

But now see the irony of things. When these organized bodies of large-hearted women approach the Government of the day they have to do so in the character of suppliants, as though they were seeking some favour for themselves. When a deputation of men wait upon Ministers, the latter, whether they accede to their demands or not, have to assume the attitude of public servants, only anxious to give effect to the public will. To women, unsupported by male voters, Governments, even in this so-called democratic country, are autocrats and despots. Women have no more direct leverage against them than the Russian or Turkish peasant has—or had until very recently—against Czar or Sultan. Women everywhere, where they have not the parliamentary vote, are, as women, living under a pure despotism, save in respect to municipal matters; and this is equally true whether the despot be an individual, or a male-elected man-consisting legislature. Shall we not give them at least the leverage of the vote of themselves, and such of their sister women as they can carry with them in support of their platform?

But my subtle and ingenious critic will immediately say: "Because a few women are active in pursuing these altruistic efforts for reforms—most, or all of which we are bound to say, we cordially support—is that any reason for such a revolutionary proceeding as to give votes to women in general on the same terms as men?"

Let me, then, fairly face this fearful prospect. First, in its private aspect, we are told that to give women the vote will cause serious deterioration in the female character and destroy domestic happiness. I am convinced that the Spirit of Use and Wont never conjured up a more absurd bogey to block the path of progress. How far is the character of the ordinary man affected by the right he possesses to put a piece of paper in a ballot box every few years? How innumerable are the men who very seldom exercise this right though they do possess it; and who never dream of attending public meetings, or taking any part whatever in active politics? And if this is so with men, it will assuredly be still more the case with women. We may depend upon it, after women have the vote, both parties to the marriage contract will, in the great majority of cases,