

any further extension of the franchise. Our only stumbling block is the man who thinks it just that women should have the vote, but does not want them to have it yet—does not want them to have it until they have ceased to ask for it so insistently. If women want so badly a harmless little thing like a vote, says this ridiculous person, it is plain that, as soon as they get it, they will be asking for a much more dangerous concession. More than that! Mr. Foolscap would be willing to give the vote to his female relatives as a favor; he will be hanged if he gives it as a right.

For that is what the argument amounts to! Because the militants have been bad girls, they and all other women of England are not to have their lollypop. I ask my readers to laugh at this silly old man!

I shall not attempt to justify the methods of the militants, any more than I shall attempt to justify the Government in setting a match to the inflammable spirit of woman. I am content to state the plain fact that if you irritate any woman beyond a certain point she will behave unreasonably.

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It is possible, my dear male reader, that you are married, and it probable that you have sometimes been unjust in your dealings with your wife. I am married, and I have often been unjust. Now we both of us know how easy it is, by a system of pinpoint irritation, or even by sitting still and being obstinate, when we ought to yield gracefully and at once, to drive a woman to such a pitch of exasperation that she will start breaking up the furniture. And then, oh, my erring brother! you know how we should smile loftily and puff at our pipes, and observe that creatures who behave like that do not deserve to be trusted with—whatever it is we do not want them to have.

That is precisely what you have done with the Suffragettes. You have driven them to exasperation. And now when they start breaking up the furniture

you lift your hands to heaven in holy horror and swear by this and by that they are not worthy of the vote.

YOU COWARD!

What a paltry dodge is this to avoid deciding whether the vote for woman is either a fundamental human right or a fundamental human wrong!

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Look how you shuffle and shift! In one breath you call the Suffragettes unsexed, and laugh at them for the feminine petulance and unreasonableness of their tactics. Can you not be made to understand from your own domestic experience that there was never a social movement so essentially unsexed, and laugh at them for the feminine as this militant suffrage movement? Can you not see how womanly are all these apparently aimless outbursts—these attacks on unoffending furniture, on shop windows and pillar-boxes. Or are you so perfect a husband that your wife has never shattered a soup-plate because you were too lazy or too silly to understand her?

Whereupon Mr. Foolscap puts on another mask and says (good Lord!) that women do not want the vote! How do you know? If you ask your sweetheart of course you can compel the proper answer. But you are a mighty clever fellow if you know what all women want.

The truth is that the majority of women, like the majority of men, don't want anything very much except a quiet life. All great reforms have been the work of minorities, and you will not dare to deny that a very large minority of women do most earnestly desire the vote. The other women need not vote if they don't want to; they will not be dragged in chains to the polls.

As for the sex war and such rot, you know quite well that as long as women love and marry they will not vote solid against man.

And so, gentlemen, you have before you the plain issue: Is it just, or is it unjust that women should have the