

When you look at the laws of inheritance in this country, it makes you smile to hear that argument. Men have taken very good care that women do not inherit until all male heirs are exhausted. So I do not think these democratic gentlemen are quite sincere in the fears they express lest the influence of property should be very much strengthened if women got the Parliamentary franchise. I do not think it is time yet for women to consider whether the law that the eldest son shall inherit the estate is a just law. I think we should put it in this way: if it is to be the eldest child, let it be the eldest child, whether that child is a man or a woman. I am perfectly certain that if women had had the vote when that law was made, that that is how it would have been settled, if they had decided to have a law of primogeniture.

Well, one could go on giving you many more of these examples. I want now to deal with an objection which may be in the minds of some people here. They say, you are talking about laws made a long time ago. Laws would not now be made like that. If a new law were made, it would of course be equal between the sexes. But as a matter of fact, it seems almost impossible for men, when making new laws that will affect both sexes, to recognize that there is any woman's side at all. Let us take an illustration from the last session of Parliament. For many years we have been accustomed to see pass through the House of Commons and go up to the House of Lords that hardy evergreen, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. I used—it is many years since I began reading the debates on that measure—I used to read the speeches carefully through to see if I could find one speech from a man which showed any kind of realization of the women's side of that Bill. You read eloquent appeals to make it possible for a man who had lost his wife to give to the children the best kind of step-mother that they could have. Who could make a better step-mother, it was asked, than the sister of

their deceased mother? By natural ties, by old associations, by her knowledge of the children, she was better fitted than anybody else to take the mother's place. But you never heard of a man who thought there might be another side to the picture. So you have on the Statute-book a piece of legislation which gives relief to the widower who would like to provide a kind step-mother for his children, but does not give relief to the widow who would like to give a kind step-father to her children. I do not think it ever entered into the minds of these legislators that there might be a widow who would like to fulfil the behest of the Old Testament that the living brother should take up his deceased brother's burden and do his duty to his brother's family. So you see, even in this twentieth century, you have got the same spirit.

The man voter and the man legislator see the man's needs first, and do not see the woman's needs. And so it will be until women get the vote. It is well to remember that, in view of what we have been told of what is the value of women's influence. Woman's influence is only effective when men want to do the thing that her influence is supporting.

Prospective Legislation

Now let us look a little to the future. If it ever was important for women to have the vote, it is ten times more important to-day, because you cannot take up a newspaper, you cannot go to a conference, you cannot even go to church, without hearing a great deal of talk about social reform and a demand for social legislation. Of course, it is obvious that that kind of legislation is of vital importance to women. If we have the right kind of social legislation it will be a very good thing for women and children. If we have the wrong kind of social legislation, we may have the worst kind of tyranny that women have ever known since the world began. We are hearing about legislation to decide what kind of homes women are to live in. That