point of wearying you, but I think I have proved to you that *this latch-key decision has resulted in placing a most dangerous power in the hands of the Revising Barristers*. As an illustration of the unfair bias of the Revising Barrister, not merely in the question of the latch-key vote, but also in the question of the occupation vote and lodger vote and all the working class votes, I



direct your attention especially to this paragraph which appeared in "*The Labour Leader*": "Information reached us of the wholesale striking from the electoral rolls of Labour sympathisers in many parts of the country, and the crowding upon the register of the names of lodgers and women whose sympathies were known or reckoned to be opposed to Labour."

Now I want very briefly to deal with the question of the statistics showing the proportion of working-class women who would be enfranchised under the limited bill. I do not doubt for one instant the sincerity and honesty of those who compiled the figures, but I do doubt the accuracy of the figures, and the wisdom of taking them as any criterion. In the first place, a most important point has been entirely overlooked, and it is this, that on the municipal rolls there are large numbers of women who claim as joint occupiers, and *here is no money test*. That is why we say that it is impossible to compare the figures of the municipal rolls with the figures as they would show under the Parliamentary franchise as given to men at the present time. I have in my hand a classification of the voters in the St. Pancras Division. The figures are given as—

Wealthy, upper-middle and upper classes .....	39%
Middle class, well-to-do .....	32%
Working-class, earning up to 50/- weekly .....	61%
Very poor .....	23%

A foot-note says that the division indicated here by "poor" and "very poor" is necessarily arbitrary. I ask you, as a matter of common sense, how many working-class women are earning 50/- a week? (Hear, hear.) How many working-class women are earning 30/-, or 40/-, or 45/-? I think that to so class women whose wage-earning capacity is so high as that is to use terms in their wrong meaning.

It is said that the removal of the sex disability is the speediest way to a real Democracy. I have shown you that in my opinion the sex equality which would be established under the franchises which at present are held by men, would only be nominal, theoretic, academic if you like, but not a real equality. There would be no question of a real equality under a Bill which would not enfranchise married women.

We are told that we merely bring forward our proposals in order to block the way for the removal of the sex equality bar. Of course you are all entitled to your own opinions, but as one who has worked strenuously for Adult Suffrage, I absolutely and emphatically deny that. I work for Adult Suffrage because I believe it is the quickest way to establish a real sex equality.

Let us see what company we are in when we advocate the limited measure. Mrs. Billington-Greig has taken up the position that to enfranchise only six women will be the quickest way to enfranchise the working classes. I entirely disagree. But she also goes on to say that we have no right to oppose these six women enfranchising themselves. I say we do not. What we do oppose, and what we must emphatically protest against is that, these six women should use the bulk of working-class opinion to enfranchise themselves. (Hear, hear.) I have always said in my public speeches and in conversation, that these women who believe in the "same-terms-as-men" Bill have a perfect right to go on working for that Bill, and I say good luck to them, and may they get it! But don't let them come and tell me that they are working for my class. (Prolonged cheering.) We find, for instance, that there are women whom we can all respect, even if we disagree with them, because we must admire the logical position they take up—Lady Knightley of Fawsley, Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, and Lady Frances Balfour—who have all definitely and emphatically declared that the reason why they support the limited Bill is because they believe it will be an effective barrier to the "dangerous demand for Adult Suffrage."

Lord Hugh Cecil, when he took part in the debate in March, 1906, denied the right of any man to vote. He said that it was entirely a question of expediency, and that the one ground on which he did think the claim for an extension of the franchise to women was justified was, that there were certain questions on which he believed they would support the opinions he held. (Laughter). Now, it is all very well to say that these women only represent a section, and that Lord Hugh Cecil only represents himself, but these people are representative people, and they represent the interests of the propertied classes, and they are fighting for the interests of their class. They believe quite honestly and sincerely that Adult Suffrage will be a great danger. They believe, and they will use the whole force of their influence, their social position and political power, to prevent the extension of the franchise to women on the basis of human rights. We find, in addition, that there are clear indications from a leading article in the *Times* published quite recently, that the Conservative party is recognising the new force which apparently some of the advocates of the women's enfranchisement are inclined to under-estimate. The *Times*, if the Women's Freedom League do not, recognises the likelihood of Adult Suffrage, and that there is a spirit abroad which has come to stay, and is steadily growing. It recognises, too, that the

extension of the franchise to women is inevitable in the long run, and that if the franchises are extended to women on the same terms as they are now held by men, it will only be done in order to stave off the larger measure—(Hear, hear.). Moreover this "little Bill" will never be passed until the force in favour of the broader measure is sufficiently strong to drive the Conservatives into a panic.

I agree with Mrs. Billington-Greig that neither of the Capitalist parties in the House of Commons is keen to enfranchise women, and the Liberal party is certainly not keen to commit suicide by enfranchising women who support their opponents. We are accused of knowing nothing of political history—but the hopelessness of expecting any Government calling itself progressive to pass a measure which is so full of difficulties, of real dangers, of the possibility of creating greater injustices between one woman and another than exist at the present time seems to be apparent.

Of course Mrs. Billington-Greig and myself differ upon one essential point, which must be a matter of opinion and a question of the point of view from which you judge, and that is as to whether or not Adult Suffrage is in the category of immediate reforms. I am of opinion that Adult Suffrage is much nearer realisation than some of our friends believe, and I feel convinced that the safest and best and most practical way for women to procure sex equality is to recognise that if they insist upon pressing a small measure which cannot possibly claim the sympathy of the great democratic party of this country, they will run a great danger of being excluded altogether. The question of manhood suffrage is undoubtedly very close ahead of us. There are many members of the Government who have definitely stated that women would be included in a larger measure dealing with the question of enfranchisement reform. There are statesmen on both sides of the House who have tried to mend some of the franchise anomalies. There was the Plural Voting Bill; Mr. Balfour introduced a Redistribution of the Seats Bill—both abandoned for the same reason, that they cannot touch the question without having to face this great crowd of difficulties due to the inconsistencies of the laws which exist. Therefore I say, in conclusion, that the difficulties which are in the way of Adult Suffrage are over-estimated, absolutely over-estimated by the women who are claiming sex equality, and the difficulties in the way of the limited Bill are very greatly under-estimated. The question for instance, of the position of married women: Mrs. Billington-Greig's position is that it was a mistake to raise it; it should have been taken for granted. I want to say to her that you cannot take anything for granted in a House where there are over

one hundred lawyers: and whether you like it or not, married women have either to be definitely excluded or included. And when you introduce the question of married women, you are face to face with the difficulties of extending the existing franchises to women.

Mrs. BILLINGTON-GREIG:

I think I would like to commence by saying that I do not believe that Miss Bondfield has touched my case. (Hear, hear.) I do not think she has made a single point which damages my claim, as a matter of principle, for the immediate enfranchisement of women. I do not think she has made a single point which damages my statement that the dangers which face women in taking up the Adult Suffrage cry are almost overwhelming. I want to point out that she devoted the first part of her speech to certain instances, with which I entirely agree, of what were actually only a very suitable explanation of men's governmental absurdities. I am in full sympathy with Miss Bondfield's explanation. I fully believe that our present governmental conditions, our present franchise conditions, are so utterly absurd and stupid that it only needs the explanation of them by a woman to make men ashamed of themselves. But these hundred Acts granting rights of voting and the seventeen franchises are quite beside the point. The point is that women are entitled to vote, and they are entitled to vote just on the same conditions, just by the same needs, just for the same reasons that men shall vote. That being so, there is no reason for using the absurdity of the present franchises for denying the application of those present franchises to women. Be the franchise stupid as you like, it is good enough for men to vote under. If it is not illogical and undemocratic for men to use this stupid franchise, then it is not for us to use it. (Hear, hear.)

Now, I would point out with regard to the service vote, that I did not deal at all with the class of people whom Miss Bondfield quotes against me, *i.e.*, domestic servants. I pointed out that caretakers and matrons and teachers in schools and colleges would have the vote, and in the same way nurses and matrons in workhouses and hospitals. I did not mention domestic servants, and it is therefore unfair to quote that against me. With regard to the latch-key vote, I am perfectly aware that it is another example of the incapacity of man to make decent franchise laws. But does Miss Bondfield seriously ask me to believe that if we deny the right of women to vote now and hold them back until complete Adult Suffrage is granted, it will make the Revising Barristers any

more humane or just. I submit that it is very likely that the putting of women on the Parliamentary Register now may begin to educate them at once. Further, she gave us one example in which she said that women and men, a number of whom were living in almshouses, were struck off the roll, the women mainly upon the ground of poverty. She gave me an argument there, because the women were dealt with even more severely than the men. Why? Because of the sex bias. That being the case, the quicker we are in establishing sex equality and whittling away sex bias, the quicker that condition will vanish. Then I must protest—as a believer in democracy and in the principles that underlie it—against Miss Bondfield assuming that a working-class franchise is a democratic one. If you have a solely working-class franchise and leave everyone else out, you would be just as unfair as in the opposite case, and to base your arguments upon an assumption that by talking about the working-class you are talking about democracy is showing a want of universality in thought as well as in action. Miss Bondfield gives as the reason why she supports the putting off of the establishment of sex equality until such a time as all men and all women can be voters, that certain women would not favour the Labour or the Progressive party programme. I submit to this or any audience, that it is absolutely unjustifiable to seek to deny the vote to people because they are anti-Labour—as absolutely unjustifiable as it is to deny them votes because they are *for* Labour. (Hear, hear). The man or woman who want to make a franchise which will only suit the Socialist party is as much an autocrat and as much seeking after tyranny as any other person seeking to suppress his or her opponents. (Hear, hear.) Our rights in the country are not to depend upon whether or not we please the Social Democratic Federation. Our rights should be given to us as a matter of right, and not as a matter of privilege, granted graciously to us because we promise to use them in the right direction. Then a further point was made by Miss Bondfield when she quoted the statistics from the St. Pancras Division. One swallow never yet made a summer, and quoting the statistics of one division against fifty other divisions was scarcely a strong argument. In addition I would further point out that she did not take a representative division, but one in which there are a very large proportion of what may be called better-class people, and you never will be able to eliminate the errors from such a set of statistics unless you take them very generously and multiply your instances very much. Then with regard to the Women Suffragists' company. Our company is supposed to be very bad, for we have with us people of title. I have heard that there is a titled woman

in the Adult Suffrage movement, and therefore I might quote your company as equally bad. We are given three notable examples, all of them taken from the older Suffrage Society, which is not either so strong or so vigorous as the Society of which I stand as a representative. In addition to that, the opinions to which they give utterance, and which Miss Bondfield quotes, are so much like what the Adult Suffragists say that I cannot but suppose that they have been taken from their own speeches. For instance, what Lord Hugh Cecil said is what Miss Bondfield has been repeating. She only places herself in the same category with Lord Hugh Cecil when she says that his reason for wanting the women to have the vote on a basis of equality was because women so enfranchised would support his views. That is the same position which Miss Bondfield takes up. The Adult Suffragists want to give women the vote under their conditions because they think that this would give the vote to people who would support the reforms in which they are interested. (No, no, and Applause.) Then, strangely enough, Miss Bondfield speaks in favour of the *Times*. I am absolutely convinced that the *Times* will have a leading article to-morrow, in gratitude that a woman who is a Socialist, an advocate of all these absolutely revolutionary measures, should deem it fitting to praise it. May I point out that this article in the *Times* is just one of the danger signals? When the *Times*, which has never been remarkable for advocating Women's Suffrage, when the *Times*, which has always supposed that a man-made condition of society was good enough for women, comes forward as an advocate of Adult Suffrage, does it not look as if its editors realise that it is the only way of blocking us? (Hear, hear.) Then Miss Bondfield remarks upon the difficulties in the way of passing this measure. I see none. It can be carried through the chamber of the House of Commons in a few hours. It is the simplest kind of measure; it has one principle, one clause, and only needs, therefore, to be discussed on that principle. The difficulties are in the measure which Miss Bondfield spoke of first of all, abolishing half-a-dozen franchises, stating that there shall be no plural voting, and so forth. That is a measure which is absolutely certain to raise up enemies on every side. Some will say, "I am perfectly willing that women should vote, but not all at once; let it come gradually." There will be others who say, "Let women vote, but do not let them come into Parliament," and so on. All those will be united by the very difficulties raised in the Bill, and until you have abolished the House of Lords and entirely reduced the Conservative party to a few nonentities, you need not hope to pass that Bill. Manhood Suffrage, says Miss Bondfield, has been promised by certain politicians, and I agree—for a very long time. I

have not heard any actual promises, nothing but the very vaguest words of general sympathy, which means very little from politicians or from Liberal leaders. They say that they are opposing this enfranchisement of women because they have a great sympathy with the working women's lot, but they do not say that they are willing to include women in the Bill dealing with the reform of the franchise. Their whole attention is concentrated on using that as a lever to push away the real demand. Take this fact. You get Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, after he had pledged himself to the principle of equal voting rights, in the last session of Parliament, when he had made certain that his ordinary excuses would not suffice, practically advocating Adult Suffrage. Take Sir Thomas Coats—I think his name is Thomas. Anyhow, he is a Coats, and a Sir, a member of the Coats Combine, and M.P. for Renfrew. He was never known to advocate Women's Suffrage, but is now advocating Adult Suffrage! Why? Because he knows it will block the way to Women's Suffrage. I give you one more name—Kennaway—a member of the Eighty Club, who having always opposed the enfranchisement of women has now become an advocate of the Adult Suffrage line of action. So this examination proves that Adult Suffrage is merely being used as a device for blocking the way to Women's Suffrage. (Applause).

Miss BONDFIELD:

Mrs. Billington-Greig's speech is a marked illustration of how it is possible to twist remarks into meaning something one never thought of.

In the first place, then, I want to point out that she suggests that a few women on the Parliamentary Register would be the best way to change the point of view of the Revising Barrister. She must have overlooked the fact that there have been large numbers of women on the municipal registers for some time, and they apparently have had no such effect. The point is that the proportion of women who would be enfranchised under those measures would not to any appreciable degree influence them, any more than the women enfranchised under the municipal vote now affect the opinion and standing of the large bulk of women who would still be excluded. Take the case of the shop assistants. Some of them vote, but we are known to be a voteless class—the men as well as the women—political nonentities. The only way we have been able to get anything at all is by borrowing the voting strength of the actual voters. I am giving you that as an illustration. If any appreciable effect is to be made upon the women of this country,

a large number of the women must necessarily be enfranchised. A few shop assistants are enfranchised; they have no effect at all upon the political standing of the large class of shop assistants, because we suffer under disabilities which do not permit us to exercise direct influence.

Mrs. Billington-Greig sees no difficulty in passing a Bill of one clause, but, let me point out, the difficulty in this Bill of one clause is not what it says, but what it leaves unsaid. To say a Bill of one clause has a better chance of passing the House of Commons is a perfectly futile way of arguing.

One suggestion is that this limited Bill should apply only to ratepayers and spinsters; that is, that married women should be excluded *in toto*. Another suggestion is that the married women who can qualify in their own names—that is, who have property apart from their husbands—should be included. A third section says that the married women shall be included because of the qualifications which their husbands possess. Now all these different franchises, all these disabilities under which married women suffer, will have to be raised upon any Bill dealing with suffrage which is brought before the House of Commons. It will be raised by two parties, obstructively by the people who are opposed to both womanhood suffrage, and to granting the vote to women on the property basis; also by those who recognise that to deliberately shut out a woman from citizenship because she marries is to create a danger which a democratic House could not possibly face. (Hear, hear.)

Then she goes on to point out that the long Bill—the Bill with four clauses in it—is too large to pass through the House of Commons, that it deals with too many questions. It is generally admitted by all Parliamentary experts that the Franchise Bill which we call the Adult Suffrage Bill is the only logical measure before the House of Commons: it logically claims womanhood suffrage and other measures do not. And it is the only way by which the franchise can be simplified.

What are the great difficulties? The Bill reads as follows: "That every man and woman of full age shall be qualified to vote unless disqualified for a reason other than sex or marriage." With that measure you compass the complete position. Then it goes on, of course, to deal with the University constituencies, etc. The result of the first clause would be to abolish voters in the University constituency, and what sense is there in leaving these two constituencies on the list when you have abolished the voters? It is merely a technical question.

With regard to the right of women to electoral equality there are people who argue, "You might as well be silent—you raise such a storm of objection." You will raise a storm of objection on any Bill, and why not say what you mean, and be honest? (Cheers.) When Bamford Slack's Bill and when Keir Hardie's Bill and all the others were brought in to the House of Commons, every one of the objections that could possibly be raised were raised upon the smaller issues. So it will always be, while a capitalist House of Commons is in power.

With regard to the question of deferring Adult Suffrage "because other Bills will have a better chance of passing," this argument was used by John Stuart Mill in 1870. The party was divided at that time, and, when the second reading was passed with such a satisfactory majority, some urged that the broader issue should be faced, but John Stuart Mill said "No; we are within as many years as I once thought decades of the realisation of this measure, and if you talk about Adult Suffrage you will put back the movement a whole generation." We are still discussing the limited measure to-day, so that it seems to me that the withdrawal has not in the least degree helped.

Those of us who are advocating the broader measure are not preventing the other people from getting what they can. I think Mrs. Billington-Greig must have used the words inadvertently when she said that I had proposed that we exclude any but working-class people, or that we exclude people because they do not think as we think. I never said anything of the sort. What I did say was that the Liberal and the Tory party are so much alike that it does not matter—(hear, hear)—except that the Liberal party have made greater professions of democratic sentiment, and because of this, because they have pledged themselves to Adult Suffrage and have introduced a Plural Voting Bill, they cannot do just exactly as the Tory party have promised to do in connection with the question of registration reform. They are pledged up to the hilt to deal in a radical way with the question, and because the Conservative party have not pledged themselves they have, to a certain extent, the pull. I said that the Liberal party are being asked by the Suffragists to commit political suicide to enfranchise a certain number of women, whom, they and the *Times* and other papers say, will support the party of reaction. I do not say that these women would support the party of reaction, but that is a political belief and is, therefore, an obstacle in the way of granting the vote.

Then she says I praise the *Times*. I did not praise the *Times* article. I merely said that it showed the opinions of

the class of people whom the *Times* represents, and they are getting into a panic, for it is a panic-y article from beginning to end, about the oncoming flood which is going to sweep away property and everything else. (Hear, hear.)

Then Mrs. Billington-Greig says that we advocate waiting. I did not say anything to-night about advocating waiting. I do not, but I do most emphatically protest against working women being asked to wait until these other women have got the franchise before they begin. (Prolonged cheering.)

We are told that we do not care for sex equality. We do care for sex equality, but not for these superficial distinctions which have no real meaning in them, and we do care so heartily and strongly that the men and women in all classes shall have equal political opportunity and equal rights, that we desire to press forward the claims of our particular class, who shall begin in conjunction with the other classes. It is unfair to twist my words into saying that I desire to exclude them. (Hear, hear.) I do not wish to exclude the most idiotic duchess in existence, but I do say that side by side with the duchess my class shall come in, or at least if it does not, it shall not be for want of crying aloud on my part. I want to repeat that, because it is the charge which is continually made, that we are only urging Adult Suffrage to prevent the removal of the barrier. We urge it because we believe it is the only way to remove the barrier at the present time. (Hear, hear.)

Now, with regard to the Socialists. It has been said that have not been so active as they might be. I entirely agree, but it is another significant sign of the times that the Socialists and the Labour party as a whole are beginning to understand, and, let me tell you, it is the only party in the country who desires to understand. (Prolonged cheering.) They are beginning to understand that they cannot progress with their ideals until they have the women marching side by side with them. (Hear, hear.)

To merely get the vote as a new toy—is not what we are out for at all. We want to get it as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. (Hear, hear.) We want to have it primarily because we believe in its educative value. We believe that until women are actual voters they will miss a great deal of that broadening and widening influence given to men, and that *the people* must now take part in the work of government. We believe that the women have to take their places as citizens, and on that basis alone can the vote to women be of the practical value that we desire it to be. (Applause.)

MRS. BILLINGTON-GRIEG :

I want to point out that when I was up last I forgot to deal with the married woman, or perhaps my time interfered, and I intend to deal with them now. But as Miss Bondfield again raised the point, I shall deal with the remarks in the order they occur, and the married woman will get her notice at the right time. Miss Bondfield remarked that if women were enfranchised on the equality basis, they would still remain—although two million women would be enfranchised—political nonentities, like the shop assistants. I am very sorry for the position of shop assistants, but the number of shop assistants who are enfranchised is not two millions, and the percentage of women who would be enfranchised would be very much greater than the percentage of shop assistants, and it would be far easier to classify them as women than according to trade. And the further advantage would be, where you have two million women, marked by a distinguishing characteristic like sex, going into politics at once, altogether, you make a combination which enforces their recognition, and in very many constituencies they would be able to hold the balance of power between the parties. Then we are further told that I advocate the passing of this Women's Enfranchisement Bill which will give men and women political equality of right, simply because it is easy, being a one-clause measure. I did not emphasise the fact that its being a one-clause measure made it simple to pass, but its being a one-principle measure, which only raised one issue—the issue that whatever the given conditions for voters in this land, women shall vote under those conditions. (Hear, hear.) That being the one issue and the only issue, you fight your enemy on one point, and it is a much easier battle to fight than if you unite half-a-dozen enemies who would fight you on other points in an omnibus Bill. Then, Miss Bondfield tells us that when the Bill giving women equal voting rights is brought into the House of Commons, certain members talk about excluding married women and certain other issues. Now, these men are not our supporters. They are supporters of a special franchise for women which makes new conditions for women, conditions which are not made for men, and I am not willing under any circumstances to accept these people as typical advocates of this measure or as typical supporters. Then we are told further that with regard to married women—if Miss Bondfield did not exactly say this, she inferred it—(Laughter)—that the passing of this sex-equality measure will penalise them. Now, I want to submit that if men have been foolish and absurd enough to make a distinction between women and married women—that is what they have done—women should not be foolish enough

to support the idiotic suggestion. What they should do is to get passed through the House of Commons a general principle and leave it to the idiots who believe that married women are not women to declaim that fact from the rostrums of this land. (Hear, hear.) May I point out that already the way has been paved? For in the Municipal Corporations Act, which excluded married women in England from voting for the municipal elections—a special clause had to be inserted excluding married, so that even the lawyers recognise that married women are women. The position of married women is a special one. I am married myself, and cannot therefore be supposed to be without sympathy with them, and I am perfectly willing to risk my chance of voting on a general principle rather than submit to being classified as a separate kind of being of a lower status than my unmarried sister. Moreover, such difficulties as lie between married women and equal political liberty with men, and equal political recognition with unmarried women, have been created by men. The people who will place married women on a free and equal footing are women themselves. The quicker you give women the power to care for women's interests, the quicker all women will have redress. Further, I would submit that the right of women to sit in Parliament, though it logically should follow, does not follow in the minds of the muddle-headed legislators that we have to deal with, and that it is better for women to win the right to vote so that they themselves can decide the right of sitting in Parliament, than to leave the decision of that right entirely to men. You bring it before a House of Commons responsible to men and it will be decided against you; bring it before a House of Commons responsible to men and women, and there is a probability of it being decided in our favour. Now I would like to ask one simple question. If a large number of Parliamentary experts are of opinion that this Adult Suffrage measure is the only logical measure, why does it not pass? Again, Miss Bondfield says that the Liberals cannot eat their words; but they have done it, heaven knows how many times. She says they cannot go back on their pledges, but I say that they are constantly doing it. And they will do it; because the only thing that makes them carry out their pledges is that unless they do it they will be punished. They can very easily continue to throw back their pledges in the face of those who have no votes. The last statement Miss Bondfield made was that she wanted the vote because it would be educative. That is why I want it at once. I do not see any reason why, when you recognise this—first, that women would be educated by using the vote, and then others would be educated to realise their need of it—we should delay the passing of a measure

which is far more likely to pass than the measure Miss Bondfield advocates. And I am certain that Miss Bondfield has not touched my case against the dangers. She has not dealt with the reason why, where men were voters and women not, a demand for universal suffrage was translated into manhood suffrage. I can quote here but one country where men and women got universal suffrage altogether—Finland; and in that country neither men nor women were voters, and so both were equal in subjection and in power. (Applause.)

Miss BONDFIELD:

There is not a great deal to reply to, I think. But with regard to the question of the women holding the balance of power, that pre-supposes that all women will vote together in the same way. With regard to the Bill raising only one issue, I must again refute that. It is not what Mrs. Billington-Greig thinks the Bill will do; it is what it actually does do in the House of Commons. Her Bill, she says, raises only one issue; but I tell you that every other issue will be raised. Whether she likes it or not, it is a fact.

Then with regard to the sex equality measure, she says that if the men are idiots enough to say that a married woman is not a woman, that is their look-out. That is again ignoring the known opinion of the House of Commons. The House had to mention the married woman definitely to get her included in the Local Government Act, and she will have to be definitely mentioned to be included in the enfranchisement Bill. Of course, it is an absurd position, we are all agreed; but there it is, and it is the legal mind we have to deal with. It seems to me that it is like the ostrich, which hides its head in the sand and thinks that because it cannot see it is itself unseen. Let us face the dangers of Adult Suffrage and womanhood suffrage. Our policy is to embody in a Bill that which shall definitely and clearly state what we are aiming at, and we do not believe that anything less than that will give political equality to women.

Mrs. Billington-Greig says that the basis can be easily changed when women have the vote. My reason for urging the opinions I hold is because I do not believe it can. These ladies have definitely stated—it is not my opinion, but theirs—that the Limited Bill is promoted by them “to avoid the grave danger of universal suffrage.” Now an excellent case has been made out for Women’s Suffrage. We are all agreed on the enfranchisement of women, but I do not think a case has been made out for granting the suffrage on the same terms as to men. *The point is that, while academically you may have equality, actually you have nothing of the kind, because*

*economically women are not in the same position as men to qualify for enfranchisement.* We have to face that question of the Manhood Suffrage danger. Mrs. Billington-Greig says I have avoided it. There simply was no time to reach it. The question of Manhood Suffrage is in the minds of large numbers of men at the present time, and I am trying to arouse the men who are interested in the welfare of the human race, to the danger of excluding women from the suffrage. These people who press for the extension of the property franchise to women are doing a great deal to hasten Adult Suffrage *via* Manhood Suffrage. I will give a pledge to Mrs. Billington-Greig to oppose a Manhood Suffrage Bill as energetically as I oppose the limited measures. There is a growing section of men in this country who realise that the position which women occupy is a disgrace to the democratic sentiment of the age.

Mrs. Billington-Greig spoke as though she could count on all women being united. That is an entirely erroneous view to take of the women of the present day. I should be extremely sorry if they were. Women are not united in one camp. There are obvious illustrations of this.

Well then, with regard to the countries where Manhood Suffrage has already been obtained. As far as France is concerned, they have it there; but women are in an entirely different position. They have legal equality with men—the right to the care of their own children, they inherit their husbands’ businesses, they have a dowry on marriage, and so on. The whole position of women is different to that of women in this country, and I take that to be the reason why they have not demanded political power more than they have done.

With regard to America, it is a known fact that in America, if the women really wanted enfranchisement, they would get it. The reason why they have now begun to want it is because they have more faith than we in democratic power to purify political life. American women keep out of politics because in America politics is considered dirty work, and the best of American men have frequently taken the same view. I think it is a mistake on their part, but it is not because of Manhood Suffrage that women have not chosen to take any part in politics in America.

In regard to Austria, the women voluntarily withdrew their claim, as they thought it a matter of expediency that Manhood Suffrage should be passed. I do not agree with them, but they have their own view, and the men have given a pledge that a Women’s Suffrage Bill shall be introduced in the coming session.

With regard to the one illustration where the women have

VOTES FOR WOMEN.

**BALLOT  
BOX  
PROTEST.**



ALISON NEILANS.

DEFENCE AT OLD BAILEY.

By  
**Alison  
Neilans.**



MRS. ALICE CHAPIN.

PRICE 1d.

PUBLISHED BY THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE,  
1, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.



## Votes for Women.

# Women's Freedom League

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### CONSTITUTION.

**NAME.**—The Women's Freedom League.

**OBJECTS.**—To secure for Women the Parliamentary Vote as it is or may be granted to men; to use the power thus obtained to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

**METHODS.**—The objects of the League shall be promoted by—

1. Action entirely independent of all political parties.
2. Opposition to whatever Government is in power until such time as the franchise is granted.
3. Participation in Parliamentary Elections; at By-elections in opposition to the Government candidate and independently of all other candidates.
4. Vigorous action upon lines justified by the position of outlawry to which women are at present condemned.
5. The organizing of women all over the country to enable them to give adequate expression to their desire for political freedom.
6. Education of public opinion by all the usual methods, such as public meetings, demonstrations, debates, distribution of literature, newspaper correspondence, and deputations to public representatives and other bodies and their members.

**MEMBERSHIP.**—Women of all shades of political opinion who approve the objects and methods of the League, and who are prepared to act independently of party, are eligible for membership. All members must approve though they need not actually participate in, militant action.

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## THE BALLOT BOX PROTEST

AND THE

Trial of Mrs. Chapin and Miss Neilans, at the  
Central Criminal Court.

To understand the full significance of the Ballot Box Protest it is necessary to recall the chief incidents in the campaign which preceded it. Ever since Mr. Asquith became Prime Minister the Suffragists have been endeavouring to gain an interview with him in order to inform him of the altered nature of the agitation and the vigorous growth in every direction which has taken place. The only answer has been the prison cell, and our beloved President, Mrs. Despard, together with many other members of the League, have been imprisoned during this year for no other offence but trying to carry a resolution to Mr. Asquith.

The "famous and epical" siege of the House of Commons began at 8 p.m. on July 5th. It was not exactly premeditated, but the deputation was instructed by Mrs. Billington-Greig to wait until the members of it were received by Mr. Asquith, and until he had listened to the reasons for our demand. No one could have imagined that women would be kept waiting for 16 weeks and an aggregate of over 14,000 hours, and still be refused audience. They waited wet through by rain, fainting in the hot August sunshine, seeing the sun rise after weary all night vigils, and all this fatigue and suffering were endured because a public servant refused to give an hour of public time to listen to a public grievance.

Even the most sanguine of us at last lost all hope that Mr. Asquith would ever yield to the silent request put to him in such a quiet and dignified manner by the pickets who waited at the gates. Then arose the question, what was to be done? How were we to make Mr. Asquith hear and understand that the question of Votes for Women is too vital and too serious to be disposed of by contempt and indifference? A plan suggested some time before by Mrs. Billington-Greig again came up for consideration and discussion, and we decided to attempt to invalidate an election as the strongest political protest we could make. We knew the risks we ran, but as always before volunteers were ready when there was danger duty to be done. The plan was simplicity itself, and the protest was carried out exactly as arranged, except for a slight accident to a Presiding Officer, which no one regretted more than Mrs. Chapin and the officials and members of the League. Mrs. Chapin

took the earliest opportunity of calling to express her sorrow, but Mr Thorley refused to see her.

Mrs. Chapin has thus related her experience :

"It was quite absurdly easy from one point of view. I had not visited the constituency before, and did not know where the particular polling-booth marked down for me was, but as I sat in the car a girl said, 'There are the Boutcher Street Schools; they are polling there to-day.' 'My destination,' I thought, so I got down and walked slowly up the long school-yard. The policeman at the door had his back to me, so that I entered the booth unchallenged. I stood for a moment to take my bearings. There were three men seated at a table, but they were all too busy to take any notice of me. I walked quietly to the ballot-box and broke my tube over the slit; some of the liquid remained on the top of the box, so I pushed it in with my hand, knowing, of course, that it was harmless. There was a cry from one of the men that something had gone in his eye. I told him quickly that he need not be frightened, it wouldn't hurt him if it were washed off at once. They then rushed at me, dragged at my furs, and caught me by the neck. The constable came up, and I said, 'Tell these men to remove their hands at once, will you, please? I am perfectly willing to go with you; there is no need for them to interfere.' He did so. Then he took me into custody, and I was marched off to Tower Bridge Police Court, where I was first charged with 'maliciously throwing a liquid at Mr. Thorley with intent to do grievous bodily harm.' Of course, this was an entirely false charge, and I indignantly repudiated it. A second charge was then made of 'fraudulently defacing ballot-papers,' which, of course, was just as false as the other. There was no fraud about my attempt to deface the ballot-papers. I set out with every intention of doing so, and it was done in the most straightforward manner possible."

At Laxon Street polling booth Miss Neilans was courteously directed by the police to the number 3 polling room, and she also walked quietly up to the ballot-box and broke the test tube over the slit. She said :—

"The men who were sitting at the table seemed too taken aback to move for a moment or two after I had broken my tube of liquid over the ballot-box. They gave me time to lift the tube up, look to see if all the liquid had run out, and then hold it over the box again to let the last drop drain out. On the whole, I can sympathise with their stupefaction. Then a horrified voice wailed out 'Oh, Miss! what have you done?' Another said indignantly, 'Look, you've spoilt my trousers!'

"'I hope I've spoiled your election, gentlemen,' I answered. They came round the box then, and one of them got some of the liquid on his hand. He was very frightened, and asked agitatedly, 'Will it burn?' I reassured him at once. 'Go and put your hand under the tap and it will be all right; see, my hands are soaked in it.' I then gave my name and address, and left them animatedly discussing what ought to be done, and whether

they ought to give me in charge or send for the returning officer."

A summons was served on Miss Neilans the next day.

The cases came before Mr. Rose on November 4, when Mrs. Chapin and Miss Neilans were committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court.

On November 24 the cases were tried by Judge Grantham, who had expressed a wish to have them placed in his list. Judge Grantham, is notorious for the harshness of his sentences, and the "partisan and political character of his conduct" at the trial of the Yarmouth Election Petition was made the subject of a special debate in Parliament. In our own cases we can endorse what was said of him on that occasion :—"Judge Grantham brought to bear on the decision of an election petition a mind so biased by political prejudice as to render him incompetent to give a fair and impartial judgment. His conduct on the bench was unjudicial, calculated to lower the dignity of the bench as a revered institution, and to cast no credit on his fellow judges."\* Mrs. Chapin was defended by Mr. F. C. Gill, K.C., and Mr. H. A. McCardie. Miss Neilans defended herself.

The Judge gave orders that no women should be admitted to the Court, and the only exceptions made were in favour of Mrs. Neilans and Miss Chapin.

Mrs. Chapin was accused on the following counts :—

1. Of unlawfully, without due authority, interfering with a ballot-box then in use for the purposes of an election of a Member of Parliament for the Bermondsey division of the County of London by introducing into it divers liquid chemicals.
2. Of attempting to destroy a packet of ballot papers then in use for the purposes of the election.
3. Of assaulting one George Thorley and occasioning him actual bodily harm.
4. Of assaulting one George Thorley and of causing him grievous bodily harm.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty.

The jury found her guilty on the first and third of these counts, but not guilty on the second and fourth.

Everyone who puts aside technicalities of the law must realise that it was no assault but an accident.

Miss Neilans was accused on the first count only.

The Rev. Hugh Chapman, who was present at the trial, said at a public meeting that what impressed him about the trial was its reality, and that he felt Mrs. Chapin and Miss Neilans were the most courageous and disinterested women whom he had met. Of Miss Neilans' speech, he said : "It was one of the best and most eloquent speeches I have listened to for a long time. It was well considered, and there was no acrimony or bitterness about it. One man who was standing near me, and had been jeering, was so moved by her speech that his eyes filled with tears, and he said, 'I don't agree

\* Hansard Parliamentary Debates. Vol. 160.

with the lady, but by God it makes me proud of our women.' I must congratulate the Women's Freedom League on numbering among its members such a woman as Miss Neilans."

The heroism shown by Mrs. Chapin and Miss Neilans adds fresh lustre to the annals wherein are recorded the brave deeds which have been done in order to win Freedom in these latter days—political and moral freedom—for women.

#### MISS NEILANS' DEFENCE.

My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury,—A special responsibility rests with you to-day. For the first time in the history of the Women's Freedom League a suffragist stands before a tribunal which is not in the pay of the prosecution, but which is composed of free men, who do not owe their positions in life to the Government. Hitherto we women, who fight *only* for liberty, have come before police court magistrates who are the paid servants of those responsible for the torture of helpless and exhausted women. I do not say—I *cannot* say, that this fact has influenced the judgment of these magistrates, but I submit to you as business men who know the world, that the balance of power generally lies with those who hold the purse. It is for this reason we have petitioned that our case may be dealt with in a higher court and by a jury of unprejudiced men, a jury composed of free citizens. At last the petition is granted—but at what cost! Here I stand to-day in the Central Criminal Court in a dock where murderers and thieves and criminals of the lowest types are wont to stand. You are asked by the Crown Prosecutor to brand me as one of this class, to condemn me under criminal laws, because I have been fired by that spirit of Liberty which I hope breathes in every man and woman in this court, because I have been fired to commit an offence against what is—as far as women are concerned—

#### a tyrannical and unrepresentative authority.

I have pleaded not guilty to this charge on which I stand committed to-day for this reason, that, although it is not for you, Gentlemen of the Jury, to say whether or not I did this thing with which I am charged—I am not debating that point—it is for you to say if I have been guilty of crime in so doing; because to be charged and convicted as guilty in a criminal court is to brand me as if I were guilty of crime; and I would submit to you, my Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury, that I have been guilty of no crime whatever; that I have done what all true men and women must do—I have endeavoured to protest against tyranny.

It is for you to decide if in doing this I am deserving of being sent to prison in the criminal division. In no other civilised country in the world would such a charge be made in a criminal court, nor would such a distinctly political act be regarded as criminal.

I would ask you to bear with me for a moment—I am compelled to say something about the Society to which I belong. I know, gentlemen, you desire to decide both rightly and justly on my case, but it has been suggested to you that the Women's Freedom League (to which I am proud to belong) resorts to acts of personal violence; that we are careless of life and limb, and that we do not care what we do to any person or property so long as we achieve our end. This, gentlemen, they have put before you, and you will be asked because of this to treat me with the utmost rigour of the law in order to make the Society to which I belong pay the full penalty. Now, gentlemen, because my treatment here will affect not only myself, but the whole Woman's Movement—

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: You must not go into that; you can only make observations in reference to this charge.

MISS NEILANS: I will endeavour to conform to his Lordship's ruling, but

#### the case is prejudiced

and I wished to make this statement. However, I will pass on if I am not allowed to make it. My Society has never been guilty of any personal violence to any person whatever, and it is one of the ethics of our movement that we shall take no action involving suffering and penalty to anyone. Now we come to the case which is before the Court. You may say that here there was injury to the person, but you have it on the man's own statement, given on oath, that it was accidental and unintentional; therefore I would ask you in giving your verdict as to whether we are guilty of crime in this connection, to bear in mind that it has never been the wish of any of us at any time to injure person or property, and it is the thing of all else we wish to avoid and which we should sincerely regret if it happened. Now, gentlemen, another fact I would draw your most serious attention to is, although I come here to-day at liberty to plead to you—at liberty, to a certain extent—yet I will say the case is prejudiced and blackened. You have been led to believe that we were not careful with this fluid and used a fluid which was likely to hurt people. I am not on oath, but it is just the same to me whether I am on oath or not, and I can assure you that before I went to Bermondsey to make this protest, I had had the fluid over my hands, and on the actual day it went over my hands and my face—am I any the worse for it?—and therefore I submit to you that the idea that we were careless in our protest is a wrong one and prejudices our case. I noticed the other day that his Lordship said that when a prisoner stands in a dock he stands before the jury on their deliverance, and that he gloried in the fact that he did not wish him to be convicted but gave him over to the jury in order that they might deliver him if it were possible. Now, gentlemen, with this point clear in your minds that the Society to which I belong, and of which I am a member, has never broken any moral law whatever and has never advocated the destruction of property, I

am sure that you will not allow press reports to prejudice you when you judge my case of unlawfully interfering with the ballot-box. I wish to plead justification, and in order to plead justification I am obliged to ask you to remove from your mind all idea of my being a Suffragist. I will ask you to remove from your minds the fact that I am a Suffragist, to remove from your minds the fact that I am a woman—I do not want sex protection. I will ask you to look at my action of interfering with the ballot papers in the light of those actions which have made England what it is to-day. The very fact of your presence here to-day proves the right to be tried by one's peers—but men are not women's peers. Bear in mind that no cause has ever been won by indifference. Britain has won every privilege and every liberty by fights and struggles against the constituted authority of the day. Gentlemen, the House of Commons which is to-day, I suppose, the constituted authority of the country, won its authority by the act of a rebel. That rebel, Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, rebelled against the constituted authority in 1254, and after defeating the Royal forces at Lewes, imprisoned the King and summoned the first representative Parliament. Again, Magna Charta was signed by John at the sword's point. We have won all our liberties by fights and

**struggles against constituted authority.**

To-day, why do we reverence Cromwell, Pym, Hampden, and others who have fought and made England what it is and who gave us such liberties as we enjoy? Gentlemen, why do we build statues to them, and why are their names taught to our children in the schools? Because they were liberty-loving, and because they rebelled against constituted authority. They won; and to-day the statue of Cromwell stands in front of what ought to be a representative House of the people; his statue sees women charged by mounted police and taken away to be thrown into prison; it looks down on that and sees that we are fighting for the same principle of liberty he fought so bravely for in the olden times. Gentlemen, I would submit to you that the spirit which makes us fight for freedom is the same whether it breathes through women or men. But nowadays you men do not fight for yourselves, and it seems to me in not having to fight for yourselves now you have forgotten the value of liberty. You are asked to send me and my comrades to a criminal prison because we have been true to the principles of liberty in our hearts; because we have endeavoured to do our duty—what we believe to be our duty—and I would submit to you, in fighting constituted authority as we have done, that I have justification for my act, because it is the principle which is embodied in the fight which Englishmen fought in the past to obtain liberty. Gentlemen, I am convinced that you will not be prejudiced by the fact that I am a Suffragist. I am convinced you wish to give me a fair judgment and that you are willing to do it. Now here at once we come to the whole root of the trouble; my Lord, and you your-

selves, wish to judge me fairly and rightly, but, as I say, here at once we come to the root of the trouble; the whole trouble is the question of a point of view, your point of view, and I think I understand it, although a Suffragist. It is this; here is a woman who deliberately breaks laws, deliberately creates disorder, who even attempted to upset an important Parliamentary election, and you feel you are bound in order to preserve justice, to condemn me and pass censure on that act. But may I beg that you will try if you can, for a moment, to see my point of view. Surely you do not imagine —

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: I cannot allow you to give your point of view.

MISS NEILANS: I cannot possibly justify —

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: You can only refer to matters in reference to this case.

MISS NEILANS: I cannot justify my action unless I am allowed to say things which have led up to it.

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: I want to give you every latitude, but I cannot allow you to go into your general principles as to what you are fighting for.

MISS NEILANS: Very well, my Lord. Well, gentlemen, I am not allowed to go into general principles, but I wish to go into my reasons for doing what I did.

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: I cannot allow you to do that either; it is nothing to do with this case.

MISS NEILANS: Well, gentlemen, you are asked to condemn me, but I am not allowed by his Lordship to try and show you what I believe to be justification for what I have done. You are asked by the Prosecution to condemn me as a mere disorderly law-breaker, but I would ask you to believe that nothing is further from my thoughts, and the thoughts of my fellow prisoner, than to break any law, were it not that we believe a protest is necessary and that it is our duty to make such protest. You may have been told, perhaps it has already been suggested to you, that we women do this sort of thing for notoriety. Now I appeal to your common sense; would any of you risk a period of imprisonment for the sake of seeing your name spelt wrongly in a halfpenny newspaper? It is not for notoriety—I myself do not know, I could not tell you, one quarter of the names of the women who have gone to prison because they believed it to be their duty—but it is because we have behind us the

**driving force of a great ideal.**

As I have said—we may be wrong—who knows?—but we have behind us the driving force of a great ideal, which will not allow us to sit safely and comfortably in our own homes while our sister women struggle and die because of the hardness of the unequal fight. Wherever we look we see women should have a voice in the legislation of the country. And it is because of this we feel we should make continued protests; and the reason why I have

made my protest is this; because women's wants are but superficially treated, and because they are not properly represented in the Government of the country. It does not mean that women should sit in Parliament, but it means that they should be enfranchised, where properly qualified.

I have not been allowed by his Lordship to go into that question of point of view, but I am certain that in five minutes, or less, I could make you see the idea behind this movement, and then there would be no jury in this country who would convict us of criminal intent. Put yourself in the place of a woman for a moment—imagine yourself in a country—it will seem humorous to you—

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: I cannot allow you to go into that.

MISS NEILANS: Well, gentlemen, I must not go into that either; but I will ask you to try and think it out for yourselves. You see how I stand here to-day; you see that I am tried by a man judge, and a male jury to decide my fate. I am not allowed to have a woman-barrister, because they are not allowed at the Bar. I have no friends here—by order of his Lordship they have been excluded—with the exception of my mother—I have no friends here to give me their moral support. I stand before you, I say, a woman not allowed to have the benefit of the presence of my own sex. Now this is not fair. This is no question of mere prejudice; you know perfectly well women could not judge you honestly, we should be liable to try you unfairly; yet you are asked to condemn a woman, although, with the best intentions in the world, you cannot understand why we did what we did. The ballot-box to you is a symbol of the liberties of this country, it is to you a

**symbol of your citizenship,**

it is a symbol of all you hold dear; but, gentlemen, what is it to a woman? A ballot-box has no sacredness for me; a ballot-box to me, as a woman, is merely an instrument which proves that we are in political slavery; a ballot-box to a woman in this country merely shows she is outlawed and debarred from citizenship. Therefore, you see why it is that an election has not the meaning for a woman which it has for you. I think my presence here to-day shows that we women value the vote and the ballot; if it were not that I have the deepest respect for the ballot, and because I want the ballot to be a part of the liberties of the people, because I think women are part of the people—had I not felt so deeply being shut out from a voice in the Government of the country, I should not have made this protest at that place where we are debarred from exercising the franchise to which we are entitled. As I have said, it is almost impossible for you to appreciate my point of view; but think of it, if you stood where I stand, to be judged by a woman; you will understand how I feel to-day, but even with the best intentions in the world you cannot, even if you want to, do my point of view justice.

I would ask you to remember that if by your verdict to-day I am given over to criminal imprisonment, you do not merely sentence me

to imprisonment, but to starvation, the stomach tube, the fire hose and any other brutalities which the Home Secretary will permit. You may say, "Oh, that is self-inflicted, and you need not go through it." It was just as much self-inflicted when 300 years ago people were going to death at the stake. They need not have gone. They might have said, "We will believe what you want us to believe, and drink the health of the king." But why not? Because it was a principle with them. So that of course their death was self-inflicted, and those men and women who went to the scaffold went of their own choice, and

**for the sake of a principle**

which was dearer to them than any life. If I have to go to prison as a criminal then I am obliged by the very principle which sent men to their death, I am obliged to resist—perfectly peacefully—and that will mean forcible feeding, stomach tubes, and other tortures inflicted by those in authority. Look at me, I am now strong; in two or three weeks I shall be a physical wreck. Self-inflicted? Yes; but because, gentlemen, my principles oblige me to do it. I do not think that even you would wish me to give up my principle merely in order to have more comforts. If I am treated as a first-class misdemeanant I shall accept my punishment without resistance, because, although I believe my protest was justifiable and logical, I realise, of course, that you are bound to give me punishment for it—I realise that point of view. If I say the imprisonment is first-class and the offence is treated as political (for first-class punishment has been given to people before for actions no more political than the thing I have done), if that is done I shall go through it quietly; but if I am sentenced to prison as a criminal—if the judge gives his decision that we are criminals—then you know what you are sending us to.

Gentlemen, I have not been able to say to you what I should have liked to have said because, as you very well realise, I am not used to the etiquette of a criminal court. I do not know how to put my case in such a way that the judge will allow me to go on. I say things perhaps which are not absolutely in order, and therefore I have been unable to put the case to you as I would have liked to do it; but I would urge you to think for yourselves before you give your verdict; think of the history of the country; the struggles which have been won against constituted authority; and when you remember that and think also it is well-nigh impossible for one sex to judge the other, I well believe you will refuse to be made the defenders of an unjust and tyrannical system. I know that with the best wishes in the world it is almost impossible for you to judge my fellow comrades and myself fairly; yet I appeal to you as best I can to give your verdict not in accordance with convention and technicalities but in such a way as it shall be indeed just. I appeal to you on every ground of loyalty and truth and liberty to find me, on this count, Not Guilty.

### THE JUDGE'S SUMMING UP.

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: Gentlemen of jury, this is a very simple case as I have said to you before. The prisoner is charged with interfering with the ballot-box; she practically not only admits it, but glories in it. You have heard the law on the point, and I will ask you to say, gentlemen, whether you find her guilty or not guilty.

### VERDICT.

The jury brought in a verdict of GUILTY on the first count of the indictment—interfering with the ballot-box; and a formal verdict of NOT GUILTY on the second count—attempting to destroy ballot papers.

Mr. Muir then mentioned that Miss Neilans had been convicted twice before, and proceeded to read extracts from an interview with Miss Neilans, which had appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*. Miss Neilans objected to this as being out of order after the case for the prosecution was closed, but the journalist who wrote the account was put into the witness box.

MR. MUIR: With regard to Alice Chapin, I have a cutting from the *Times* of Monday last, containing what purports to be a report of a meeting held on the Saturday night previous, the 20th November, in which Mrs. Chapin—

MR. MCCARDIE: I take formal objection to this. If my friend has any conviction let him state it. I object to his reading from a report.

MR. MUIR: She is reported to have made a statement. I have not here evidence to prove that she, in fact, made that statement; therefore, my Lord, as my friend objects, I presume Mrs. Chapin will require it strictly proved. I have no more to say about it.

MISS NEILANS: My Lord, before you pass sentence, may I say a few words?

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: You have had plenty of time and have said a great deal already. You seem to take it as very amusing and to rather enjoy your position.

MISS NEILANS: I submit that is not a fair remark to make to a prisoner in the dock. I do not enjoy my position at all, and imprisonment is as serious to me as it would be to yourself.

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: What is your statement?

MISS NEILANS: I wish to submit to your Lordship that this act should be lifted by your judgment from the sphere of criminality and should receive your consideration as a political misdemeanour arising out of a political act done from a political motive; and in asking you to do this, I would call your attention to the case of Dr. Jameson, who stood in this court, or in the Old Bailey, on a most serious charge, and was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. The charge was that of carrying arms into a country with which we were at peace. This man's action, whether right or wrong, brought him into the criminal court, and yet he was sentenced as a first-class misdemeanant with many privileges, and treated as a

political prisoner. The Government of that day rightly and properly gave Dr. Jameson the privileges of first-class misdemeanancy, and if the Government of to-day refuses it, I would ask your Lordship's sense of justice to give us first-class prison treatment and to make us political prisoners for that which is a political act; and if this is not a political offence there has never been a political offence.

### SENTENCE.

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM: Alice Chapin and Alison Neilans, you have both been very properly convicted on the clearest possible evidence of a very serious crime, and having been convicted of that crime, you are both criminals; and, after merely stating that fact, I shall treat you the same as other criminals. I will now pass sentence upon you. The sentence I pass under the first count you are charged with, namely, interfering with the ballot-boxes, is that you each receive three months' imprisonment. As regards you, Alice Chapin, and the injury to the poll clerk, I pass a sentence of four months' imprisonment upon you—your two sentences to run concurrently. The imprisonment in both cases will be in the second division, as I consider you no different from other criminals.

After the Defendants had gone below,

MR. JUSTICE GRANTHAM (to the Jury): Gentlemen, in the *Times* of 22nd, you can read what the woman said on last Monday. Of course, I took no notice of it because there was no one here to prove it. It is in the *Times* of last Monday, under the heading of "Women's Suffrage," the second paragraph on page eight.

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Repeated applications have been made to treat Mrs. Chapin and Miss Neilans as Political offenders by placing them in the first division in prison. This is in accordance with precedent. Early in the year 1903 Mr. Ginnell, M.P., was sentenced to six months, for cattle-driving, in the *first division*. It was urged in defence that he had no option of a fine or of being bound over; neither have Mrs. Chapin or Miss Neilans. Many other instances could be given of male prisoners who have been treated as first class misdemeanants, and we now urge all friends of liberty to insist that women political offenders should be given the same treatment, and so put an end to the horrors of the stomach tube and other brutalities employed by the authorities to crush an agitation which has for its sole end to win the rights of citizenship for women.