

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES,

WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE?

THE object of the Women's Suffrage Societies is "to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same terms as it is, or may be granted to men"; or, in other words, to obtain the removal of the disability imposed, on the ground of sex alone, on women who would otherwise be duly qualified electors.

This disability is shared by women with paupers, idiots and lunatics, criminals and minors.

Women who pay the Rates are, so far as the electoral law is concerned, in the same position as persons who are *on* the Rates.

Women who may have given such evidence of intellectual competence as e.g. that of being placed in the ranks of University Graduates, are in the same category with persons of unsound mind.

Women who as tax-payers contribute to the maintenance of reformatories and gaols are on the same footing as the irreclaimable inmates of those institutions. A criminal, who on coming out of prison betakes himself to an honest life, can in due time qualify himself as an elector. To women, no such opportunity is afforded.

Women are largely responsible for the nurture and education of young persons of both sexes. These young persons, on reaching the age of twenty-one, will, if men, be able to qualify as electors. The women who have brought them up are regarded as in a state of tutelage during their whole lives.

Is this common sense ?

It may be argued that the Parliamentary vote is not withheld from women on the ground of their alleged resemblance to any of the above mentioned classes, but in view of grave considerations as to the probable results of their taking part in affairs of State. If this be so, it may be pertinent to ask whether the same considerations might not justify the prohibition by law of the employment of women on Education Committees, as Poor Law Guardians, Factory Inspectors, Physicians and Surgeons, and in other posts of public responsibility? Yet hardly anyone would propose to deprive the State of the services of women in these capacities.

It is claimed that the proposed reform would bring with it a better representation of important interests and sentiments, a fuller measure of justice all round, and a more widely diffused sense of civic responsibility. The burden of

justifying the existing disability seems to lie on those who maintain the outworn tradition of exclusion.

Price 1d. per dozen, or 8d. per 100.

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