

The Women Suffrage in England

The object of the movement is to obtain the Parliamentary Suffrage for Women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men. It is not a movement for adult suffrage. It does involve granting the suffrage to married women. Those fearful that this would be inimical to domestic peace should read J. S. Mill's statement of the case in favor of married women voting—that a man may be helped, not hindered, in putting public before private interest by the influence of his closest intimate, who will, however, have little conscience about public good if she is told to believe that it is no business of hers. It is well, moreover, to emphasize two points: First, that giving the vote to married women will increase the weight of the family vote and so of the stable element in political power. Second, that marriage and motherhood are the fulfilment of women's life, and matrimony should never be made to involve a loss of status. The extension of the franchise would involve the addition about one and a half million voters to the present seven and a half million voters. Of these some 80 per cent. would be women economically independent of men. This fact is important, as it is generally held that the strongest claim to the suffrage lies with those who have an obvious economic stake in the Government of their country.

It is difficult to marshal evidence and arguments in favour of Women's Suffrage without appearing to say the obvious.

If women are different from men representative Government without them is incompletely representative of the State. If women are the same as men they have presumably the same need to vote as men. Again, Laws framed by only a fraction of the citizens can never be other than the expression of the thoughts, aspirations and desires of that fraction; or again, it is only through our country that we can have a recognized collective existence, and there is no true association except among equals. There are the two time-honoured theories that representation should go with taxation, that the foundation of all political liberty is that those who obey the Law should have a voice in choosing those who make the Law. There is no need to explain their application to the Women's Suffrage argument. To those who value lightly the use of the vote it might yet be expected to appear an insult to withhold it; it leaves women ranked with infants, lunatics, paupers and criminals. The theory of the disability of the sex can no longer be maintained. In the past fifty years three great changes have come over England and our Western civilization. First, the achieved economic independence of women, whether to be reputed or not is a fact. The franchise, if it did not effect immediate direct change for the better in women's wages, would undoubtedly improve their status and indirectly be beneficial to their economic position. Second, the

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