

told, but at any rate in great numbers, drunk and disgraced under the temptations that were offered in the fierceness and unscrupulousness of a political contest. The honourable member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate) referred to the Catholic question, to the influence that might be exercised by the Catholic priest. I will not go into that further than to say that every man in this House must be sensible, and those who are in favour of this Bill have never ventured to deny, that the influence of priest, parson and minister would be greatly increased if this Bill and other measures of a similar character were passed. I recollect last year discussing this Bill with a gentleman who was a member of a former Parliament and a member for an Irish constituency—I rather think he supported this Bill, but I am not quite sure—and he said, “One thing you may rely on, that in Catholic Ireland every woman’s vote may be taken to be the priest’s vote.” Hon. members who come from Ireland may contradict this, and they are much better authorities on the subject than I am. But I do not give it on my own authority. I give it on the authority of one of their own members in a previous Parliament, a man equal to any member for an Irish constituency or an English either, a gentleman of knowledge and veracity in a matter of this kind. All these risks and all this great change we are asked to make—for what? To arm the women of this country against the men of this country. To arm them that they may defend themselves against their fathers, their husbands, their brothers and their sons. To me the idea has something in it strange and monstrous, and I think a more baseless case—that is, on the ground of any suffered injustice—was never submitted to this House. I believe that if everybody voted, if all women and all men voted, the general result must be the same; for by an unalterable law, strength is stronger than weakness, and in the end, as a matter of absolute necessity, men must prevail.

My sympathies have always been in favour of a wide suffrage. They are so at this moment, and I grieve very much that a measure should be submitted to this House in favour of the extension of the suffrage, to which I cannot give my support. But I confess I am unwilling, for the sake of women themselves, to intro-

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