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**THE CASE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE**

## **BOOKS ON THE SUFFRAGE QUESTION**

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LONDON : T. FISHER UNWIN.

*Shaw, Neave, John*  
**THE CASE**  
FOR  
**WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE**

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## **THE LEADERS OF THE FOUR PARTIES ON THE SUFFRAGE QUESTION.**



### **THE RT. HON. SIR HENRY CAMPBELL- BANNERMAN, M.P.**

“ . . . The more I come to close quarters with the social questions which affect the great mass of the people of this country, the more am I driven to the belief that women ought to have the power of expressing their opinions on those subjects and help in their solution.”

### **THE RT. HON. A. J. BALFOUR, M.P.**

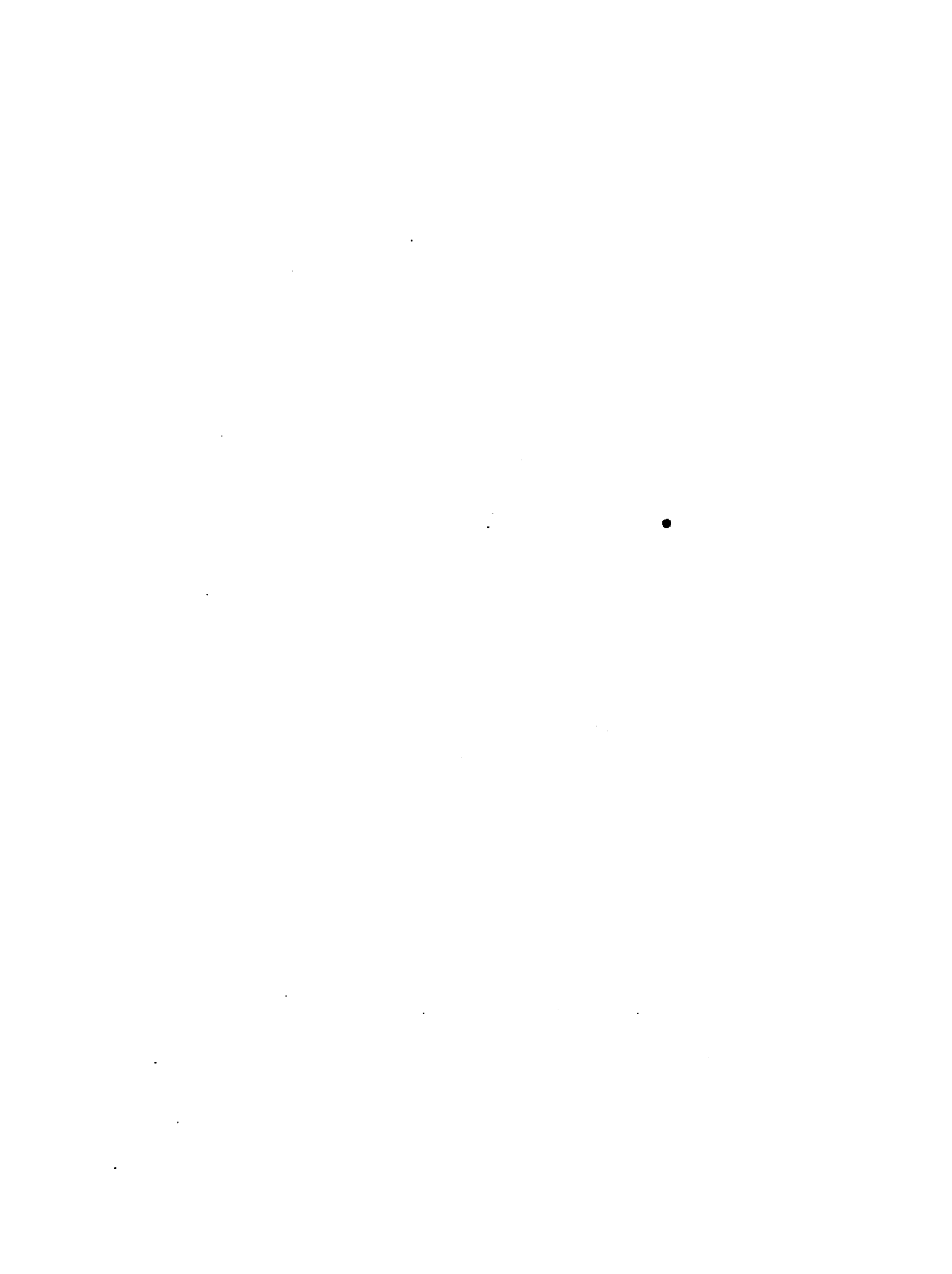
“ We have been told that to encourage women to take an active part in politics is degrading to the sex, and that received the assent of an hon. friend of mine below the gangway. It has received the assent of almost every speaker to-day. I should think myself grossly inconsistent and most ungrateful if I supported that argument in this House, for I have myself taken the chair at Primrose League Meetings, and urged to the best of my ability the women of this country to take a share in politics, and to do their best in their various localities to support the principles which I believe to be sound in the interests of the country. After that, to come down to the House, and say I have asked these women to do that which degrades them, appears to me to be most absurd.”

### **MR. JOHN REDMOND, M.P.**

“ Is it not absurd to say that a woman in this country who may be left a widow, who may have the training of her children, the regulating of their education, the forming of their character, is to have no voice whatever in the laws to govern the state of the future citizens of which she has had the training ?”

### **MR. J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.**

“ I know of no argument in support of the grant of the franchise to men which does not equally apply to giving the franchise to women.”



## INTRODUCTION

BY BROUGHAM VILLIERS

**I**T is barely three years ago since, in writing of the apathy of the nation towards the old Liberal ideals, I penned this sentence: "Until women realise more fully than, alas! most of them do, the vital importance of politics to them, there are many electoral anomalies, but no loudly asserted grievance." Even so, the expression "loudly asserted" was an afterthought for "deeply felt," due to the hope that thousands of quiet women might feel adequately the indignity of being denied the elementary rights of citizenship, while lacking means or courage to avow their discontent. No one would use either phrase now. Confined three years ago to obscure corners of the newspapers, to meetings in private rooms, to the conversation of a select few, the question of woman's emancipation has suddenly become the most insistent political problem of the day. Even the apostles of "Tariff Reform" play a less conspicuous part at bye-elections, even the politics of Labour are less discussed in the public Press than the agitation which then appeared so lifeless. In less than three years the movement

for the enfranchisement of women has made greater strides than in the century before, and the seed sown long ago by Mary Wollstonecraft seems at last likely to bear fruit.

There must indeed have been a deep, though almost inarticulate, discontent among the women of England to render so rapid a change possible. This discontent has at last found voice, and that not only through the members of the Women's Social and Political Union. This book will, it is hoped, come as a revelation to many of the wide extent to which the desire for political enfranchisement has permeated all classes of women in this country. Among the older suffragists, among the women Trades Unionists of Lancashire and Cheshire, among the thrifty housewives of the Co-operative Guilds, the influence of the same militant spirit will be seen working as in the organisation whose tactics have occasioned so much comment. Nor is it only the organised women who have felt the influence of the new movement. No book could be adequately representative of this new enthusiasm unless it found a place for the professional woman. Miss Smedley, Miss McMillan, and Miss Atkinson here give us the views of feminine culture and literature, while Mr. Zangwill and Mr. Keir Hardie voice for us the reflex effect of the movement on masculine letters and masculine politics. In the world outside we may see things no less significant. In Parliament the question is no longer discussed flippantly, but with the gravity due to a matter of practical politics. In the congresses of Labour there may be divergence of method,

but not indifference ; in the counsels of the older parties there is an angry feeling that at least this is a question that can no longer be ignored.

How welcome all this is to those who have for years striven to drive out the early-Victorian attitude towards women from politics it is needless to say. Looking out on a world pregnant with hope from east to west, the friend of democracy finds no part of the great world movement more hopeful than that which the women of England are now carrying on for their own emancipation. Even the Russian Revolution is not more widespread, certainly not more unexpected than this. In our unromantic age, our unromantic land, a great popular movement has at last arisen, a movement of revolt, not less heroic than those of more distant times and nations.

It is not yet so very long ago since the members of the Women's Liberal Associations decided no longer to work for any candidate who was not in favour of the emancipation of their sex. The views of the candidates were ascertained, and many of the most earnest women refused to work for unsatisfactory men. Here, perhaps, the more clear-sighted women may have realised the extent to which the denial of citizen rights to women has vitiated the atmosphere of British politics. In a State where women had votes it would be impossible for any party to select a candidate unacceptable to its members of either sex ; but in England, outside the ranks of the Independent Labour Party, the whole business of selecting candidates is almost entirely monopolised by men. The members of Conservative and Liberal Associations



select their candidates almost without consultation with their women comrades, and then invite the Primrose League and Women's Liberal Associations to work for them! Hence it comes about that the male supporters of either party are, for the most part, profoundly ignorant of the women's view of any question, and the women have no guarantee that, at any time, a candidate distasteful to them may not be thrust upon them. In that case they may be faced with the alternative of working for an opponent or of appearing at least to be disloyal to their party. Every authoritative party organisation should be so constructed as to be equally accessible to people of either sex. A party that desires to democratise the nation should begin by democratising itself.

The new policy of the Liberal women, then, though it has done something to advance the suffrage movement within the ranks of the party now in power, lacked the leverage to do as much as it ought; and even now Liberalism is hardly in advance of Toryism on this question. Many years of patient effort have failed to get Women's Enfranchisement recognised as a fundamental item on the Government programme. It is still perfectly possible that the largest Liberal majority for generations may do nothing for women; it is almost certain that it will do nothing unless compelled by outside pressure. Fortunately this outside pressure is now being applied, and that in a number of ways hitherto unattempted.

Our civilisation shows many pathetic figures, one of the most interesting of which is the aged lady

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