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WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE.

FROM A MAN'S POINT OF VIEW

It is man's fault and the country's misfortune that women have had no Parliamentary vote for 76 years. They lost the right to vote because they trusted the men, and neglected to guard their rights when the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. They have not regained the vote because, until we heard of the militant women, they have not fiercely insisted that they want it.

I have attended Women's Suffrage meetings, and heard women mildly explain why they ought to have the vote, and the good they will do when they get it. This is purely academical. Woman is too reasonable on the Suffrage question. To a man it is merely a matter of business. I get the vote because I am an owner and occupier of rateable property; and I am still waiting to know why an exception should be made in the case of the occupier who is a woman.

I met a lady this week who has been for 15 years the successful proprietor of a large boarding house. I thought, "Here is a Suffragette." No! She knew nothing of politics. She left politics to the men. Fancy a man refusing to be interested in a thing because he doesn't understand it. Wise men! We never give the show away. Do we refuse to travel in a railway train, or electric car, because many of us do not understand the mechanism of the steam engine, or electric traction? Do we refuse to send wireless telegrams because only a few of us can explain the Marconi system? We are satisfied if some of us know. For the same reason the 70,000 illiterate men on the present Parliament registers of the United Kingdom do not refuse to vote. They vote as directed, or as they please, and no one proposes to take the vote from them.

Brother and Sister.

I often ask the question : Do women realise what little intelligence men require to send a member to parliament? I am one of those who have more Parliamentary voters than my share, at least, I think so, as long as the women are without. I never asked for a vote. I passed no examination, like some of the University graduates, to get it. I found when I was 21 that I was the half-owner of a little freehold. That was enough. The officials gave me the vote. The other half-owner was my sister. That was enough to refuse it to her, when she was 21, because she was a woman. Afterwards I went into business and paid office rent. Another vote. In a year I did so well that I married and my wife and I set up house. Of course, I was given a third vote for that. My conscience never troubled me whether I was wise enough to exercise the vote, No one ever suggested it to me, although possibly when I voted Liberal the Conservatives had their doubts about it. Why, should it trouble a woman whether she understands politics or not? How many men do we know who are really politicians? I didn't get three votes because I was a politician, but because I owned rate-paying property in one place, and occupied rate-paying property in two other places.

At election times I looked around. Were the voters left to themselves, like sheep

without a shepherd? On the contrary, we were admirably shepherded. Candidates spent a lot of money to guide us. They issued long printed addresses, which few voters read, and none remembered. They called upon us, and were most friendly. If they could do anything for us in Parliament, they would be only too delighted. Then came speeches galore, and election colours: Liberal; red ; Conservative, blue. What could be simpler? A child could understand.

The voter, before he entered the polling-station, was given as a specimen voting paper a red card, or a blue card, containing the candidates' names, with a big cross marked against the name of the candidate for whom each of the parties wanted him to vote. So little does the average voter understand politics, that he always votes for the same party—the same colour he calls it ; he does not, as a rule, turn his coat ; consequently, party votes neutralise one another, and the turn-coat turns the scale. When the voter enters the polling-station he gives his name to a clerk at a table, who compares it with the printed register and ticks it off, to indicate that he has voted, and gives him a ballot-paper. He is then directed to go to the enclosed desk where, with a pencil provided for that purpose, he puts a cross on the ballot-paper against one of the names, if one M. P. has to be elected, or a cross against each of two of the names, if two M.P.'s are to be elected; or he may plump for one only Then, having folded the paper so that nobody sees for whom he has voted, he puts it in the ballot-box, and his vote is recorded.

He has by this simple operation done what it is said women are physically and mentally incapable of doing. There is one remedy; if they feel their deficiencies, they can stay away. A large number of men always do.

Henceforth let women no longer, like Milton's guardian angels, stand and wait. Let them tell men they know the game of politics, and can play it, too. They have found us out. We are not the wisecracs we pretend to be. Remind us, and particularly Cabinet Ministers at home and travelling abroad, in season and out of season, that the vote is exercised by marking a cross, and that all women who are occupiers of rateable property can mark a cross against a candidate's name on a ballot-paper. Remind us that we ordinary voters are not called upon to exercise even the intelligence of selecting and nominating a candidate. The candidate packs his bag and collies. The candidates are all, more or less, representative men, selected by, their political parties, and nominated by local supporters.

Remind us that you women who possess the necessary qualification have for a long time been voting in this way for the election of guardians of the poor, for parish councils, for borough councils, for county councils, and so useful have you proved yourselves to be that you are now eligible to sit on these various councils, and are doing citizens' work alongside the men. Demand from us men whether we can point out a single instance in which our interests have suffered in any way through city municipal votes given by women. Insist that to the municipal vote shall be added the Parliamentary vote. It is a question of practical politics. Let mere academical discussion of the subject cease. It has been going on fruitlessly for 40 years. You are being robbed. You are paying rates, and get no Parliamentary vote in exchange.

No Vote Without Militancy.

Militant women, indeed ! I am proud to see you have the pluck to be militant. You will never get the vote without. Can you women imagine for one moment what we men would do if we had a Bill before Parliament to give us the common rights of citizenship, the right to be raised above criminals and lunatics, a Bill which, on February 28 last, actually passed the second reading in the House of Commons by a

majority of three to one? Can you imagine what men would do if the Premier refused absolutely to set aside a day for the Committee stage and third reading of our Bill, notwithstanding that, on his own admission, two-thirds of the Government are against him? Women, pause here, and insist on the answer, *What would men do?*

Do you suppose that, if the Government dared to deal with men in this manner, they could brutally imprison over 300 when they voiced their demands? Thank God there are many men in the country like the Haggerston voter who said to Mrs. Drummond, "I have been a Liberal all my days, but I shall not vote for a Government which imprisons women because they ask for a vote. That is a disgraceful thing in liberty-loving England. Tell me, missus, what to do for your cause, and I'll go to gaol myself." When men go to gaol it will be on a more serious charge than breaking two panes of glass or shouting Votes for Women.

W. W. H.